

## Vicky Chainey Gagnon

IN MY CURATORIAL WORK, I HAVE SOUGHT to activate exhibition spaces that challenge and unsettle historical forms of museum display—unmasking questions of power that I view as typically invisible, even in exhibitions. I was first influenced by Mary Anne Stamilewski's *The Power of Display* (1998) and then completed a summer course in museography/scenography at the École du Louvre in 2009, after five years working as a curator at the Foreman Art Gallery at Bishop's University. My motivations at the time were to understand the ways different cultures find their expression in how objects are presented and socially situated in the institution of the museum. Self-reflexive forms of curating continue to fascinate me most, specifically those that disrupt traditional museum experiences. I have always thought that these discrete interventions into the public sphere ("exhibitions") can bring the practices of interventionist feminist history, research, and ethics to bear on the visual arts: this is what endures for me.

I have always conceived the exhibitions I have curated as interactive, social spaces, and I consider that my role as facilitator was and is fundamentally a muscle I developed slowly through trial and error. I remain steadfast in my belief that exhibitions are materially discursive forms, their languages, social aspects, socio-economic and political functions being deeply and historically tied to (neo)colonialism and (neo)liberalism. Destabilizing narratives of power and display in my curatorial work has revealed to me the many possibilities that can be found in different forms of "writing."

My instincts tell me that exhibitions should always be active sites of criticism and action, with an end goal (hopefully) of fashioning a more diversified, socially engaged culture that increasingly tests the visual arts with different perspectives, making it richer and plural. My faith lies in this potential for a new grammar to emerge, opening up additional avenues of experimentation in the area of exhibition-making across the field, now and in the future. ¶

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Value, January 11–March 17, 2012, curated by Vicky Chainey Gagnon, organized by Foreman Art Gallery, Bishop's University (Sherbrooke, QC). Artists featured: Cooke-Sasseville, Antoni Muntadas, Red Channels, WocheKlausur, and Antoni Vidokle & Julieta Aranda.