

Critical Reflection

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1. Introduction

My SICP project “Invisible Load: The Boundary Between Gazing and Being Gazed Upon” not only presents women’s invisible experiences within the exhibition but also uses the exhibition as a mechanism of visibility to critically engage with these issues. My approach centers on a female perspective, using various media forms and public programs to explore the power relationships of “gazing and being gazed upon,” thereby visually bringing the curatorial process into the public eye. The exhibition is a dynamic field of perception, adopting a “multi-narrative, non-linear” structure to present themes from multiple dimensions—including labor, the gaze, and anxiety—while transforming individual experiences into public discussions. This approach enhances the dissemination and advocacy surrounding women’s hidden pressures and anxieties.

Critical reflection unfolds across three levels: individual curation, collective curation, and peer review. First, I analyze the process of my individual curatorial project, from the initial identification of themes to the final proposal, refining the project through continuous adjustments based on course learning, relevant readings, and exhibition-viewing experiences. The second section shifts to the collective curatorial project, discussing the challenges and gains arising from collaboration mechanisms among group members, division of labor, and curatorial space practices. The third section combines peer review to evaluate my own gains and shortcomings in curatorial practice, while also considering future prospects.

2. Reflections on the Individual Curatorial Project “Invisible Load”

2.1 Insights from Course Content and Reading:

From the beginning of the course, I gained a deeper understanding of the concepts of curation and curators. Curation is not merely about selecting and presenting works; it is more importantly about using art to discuss “neglected” issues, which is interactive and communicative in nature. For instance, curator Mary Jane Jacob focused on female artists. Her curatorial projects were not providing entertainment for capitalist cities, but rather a call and dissemination, expressing aesthetic and intellectual expressions (Thea,2009). This gradually led me to establish a curatorial direction with “invisible” and “marginalized” as the entry points – the theme of female anxiety, exploring the marginalized issues of women. This approach echoes what Gini Lee mentioned, that “curating is not just about the objects to be displayed, but also about the ‘care’ of overlooked history and experiences (Lee,2007)”. It also led me to shift from simply presenting the “invisibility” to thinking about how invisibility is constructed.

In terms of the choice of media, I initially selected the form of photography. By reading and viewing the artworks of relevant female photographers, such as Cindy Sherman’s “*Untitled Film Still*” series (Sherman,2003), revealing the process of gender construction and triggering the audience’s reflection. However, during discussions with Contemporary Art Practice students in the course, I realized the limitations of static images. Art installations and images can demonstrate the continuity of time and spatiality, providing a more immersive experience for the audience. Therefore, I shifted the curatorial approach from a single medium to a multi-medium structure. In Week 9 of the course, I explored *Disability Arts Online’s online gallery*. Through browsing the web, I learned

the importance of accessibility in curating. In my project, I introduced easy read and audio guide, which can provide a clearer and more direct understanding of the specific content of the exhibition.



Fig 1 : Photograph from Cindy Sherman's "Untitled Film Stills" series



Fig 2 : Students in the Contemporary Art Practice major shared and exchanged ideas about their artworks.

2.2 Curatorial Reflections Inspired by the Experience of Viewing Exhibitions

During multiple on-site exhibitions, I realized that curating cannot solely rely on conceptual learning; observation and practice are also crucial. During the exhibitions at Fruit Market and Talbot Rice Gallery, it was observed that exhibition spaces would have some interactive areas for the audience: For instance, on the second floor of Fruit Market, the film viewing area was equipped with painting area, allowing the audience to create based on their own exhibition

experience, and further extending the audience's participation methods through small games (finding visual elements in the works) and artist art exchange meetings; in the third exhibition hall of Talbot Rice Gallery, the audience was involved in the exhibition through hopscotch games, and exchanging postcards for souvenirs, integrating the audience's physical actions and emotional expressions into the exhibition structure. This realization influenced my SICP project, setting up interactive message areas and artist workshops, including the audience in the process of meaning production, transforming the audience from "viewers" to "participants", and through this interactive method, reshaping the process of meaning production between the audience and the exhibition (Bishop, 2012).



Fig 3 : Painting by a Viewer on the Second Floor of the Fruit Market

Gallery



Fig 4 : Interactive games for visitors at the Talbot Rice Gallery

While visiting the Summer Hall exhibition, I gradually realized that through layout, pathways, and visual organization can shape the way viewers perceive the art. The differentiated designs of the different exhibition halls in Summer Hall will affect the viewing rhythm and manner of the audience. For example, the War Memorial Gallery is an open rectangular space with no walls to block the view. The painting works extend along the walls, and the art installations are placed in the central empty area, forming a visual focal point. In contrast, the Sciennes Gallery uses wall divisions and space blanking to establish a hierarchical relationship between different media, creating an immersive

viewing experience. This also made me pay attention to the selection of the venue, the design of the viewing path, and the distribution of the works in my SICP project: I chose the Sciennes Gallery as my exhibition venue, as its partitioned structure can support the organization of multi-media works. At the entrance, art installations and video works are placed, allowing the audience to transition from the gaze mechanism to the understanding of identity construction. The white walls serve as a medium partition to display photographic works, extending to the hidden labor and anxiety of women.

During my twelfth week, I visited the Talbot Rice Gallery again to view an exhibition featuring four artists. The exhibition used varying lighting conditions and gallery designs to emphasize the thematic expressions of each space. For example, the galleries showcasing works by Amol K Patil and MADEYOULOOK employed low-light environments and focused lighting, making the artworks the visual focal points of the space and intensifying their emotional impact. In my SICP project, I also incorporated lighting and prop design into the curation. For instance, I used spot lighting to highlight the main subject of the installation "*Regurgitate*"; for the work "*Joyce II*", I employed lighting of varying hues to create local shadows and designed the surrounding environment (pink blankets, mirrors, etc.); The exhibition also provided me with significant inspiration regarding accessibility practices, committed to integrating multisensory experiences into the exhibition (Cachia,2022).Since lighting conditions varied across different galleries, sunglasses, headphones, and sensory kits were provided at the gallery entrance to address the perceptual needs of diverse audiences. Consequently, I recognized the importance of accessibility and incorporated audio guides and exhibition brochures in various font sizes to facilitate the viewing experience for visitors.



Fig 5 : Low-light lighting in two different exhibition halls

3. Reflections on the Collective Curatorial Project “Breathe”

3.1 Team Collaboration and Theme Development:

In the early stage of the collective exhibition project, during the class group discussions, we decided on our group name “No idea”. Based on this, the group members held online meetings to brainstorm and determine the group manifesto and introduction, describing the origin of the group name and the exhibition vision.

The group would have offline meetings at SummerHall every week, focusing on the exhibition theme “The Relationship between Natural Systems and Life”, aiming to showcase the emotional connection between humans and nature and create a spatial environment oriented towards experience, perception, and vision. During this discussion process, I realized that

collective exhibition is not only about negotiating different opinions, but also about constructing a logical exhibition framework in the midst of differences, enabling me to have the ability to listen and adjust.



Fig 6 : Offline Team Meeting

3.2 Artwork Selection and Work Division in Practice

In the selection of the works, I chose the creations of two students from the University of Edinburgh. The exhibition narrative was carried out from the perspectives of “microscopic nature” and “perceptual transformation”: The first work, “Tide and Temper”, is a glass installation. Through the refraction and flow of light on the glass surface, it simulates the rhythmic changes of nature, making “nature” concrete and transforming it into a dynamic perception process; The second work, “Melt”, combines painting and weaving to transform the microscopic changes in nature into

visual language, weakening the grand narrative and enabling the audience to re-think the vitality of nature. Considering the compatibility of the space conditions and the works, as well as the expectations for the presentation of the artworks, the collective curators finally selected the exhibition venue as In Vitro Gallery.

In terms of project execution, the team advanced the work by creating an activity schedule and task division. My task was to create an exhibition budget table and the personal profiles of the artists. The budget design covered multiple aspects such as transportation, insurance, venue rental, and printing of promotional materials. For the writing of the personal profiles of the artists, it was necessary to be concise and clear while ensuring the accuracy and readability of the information. Through this process, I also realized that curating is not only about constructing a creative space, but also considering reality and resource allocation as well as the writing of exhibition signs.

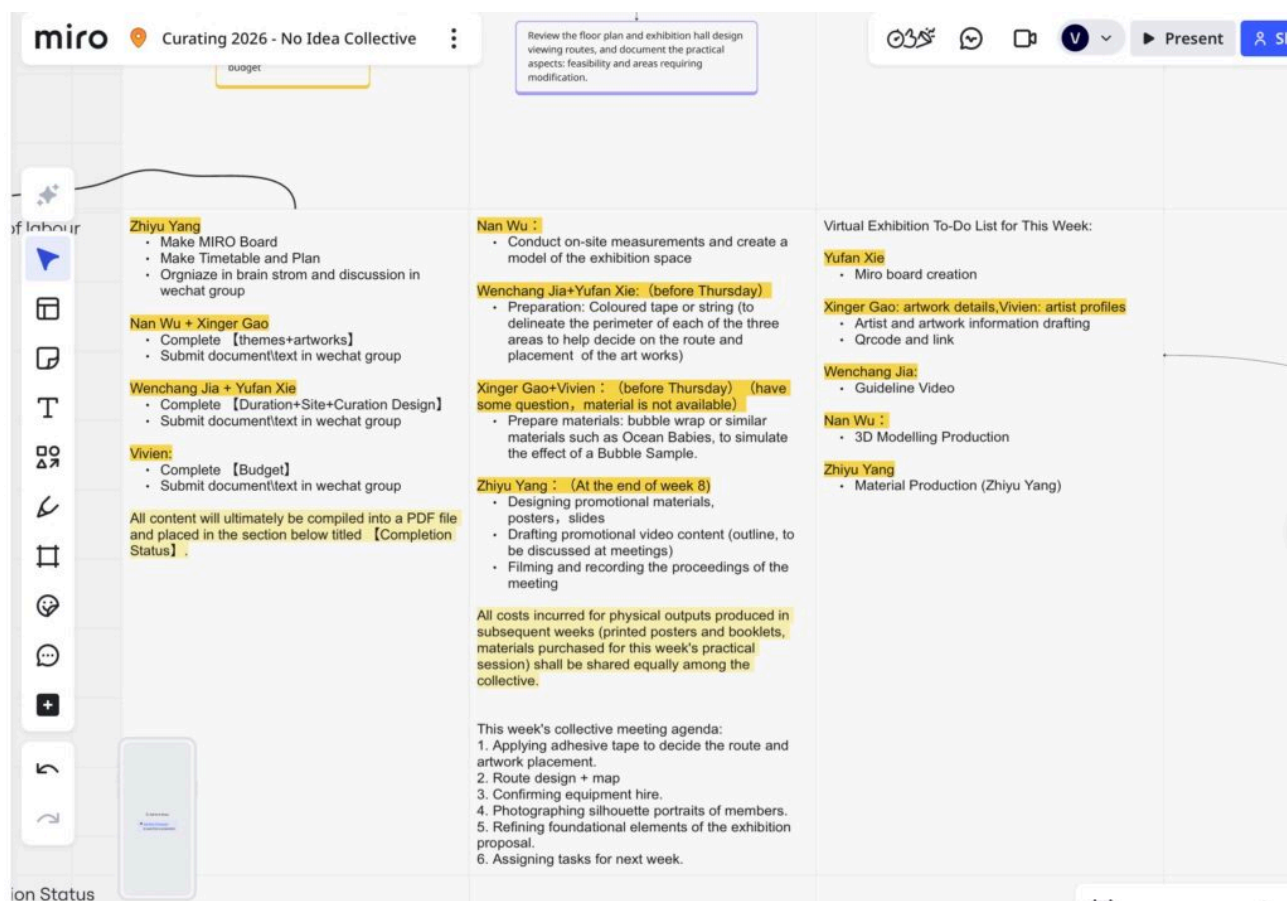


Fig 7 : Team Member Task Assignment Chart

3.3 Field Practice and Experience Reflection

When the project entered the on-site implementation stage, the team members took their works to the site for size measurement, space design, and the design of the audience's movement paths. In terms of the spatial layout, we found that there was a certain deviation between the online designed space arrangement diagram and the on-site investigation. Initially, the "Tide and Temper" was planned to be placed in the exact center of the entrance, but during the on-site test, it was found that this position would obstruct the audience's movement path and affect the paintings on the walls on both sides of the exhibition hall. However, if it was placed in an area with insufficient light, it would weaken the visual effect produced by the glass under the light, affecting the expression of the works and the audience's experience. During the practice process, we also faced some practical problems, such as the size of the space not matching the expectations, which required repositioning; the audience movement path was more complex than expected, requiring repeated tests and corrections, etc. This also made me realize that curating is a process of continuous negotiation and adjustment between the space, the works, and the audience, a state with fluidity and instability (Bismarck,2022). The process is not something that can be completed in one go, and the final form of the exhibition often generated and evolves in the interaction with the real environment and the audience (Bishop,2012).



Fig 8 : Group members' on-site practice photo

4. Gains and Reflections on Peer Review

In this peer review, it was a process of mutual learning and reflection. By reading Nan Wu's blog, I further understood how to effectively integrate theory, exhibition experience, and curatorial practice. Her content did not merely remain at the theoretical level; instead, it transformed theory and exhibition experience into tools for analyzing her SICP project, continuously deepening her personal curatorial content. Each of her blog articles has a strong correlation, enabling continuous revision and advancement of her personal curatorial plan. This taught me that curating is a dynamic development process, not only involving the construction of concepts, but also including the display methods of works, spatial layout, and other details, which can directly affect the perception of the audience. Nan has very strong practical ability. She can convert curatorial ideas into a visual three-dimensional spatial structure through 3D modeling, presenting

the spatial layout and audience flowlines more intuitively.

During the review process, I reflected on my own blog. In terms of theory, I usually tend to summarize and generalize the content of the text. However, reading others' blogs made me realize that viewing exhibition experiences can lead to the extraction of targeted analyses, such as the structure of the exhibition space and the logic of display. By relating these to my own personal curatorial content, I gradually formed this "reflective practice" (Schön,2017) through the interaction of practice and reflection. Moreover, the content of my blog lacks coherence and the connections between the contents are rather loose, failing to clearly present the development trajectory of SICP. In collective curatorial projects, my reflection on teamwork was not sufficient and I should pay more attention to the problems and gains in the decision-making and practical processes, and in the future, I should be more proactive in intervening in the practical stages and enhance my practical ability.

5. Conclusions and Outlook

Overall, whether in individual curating, collective curating, or peer review processes, I have gradually come to realize that curating is a practical process that generates meaning through the combined effects of theory, space, and media, constructing the experience of art works and influencing the creative methods of art works as well as the communication methods with the audience (O'Neill,2016). Through the accumulation of course content, reading materials, and exhibition experience, my understanding of curating has deepened continuously, helping me determine the theme and direction of my individual curating projects. In individual curating, I introduce multi-media structures and public projects to transform "gazing and being gazed" into perceptible exhibition experiences. In collective curating projects, I further understand the complexity of curating as a

collaborative practice, which is a process of continuous negotiation and adjustment among teams based on real conditions (space, budget), especially in the field of practice, the deviation between the curatorial plan and the practical space is what I have recognized as the uncertainty of curating, which is a process of continuous adjustment and reconstruction.

In future learning and practice, I will strengthen my critical thinking in curating, not only being able to integrate relevant theories and transform them into analytical tools for curatorial problems, but also enhancing the depth of research; strengthen my practical ability, such as building space modeling and designing audience flow lines, in collective projects, I can possess the ability to organize projects and collaborate with teams, and participate more actively in decision-making and execution processes. I hope to bring deeper and more innovative contributions to future project planning and execution.

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