

CP: That is *the* question because everyone is a curator now. You find “curatorial” projects at Target or online, so what does this mean for our field? The term curator is consumed into mass culture. Curators must adapt to this reality and become not curators, per se, but exhibition-makers and think of new ways that curatorial practice can interface with technology. The question for our field is how to get ahead of the mass understanding of the curator.

LO: How do you see the role of the curator evolving in the future?

CP: One of the things I discovered is that I really love collaborative curatorial practice. I very much enjoy a real dialogue with another curator and then watching that shape into an exhibition. As Glen and I worked together on *Temporary Structures*, I reflected on my history with collaborative process and it is actually a very large part of my practice—a part that I had not given much credence. It is nice to know that. Nice is not the word, but important.

LO: How was your experience collaborating on an exhibition that carries many ideas from your personal research?

How do you distinguish yourself? It is one thing to be a curator, but it is another thing to be a curator with a specific philosophy—to look at your own profession from a different point of view.

* Hal Foster, *The Art-Architecture Complex* (London: Verso, 2011).

** Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).

Cydney Payton: My interest in CCA was to take time to investigate and consider how curatorial practice has changed over the last two decades. When I first became a curator there were no academic degrees for the field. Curating has definitely evolved. Beyond that, as the director and chief curator of MCA DENVER, I became very intimate with architecture during the building of the new museum. Working with London-based architect David Adjaye gave me first-hand knowledge of architectural processes and ideas from conceptual design to construction. I wrote the conceptual brief for the building—an abstract with all the spatial allocations for types of galleries, public and educational spaces. It is probably highly unusual to have the director and chief curator as the point person for an entire institution, but I was

prompted this unexpected transition? California College of the Arts (CCA). What Curatorial Practices graduate program at the museum it is today. Then you joined the which you developed into the prominent Contemporary Art Denver (MCA DENVER), director and chief curator at the Museum of

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LO: Since you were already familiar with architectural theory and terminology, how does your focus in architecture at CCA help you bring architectural language into curatorial practices?

CP: Maybe we can look at it in a bifurcated way. The texts on architecture are very different from those in the curatorial practices program. I try to weave both concepts together. There is some

this to the closed system of exhibition making. places is how to connect the more open theoretical language embedded in sites such as relationship to thinking, and experiencing, such as architectural history. The question for me in Greece, Adjaye described its fantastic their programs. At the Acropolis in Athens, to study various types of cultural institutions and building of MCA DENVER, Adjaye and I traveled look outside of the white cube. During the the streets, landscapes or airspace. I continually means to the other structures around it, such as what goes on in a space for art and what it considering the broader relationship between the urban context of these sites. I am always spaces are a reaction to external factors such as essential; my ideas about gallery and museum theory. In my career, I consider place making an

lucky to serve on behalf of the Trustees as the lead client. Based on years of experience working with varied types of spaces—the Cydney Payton Gallery, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art and then MCA DENVER, beginning with when it was in an old fish market—I developed a critical eye for balancing spatial, social and artistic needs. My prior understanding of space was of course limited to a certain economy proscribed by those vernacular spaces, yet I find that “space” is a medium that resonates with my interests.

LO: Why did you choose to study curatorial practices over art history?

CP: It is an interesting exercise to learn about how curatorial practice is being taught. When running a Kunsthalle, there is no time for self-examination. It is a very fast paced institution. Reflection, research and writing needed to be elevated within my own curatorial practice. At CCA I was in dialogue with my own viewpoint, without the politics of considering a “public.” My hope was to construct a portrait of my own role within our field and to move it towards another future. My research has become more specialized towards architectural

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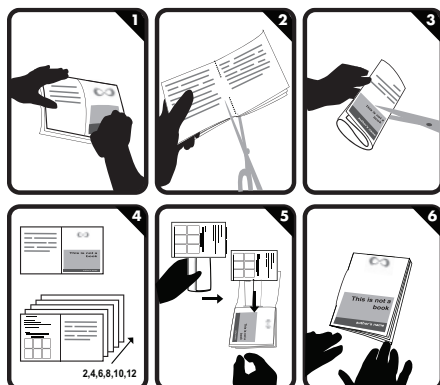
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Mona Lisa came to America and caused a media blitz. Thousands of people went to see one small painting, in what the late Robert Hughes described as the beginning of the relationship between spectacle and art in American culture. My research moves off of this track to consider what it meant to be an audience member, a passenger in that experience of standing in line to ultimately end in front of something like the *Mona Lisa*. Now we assemble in the public spaces of museums, pavilions, streets and galleries to experience art. But are we there to really experience art or are we there to be engaged in types of social experiments removed from the act of seeing? With that question, what kind of critiques can arise? For example, Ai Weiwei takes a thousand tourists from China to Documenta 12. They are tourists interacting with each other and the location, but they are also on display. There is this idea of display that has to do with *image frames* created by architectural networks and spaces that are permanent, temporary, collapsible or invisible. It seems to me that concepts of experience have overridden concepts of display.

resistance to this idea from both sides, but architectural language often resides alongside the art historical. Art and architecture seem to be coming together more in contemporary art discourse, as noted in the recent Hal Foster book *The Art-Architecture Complex*.* The history of my work is to be at the beginning of something that is very relevant. Arriving at the beginning means that the ideas need sorting out and require maturation and development through exhibition making.

LO: Rather than the formal qualities of architecture, social interaction with space seems to be the focus of your thesis for CCA. Do you feel this is also true in your exhibition *Temporary Structures*, co-curated with Glen Helfand at the San Francisco Art Institute?

CP: Yes. I am interested in social space. My research in "social space tourism" follows the lineage of Dean MacCannell's *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*.** Audiences have become immune to the importance of going to see a specific great work of art, a singular object. We can look at the rise of culture in the United States during the Kennedy administration. At this time, Leonardo da Vinci's