

The background image shows a gallery or museum space. The walls are covered with numerous framed artworks, including paintings, posters, and textile-based pieces. A person wearing a long orange coat and black boots is standing in the foreground, looking at the art. The floor is made of light-colored tiles. The lighting is bright, and the overall atmosphere is one of a diverse and inclusive art collection.

Curating for Uncategorized Artist:

An Exploration of how Curatorial Practices Altered the Representation of Inclusion

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AP6002 Introduction to Curatorial Practice

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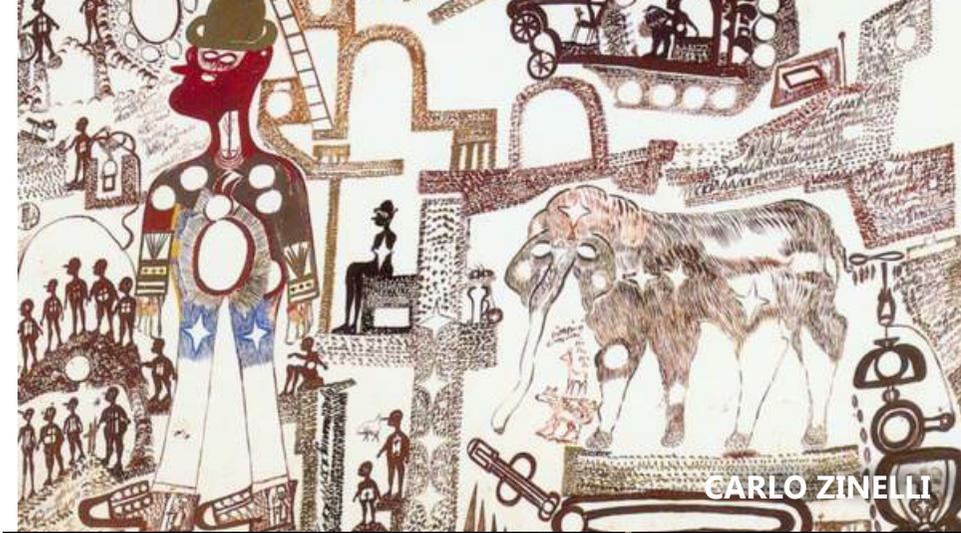
Note: 'Uncataglorized Artist' in this essay refers to untrained, unintentional, undiscovered and unclassifiable artists that have been excluded in the cultural and social mainstream, across different disaplines, educational background and types of abilities.

1. Abstract

This essay is going to explore how curatorial practice is altering the representation on the subject of Inclusion, through developing an exhibition for uncategorized artists.

Establishing the exhibition from the stretch, I realized that curatorial gestures and the precision in the curatorial decision are critical on constructing the narrative and discourse. When curating for a specific ethical community, a curator should be clear on what are we representing and be careful whether our curation is portraying the same statement.

First part of the essay presents an overview of the how uncategorized artists has been interpreted in art history, that helps to navigate how the subject is adapting in contemporary society; the second part focus on stages of the exhibition development, from conceptualization, design to outreach, explains what factors in curatorial practices impact on the subject of Inclusion; then follow up with a proposal suggesting what key actions can be done in the actual exhibition. The last part is going to give a critical reflection on the role of curator and establishing a curatorial manifesto to myself when it comes to the subject of inclusion.



CARLO ZINELLI



A.C.M



Tomoyuki Shinki



Michael's paintings

2. Foreword

During my first volunteer visit to an intellectually disabled center in Hong Kong 10 years ago, I was amazed and inspired by one of the client's ability to distinguish colors in precise shades. The experience was inspiring to learn that art is something born within and I developed an interested in art by intellectual disabled since then.

Until months ago, I went to volunteer at Metta Home for the Disabled in Singapore and met one of the clients Michael, who demonstrated his talent insensitivity in colors and patterns through his beautiful paintings.

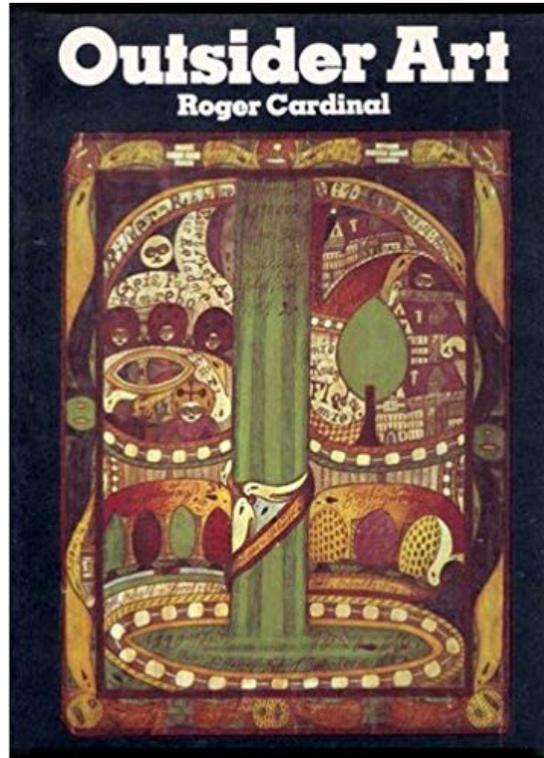
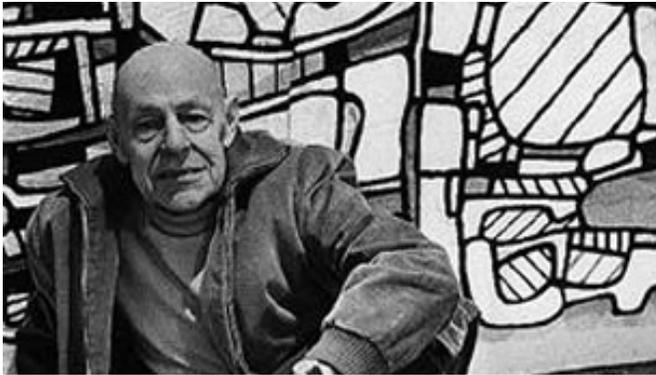
Meeting Michael gave me the urge to do something about them and their work, yet I am able to explore further on the community of uncategorized artists not just limited to mentally disabled, but artists who are excluded in the social and cutural mainstream, along with researching on the related subjects on inclusion and accessibility.

I would like to see in what ways that curatorial practice is influencing the discourse of inclusion and setting myself a manifesto when curating for ethical communities.

3. Overview of the History of Uncategorized Artists

When curating for an ethical subject, it is crucial for us to do research on the history on it so to learn from the previous execution, critically reviewing what is desirable and what can be improved; from then generate our own interpretation on the subject, adapt on an improved intervention.

'uncategorized artists' is no stranger to the modern and contemporary art, yet their status had shifted around, reinterpret and re-categorized over and over again.



The community of uncategorized artists didn't gain recognition until the term '**Art Brut**', translated as Raw Art, invented by French artist Jean Dubuffet 70 years ago which he described "pieces of work executed by people untouched by artistic culture, in which therefore mimicry, contrary to what happens in intellectuals, so that their authors draw everything, not from clichés of classical art or art that is fashionable."¹

In the 1970s, the term '**Outsider art**' is introduced as a translation of Art Brut in English by art critic Roger Cardinal. Yet, this term is wildly used and has emerged until nowadays. In 1993, the first Outsider Art Fair took place in New York annually². Other terms such as 'Naive Art', 'Folk Art', 'Primitive Art', 'Vernacular Art' share a similar nature on referring art made by untrained artists.

The Museum of Everything, a non-profit organization for self-taught and non-academic art-makers founded in 2009³, and Creative Growth Art Center⁴, a nonprofit arts institution provides supports to artists with developmental, mental, and physical disabilities.



4.1 Conceptualization -

4.1.1 Understanding Uncategorized Artists



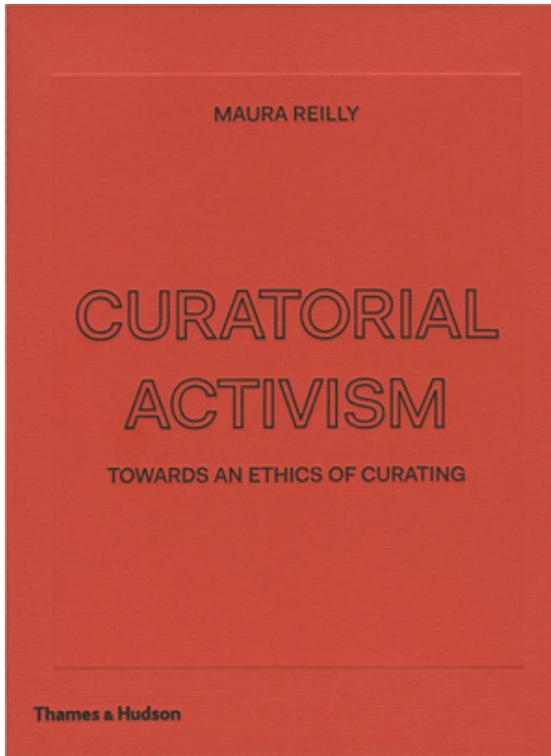
Inspired by uncategorized artists who I encountered and researched on, I found the most precious things about them is they create out of urgency, the purity of their creations disregards in pleasing the market or audiences; some of them even don't understand they are making art and they don't have the pride of being an artist.

Apart from their artworks show same artistic value or skills as an art by professionally trained artist, what is more, interesting in their artwork is showing different perspectives of life that are significant to the particular ethical community.

Take Judith Scott* as an example, her sculptures demonstrated the caring and protective nature of how she hides her own properties from others in the institution of mentally disabled.

* Judith Scott is an American fiber sculptor. She is born with Down syndrome and were kept away from her family an institution for the mentally disabled for 35 years until her twin sister Joyce Scott became her legal guardian. Judith later enrolled at the Creative Growth Art Center in Oakland and began to create fiber sculptures.

4.1.2 Role of Curator



The role of curator shifted according to different purposes in the different context.

The literal translation is significant in the role of curator when curating for the uncategorized artists. The curator should be a caretaker not just to the artworks but more to the artists and to the ideology of inclusion.

Since some uncategorized artists may not understand what art is and what they are doing is art, hence neither the reasons of having their creations displayed, the curator

must communicate with the artist or their guardians to make sure they feel comfortable lending the artworks out, and handling the artworks according to their wills.

The role of curator may be an activist in the subject of inclusion; we should stand by the artists and provide a platform where uncategorized artists are given equal opportunities to be appreciated and treated as any other artists.

4.1.3 Narrative

According to literary historian and critic Stephen Greenblatt, museum experience can be divided into two primary responses. "Resonance" is about enabling the power of the displayed object to reach out beyond its formal boundaries to a larger world while "Wonder" refers to the object's poetic dimension, its power to evoke an exalted attention⁵.

By shifting the approach of narrative can make a huge difference in how audiences receive the artworks by uncategorized artists, hence, alter the nature of inclusiveness for the exhibition.

Since some of the uncategorized artists are having physical or mental condition, it is quite usual that the exhibition uses the biographical narrative because stories sell. However I found the access of the back story

of the artists prior to seeing the artwork could be tricky in creating an invisible mental barrier, when navigating the artwork with thoughts of 'these are works by disabled' or having the sympathetic feeling which is meaningless in appreciating the artwork and artist.



At the 55th Venice Biennale, 'The Encyclopedic Palace' is capacious, accommodating the work of the highly trained and the self-taught, the academic and the hard-to-categorize⁵. By putting blurring the boundaries between trained and untrained artists, it gave the audience an opportunity to re-think what art is.

4.2 Exhibition Development and Execution -

4.2.1 Artist/ Artwork Search

Searching for artists is one of the main responsibilities for the curator. Options of uncategorized artists are pretty much unlimited while they come from everywhere; create in all forms over all matters.

To locate uncategorized artists is more challenging than finding institution artists, where artists are situated at the institutions; some of the more interesting works are not as visible, especially for those who don't recognize themselves as an artist, their works are not documented.

The uncategorized artists are often found from words of mouths or from the curator's connection with the different institution such as disable care center etc.

Apart from common aspects on selecting artwork including visual impact, consistency in creation or so, what makes the chosen uncategorized artists stand out from the rest is the authenticity of their work and the story behind, as mentioned that their work may represent to the ethical group.

4.2.2 Curatorial Language

The language used by curators serves to create an international common ground for curators, establishing a standard for how to talk about art⁶. Words itself plays an important part in the art industry; when certain words are (not) chosen and (not) used upon the curation, there should be reasons behind it.

Curator should be mindful to the language we use, the categorization we chose to make is whether breaking down the boundaries or not.

For instant, 'outsider art' is a misleading term; the word 'outsider' hinting that their art can be divided into 'insider' and 'outsider', and outsiders are someone away from the center of the art world. However, when looking at the work from 'outsider artist', they are as artistic and important as any other artwork; it is rather the categorization that defines and excludes them but not their work itself.

Meanwhile, the term 'outsider art' had been using for decades yet only a few people who are influential in the art world are questioning it or dare make a change; this lead to a bigger problem that happens in the art industry. Terms those divide the different classes in the art are people are clearly given by the more powerful group, 'insider' naming 'outsider', 'high art' despising 'low art'.

People who invent these categories try to maintain their superior status and power by separating themselves from someone they look down to, and audiences that think they are an insider looking at outsider are also the culprit for the inequality in the art industry.

4.2.3 Minding the Space



Thelma Golden and the Studio Museum in Harlem. The institution not just do exhibition about African American art but is a part of Harlem, it is representative to the ethical culture.

An art institution is not just a place for displaying artwork but the understanding of the space, set up in real time, context and history is crucial in order for productive engagement between art, artist, and public⁷; simply, audiences access the collection through the institution as an interpretation of the discourse.

Since uncategorized artists are neglected in mainstream society, if the exhibition for uncategorized artists is holding in a national status institution or having their artwork as part of the permanent collection, handling with the equal treatment on inclusion as previously mentioned, it will be making a statement to the art world that there are a bigger part of the national art and culture that haven't been seen and appreciate as what we are seeing; this will eventually motivate the art world to adopt a more equality environment.

If the artwork are showed in alternative art space or commercial gallery, it not just lowered the visibility for the artists but rather projecting their identity as a subculture or a marketing strategy that make sales with sympathy.

5. Exhibition Proposal for uncategorized artists

- Get to know the artists. Stand by the artist, fight for the equality on the treatment and execution for the artist and their artwork as any other artist.

- Avoid any meaningless categorization e.g. have a vague exhibition title

- Think about the consequences of using certain words; avoid using any terms that may give the audience a pre-concept on what the exhibition is about or how the artwork will be.

- Display the artworks to their best. Present the artwork to be viewed formally before biographically, or other narratives that may cause any excessive emotion.

- Breaking the boundaries by exhibiting both trained and uncategorized artists



The Museum of Everything is a very good example .

6. Challenges and Critical Reflection

The biggest challenge when curating for the uncategorized artists, especially for artists who have a physical or mental condition, the more sensitive the curator should be when making decisions. Each decision that we make down to the little details, should be well thought out and understood since exclusion is quite often caused unintentionally.

At the beginning of the project, I've been asking myself 'what can I do for them?', it seems to be a common way of how curator brainstorming; and along the way breaking down the cause of exclusion, the question has become problematic since no matter how we try to put ourselves in their shoes, we are not them and we shouldn't be pretending to be as well.

At the end of the day, I just figure out that curator should rather ask ourselves, 'What are the best I can do for them and their art?' and my answer would be displaying their art to the best and allow the audiences to appreciate their art as much as any other great creation.

Here, I am not trying to raise the attention to ethical community, begging for sympathy nor redefining the beauty of art; I am not treating this as an exhibition for uncategorized artists but rather with the aids of the uncategorized artists, reflecting ourselves on how we see things and how easily we got affected; moreover, letting the audiences to understand that when we are doing nothing, not questioning the authorities nor reviewing the practicing ideology in contemporary society is constructed, we are the one responsible to the exclusion.

Last but not least, I believe by setting the right practices when curating for minorities is going to offset the inequality in the art industry and disrupt the power flow, in order to progress to a more inclusive and diverse environment for creatives.

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