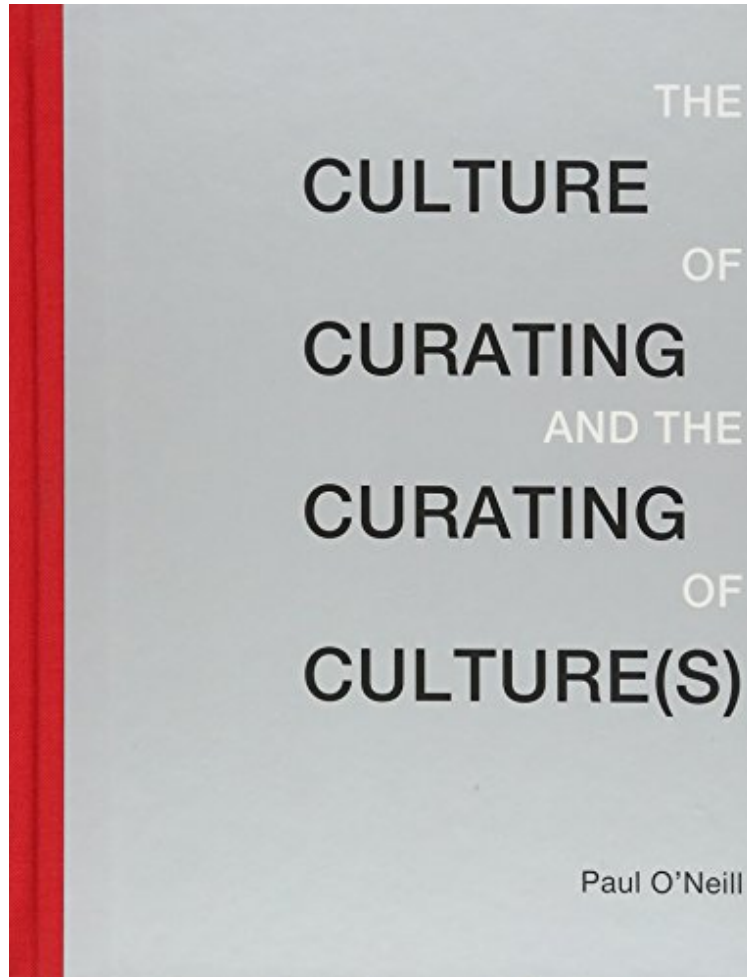


(Download ebook) The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s) (MIT Press)

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Paul O'Neill

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Paul O'Neill : The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s) (MIT Press) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s) (MIT Press):

20 of 21 people found the following review helpful. important concepts with a difficult presentationBy John LedermanI can see why this book, The Culture Of Curating, has not had a single review on in two years since its publication. All fields have their language, their jargon of the initiated. I thought psychology was among the worst for its jargon, but this book and some philosophers whom this author draws upon (Habermas and Foucault) also belong in that pantheon of important books that are difficult to impossible to read and understand by a generally half-decently-educated public. Freud and Jung are good examples. Jung's psychology is far more interesting and complex, nuanced and layered, more far-reaching than Freud's, but Freud's writing is so conversational and easy to read and Jung's is so

very dry, difficult and obtuse, that Freud is far more read, known about, and accepted. There is a line, a balance, between writing and tone on one hand, to convey that one has an idea and an expertise, and an accessibility to be read and understood on the other hand. This author has not found that balance, even though this is an important work to read and understand. I came to this book because over the years it has become clear to me that in all the art galleries I go to, my experience is mediated by the curators and directors of those exhibitions and how and where they present the works of art there, and what they write in their little wall notes and big catalogues influences my experience of the art. It has become hard as a result to see the artist and what the artist and their work has to say. This first started to dawn on me in my student days when the regional art gallery would only ever display the director-curator's taste, then rather traditional European, and none of the new cutting edge work from the rather exceptional painting school where many of my friends studied with a faculty of exceptional painter/profs briefly assembled together. I realized then, and it is so today as well, that those in power over the exhibition space determine what you see and how you see it. Some are more interfering, some are more neutral. Today I have found all are more interfering than I like or than they used to be, because it has become more about the money in the art world and often about the lack of it and trying to bring more in, in public galleries and curators are hugely aware of that; their living depends on it. In regard to this book, I like difficult and esoteric language better than most people. I delight in books that require me to resort to my Oxford English Dictionary (the compact edition of all 26 volumes of it plus the new supplement). I like expanding my vocabulary. This book doesn't do that for me, it just uses obtuse words where simpler ones would serve quite well. I suppose that is my definition of jargon. Where authors do this, to me, they shoot themselves in the foot. For example, from this book: "Curatorial practice and discourse are dialectically entwined, a consequence of a recoding of practice as discourse..." (paragraph two of the introduction). "...curatorship has begun to be understood as a constellation of creative activities akin to artistic praxis." "Discussion from within the art field continues to be motivated by an interest in the accompanying authority that enunciated discourse can bring to individual cultural practice." Well there it is. It is about authority and its accompanying power. Curators and prospective curator students have sensed over the last decades that curators have as much or more power than artists now with the plethora of available so-called art and artists. (Robert Hughes observed in the 1980s that art schools in the US alone, then, turn out more graduate art students every two years, 70,000, than the entire population of Florence in the Renaissance). Art and artists have certainly, consequentially, lost some of their power of influence and curators have smelled the vacuum to be filled due to these overwhelming numbers and variations of talent. It has become clear to me that the influence of a curator, director, gallery, is an important concept to understand for those of us who love art and the important things it sometimes has to say. It is important to look beyond an experience mediated by a third party and have the direct experience oneself with art, that was, and is, still intended by artists. For that reason this is an important book, or at least it has important ideas, with which to grapple, and it is, I think, worth the struggle to read. I suppose someone has to sort through the overwhelming mountain of what passes for art these days in an age where far too many with little talent or technique or anything valuable to say still want to be heard. Curators too are now in that position, and as usual that power has a tendency to corrupt, so we all need to be cognizant of what they do and why, as we do throughout society, where others mediate what we see and hear. The ideas in this book have something important to contribute. If only its author had made it easier to read and not gotten so caught up in a perception of power in the jargon and expertise of his field.

How curating has changed art and how art has changed curating: an examination of the emergence contemporary curatorship. Once considered a mere caretaker for collections, the curator is now widely viewed as a globally connected auteur. Over the last twenty-five years, as international group exhibitions and biennials have become the dominant mode of presenting contemporary art to the public, curatorship has begun to be perceived as a constellation of creative activities not unlike artistic praxis. The curator has gone from being a behind-the-scenes organizer and selector to a visible, centrally important cultural producer. In *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)*, Paul O'Neill examines the emergence of independent curatorship and the discourse that helped to establish it. O'Neill describes how, by the 1980s, curated group exhibitions -- large-scale, temporary projects with artworks cast as illustrative fragments -- came to be understood as the creative work of curator-auteurs. The proliferation of new biennials and other large international exhibitions in the 1990s created a cohort of high-profile, globally mobile curators, moving from Venice to Paris to Kassel. In the 1990s, curatorial and artistic practice converged, blurring the distinction between artist and curator. O'Neill argues that this change in the understanding of curatorship was shaped by a curator-centered discourse that effectively advocated -- and authorized -- the new independent curatorial practice. Drawing on the extensive curatorial literature and his own interviews with leading curators, critics, art historians, and artists, O'Neill traces the development of the curator-as-artist model and the ways it has been contested. *The Culture of Curating and the Curating of Culture(s)* documents the many ways in which our perception of art has been transformed by curating and the discourses surrounding it.

"this latest publication is certainly one of the most invaluable histories of contemporary curating that I've come across.

Though relatively slim, it combines a good deal of primary research (such as interviews with Seth Siegelaub and Brian O'Doherty) with wide-ranging case studies and an impressive synthesis of the now-vast body of related writing. The book tracks a shift from the curator as a behind-the-scenes carer, to a nomadic, semi-autonomous and very public figure - acultural producer as diplomat. " -- Sam Thorne, *Frieze*, 152, Jan-Feb, 2013

About the Author Paul O'Neill is a curator, artist, and writer who has curated or co-curated more than fifty projects. As author and editor, he has published widely in books, anthologies, journals, and art magazines. He currently lives in Bristol, U.K and New York. He is the new Director of The Graduate Program at Bard College' Center for Curatorial Studies.