



THOUGHTS ON CURATING

EAMONN MAXWELL

BACKWATER ARTISTS STUDIO

3RD NOVEMBER 2022

BIOGRAPHY

- Eamonn Maxwell has worked as a curator and advisor in the visual arts for over 20 years. He has curated numerous exhibitions across the world including the Irish Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2011.
- From 2009 – 2016 he was Director of Lismore Castle Arts, where he programmed significant exhibitions by leading international and Irish artists. He has been a passionate advocate for emerging artists, establishing the Emerging Artists Programme during his tenure as University Curator, University of the Arts London and he continues to mentor artists.
- Latterly he has worked a collection adviser to Arts Council of Ireland, Goldsmiths College London amongst others He has served as a board member, and sub-committees, for many not-for-profit cultural organisations.
- He has been a visiting lecturer at Crawford College of Art and Design, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork, Ulster University and University College Dublin.
- He holds a BA (Hons) in Visual Arts from Camberwell College of Arts, London and a MA in Museum and Gallery Management from City University London. In addition, he has qualifications in corporate governance, marketing and fundraising for the arts.



THE TERM “CURATOR”

- Origin can be traced to the Roman Empire and the Curatores – who were senior civil servants
- During 15th/16th centuries the term was used to describe how priests took care of people “curare”
- By 20th century the term was used in museums to describe keepers and historians. Laterly has been adopted to describe exhibition organisers/makers
- Now the term is used to give anything credibility!
- <https://uk.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2011/september/09/a-brief-history-of-the-word-curator/>

CURATORIAL PROJECTS

- Camberwell College of Arts
- University of the Arts London
- Lismore Castle Arts
- Venice Biennale

CAMBERWELL COLLEGE OF ARTS

BA Joint Honours in Visual Arts

Began curating during 2nd year

By graduation had given up
being an artist to become a
curator





UNIVERSITY OF THE ARTS LONDON

- MA in Museum and Gallery Management @ City University London
- Inaugural University Curator
- University Art Collection
- The Arts Gallery
- Artists + Collectors Exchange
- Emerging Artists Programme



LISMORE CASTLE ARTS

- Director from 2009 – 2016
- Set in a Castle dating back to 12th century
- Contentious ownership
- Destination with no public transport
- Major international exhibition each summer
- Conceptual contemporary art, often displayed in gardens or village

IRISH PAVILION AT 2011 VENICE ART BIENNALE

- Commissioner: Emily-Jane Kirwan
- Curator: Eamonn Maxwell
- Artist: Corban Walker
- No fixed venue, with limited resources
- Multi country project
- Irish tour
- Weight of expectation



ROLE OF THE CURATOR



Devising the concept



Sourcing content



Work with artist, galleries/dealers, estates etc



Contractual



Oversee installation/hanging of art works



Public engagement/programming



Promotion – press/pr/publications

DEVISING THE CONCEPT

- Solo presentation
- Group exhibition
- Survey exhibition
- Thematic response
- Historical analysis
- Commissioned new work
- Existing works of art

SOURCING CONTENT

Collaboration with other institutions

Working directly with artists/galleries/estates

Historic or contemporary collections

Touring exhibitions/projects

Socially engaged practice

WORKING WITH GALLERIES AND ARTISTS

- Many artists are not represented
- But other are – it's important to respect the industry norms
- Artists fee
- Commissioning
- Ownership
- Contracts
- Difficult conversations

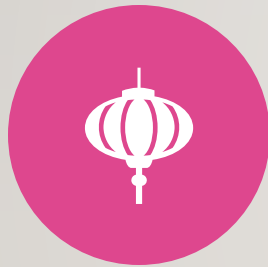
CONTRACTS

- These are still not the norm in visual art sector
- Form the bedrock of any relationship
- A good contract is never needed
- There to protect both parties
- Really critical when multiple parties are involved

OVERSEE INSTALLATION + HANGING

- Core of curatorship
- A well curated show can transcend the work – but opposite is also true!
- Balance needs of artwork, artist and audience
- Health and Safety concerns

PUBLIC PROGRAMMING/ENGAGEMENT



INCREASING IMPORTANT
FOR GALLERIES,
MUSEUMS AND FESTIVALS



ENGAGE THE LARGEST +
WIDEST AUDIENCE
POSSIBLE



HOW CAN THEY ENHANCE
THE EXPERIENCE



UNUSUAL OR QUIRKY
IDEAS CAN WORK BEST

PROMOTION – PRESS/PR/PUBLICATIONS

The importance of promotion cannot be overstated

Press coverage – local, national, international/speciality

Social media

Publications – leaflets, brochures, catalogues

Good promotion acts as legacy of a project

MENTORING

- All the things you never learned in art school!
- Advice on professional development
- Sounding board for ideas
- Help resolves issues/blockages
- Connecting artists with national and international network

QUESTIONS?

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO
KNOW ABOUT CURATING?

WHAT ADVICE CAN I GIVE
YOU?

