

## **Suzanne Carte-Blanchenot**

### **Role Call: Pirates, Protagonists, and Purveyors**

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I'd like to take a moment before diving into the thematic review of the Toronto session "Role Call: (re)Placing Curating", reflecting a brief description on the project to date.

This past July, we held the first curatorial round table in Banff, Thinking Through Curating. The invited curators were asked to reflect on, and present to, a series of questions centred on the position that the visual arts curator today is based in critique, examinations, and assumptions. The participants examined the history and responsibility of the language and opened up a discussion for multiple definitions of curating, beyond presenting multiple roles of practice and models of practice. It was not to contribute to a lexicon or a definition of practice that discussed the realm of possibilities and the fluxus state of the notion of curating. In her opening remarks, Jenifer Pappararo referred to curating as "the art of stepping aside". Focusing on collective processes, Jenifer introduced her proposal of developing a "nonrivalrous" curatorial practice that informed the transferring of ideas and formula-sharing to execute exhibitions.

She proposed a series of questions to the curatorial panels and asked them to examine the true nature of the relationship of artist and curator as a lender and a borrower. Through the course of the symposium, we heard curators that also supported and reiterated Jenifer's collaborative process but referred to and indulged in institutional critiques, histories, and the act or art of considering the audience.

I've been privy to discussions of the respective roles and responsibilities of curators, personal accounts of cultural production, representations of communities, to learn boundaries and the nature of the curatorial ethic. It became a meeting ground of the ideologies of the action and reaction of the curator. Through the course of the project, I've come to recognize the curatorial role in a multitude of functions and characters. The curator has become, as Ben Portis defined it, the "shifting expert".

You are: artists, editors, publishers, authors, scholars, authorities, educators, historians, conservators, collectors, custodians, borrowers, commissioners, archeologists, activists, gatekeepers, labourers, installers, administrators, facilitators, organizers, directors, programmers, museum professionals, grant writers, fundraisers, cultural producers, presenters, coordinators, designers, performers, translators, interpreters, instigators, investigators, catalysts, pirates, playmates, storytellers, sociologists, scientists... should I go on?

Jetsetters, nomads—(*laughter*)—institutions, critics, authorities, philosophers, theorists, academics, intellectuals, politicians, tailors, carers, activists, advisors, investors, trend-setters, risk-takers, stars, egos, icons, opportunists, antagonists, motivators, supporters, promoters, cheerleaders, and champions.

Looking forward to another invigorating discussion from Curators in Context in the Toronto session, from you, the champions.

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