

THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF CURATORIAL PRACTICE over recent years has afforded and warranted wide-ranging diversity (a good thing). At the same time, it has been criticized for promoting a superficial approach (not such a good thing) that has watered-down and shifted the “profession’s” objectives of upholding dominant discourse and aesthetic judgment. The “profession” carries a historical burden of privilege that has existed as a barrier for many, while still struggling to maintain itself despite the doors to “institutions” and mono-cultural spaces being consciously and publicly cracked open for resolution. Such resolve addresses better forms of social equity, accessibility, and engagement to reflect critically beyond the status quo and recognize diverse social conditions. The motivation “to curate” shifts and shapes the practice considerably as a more sociable and popular action capable of reaching wider/other audiences. As usurped or recouped/attainable practice, the focus of its intent becomes interdisciplinary by nature, with multiple platforms to access and coordinate. Similar to art, the professionalization of curatorial practice is not, nor should it be, limited to one specific trajectory. However, critical rigour sets it apart, while assuming an opportunity to encourage examination and opportunities to rethink the canon.

Critical curating should be framed as a creative intervention, which acts as a catalyst that merges and circulates

scholarship/discourse within an intellectual and emotive space for negotiation/reaction. The curatorial intent is the entry point that welcomes and offers a public or audience access to navigate within the foundations of venerated and DIY spaces. The guiding hypothesis offered considers the dynamics of ideas and aesthetics that are intentionally positioned/installed to flow fluidly across carefully selected artworks, ephemera, and/or visual culture, performance, etc., and that are influential across a multiple matrix of interpretation. The curator, therefore is a social mediator, one who draws upon the necessity to engage with a collective body and provide an opportunity to tease out the layers embedded in evidence to activate creative agency within art and culture beyond its physical manifestation and who seeks to inspire conversation, mediate truths, and fulfill desires. The curator is also an architect, one who has the foresight to build an approachable, empathetic space that can broaden perspectives within the cultural landscape. ¶

Ryan Rice, Kamien 'Iehá'ka of Kahnawake, is an independent curator, critic, Associate Professor and Associate Dean of Academic Affairs, Faculty of Liberal Arts, School of Interdisciplinary Studies at OCAD University.
— rrice@ocadu.ca