

Contemporary Architectural Culture and Curatorial Thinking:

Instructor: **Wanli Mo**

Time: **Tuesday 10:00 – 11:35**

Location: **North Building 308, Tongji University**

1.Introduction

Since the modern architectural movement, architecture has gradually constituted an interdisciplinary cultural phenomenon centered on the knowledge system of the architectural discipline and integrating design, art, media research, and communication through exhibitions, periodicals, and other media. Currently, architectural exhibitions are on the rise in professional and public discourse, greatly expanding the traditional perception and understanding of the discipline of architecture. In this context, this course is committed to taking curatorial thinking as a starting point, combining historical, methodological and practical perspectives, helping students to understand the historical role and social value of architectural exhibitions from both theoretical and practical levels, establishing a curatorial methodological system of architectural exhibitions, and expanding the multifaceted possibilities of the discipline of architecture.

As the term curating goes beyond the concept of “planning and organizing” for art exhibitions and becomes more deeply and widely embedded in society, it is emerging as a new selection medium that qualitatively leads a changed society. The Oxford Dictionary defines curating as “carefully choosing and thoughtfully organizing.” Modern society, which is witnessing a technological revolution including artificial intelligence, is experiencing unprecedented urban expansion, excessive production and consumption resulting from it, and conflicts of social values. The “importance of selection” for values or systems in response to this is a measure that determines and reduces losses in social organization and the quality of individual life. Therefore, curating is establishing itself as a public medium that selects the values of sociocultural, architectural, and urban space.

In the past, curating was used as a means of presentation that thoughtfully selected creative works of visual art, design, and architecture and shared knowledge and experience of the creative works with the public. However, today, curating is widely applied to urban planning, food culture, fashion, music, business management, selective medical care, well-being, and artificial intelligence. In other words, curating is utilized as a new reforestation project for academic and arts. In universities and other higher education institutions, the methodology and execution process of curating, which goes beyond the aesthetic and critical level of selection of art, design, architecture, and urban planning in the past, is emerging as an important practical study and research process.

The course is taught in the form of modular lectures, through lectures, classroom discussions, classroom reports, field trips to art museums, online knowledge base and other forms. The course emphasizes the combination of theoretical knowledge accumulation and practical application. Combined with special lectures, students will gradually complete independent/group curatorial project proposals.

2.Schedule

Week 1 (Sept.15th) Course Introduction / What is Curating

- Course Introduction
- Explore the etymology and historical development of the term *curate*
- Establish a comprehensive framework for the course

Suggested readings:

- [1] Hans Ulrich Obrist, Ways of Curating, Introduction. Faber & Faber. 2014
- [2] Terry Smith, Thinking Contemporary Curating, Chapter 1. Independent Curators Inc..2012

Week 2 (Sept.22nd) Exhibiting Architecture: A Paradox?

- Types of Architecture exhibitions
- Identify the key differences between architectural curating and curating in other art forms

Suggested readings:

- [1] Yve-Alain Bois, Denis Hollier, Rosalind Krauss and Jean-Louis Cohen. A Conversation with Jean-Louis Cohen. October. Vol.89 (Summer, 1999)

Week 3 (Sept.29th) Modernism and the Rise of Architecture Exhibitions

- How architectural exhibitions in the early 20th century shaped Modern Architecture

Suggested readings:

- [1] Jean-Louis Cohen. Exhibitionist Revisionism. Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Sept, 1999.

Week 4 (Oct.6th) National Holiday (no class)

Week 5 (Oct.13th) Architecture Exhibition after 1960s

- Architectural exhibition as a form of practice

Suggested readings:

- [1] AleBrown, A., & Szacka, L. C. (2019). The Architecture Exhibition as Environment. Architectural Theory Review, 23(1), 1–4.

Week 6 (Oct.20th) The Biennales and Globalization

- Architectural galleries, museums, etc.
- The Biennial mechanism and its global spread

Suggested readings:

- [1] Global Biennial Survey 2018.On Curating Issue39.
- [2] Lea-Catherine Szacka, Biennials/Triennials: Conversations on the Geography of Itinerant Display, Columbia Books on Architecture and City.2019.

Week 7 (Oct.27th) Architecture Exhibitions in China

- The rise of Experiment Architecture and architecture exhibition in China
- Architecture exhibition and urban regeneration

Week 8 (Nov.3rd) From Concept to Narrative

- Methods for formulating curatorial concepts

- Narrative structures

Week 9 (Nov.10th) Student Mid-term Presentation

Week 10 (Nov.17th) Exhibition Design

- Circulation and spatial planning
- Installations designs

Suggested readings:

- [1] Kayoko Ota. Curating as Architectural Practice. Log.No.20. Fall 2010.
- [2] Mary Anne Staniszewski. The power of display: A History of Exhibition Installations. The MIT Press.1999.

Week 11 (Nov.24th) Particle Issues

- Audience and public program
- Exhibition logistics

Suggested readings:

- [1] Adrian George, The Curator's Handbook. Thames and Hudson Ltd. 2015.
- [2] Meredith Carruthers. Some Other Systems of Orientation: Publishing Exhibitions.

Week 12 (Dec.1st) Architecture Exhibition and Society

- Exhibiting and image-building

Week 13 (Dec.8th) Architecture Exhibition as Cultural Ecology

- Guest speakers TBD

Week 14 (Dec.15th) The Expanded Field of Architectural Curation

- Digital curation and new media
- Interdisciplinary curation
- Participatory curation

Week 15 (Dec.22nd) Student Final Presentation 1

Week 16 (Dec.29th) Student Final Presentation 2

3. Assignments

1.Group project

A group proposal of a curatorial project (3-5 students) within the field of architecture and art. The proposal should include:

- Curatorial statement (less than 800 words)
- Location description (less than 300 words)
- Exhibitors and works list (less than 200 words for each exhibitor/work)
- Exhibition design (could include plan, sketch, collage, perspective rendering...)

- Tentative execution schedule
- Budget plan (Max 300, 000 rmb)

Submission deadline Jan.15th, 2027

2.Individual case study

Each student will select an architecture exhibition and develop a case study (1000-1500 words) regarding the following aspect: the background of the exhibition; the curator, participants, and their works; the significance of the exhibition; its social impact; etc.

Submission deadline Jan.15th, 2027

4. Grade

15 % Class participation, 20 % Mid-term presentation, 35 % Final presentation, 30 % Case study