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Mike Tooby

**‘Who Me?’ : the individual experience in participative
and collaborative projects.**

This chapter is shaped by responses to some recent curatorial projects in which I have been involved, projects that took a participative or collaborative approach to curatorial leadership, and where individuals of different backgrounds shared in the making of exhibitions, displays and curatorial projects. The testimony of participants has been both affecting and powerful, and making meaningful connections with individuals through participative curating can lead to the possibility of a new social body. Through sharing people can feel that their lives are somehow enhanced, that new possibilities have opened, and new experiences created for them and the people with whom they work. As a recent participant explained: ‘what I have enjoyed about the process is that it has brought local people together around a project.’¹ This is a tremendous reward for any curator: to feel part of a community, and to provide an immediate sense of the impact of engagement. Such responses also affirm the civic value of curating, resisting the recent appropriation of the term as denoting taste-making in the market.

This chapter considers how participation and collaboration, in becoming familiar tools to make connections in informing curatorial work and building communities, prompt a discussion of what an individual’s role might be within such practices. In the analysis which follows, collaboration will generally refer to people taking an active decision to work together as equals, agreeing on ways to deliver a project, and on each other’s roles in doing so. Participation, on the other hand, refers to when people become actively involved in a project across a spectrum of roles; they may contribute or respond in a way that is conscious of their interaction with others,

and which can be seen to have modified the project. Explicit agreement to work together across those roles need not be taken. Forms of curatorial practice, such as co-curation or consultation, may require either collaboration or participation, but are not necessarily *ipso facto* collaborative or participative. Equally, within a project, participants may choose to become collaborators, even for specific moments or tasks. This stands in contrast to what one might label the ‘show and tell’ approach, where the traditional role of the curator as a single leader or expert arbiter may apparently bring clarity and authority, but also reinforce the perception of curating solely as an expert individual’s capacity to use knowledge, taste and position as decision-making power.² The methodology discussed in the present text also reflects the breaking down of a binary contrast: that between curator as author in generating the idea of the exhibition and overseeing its delivery; and the subsequent (and only subsequent) work of the learning and engagement curator in sharing this with audiences. It also compares ideas generated in socially-engaged art practice with their general applicability.

Working with people

Ten years ago I decided to test for myself differences of process and purpose by changing my own approach to work; I sought a new ‘portfolio’ way of working. After three decades in full-time institutional curatorial roles, including generating collaborative, participative, and socially-engaged projects to diversify the approach to engaging audiences, I wanted to explore the ecology of differentiated practices and sites with which I felt I had become familiar. I wanted to do so without a single institutional starting point as a driver, in a sense forcing myself to create an individual professional identity. My new sphere included the temporary project in the

mainstream museum and arts venue, the 'pop-up' and one-off temporary project in in-between site specific spaces, and the 'Academy'.

I say this as personally as I do for two reasons. Firstly, to suggest how I asked myself to work through assessing my role as an individual in the social body. In the neutral language of institutional reports and academic discourse, is there the possibility to speak or act as an individual without conforming to the authority models of such acting, the voice of the 'star curator', the model of the single subject expert? Secondly, my current relationships to institutions are increasingly typical of the society of which museums, heritage sites and arts venues are a part. Curatorship today is widely upheld by part-time work, time-limited contracts, occasional projects, some paid, some unpaid; and in a complex relationship between personal circumstances and diverse locations of work, requiring travel, re-orientation and building new relationships. Institutions, including public bodies in the UK, so hugely impoverished through the diminishment of public funding, have become commissioners of such contract and part-time workers alongside core staff still on the payroll.

In order to explain why this matters I will describe some projects I have undertaken since leaving a full-time role as a museum curator. I give as justification the need to share specific experiences and ideas when acting as an individual in dialogue with institutions. Soon after I left Amgueddfa Cymru – National Museum of Wales in 2011 – I began the first of three, related, small-scale installations over three annual editions of a community-based arts initiative, '*Made in Roath*'. This happens in a district of my home city of Cardiff, and promotes social cohesion through awareness of creativity in its locality. Invited to present a project as one of a group of people from beyond Roath itself, I wished to foreground the personal, seeking a

discussion of ideas of local connection. I called it '*Kelvin Road Mantelpiece*'. It was presented in a house in a road with the same name as the one in London where my daughter lived with her new-born son. Each road's name in turn recalled the district in Glasgow where my daughter herself was born. I used possessions and images belonging to myself, my daughter, and the family living in the house – whom I had not met before – in a display that offered a pastiche of National Trust-style room presentation. It was about, I thought, moving in to a new home and finding personal identities through such connections.

The result was understood by many visitors as in large part a show about coincidences. I was fascinated by the passion with which visitors adopted this idea and the range of anecdotal examples they offered in spontaneous response. So the following year I followed the fashion for projects called 'Museums of...' and created '*The Museum of Amazing Coincidences*'.³ Objects and stories were gathered through experiences based on the motif of 'valuation', which I offered in events and encounters where objects brought along were valued by the level of coincidence demonstrated in the associated story. Outstanding examples became loans to another house display, this time in the home of the artist Sara Annwyl. In turn this led to a spin-off exhibition project, '*Apophenia*', held in a nearby venue and led by Sara Annwyl, Julia Thomas, and their collaborators. '*Apophenia*' directly addressed people's experiences of mental health, and the possibilities of outreach and support.⁴

For '*Made In Roath*' 2014 I made a project called '*Storio : Store*', in two different locations: at an artists' project in rural Camarthenshire, and an extended version at Spit & Sawdust skatepark and arts venue in Cardiff. I invited diverse contributors to form a temporary collection of objects that constituted personal memories of past editions of '*Made in Roath*' and personalities associated with the

festival. The objects were catalogued, bubble-wrapped, put into a specially created temporary store, and locked away. Access was in three forms: via cctv security cameras viewed remotely, such as in the skatepark's café area; by consulting the catalogue, with its extended labels and descriptions; or in guided visits made by appointment. The central theme to emerge was a discussion of how community memory is actually a sharing of individual personal associations which, in order to be preserved, become locked away, the stories living independently in the imagination.

What my role in these projects was became a question for some visitors and professional peers. In particular, some asked if I would now term myself an artist rather than a curator. Discussion led to asking why that title would seem appropriate – was it because my name was in a listings guide, alongside the exhibitors across the festival in open studios, galleries and temporary venues? Was it the evident level of authorship in the displays, making a serious joke about the mechanisms of curatorship and the perception of museums? Had I exchanged my role as a curator with that of artist interpreter or socially engaged artist? I chose not to answer, but noted that, despite the way I saw these projects as re-imaginings of the methodologies I had built as an institutional curator, the term 'curator' now seemed in many minds to be inappropriate as a term to describe me as an individual. With no institutional label, I was a new version of myself, known or newly introduced in the community.

Over this period I also developed curatorial projects with mainstream large-scale venues beyond Cardiff. For example, in *wavespeech*, the artists Edmund De Waal and David Ward asked me to help make manifest their ambition to collaborate in a site-specific project. We secured the involvement of the Pier Arts Centre in Stromness, Orkney as a host. This resulted in 2015 in a presentation of collaborative and new individual works by the two artists, integrated in a temporary redisplay of the

Pier's remarkable collection, and an associated learning programme. At the same time, I proposed a project later called *Journeys with 'The Waste Land'*, to Turner Contemporary Margate as a long term participative project. It was initiated in 2012 and presented in Margate and Coventry in 2018.⁵ Both required me to share or give up key aspects of the single author/curator role, and in contrast with the projects made within my own community, remodelled the role of a guest curator. Both addressed the nature of making connections as a way of building relationships and changing the organisations' practices, either in a nuanced way, as in Orkney, or in a demonstrative, radical way, as in Margate.

In Orkney, the familiar Modernist collection and exhibition gallery presentation was renewed by the participative methodologies of the artist-intervention approach to reconfiguration. The collaborative curatorship involved brokering relationships between the proactive individual curatorial staff of the host venue, its own networks of relationships, and the two artists and their own collaborators in their practices. At the same time, with named artists but no single author-curator, the audience was prompted to reflect upon and share the relationships involved. The means ranged across traditional gallery methods, and included: open discussion sessions with the project collaborators; targeted work with young people facilitated by locally-based staff with a collaborating 'guest' artist-curator, Rhona Warwick; and more intimate informal conversations in locations such as the Pier's library space.

These activities shifted senses of working together signified not simply by changed relationships between objects and spaces, but by debate over how these visiting collaborators 'passing through' responded in a new form of place-making. A shared text work by Ward and De Waal was acquired for the Pier's collection, and will now figure in future redisplays and learning work as a legacy. More importantly,

the project demonstrated a key distinction between collaboration and participation. As a collaboration it involved around twenty people in different roles, defined by skillset and personal interest. However at its core, the relationship to people was participative in a traditional sense of engaging audiences in a formed idea, in understanding the nature of the collaborative process, and by absorbing its impact in a small, tightly knit community.

In *'Journeys with "The Waste Land"'*, the curatorial methodology was different. It sought to further extend in a radical way Turner Contemporary's participative approach to curating and engagement. People drawn from the locality and beyond participated at every stage over three years in the development and implementation of a major project. It was initiated as a major loan exhibition, to be based on the idea of sharing responses in the visual arts to T. S. Eliot's poem, often said to be begun in earnest when Eliot stayed in Margate in the autumn of 1921. However, once underway it also developed its own outreach, offsite and learning programmes, all of which refracted different content and methods generated through the individuals and organisations involved in the overarching curatorial process. The principle was simple: to engage diverse people in a collective enterprise where the entire curatorial process was open to discussion and shared decision-making. The project addressed a subject without a specific 'demographic' definition of participants that linked them to the subject. The project's content and form would depend on the shared experience of learning together from the outset, informed throughout by diverse expertise and life experiences. As a 'guest curator' I worked closely on its management with another independent curator, Trish Scott, a locally based artist-curator taking on a dedicated role in Turner Contemporary for the duration of the project. A wide group of participants, some new to the venue, some familiar, were all

recruited from an ‘open call’. They became known collectively as the Research Group.

The Research Group included people with no prior knowledge either of Eliot and modernist poetry, or modern and contemporary art and curatorial methodologies, alongside people who had longstanding interests in one or the other. It included people from Margate, from the wider community of the Isle of Thanet, and people who travelled from across east Kent and beyond. Some members of Turner Contemporary staff joined, attending meetings in their own time. Online participation was facilitated through a ‘closed’ group website. Over the three years of its existence the group varied in size, at times near 100, at others and more consistently around 35 – 40, with a small number – around 25 – directly involved in everything from beginning to completion.

Members of the Research Group debated each stage of planning, and every decision taken. Many key sessions were informed by the participative methodology developed at Turner Contemporary with practical philosopher Ayisha De Lanerolle, and by other strategies drawn from work in audience engagement and learning.⁶ The group also informed other aspects of methodology with its own initiatives and reflections. In some cases these led to strands with their own identities and momentum, both as research and as engagement. Dedicated elements were created around social cohesion, mental health and well-being, as well as place-making through organisations such as the local volunteer-run museum, all brokered through initiatives by individuals and smaller collaborative groups within the Research Group.⁷ Over the process, the curatorship was therefore collaborative *and* participative. As collaborators, members of the Research Group and the curatorial leads worked closely together, whilst also engaging with audiences as different kinds

of participants, often with much in common with the Group, and so requiring further negotiation of the roles of collaborative curators. For example, one key issue addressed within the Research Group concerned how best to express the role of the Research Group itself, and the individual identities and interests of its members. At the time of writing this is also being debated by a group in Coventry and Warwickshire who are creating a heavily revised version of the exhibition for the autumn of 2018; this element tests whether a locally generated project can ‘transfer’ in a way that maintains the integrity of the methodology.

The conclusion of the discussions in Kent was that individual contributions within the Research Group would be attributed to someone only where necessary or unavoidable: for instance in first-hand testimony in introductory talks and secondary interpretation.⁸ Otherwise, the creation of a clear narrative about that process for visitors was the priority, and the way the Research Group accepted and embraced particular individual insights and priorities would be anonymised, all of which emphasised collective identity. The exhibition and its learning and engagement programmes received over 114,000 visits. The related off-site programme generated 33 projects in 16 venues across the town. The project featured in a huge range of reviews, feature articles and media coverage not usually afforded participative projects, while fascination with the process and the relevance of it to Eliot’s poem ran throughout:

This exhibition ends up drawing attention to the profound gap between the disdainful seriousness of high modernism in 1922, and our own desire for culture to be sharable and democratic. It ends up conveying – to use the words of Elliot [sic] – nothing with nothing.

[...]

What a sprightly show. What a sprightly idea for a show [...]

What you get with amateur curators, and not with their professional kin, is an emotional response you can trust. No one here is trying to further their career or make a mark. There are no gimmicks or weaselly bits of provocation. No trendy choices, no fashion-chasing. And the calibre of the loans is astonishing.⁹

The process of reflection on this project continues at the time of writing this chapter. Indeed, the nature of evaluation in such a project has itself led to rich debate and testing of processes.¹⁰ At this early stage, two themes emerge as relevant to the present discussion of the individual and the collective. First, the project shows how the social body of those involved evolves over time. Just as the original protagonists in the small-scale projects in *Made in Roath* travelled from offering participant responses to being lenders and interpreters within displays, and makers of their own projects in response, so in a more complex way in *Journeys with 'The Waste Land'* did individuals occupy different roles at different times, as collaborators and participants, over a project's lifetime. Circumstances change, and learning generates new demands and opportunities. Since participants understand the changing nature of their own roles, different elements can appear: new learning initiatives, separate exhibits, different site-specific works and new artist or institution-led displays, all reflecting the way individuals might seize opportunities in their own way.

Secondly, decisions about exhibition content, presentation and interpretative role, and how to prioritise participants in the approach to engagement, will have been grounded in different arguments: original historical or content-led research; personal

choice, offering subjective association as a moment of enlightenment or reward; or a result of strategic decision-making about collaboration and the permeability of the project. These issues are familiar in traditional curating, but here with a crucial difference. As the Research Groups' discussions needed to be made visible in order to be shared, all those who took part were capable of reading those intentions and outcomes in their own ways. The testimony of the participatory and collaborative approach to the whole project was emphatically transparent and shared, and itself had meaning created by its audiences. ¹¹

Curating and curating

In my own work I have found that to embrace the perceptions and insights of others through sharing the curatorial process is hugely rewarding, while acknowledging that the traditional dissemination of expertise offered by the sole lead curator can generate memorable experiences. However, one might suggest that the idea of *any* project being curated by a sole expert or a single personality as imagined in the role-model of the 'star curator' is a falsity. Even when an audience is expected to understand a project as being the product of a single lead voice or expert, the realities of exhibition-making or collection-building are such that a single author will have of necessity to work with a group to realise such outcomes.

The first set of connections the curator must build is with those within an immediate community of colleagues creating a project. A curatorial enterprise requiring different skillsets, from managing buildings to fundraising, from commissioning artists to developing interpretation, from handling loans to maintaining AV and digital hardware, requires collaboration. All curatorship, therefore, is to some degree or other collaborative and participative. A primary

challenge for the curator in building collaborative and participative methodologies, then, is to address who can join this community in creating a project. More sophisticated processes of evaluation may help evolve the basis by which participants are engaged, but we nevertheless are also measuring whether the platform they are given addresses the paradox that they are involved by permission of the institution. For example, the extent to which participation reinforces the underlying power structures of a political system enmeshed with the market, and indeed is explicitly used by the market in presenting itself to consumers, is now a fundamental question for curatorship. The way public organisations and individual curators can respond to this is to test how to use participation and collaboration to open out and share the curatorial strategy itself.¹²

One way to address the response to institutional parameters is to test how far back in the curatorial process participation and collaboration can be traced. Two diagrammatic metaphors illustrate this. In the pyramid image of institutional structure, trusteeship and directorship is at the top and audience is at the bottom. Can we imagine the points on a chronological linear diagram of a project plan where we might indicate critical moments so that we can see how participants engage with decision making 'up or down' the pyramid? Take a hypothetical example of people involved in a new display re-orienting the presentation of a collection: how was the collection formed in the first? For people involved in having a say in acquisitions the material must be made available through research and facilitation, so the question arises: whose research? And for any exhibit outcome to be presented a venue must be available, with all the strategic issues about its funding and its accessibility taken into account; who sources these? And so on.

This discussion comes at a time when the label ‘curating’ and its association with sole authorship risks being settled in a particular meaning. This generates problematic contexts in which to analyse and celebrate participative and collaborative curating. For example, the term ‘curating’ is now casually deployed in everyday use, from music playlists to restaurant menus. It usually associates curating as the exercising of special insight, taste and discretion, generally by an individual who has demonstrated some sort of specific expertise or qualification in a given field. Moreover this meaning is often how ‘curation’ is also used in the language of the new digitised market: ‘in tough markets where 80 or 90 per cent of products fail, curation helps focus on what works’, suggests Michael Bhaskar, and he goes on to argue that phenomena like pre-curated stock choices in shopping and on-line selections using algorithms show that ‘the shift from top-down industrialised organisation to a user-centric Consumer-Curated Model is here [...] It also comes back to that perennial of curation – expertise. Good content curation demonstrates expertise and builds trust. Lastly, content curation may take a lot of intelligent selection, which itself is a resource but it requires less up-front spend than classic marketing’.¹³ Curation, in other words, doesn’t facilitate choice or boost knowledge but, rather, proposes we accept that others – including designers of marketing algorithms – know better, and will make more intelligent choices for us.

In response, it must be said that if it can be reassuring to know that someone else is better placed than oneself to advise, this usage of ‘curation’ also ensures that the audience is understood as consumer, not as someone with their own ability to make choices and propose ideas through sharing knowledge and understanding the field. A different problematic context is the assumptions about curating as authorship embedded in the institutions where the discourse of curating takes place.

The museum must define roles for a variety of reasons: for example, what is the role of a curator in a project team of diverse skill sets – is that the person in charge, or is it the subject expert who is first among equals? And how best can the museum procure the value of known names to make an impact in a personality-driven media environment?

At the same time the systems for funding and evaluating those universities, art schools and policy-making institutions which generate ideas and perceptions of curating require individual curators or writers on curating to create a personal academic identity and status through an account of their individual authorship of texts and projects – such as this author with the present text. The single lead expert and author model therefore becomes one that institutional career structures and the literature offers as that to which we should aspire. At times it can seem circular: in discussing curating, the single role author becomes that by which curating itself is defined. A key confusion therefore centres around the definition of expertise, as Bhaskhar's discussion testifies. It is crucial to ensure that curatorial expertise is not simply described as a transference of an individual's expertise in a subject field; it also embraces the arenas of curatorship as they interact with a subject field. Making exhibitions, building collections, engaging people in interpretation and appreciation are practices in which people can have diverse levels of expertise and where engaging participants as equals brings benefit. Just as a subject expert can open up their discipline, so the expertise in the methodologies of curatorship, inscribing as they do the experience for audiences, can and should be subjects for sharing through making them transparent and available.

The individual as collaborator and participant

Jacques Rancière's writing on the 'emancipated spectator' takes as its formative question the attempts to change the relationship between performer and audience in the theatre. This leads him to consider more widely the nature of the relationship between artist (as producer, writer, maker and so on) and audience. In his discussion, Rancière embraces the institutional mechanics of the form – the stage and the auditorium, the cinema screen and its rows of seats, the object in the museum – and questions how we define the social body that is gathered by participation in such sites.¹⁴ This discussion builds on Rancière's study of pedagogy, and his text *The Ignorant Schoolteacher* reflects on the testimony of one Jacques Jacotot. In exile in the 1820s Jacotot faced the task of teaching Belgian pupils a French text. Not knowing Flemish himself, and with the class not all knowing French, Jacotot decided they would all read a bilingual edition of the text and learn together. Rancière explains the success of Jacotot's enterprise by reminding us of something still widely acknowledged by experienced educators : that 'explication' by the expert teacher, showing and telling their subject to the class, only reinforces the inequalities of the power relationship between the apparently 'educated' and the apparently 'ignorant'. In any field of learning, sharing experience is a more powerful and more positively equal process than one that enshrines inequality. Rancière comments: 'The pedagogical myth divides the world into two'.

The parallels with the model of the expert curator creating the exhibition in the museum, allowing the marketing and learning teams to then create ways to engage audiences, are obvious. Rancière asks us to consider the way a community is formed through attempts to redesign the relationship between actor and audience. He questions not merely the revision of structures for the experience – Artaud's theatre of cruelty, for example, where performer and audience share the same physical space –

but the very way in which sharing the work of art in a social body requires rethinking the individual relationships embedded in the roles of actor and audience member:

Emancipation begins when we challenge the opposition between viewing and acting: when we understand that self-evident facts that structure the relations between saying, seeing and doing themselves belong to the structure of domination and subjection. It begins when we understand that viewing is also an action that confirms or transforms this distribution of positions. The spectator also acts, like the pupil or scholar. She observes, selects, compares, interprets. She links what she sees to a host of other things that she has seen on other stages, in other kinds of place. She composes her own poem with the elements of the poem before her.¹⁵

Rancière's argument reminds us that the apparently – and potentially – communitarian creation of the audience as a social body, in fact creates a group of individuals making choices and decisions, understanding their own position vis-à-vis the material around them, and contributing their own potential. This social body is not simply that which the author, the director, the curator defines and addresses, but one that includes them. In other words, we must recognise the potential of ourselves – curator, artist, collaborator, participant – as individuals within this community, so as to best recognise our ability to affect and share change: 'This shared power of the equality of intelligence links individuals, makes them exchange their intellectual adventures in so far as it keeps them separate from one another, equally capable of using the power everyone has to plot her own path'.¹⁶ Rancière here emphasizes that

when participants bring their own knowledge and life experience to their role as participants, this does not reduce their equality through expressing difference, but instead allows greater scope for equalities to be expressed through understanding and sharing each other's individual potential. Far from seeking ways for the curator to reach the community, the curator's task becomes how to be an active part of a community. In defining who are collaborators and who are participants, each project requires its own thoughtful articulation of what each individual's role might be: It is the capacity of anonymous people, the capacity that makes everyone equal to everyone else. This capacity is exercised through irreducible distances; it is exercised by an unpredictable interplay of associations and dissociations. ¹⁷

Curare : to take care

The definition of curatorship and leadership as principally to do with facilitation is central to the discussion of how individuals form roles, share ideas and gain agency in collaborative and participatory projects. It underpins the fundamental ethical and political impact on institutions. ¹⁸ In developing curating methodologies for *Journeys with 'The Waste Land'*, non-building based curating and artist-led projects that embraced individuals' agency offered important models. One key example was *'idle women'*, led by Rachel Anderson and Cis O'Boyle. *'idle women'* is a participative and collaborative curatorial project based in the north-west of England. Their 'headline' descriptor is clear : *'idle women initiates and creates contemporary art with women'*. So too is its statement of purpose : *'idle women offers a place for all women and girls to belong [...]* idle women is responding to the devastation caused by austerity cuts to women's services and to the systematic erasure of women's contributions to public life'. They believe in creating opportunities, networking and other connections with

women across the UK and beyond, and nurturing long-term partnerships with specialist women's providers.¹⁹ Anderson and O'Boyle describe themselves as idle women's care-takers. The term reappraises the etymology of 'curator', and generates specific ethical and political meanings. Their leadership role is redefined, not as authorial, but as the nurturing of individuals and the sharing of responsibility with others with whom they collaborate. They take care, in turn, to identify with clarity other roles that their projects require: for example, those involved as leaders and generators of content, as well as project participants.

Care-taker is a term we might contrast with gate-keeper. The curator and the collaborator in the curatorial process – front desk, invigilator, learning facilitator, object handler and so on – will all have individual roles to play as gate keepers. They must make individual decisions about how to respond to the wider body of participants in curatorial projects, from co-curators to visitors, recognizing all as individuals within a community. Choosing a care-taking approach to modify their custodial role helps to ensure that other individuals share in the wider enterprise.

The relation with feminist discourse of gendered roles has generated fresh thinking about the necessary impetus behind breaking this down: 'It comes as no surprise that, particularly in the discussions around the so-called 'educational turn' in curating, a sometimes more, and sometimes less latent dichotomous gendering of curating and mediation may be observed, one which discursively links curating with masculinity and education with femininity.'²⁰ In addressing the opportunities of collaborative and participative curating, there is a shared process of giving up power. With the institution – whether the large museum or the innovatory small artist-run initiative – there will of necessity be roles in which power inheres. The responsible individual takes day-to-day and strategic decisions about the ways in which they

recognize this. Taking responsibility for decisions gives power, but the decision-making process can be shared. As the care-taking curator may retain aspects of the role of gatekeeper, and certainly must recognize the leadership role of facilitator, so they learn with the participant and collaborator alongside them how to re-model these very roles. In responding to the dynamism, originality and different experience and knowledge that comes through working collaboratively with participants, the extent to which the individual is empowered to be an equal part of a project is surely a measure of its success.

At the same time, recognizing their own individuality promotes the consideration of their own personal identities within the collective enterprise. The care-taking curator recognizes how they connect with others, and cannot exclude themselves from the dynamics of individual relationships, even while adhering to an appropriately 'professional' approach. Individual roles will reflect personal qualities and interests, personal circumstances such as whether people live in the locality of the project or travel long distances to take part. Crucially the facilitating curator must recognize the potential impact of disadvantage on individuals, and engage with personal priorities of ethics, politics and spiritual values.

In the connected project, strategic decision-making, content creation and delivery vehicles are all part of the collaborative and participative curatorial practice. They are not pre-determined givens around which engagement is then delivered. The care-taking curator shares the recognition and understanding of this with the participant collaborator. They facilitate what this shared learning means as people's lives develop together with new opportunity and a sense of empowerment, their role in the institution becoming a model of their potential to develop and promote change in other social and political contexts. The characterization of curatorship as being the

product of a single author can only reinforce the audience's perception that they are 'other'. It may lead to wonderful exhibitions and develop collections with excellent content, but it will not do anything to address the power relationship between actor and spectator, just as its use as metaphor misrepresents the realities of curating. Yet perhaps the way an individual care-taking curator evidences their own presence within the participant community is why they can be perceived as adopting the approach of the socially-engaged artist.

If we reclaim the term 'curating' as being the taking care of objects and communities of people, then it becomes a way of resisting the appropriation of the term as one to describe the exercising of taste and selection based on an individual's prior knowledge. In so doing we can resist its appropriation by the market, and help preserve the wider civic value and the potential political and ethical role of the curator. Should this seem a narrow set of reflections on making exhibitions and learning programmes through shared individual agency, we can recall the experience of *The Ignorant Schoolteacher*: the power of the participant to tell and share their own story is at the heart of a collaborative enterprise and, through being told, empowers the participant, whether collaborator or spectator:

Storytelling then, in and of itself, or recounting — one of the two basic operations of the intelligence according to Jacotot — emerges as one of the concrete acts or practices that verifies equality. (Equality, writes Jacotot, 'is neither given nor claimed, it is practiced, it is verified.')

²¹

Individual testimony demonstrates the transformation of the lives of collaborators and participants when the potential of their individual agency is released. The real challenge is for the impact of this on the institution – the large museum, the white box gallery, the small organization, the academy – to ensure that it truly supports and nurtures those individuals who seek to work with shared experiences and collaborative values at the heart of their practice, and so see their own lives, as well as the institution, transformed.

¹ I. Jones in ‘*Discover ‘Journeys with The Waste Land’ at Turner Contemporary*’, the exhibition introductory video, now available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zuhOKYBwRM&t=72s>

² R. Storr, ‘Show and Tell’, in *What Makes a Great Exhibition* (Philadelphia: University of the Arts, 2006).

³ ‘*The Museum of Broken Relationships*’ in Zagreb was a particular inspiration. See D. Babic and Z. Miklosevic, ‘Museum as Creativity: Building the Universal Through the Individual’, in *Museums of Ideas : Commitment and Conflict* (Edinburgh: Museums Etc, 2011).

⁴ M. Tooby, Professorial Lecture, ‘*It was amazing! Reflections on connecting people places and things*’ at Bath Spa University, available at <https://youtu.be/KEPywb3tNhI>

and M. Tooby, ‘Learning and Interpreting’, in *Twenty Five Years of Gallery Education* (London : Engage, Winter 2014).

⁵ M. Tooby, ed., *wavespeech* (Bath: Wunderkammer, 2018) ; ‘*Journeys with ‘The Waste Land’*’ ‘ will be the subject of dedicated forthcoming publications and online resources (2018), via Turner Contemporary Margate website listings.

⁶ T. Scott, A. De Lanerolle and K. Eslea, ‘*Philosophical Inquiry: A Tool for Decision*

Making in Participatory Curation', in P. Villeneuve and A. Rowson Love, eds., *Visitor-Centered Exhibitions and Edu-Curation in Art Museums* (Maryland: Roman and Littlefield, 2017).

⁷ T. Scott & M. Tooby, *A Journey with The Waste Land, Community, Arts & Education*, Issue 8, Spring 2016 available at <http://wellingvisualarts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/æ-Issue-8.pdf>

⁸ An example is '*Discover 'Journeys with The Waste Land' at Turner Contemporary*', the exhibition introductory video, now available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zuhOKYBwRM&t=72s>

⁹ J. Jones, *The Guardian Review*, 2 Feb 2018; W. Januszczak, *The Sunday Times* lead review, 11 February 2018.

¹⁰ The development of an open evaluative website led by Michele Gregson and including individual testimony will be available from autumn 2018 via the Turner Contemporary website.

¹¹ 'The point is to show that, as in the pedagogical situation, where the master speaks without ever passing his knowledge into the mind of his pupil, so too the artist may work out grand strategies [...] but to no purpose. What happens is that the artist arranges the elements and the spectators, the visitors arrive and they decide how to assemble what they see in the light of their own histories, experiences and so on.' E. Battista, ed., *Dissenting Words: Interviews with J. Rancière* (New York : Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 269.

¹² B. Lynch, *Whose Cake is it Anyway: A collaborative investigation into engagement and participation in 12 museums and galleries in the UK*; Paul Hamlyn Foundation London, (nd).

¹³ M. Bhaskar, *Curation : The Power of Selection in a World of Excess* (London: Paitkus, 2017), 108 and 227.

¹⁴ J. Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. G. Elliott (London: Verso, 2011).

¹⁵ Ibid., 13 .

¹⁶ Ibid., 17.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ M. Douglas, *How Institutions Think* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986);

P. O'Neill, L. Steeds and M. Wilson, eds., *How Institutions Think: Between*

Contemporary Art and Curatorial Discourse (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2017).

¹⁹ <https://www.idlewomen.org/about-us.html>

²⁰ N. Buurmann, 'Engendering Exhibitions : The Politics of Gender in Negotiating Curatorial Authorship', *Journal of Curatorial Studies*, Vol 6. No 1. 2017.

²¹ K. Ross, Introduction to J. Ranciere, '*The Ignorant Schoolmaster*', (California: Stanford University Press, 1991), xxii.

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