

Jens Hoffmann (Curating) From A to Z

Program Hapax Series

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ing recent developments but also pointing to possibilities for further artistic and intellectual production on a global level.

C > CURATOR

Now to what is probably the most essential term of this index: curator. From the 18th century through much of the 20th, curators were scholars who cared for the treasures of the past. They assembled, actologued, and maintained collections, and interpreted and displayed the objects within them. They were the intellectual wardens of museums, and their exhibitions served a straightforward purpose: to make the case that the objects in their care were worthy of protection and would educate the wider public in some form. Today, however, this definition has shifted radically. Like artists, ourators are more

and more grappling with the decentralization and open-ended definition of their field. Over the past decode or so, the word curating has increasingly been used to describe anything that involves choosing and ordering objects or media, from making a party playlist to the artful arrangement of furniture, and these new vernocular usages imply that the role eight be less rigorous and more diffuse than it once was.

Though the role has grown, not everything has changed. Curators care for works teday by providing context in order to allow meanings to proliferate and have resonance with a public. Alongside an apparent deskilling runs a reinvestment in training. New programs and degrees in curatorial studies continue to gain traction, and the formal discourse around curatorial practice has only intensified (many say to only create an appage and meta discourse only useful to those within the highly specialized field of contemporary art curating). Art history credentials are often still required to be a museum curator, but this expertise might not show itself in the shape of a Ph.D.

Another skill set has superseded those of the traditional art historian. An ability to bring new propositions to the table, to be a creative

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Curating A-Z

"(Curating) From A to Z" offers a summary of the development of curatorial practice over the last two decades seen through the eyes of curator Jens Hoffmann. In this publication each letter of the alphabet evokes a particular word related to the world of exhibition making: From A (as in Artist) and B (as in Biennial) to R (as in Retrospective) and W (as in White Cube). Employing a diarist style, the curator presents his personal curatorial alphabet with a similar transparency and the same idiosyncratic character revealed in many of his exhibitions. The entries are not only stimulating and intellectually rigorous, but also emotionally engaging.

Jens Hoffmann (b. 1974 in San José, Costa Rica) is a writer, exhibition maker, and educator. He currently is Deputy Director of The Jewish Museum, New York. He has published widely in journals and museum publications and has written over 200 texts on art and exhibition making over the last 15 years. His most recent books include "The Studio" (2012), as well as "Show Time: A History of Exhibitions" (2014). He is the founder and editor of "The Exhibitionist: Journal on Exhibition Making." Most recently he co-curated the 9th Shanghai Biennial (2012/13) and the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011).

Second printing.

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