



In this issue

**CURATING OUTSIDE
THE FOUR WHITE
WALLS OF THE
MUSEUM**

PAGE 2
CURATOR CORE
COMPETENCIES
submit comments
before April 1

PAGE 3
WINTER SHACK:
SEASONAL SPACE
by Alex branch

PAGE 5
PLEASE DON'T RUN
THE NEPO 5K
by Klara Glosova

PAGE 8
CURATING THE
STREET
by Katherine White

PAGE 12
TAKING CARE
by Eric Fredericksen

REMINDER:
CLICK HERE TO
VOTE FOR CURCOM
OFFICER'S SLATE

Greetings from your Chairperson!

In this 40th anniversary year of the AAM Curators Committee, the CurCom Ethics Committee developed the first edition of a living document titled Curator Core Competencies. We are pleased to offer this to the museum community as a guideline to help curators and non-curators alike understand what we are aiming to achieve in the profession. It will be voted on for the purpose of general distribution at the CurCom Business Lunch at the annual meeting in Atlanta on Tuesday, April 28. The Curator Core Competencies is open for general comment by CurCom members between now and April 7. It is meant to evolve over time and grow as the curatorial profession grows.

Hopefully you have registered for the meeting in Atlanta or are able to register for online sessions. On-site, CurCom will be cohosting a Professional Network reception at the Margaret Mitchell House on Sunday, April 26 in partnership with LMN, COMPT, SMAC and Historic Houses. We thank Delta Designs Ltd. as our multi-year sponsor. At the CurCom Business Lunch on Tuesday, April 28 we will hear more about the two 2015 Excellence Competitions—Exhibitions and Label Writing. We hope to see you there.

During the year, CurCom has been pleased to sponsor AAM webinars. Most recently we organized a webinar on the subject of label writing titled Exhibition Label Writing at its Best. We worked with past competition judges from CurCom, EdCom and NAME for an overall look at excellent label writing. There were 595 participants, which speaks to the fact that this is a subject noted in the 2014 CurCom survey as something of great interest to members. We listened. To hear an archived version, go to the AAM website. This webinar was just the beginning. More label writing learning opportunities are being developed.

To see the results of the 2015 Excellence in Label Writing Competition, stop in at the Marketplace of Ideas in Atlanta on Monday, April 27. Or go online to the CurCom page of the AAM website to see past winners: <http://www.aam-us.org/about-us/grants-awards-and-competitions/excellence-in-label-writing>. It is a great resource.

continued on page 2

CurCom is also pleased to be the current coordinator for the Excellence in Exhibition Competition. Judges from CurCom, EdCom, NAME and CARE have spent the last several months reviewing submissions from all over the country. We look forward to learning more about the winners at the 27th Annual Excellence in Exhibition session on Monday, April 27, 8:30 a.m.

And finally, this issue of *Update* is a first and a last. It is the first issue produced by our new editor, Tessa Shultz, an independent museum professional. Welcome, Tessa! It is my last issue as your Chairperson. It has been a privilege to serve and help the museum profession via CurCom and the Professional Network Council. I look forward to continuing participation by sharing information about exhibits, artifacts or other relevant collections stories at my institution. I hope you do too! And don't forget to share your story as a curator (via the 3-minute video that can be submitted to the [CurCom YouTube channel](#)). We want to hear from you!

Ellen Endslow
CurCom Chairperson
Director of Collections/Curator
Chester County Historical Society

Curator Core Competencies: submit comments by April 1

The CurCom Ethics Committee has developed the Curator Core Competencies as a guide for the museum profession. It is a comprehensive statement of the domains in which curators work, the duties they perform and the applied skills that they must all possess to be successful in today's profession. It defines who curators are, what curators do and why curators are important. This document has been reviewed by numerous museum professionals and the CurCom Board. [It is available for download on the CurCom website](#). We now seek CurCom members to review it before the 2015 Annual Meeting in Atlanta. A PDF document was emailed to all CurCom members with this issue of *Update*. Comments may be directed to curcom.aam@gmail.com before April 1. This is a living document that is meant to evolve with the curatorial profession. We are pleased to offer this first edition during the 40th anniversary of the AAM Curators Committee.

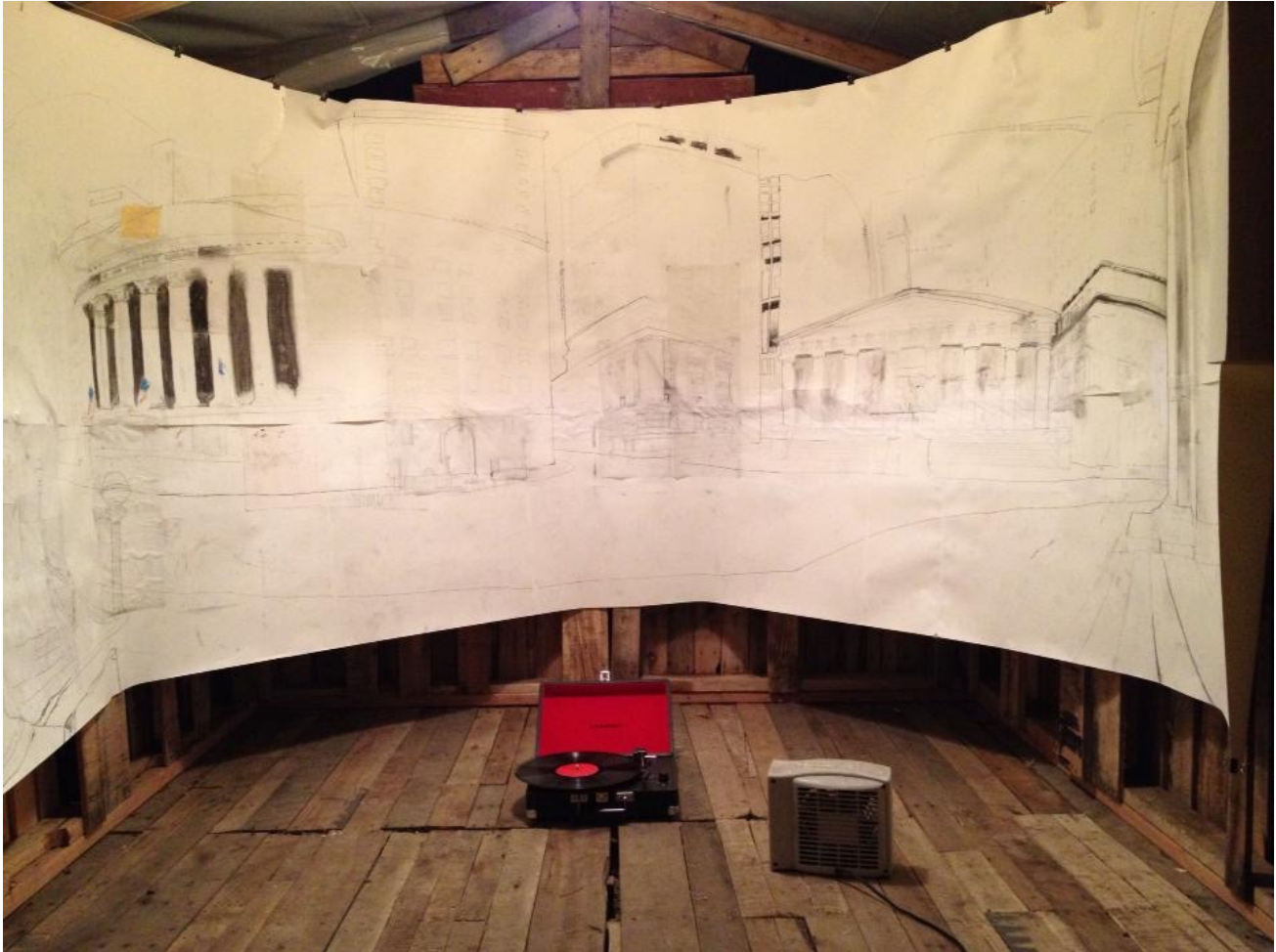
Editor's Note

I would like to extend my gratitude to the writers who contributed to *Update*. Their voices urge us to venture outside typical curatorial confines. The next issue will continue to explore new terrain by focusing on tech/art partnerships. Does your institution have a relevant project? What can the cultural heritage sector learn from the metrics-obsessed realm of technology? Email ideas and questions to: tessashultz@gmail.com.

Tessa Shultz

Winter Shack: Seasonal Space

by Alex Branch



Installation view of Aaron Beebe's *Panorama*, January 2014.

Winter Shack is a temporary art space built from reclaimed wood in Bed-Stuy, Brooklyn and activated solely during the winter months. I originally built the shack in the backyard of the apartment building where I live. Using pallets found on the neighborhood streets, construction took place during the winter of 2013-14. The shack sprang out of a desire for space in a city where space is scarce and real estate prohibitively expensive. Artist Nicole Antebi and I curated a series of events consisting of readings, installations and performances. We encouraged artists and writers to respond to each other, the surrounding weather conditions and the architecture of the shack. From January until March 2014, Winter Shack created a sense of community and inventiveness during the darkest hours of the year for those who came to experience it.

The shack is a rough-hewn outdoor structure, requiring the audience to engage with atmospheric conditions, whatever they may be. Unlike the white cube of a gallery or enclosed museum space, Winter Shack allows uncontrolled elements to permeate its space.

continued on page 4

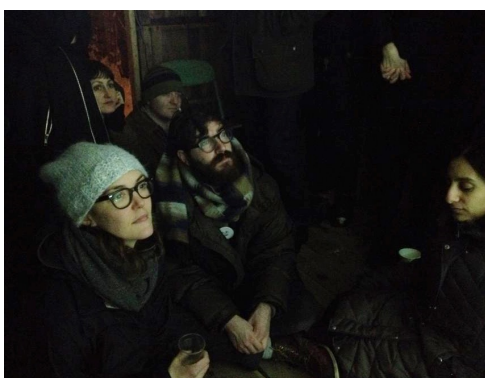
Winter Shack: Seasonal Space continued

The roof diverts direct rain and snow, and its four walls cut down severe winds, but the two windows are open and the doorway has no door. Along with the audience, artwork must interact with the weather, often to beautiful effect.

Maia Murphy's lecture on cabins and cabin fever steeped in the smell of campfire smoke. Winds stirred the sulphuric netting of Elianna Mesaiko's *Trap* installation. Bright white snow contrasted with the visceral red projections of Elizabeth Phelps-Meyer's animation. This break from a traditionally protected institutional arena where art is presented in a sterile environment encourages experimentation and inventiveness while presenting unpredictable challenges. We occasionally had trouble with the effects of cold temperatures on electrical equipment. In one instance a pickup microphone refused to play, rendering a piece imperceptible. Another issue was space. During readings the audience crowds into the structure and sometimes inadvertently bumps the artwork.



Co-curator Nicole Antebi.



Audience at Maia Murphy's lecture, February 2014.

This season, Winter Shack has moved to a 44-year-old community garden in the Fort Green neighborhood. First it had to be broken down into seventeen pieces and transported by pickup truck. With the help of many volunteers, the shack left its backyard confines and careened into uncharted territory. This new location has opened up the project to a larger community while bringing about its own set of challenges. At a time when the garden would otherwise lie dormant, Winter Shack creates a fresh symbiotic relationship by lengthening the seasonal life of green garden spaces. As of the date of this publication, the proposed Affordable Housing Plan leaves many of New York's urban gardens in a precarious and threatened state.

Alex Branch is an artist and independent curator based in Brooklyn, New York. She enjoys collaborating with visual and non-visual artists alike. Alex has organized shows in Seattle and New York including the exhibition *Between The Walls*, a permanent exhibition sealed within the crawl space of a building in upstate New York. All images courtesy of Alex Branch.

To learn more about Winter Shack go to www.wintershack.org.
Click to see the full upcoming schedule of events at Winter Shack.

March 14th: *Interior* [Leslie Jamison](#) | [Sarah Knouse](#) | [Amanda Thackray](#) | Dorthe Nors
March 21st: *Transitive Spaces LA/NY* [Hive House](#) | [Beauty in Transition](#) | [Adjunct Positions](#) | [The Drift](#)



Please Don't Run the NEPO 5k

by Klara Glosova

Most people don't know that NEPO is OPEN backwards.

In 2009 I opened my house to the public as a gallery and alternative project space called NEPO House. I have never claimed that this was a revolutionary idea. Rather, I felt I was following in the footsteps of so many other likeminded people. There have been many examples of salons and people showing art in their homes throughout history. I have offered my assets to the art community in order to create new, and personally much needed, connections with local artists, my neighborhood, the city and the world I live in.

NEPO House projects soon overflowed beyond the boundaries of my single-family dwelling. When art spilled into the surrounding neighborhood, the conceptual idea behind NEPO House continued to serve as a container, a vessel. Today, regardless of the project's physical location, NEPO House serves as a homing device for multimedia projects and a vehicle for collaborative, active participation.

Collaboration is a necessity for manifesting ideas that involve large geographical and/or social territory. The pace of change during our lifetime is rapidly speeding up. Even when we think otherwise, we usually don't see very far ahead. Ideas can percolate throughout society and poke their heads up in several places at once, however apparently unique or isolated. Sometimes emptiness or a lack of something makes room--a fertile ground--for these ideas to catch hold and grow bigger. The nature of projects that arise this way usually responds to an essential need. These societal needs are created by systemic imbalances in the whole system. The belief in an individual artist's genius, for example, must be balanced by a realization of the relational nature of everything in existence. Nobody functions in the vacuum and nobody would want to.

In recent years Seattle has been among a growing number of places in the world where particular conditions (namely lack of institutional or commercial infrastructure and support) created plenty of space for a whole alternative DIY project economy to sprout. Projects, exhibitions and events, usually led by artists, filled urban nooks and crannies. Alternative spaces like NEPO House and [Vignettes](#) brought a lot of artists and curators together. We found ourselves creating content as well as structures that would hold it.

Above: NEPO 5k DON'T RUN 2013 participants at the installation by Tara Atkinson and Justin Duffus, *My Heart Is A City: Who Belongs In the House on the Hill?*—a series of mini-essays and paintings on velum installed on top of the existing "Equality" sculpture in Daejeon park. Photo by Kari Champoux.

Working closely in this ever-shifting landscape means taking on many interchangeable roles. Collaborating in this way doesn't imply subjugating one's needs to those of a larger group. On the contrary. For most projects to be realized, artists/curators must retain their full autonomy and remain self-directed when choosing their level of involvement. There is no top down valuation. Success is measured by the ability to come together and make something exciting happen with our combined efforts and often very little funding.

An exciting artist-led project that has been happening annually for the past four years is the NEPO 5k Don't Run. Each year Seattle artists create over 60 site-specific projects and installations along the 5-kilometer route leading from Hing Hay Park in International District to NEPO House on Beacon Hill. The event lasts for just one day. For those who walk the route it is a sensory overload, albeit temporary and ephemeral in nature.



“For those who walk the route it is a sensory overload, albeit temporary and ephemeral in nature.”

The route is a varied, interesting mix of urban and suburban environment. Its start, in the flavorful heart of Seattle's International District, gives way to a gritty underworld beneath a freeway overpass only to emerge atop Jose Rizal Bridge with one of the most spectacularly sweeping views of the city. The initial dramatic ascent is followed by a mid-way repose in grassy Daejon Park with its central pagoda. The last leg of the journey leads through the Beacon Hill neighborhood with an inconsistent block-to-block feel and treasures such as a perfect, cave-like garage overgrown with ivy or an old pink Chrysler parked on the street corner.

Fittingly, the range of projects along the route spans many artistic disciplines: visual art, sculptural installation, theatrical performances, interactive artworks, poetry readings, video projections and sound installations. We work with established and emerging artists and artist groups. The multimedia nature enables interdisciplinary mixing of artists and their fans. Many participating artists come from different countries and cultural backgrounds. Their diversity of experiences adds another layer to already multicultural neighborhoods.

This year NEPO 5k Don't Run will take place on August 29th 2015. It will be the fifth and final iteration in this location.

continued on page 7

Above left: Adam Boehmer's *YES VESSEL*, 2013, below Jose Rizal Bridge. Photo by Bruce Clayton Tom. Above right: Eric E. Aguilar's performance, *Ritual of the New Natives*, 2013. Photo by Eric Becker.

This event will be particularly meaningful for us, for our neighborhood and for our artistic community. It will mark an ending in an amazingly transformative five-year cycle. It will culminate with a celebration of all the creativity and love poured over these city streets during the past five years.

NEPO 5k almost didn't happen. Initially conceived as an art run, our permit was denied by the city. "Don't run," we were instructed in their note, due to safety reasons. We changed the event name and proceeded to hop, skip, crawl, jaunt, hobble, stumble and trot into action.

If art-walking were an artistic discipline I would describe it as an equal mix of land art (or site specific art) and a citywide happening. Multiply this by a lot of time, discussion, consideration, head scratching, talking, walking and making by many, many people.

There are four of us on the curatorial team: Sierra Stinson, Zack Bent, Serrah Russell and Klara Glosova (myself). We like art to be an integral part of life, of everyday existence, placed on the floor with no pedestals. We have big dreams and make up lofty ideas. We love to indulge in philosophy and large metaphysical schemes but remain pragmatic about fixing the world. We usually look down at the ground in front of our feet and take it one Don't Run at a time.

Klara Glosova is a Czech-born artist based in Seattle for almost twenty years. She is a founder of NEPO House and is always interested to see what happens when you place the inside out, invite the outside in and generally do things backwards. Her artwork is represented by [Vignettes](#). Bio reprinted with permission. All images courtesy of Klara Glosova.

**read more
about NEPO
House**

**submit art
to the 2015
NEPO 5k
DON'T RUN**

Become an AAM member, join the Curator's Committee

Curator's Committee (CurCom) is a Professional Network (PN) committee within the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). *CurCom Update* is a periodic newsletter distributed to CurCom members and available online at: <http://www.curcom.org>.

To join CurCom, you must be an individual Professional member of AAM. Simply login to the AAM website and add the PN on your profile.

Questions? Contact:

Membership at 866-226-2150 or membership@aam-us.org



Curating the Street: The Aesthetics of Gentrification

by Katherine White

Zaro's Bakery's central industrial bakery, located on Bruckner Boulevard in the southernmost tip of the Bronx, stands out from its surroundings. The bakery's 200-foot street façade features a floor-to-ceiling mural by street artist Nick Kuszyk. The piece is an eye-popping, exuberant fantasy of bubblegum pink, cartoon characters and green tendrils. However, this is not the bakery's first encounter with graffiti. A cached Google Maps street view from before the mural was installed shows the bakery's front surface marked with painted-over graffiti letters. Why would the bakery choose to paint over one form of graffiti and replace it with another?



Zaro's Bakery industrial baking center, South Bronx.
Photo by Ed García Conde.



Zaro's' previous façade. Google Maps street view.

The answer lies in Bushwick, Brooklyn, where graffiti writer ZEXOR went on a rampage this January. ZEXOR, a Bushwick native, painted his signature tag and "throw ups" over murals by the Bushwick Collective, a group of street artists organized by Joe Ficalora. Ficalora, also from Bushwick, calls himself an "accidental curator." He organized a group of artists to paint rolling security grates previously covered by graffiti writing. Ficalora's project is designed to "beautify" the area and does not allow graffiti lettering.

In graffiti culture, spray painting over another writer's piece, called "going over" or "ragging," is a serious insult. Graffiti writers usually do not deface street art murals, even though they are not considered graffiti. ZEXOR's actions are unusual: they are a political statement against what he perceives as outsiders coming into his community. Bushwick is the new ground zero for gentrification in Brooklyn, and Ficalora's muralists have contributed to the changes in the neighborhood. ZEXOR fights back by targeting murals designed to literally erase graffiti writers like him.

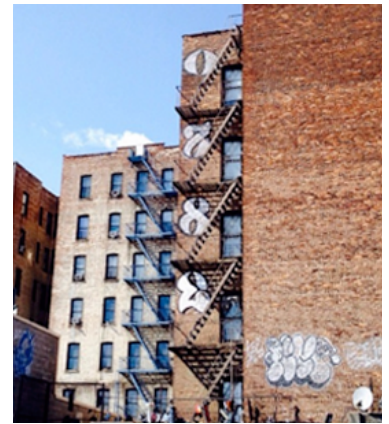


Called a "throw up," this ZEXOR graffiti covers a Bushwick Collective street art mural. Photo by Aymann Ismail/ANIMALNewYork, 2015.

continued on page 9

Those opposed to graffiti argue that it is mindless vandalism with no aesthetic value. However, it is a sophisticated network and culture with its own language, mythology, and traditions. Graffiti is not designed to appeal to outsiders. It is a secret language, a system of codes and symbols only decipherable by those who have studied its craft. I asked talented Bronx-based graffiti writer [OZBE](#) why graffiti and street art have different audiences. He said:

Graffiti is still labeled as a crime and as defacing property, so people are not going to appreciate it. They're not going to know who did what and what year, or who bombed¹ what trains and all the legends. It's a whole different culture. The common person is just going to look at it as pointless words you just put on a wall and not look at it as giving yourself publicity, becoming an egotistical maniac and putting your name everywhere. You belong to something now, because people [other graffiti writers] recognize you. They don't recognize you, but they recognize your name, your art, your publicity [... it's] the acknowledgment from your peers, like forget everybody else—the people you care about. We've accepted that we're secluded, we like it that way.



An OZBE graffiti piece. Photo by [thenumberman](#), 2014.

“Graffiti is a political statement of the voiceless, a refusal to disappear.”



C Train, 1985, by Richard Sandler, shows New York City's early, prolific graffiti writers.

Modern graffiti was born in Philadelphia and New York City during the 1970s, at the height of urban tumult caused by decades of racial segregation and disinvestment in center cities. Young men (and some women) with no voice in the larger culture decided to take back the city, inscribing their names on the rooftops, bridges, and subway cars around them. Graffiti is a political statement of the voiceless, a refusal to disappear.

Street art, by contrast, fits into the aesthetic sensibilities of the upper-middle class. It is visually appealing and easy for the non-initiated to understand, featuring clever stencils, cartoon people, social messages, and beautiful images. The difference between graffiti and street artists is global. In Brazil, this contrast can be illustrated by comparing Brazilian street artists Os Gemeos with Brazil's indigenous graffiti style, *pixação*. Pixação writers, or *pixadores*, use a complex alphabet of rune-like characters to spell out

messages across the façades of buildings. The more daring and dangerous the spots, the better.

continued on page 10

¹ “Bombing” is graffiti slang for painting, especially large and impressive pieces



The Edifício São Vito in Sao



Octavio and Gustavo Pandolfo, street artists Os Gemeos (The Twins, in Portuguese) with their mural, in Boston.



Pixação letter styles from the book *Pixação: A São Paulo Alphabet*, by François Chastenot.

Pixação is primitive and visually jarring, and reflects both the history of public political writing in Sao Paolo and the size of the city's urban underclass and poverty. The writers in Sao Paolo are mostly poor, underprivileged young men disenfranchised by society. While most observers see pixação as an urban affliction, few stop to question why its practitioners risk their lives for recognition—or the social conditions that might force them to do so. Fewer can read the cryptic messages spelled out by pixadores in a complex alphabet resembling ancient runes.

Os Gemeos are two very different Brazilian artists. They are twin brothers and street artists whose murals depict people that seem half-cartoon, half-real. They are among the most successful street artists working today, and for good reason: their works are beautiful and accessible. The average person can appreciate the surreal figures and rich, earthy colors of an OS Gemeos mural. The same can't be said for pixação.

Ultimately, the establishment accepts street art because it represents art school, education, whiteness, an edgy but still tolerable sense of rebellion; graffiti is rejected because it is self-made, outside of the institutions and aggressively oppositional. When graffiti writers took over the MTA, covering the cars with their signatures, they were a symbol of the city's decay and inability to maintain social control. Graffiti was created by black and Latino youth, doesn't appease upper-class aesthetics, and therefore lowers property values. Street art, by contrast, is valued and desirable, even when it is illegal. It raises property values and can turn entire neighborhoods into tourist zones—Wynwood, in Miami, is one such phenomenon.

“Ultimately, the establishment accepts street art because it represents art school, education, whiteness, an edgy but still tolerable sense of rebellion; graffiti is rejected because it is self-made, outside of the institutions and aggressively oppositional.”

continued on page 11



In Miami, street art murals have transformed – and gentrified – the area now known as Wynwood. [Image © Martha Cooper.](#)

As for Zaro's? The bakery has been in its current location for almost 100 years. It survived the economic roller coaster of the 20th century, the arson and destruction of the Bronx in the 1970s and 1980s, and the recession of 2008. However it wasn't until 2011 that Zaro's decided to paint the mural. What else was happening at that time? The gentrification of the surrounding Bruckner neighborhood. Nearby, the Clocktower building boasts loft apartments with a rooftop garden and lounge area, and a smattering of cafes and fusion restaurants have sprung up.

Gentrification always causes displacement. This includes the displacement of graffiti writers. Zaro's hired a white, Brooklyn-based street artist to paint a

mural in the Bronx, the borough where graffiti's black and Latino founding writers honed their craft—and where many are still living and painting today. While the bakery's previous exterior was typical of Bronx graffiti—ugly to some, but full of meaning to others—the current exterior has a new meaning, decipherable to a new set of residents. For some, it is a welcoming beacon. To others it says: “get ready to move.”

Katherine White is an independent curatorial researcher based in New York City. All images courtesy of Katherine White.

More about graffiti, street art, and gentrification:

- [Right to Wynwood](#)
- [The Words: A Graffiti Glossary](#)
- [@149 St. The Cyber Bench: Documenting New York City Graffiti](#)
- [Autograf: New York City's Graffiti Writers, Peter Sutherland](#)
- [The Art of Getting Over: Street Art at the Millenium, Stephen Powers](#)
- [Bomb the Suburbs: Graffiti, Race, Freight Hopping, and the Search for Hip Hop's Moral Center, William Upski Wimsatt,](#)
- [Scrapyard NYC, 300 West Broadway, New York, NY](#)

Taking Care

by Eric Fredericksen

Ivan Morison and I are driving a rented cargo van off the Tsawassen-Nanaimo ferry, headed to an oyster farm up the coast of Vancouver Island. We need to collect enough shells to construct a reasonable approximation of a shell midden for a show I'm curating of work by Heather and Ivan Morison, with Lutz Bacher, Oscar Tuazon and Jordan Wolfson. After a quick detour to gawk at an abandoned dock adopted by dozens of sea lions, we find the shucking facility of Fanny Bay Oysters. Stacked everywhere around the small plant are vast mounds of shells, bleaching in the sun. We start loading up buckets and dumping them into the back of the van. I'm a little concerned about the flies that have taken an interest in the middens, but we're on a tight schedule, needing to complete our work by tonight so that Ivan can fly off to his next project. As the afternoon passes, we get less and less selective, scooping the shells up with the buckets till the mound inside the van reaches the ceiling.

I want to think about curation as various forms of care. I don't want to define what I do by setting it in contrast to my idea of what the job title encompasses or excludes at collecting art institutions. The job responsibilities have clearly shifted over time, from ecclesiastical origins to physical care of collection objects to the current interpretive responsibilities held by a museum curator. I'm still less interested in contrasting it to the curation attributed to buyers at boutiques or celebrity booking agents at music festivals. Most of the time I follow the lead of museum curators in touching unique artworks as little as possible, whether a work is undergoing installation or conservation (I have clumsy hands and limited practical skills). But sometimes time is tight and the art materials not so precious and I find myself in a cargo van that is starting to develop a distinct pong.

The long ferry ride deposits us back in Tsawassen and we return to Vancouver, pulling up in front of the Or Gallery. A long-running, lively artist-run centre, The Or is currently housed in the ground floor storefront of the narrow [Del Mar Inn](#), which is not a seaside resort but a well-kept 30-room SRO, a survivor of the gentrification of its neighborhood and the construction of a massive office tower for BC Hydro, which fills the rest of its block. The only permanent artwork on the premises is a text work on the façade, running between the first and second floors. A 1990 collaboration between artist Kathryn Walter and building owner George Riste, it reads "Unlimited Growth Increases the Divide."

**"In short,
the smell is
not going to
get better."**

As we unload the shells a conversation starts up. The gallery director and preparator are a bit concerned with the smells we are introducing into their gallery. We make a run for some odor-consuming materials—scattering quicklime across layers of shells, hiding deodorizing products within the stack of pallets that are helping bulk up our midden. Ivan and I also develop a deep sense of denial as we get accustomed to the smell. We insist that it is rapidly dissipating as the shells dry out. What we're just beginning to realize is the amount of organic material we've brought in with our shells, which are frequently encrusted with oysters that were too small to bother shucking during harvest. In short, the smell is not going to get better.

continued on page 13

The story I'm telling is from a half-decade ago. I'm just telling it because I think it's a good one. I now work most of the week on the public art program of a major urban redevelopment, where I count as a project manager rather than a curator. The largest difference is that the many layers of informal consultation and collaboration that occur in the nonprofit world become formal processes within a municipal government. Project opportunities go out as calls for artists, selections are made by panels of experts convened for that purpose, various citizen commissions and committees provide oversight. What curation means in this

“All the places where design development and the artist’s concept negotiate one another, all the potential for intersections between the history, ecology, and structure of the site and the concerns and working methods of the artists, the development of scope, schedule and budget: these forms of caretaking are the deep structure of curation.”

setting interests me greatly. In the many extended uses of “curator” and “to curate,” the common attributes are careful selection and thoughtful presentation of objects. Selection, in my new world, has been distributed to pools of applicants and ad hoc panels. Presentation will happen another half-decade from now. What happens in the interim is the part of the trade I like best, all the conversations and exchanges of information; helping an artist navigate the site, sometimes from afar and serving as a point of contact between the artist and an almost incomprehensibly large number of contractors, city departments, and consultants involved in realizing a major infrastructure project. All the places where design development and the artist’s concept negotiate one another, all the potential for intersections between the history, ecology, and structure of the site and the concerns and working methods of the artists, the development of scope, schedule and budget: these forms of caretaking are the deep structure of curation.

The puppeteers arrive the next day. Ivan is back in England and we’re Skyping with the Morisons as we rehearse the play they’ve written to be performed upon the midden. I hate her. I hate her. is an obscene sort of Pilgrim’s Progress where puppets will give birth, snort drugs, die, experience an afterlife and curse continuously--especially favoring that word that easily rolls off English tongues while retaining a much stronger taboo on this side of the Atlantic. We perform that evening at the opening (me playing scene-change music on a novelty organ.) The performance is long, and it’s hard to read the audience, who are new to the midden’s odor. We hear later that the stench lent the puppet show an especially visceral and psychedelic quality.

continued on page 14

But we're creating a nuisance: the smell is likely to penetrate up into the building's housing units and is likely to attract vermin. The next day, we are faced with a decision: either remove the midden and show documentation of the performance in its place, or disassemble it, remove all shells with any animal material, soak the remainder in bleach, and rebuild the midden on a new substrate of chickenwire and papercrete to replace all the bulk we're losing. I push for the latter, knowing that it will require arduous labor from everyone involved in the show.

I take the puppeteers back to Seattle and return a day later to join the work midstream. A small team of gallery staff and volunteers are sorting through piles of shells, discarding more than they keep. The gallery director, who I must mention is a close friend, is hunched over a bucket of bleach solution with a scrub brush, working with thin kitchen gloves, which aren't thick enough to protect him from the sharp-edged shells. Close to midnight, the gallery preparator and I finish our papercrete mound, which we hope will dry out before the pallets underneath it begin to mold.

Two weeks later I return to Vancouver for a contemporary performance festival. While walking to dinner with the gallery director, I notice the skin on his hands is chalk white and flaking off. Soaking them in bleach for two days led to a crude version of a chemical peel. To this day he is known for the softness of his hands, and he has more or less forgiven me for everything.

A year later he curates a show with two artists from Seattle. Picking up one of his favorite curatorial sidelines, "curator as art mule," he rents a cargo van to collect their work. As soon as he opens the door he recognizes it by smell: the oyster van. It's a five or six hour drive to Seattle and back.

Eric Fredericksen is a curator and teacher, and the art manager for the City of Seattle's Office of the Waterfront. He was formerly the director of Western Bridge, a Seattle exhibition space.



See you in Atlanta!

[Click here to register for the annual meeting.](#)

**March 27
Advance Registration Deadline**

**April 26–29
Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo**

Curators' standing professional committee of AAM

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Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA)

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New England Museums Association (NEMA)

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Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC)

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Western Museums Association (WMA)

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Amy Scott, Autry National Center
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Appointments and committee chairpersons

AIC Liaison

Nicole Belolan (see MAAM rep)

Archivist (open)

Ethics Committee Chair 2012

Sheila Hoffman (Chair, see NEMA rep)

James Burns (see Vice chair)

Nathan Jones (see SEMC rep)

Brian Peterson

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2013 Exhibition Competition Judge

David Kennedy (see MPMA rep)

2013-14 Label Writing Competition

John Russick (Chair), Chicago History Museum

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Membership Committee

Stephanie Antequino (see SEMC rep)

2014 Nominating Committee

James A. Hoobler, Tennessee State Museum

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Program Committee 2015

Nathan Jones (see SEMC rep)

Keni Sturgeon, Science & Education at Pacific Science Center

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Elisa Phelps (see Secretary)

Ron M. Potvin, John Nicholas Brown Center

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Social Media Committee

Allison Cywin, University of Massachusetts

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Social Media Committee Members

Nicole Belolan (see MAAM rep)

Stacey Swigart (see board members-at-large)

AAM Liaison

Eileen Goldspiel, American Association of Museums

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Exhibition Coordinator 2013-15

Stacey Swigart (see board members-at-large)

National Program Committee

Nathan Jones (see SEMC rep)

40th Anniversary Project

David Kennedy (see board members-at-large)

Scott Neel, Fort Sill National Historic Landmark and Museum

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Newsletter Editor

Tessa Shultz

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Social Media Committee

Allison Cywin (see social media committee)

Stacey Swigart (see board members-at-large)

Nicole Belolan (see MAAM rep)

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