critical curating? | Qu’est-ce que le commissariat engagé?

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Chris Lee & Maiko Tanaka

Chris Lee is a graphic designer and educator based in Buffalo, NY, and Toronto, ON. He is currently a collective artist-run ensemble whose mandate is to work with artists, curators, writers, and designers that engage in the margins of underfunding with a sense of commitment and engagement. Together, these sentiments simultaneously characterize the pragmatism of the model minority and function as engines of critique and creation. Identification with the role of the model minority provokes an unsettling, (self-)critical view on the role of diverse cultural production as an instrument of Canadian settler-state multiculturalism.

Maiko Tanaka is the Executive Director of Squeaky Wheel since 2016; she also serves on the programming committee of Gendai Gallery in Toronto.

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In 2013, Gendai curated an itinerant program called Model Minority, a component of Canadian (settler) diversity amidst the persistence of colonialism, while rediscovering “counter-models” and pursuing the articulation of more critical imaginaries. Through research into the notion of the model minority—a subject constructed to reinforce racial hierarchies by holding up as the ideal one minority group, while trivializing the grievances and struggles of others—we asked what it means to be a component of Canadian (settler) diversity amidst the persistence of colonialism, while rediscovering “counter-models” and pursuing the articulation of more critical imaginaries.

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