**From Connoisseur to Good Manager.**

**Perspectives On managerial curatorship from Canada and Brazil**

***conference abstract (800-1,000 words)***

A few years ago I worked on a series of publications exploring the theme ‘Museums Without Curators’ ([AUTHOR’S NAME] 2016a, 2016b, 2017). The title was intentionally provocative and aimed at sparking discussions on a kind of museum practice and museum thinking which I called managerial curatorship (2016b). Managerial curatorship developed as a practice and museum model and staffing structure mainly in so-called society museums during the 1990s, particularly in French-speaking Canada and later in France, before being progressively adopted in Latin America and, more recently, in the UK and USA. This model sees certain curatorial tasks such as exhibition-making being taken over by professional project managers. This intentional deconstruction of the traditional curatorship model (van Mench 2003) originally envisioned a displacement, or in some cases a complete removal of the traditional curator figure. The latter was perhaps more radically applied at Quebec’s Musée de la civilisation, a national museum complex created in 1988 and regarded by many as the first society museum (Drouguet 2015; Viau-Courville 2016b).

The topic of museums without curators attracted a range of responses. Some focused on the importance of situating managerial curatorship within the history and development of North American – and especially Quebec – museology (Bergeron and Baillargeon 2018; see also Bergeron 2019). Others emphasized the changing role and enduring importance of curators in museums (Reidla 2018, Ayélé Durand 2018). All of this points towards a renewed interest in the shifting roles of museum curators and curatorial leadership (Drouguet 2016; Ewin and Ewin 2016; McCall and Gray 2014; Gray 2015; Macdonald and Morgan 2019; Paquette 2015; Reidla 2018). While these two models – managerial and traditional curatorship – are by no means mutually exclusive, I suggest they should nevertheless be approached as coexisting museum models and practices in an increasingly global and hybrid museum world – with managerial curatorship being perhaps the most radical of curatorial work (Macdonald and Morgan 2019). While much has been written in defense of the (ever-transforming) curator figure (e.g. Heinisch and Pollak 1996), there exists little direct evidence or studies on the impact of managerial curatorship itself. In fact, a simple Google search for either (say) “exhibition project manager” or “*chargé de projets d’exposition*” will reveal how literature on this topic remains limited (though readers will come across numerous job opportunities, particularly in French-speaking Canada).

The present paper is an opportunity to bring together emerging trends as well as necessary nuances on the topic of managerial curatorship. On the one hand, I will address what this model means in relation to promoting local heritage, by reminding (whom? The audience? Transitive verb) that such a practice emerged out of, and was a practical response to, 1970s-80s interests in creating stronger and more sustainable links between museums and local communities/heritage, as well as between museums and the societies in which they operated (de Varine xx). Managerial curatorship takes its roots in what we would now call curatorial or museum activism (Janes and Sandell 2019, Sandell 2017:7-12). On the other hand, and more broadly, this model speaks to the future of museum practice and the museum profession in 21st-century museums. It is timely to reflect on existing models of socially-driven museum staffing models: this is especially the case as ICOM is now working on the next museum definition, with an interest in revealing the complexity of the interactions between museums and the communities they serve, represent, and with whom and through which they express themselves (Brown and Mairesse 2018). Is managerial curatorship still relevant 30 years on? Has it delivered what it promised in the *longue durée*?

This paper will address necessary nuances about current discourses and reactions to managerial curatorship by looking at two cases of managerial curatorship: one in Canada (Musée de la civilisation, Quebec City) and one in Brazil (Museu da Pessoa, São Paulo). It will then put forth three arguments. First, that greater attention should be afforded to developing healthy teamwork by concurrently investing in community participation as well as the career development of key staff figures (this includes better-adjusted research strategies suiting museums where managerial curatorship is prevalent). This seems to me essential for maintaining the ideal of inclusive and participatory society museums – healthy teams make better and more open and participatory museums. Indeed, as shown elsewhere (McCall and Gray 2014; Viau-Courville 2016b; see also Paquette 2015), managerial curatorship has not easily stood the test of time, as competing interests have arisen that ultimately have a deep effect on the ideals of interdisciplinarity, multivocality, and inclusion.

The second argument is that creativity is key to maintaining the sustainability of such a model in the 21st century. (Expand a bit? 1-2 sentences?)

Third, and last, I contend that there is actually no such thing as a museum without curators. As Robert Janes has noted, such types of museum management and curatorship models are ‘more a state of mind rather than a stage of working, where one must learn to tolerate ambiguity and effectively manage complexity, rather than simplify it’ (Janes 2013: 48). As such, better management of curatorial authority instead of attempts to remove or displace it will be a useful strategy for thinking about the future of museum leadership.

(Concluding sentence? How will this contribute to the field and/or fit within the conference goals?)

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