

CURATING MEANING THROUGH DIVERSE VOICES:

**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF
CURATION IN PROFESSIONAL ART
SPACES AND K - 12 EDUCATION**

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INTRODUCTION

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- Exhibitions are tools for storytelling, identity, and recognition.
- I've been interested in how exhibitions shape the way we see art and artists, especially when it comes to inclusion.
- This research came from my personal experience organizing exhibitions where students often didn't feel fully represented like Earthbound or Blick Art Shows.
- This thesis explores what it means to use curation as a tool for equity in both professional art settings and K-12 classrooms.



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

01

How can a curator use a common theme to curate a unified show that accurately captures the diversity of the artistic voices of the participants?

02

What factors are involved in the curation process of an exhibition that includes diverse perspectives for both the artists and the curator(s)?

03

How can K-12 art educators curate an exhibition that accurately captures the diversity of the artistic voices of the students?

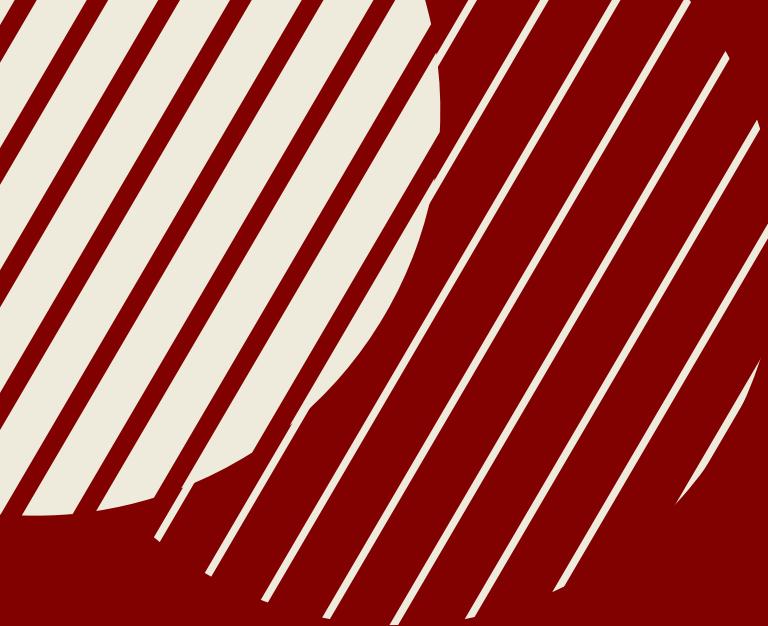
METHODOLOGY

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- Curated *Earthbound* for Art and Design Education seniors
- Interviews: students, professors, Blick associates, thesis curators
- Data: photos, reflections, quotes, documentation



LITERATURE REVIEW



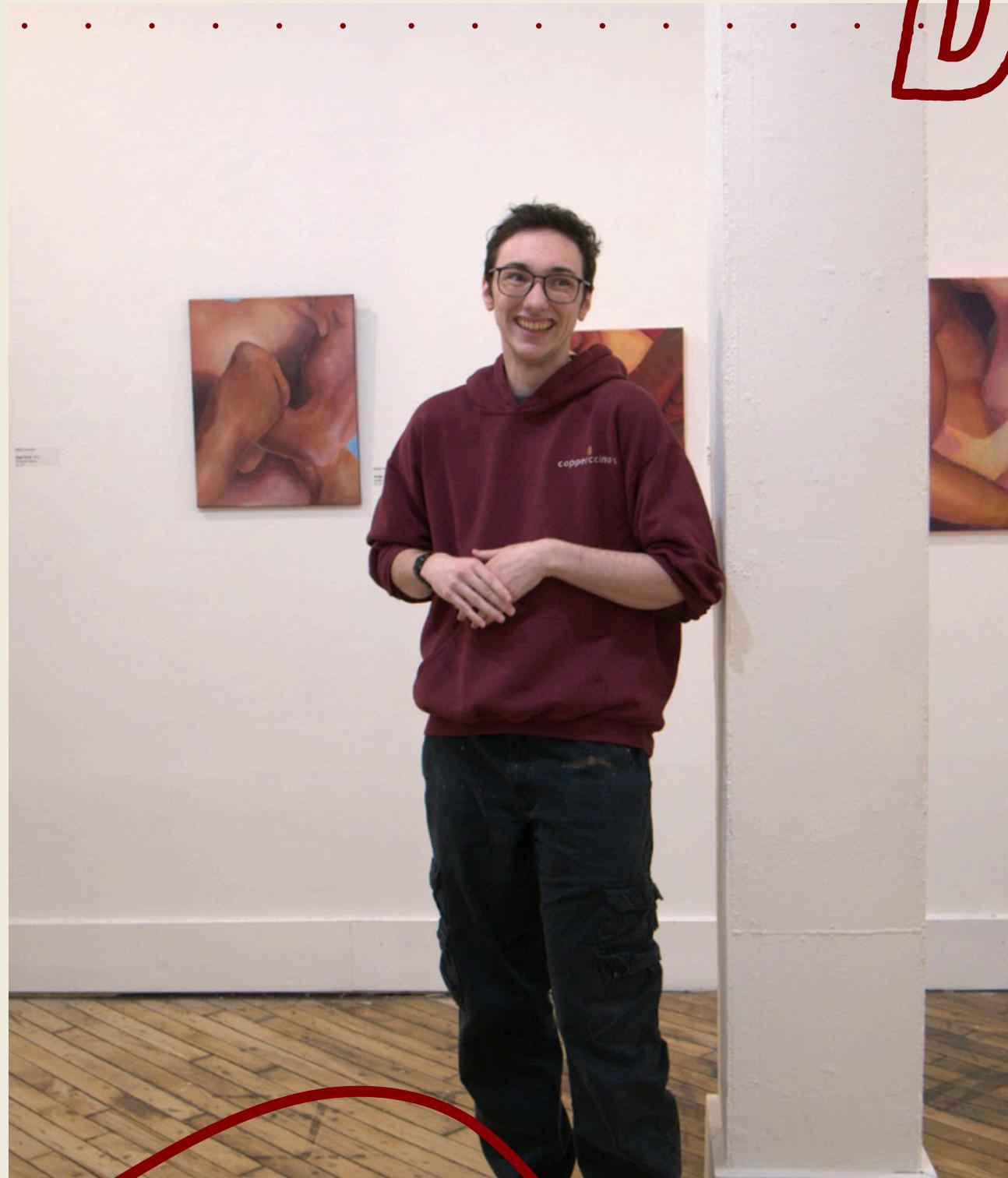
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Professional Curation & Diversity
 - Curation as thematic storytelling for underheard voices
 - Audience awareness as key to inclusive design
 - “Know your audience before planning” – LinkedIn (2023)
- K-12 Settings
 - Students engage deeper when curating their own work
 - “Curating is different than attending” – Art of Ed
 - Embrace process and product – Katie Martin
- Student Outcomes
 - Builds ownership, reflection, and communication skills
 - Helps students make ideas accessible to others
 - Encourages collaboration and cultural connections

DATA COLLECTION

DATA COLLECTION

ADE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE



- ADE students felt blocked from Fine Arts exhibitions.
- Earthbound created a professional space to present work as artists.
- The show fostered a strong community and allowed students to reclaim their creative voice.
- Robin emphasized that participation helped solidify both artistic and educational identities.
- “Blocked from fine arts opportunities unless we go hunting for them.”



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KELLY OH'S PERSPECTIVE

- Used student work to create cohesive exhibition themes in IB Visual Arts.
- Transformed school spaces: hallway, walls, windowsills, furniture into gallery spaces.
- Encouraged students to invite community and take on curatorial roles.
- Emphasized collaboration, inclusion, and celebration of process over perfection.
- "Celebrate more than perfection."

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KATHERINE HUALA'S PERSPECTIVE



- Prioritizes inclusion: exhibits range of student abilities, not just “best” work.
- Uses professional design elements: borders, color harmony, and negative space.
- Engages audiences with gallery walks, scavenger hunts, and hands-on artmaking.
- Advocates for exhibitions in community sites - libraries, cafes, and local venues - to connect learning with lived experience.
- Pushes against bias in teacher selection, asking educators to showcase diversity in voice, style, and skill.



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KAYLA LEE-EDWARDS'S PERSPECTIVE

- Retail setting was an interactive & accessible display space.
- Customers asking questions was like a museum-like experience.
- Created sense of pride and recognition among staff artists.
- Contributed to building a supportive and creative work culture.
- “Selling something was a turning point.”



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ASHLEY CARVAJAL'S PERSPECTIVE

- Explored loss and reclamation of Latina identity.
- Used white mats and clean layout to explore tension between conformity & individuality.
- Audience feedback from family & community encouraged her to go deeper.
- Regretted not using more text in exhibition ("No Sabo") to guide interpretation.
- "Dilution strips you bare so you can recreate what defines you."

DATA COLLECTION

SNIPPET OF INTERVIEWS



dilution strips you down so you can really

DATA ANALYSIS

DATA ANALYSIS



- Analyzed through 3 lenses:
 - Best practices for successful curation, including diverse perspectives
 - Research process
 - Layout and presentation of work
 - Sense of community, inclusion of participants in curation process
 - Ways to translate principles of curation for adult artists into curation into K-12
 - Why this is all important for the participants

DATA ANALYSIS



- Data included interviews, images, and participant reflections
- Emphasized identity formation, visibility, and student voice
- Highlighted the power of layout, language, and public context in shaping perception

FINDINGS

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- Curation fosters identity formation, inclusion, and visibility across learning environments.
- Earthbound bridged students' roles as artists and educators, addressing gaps in institutional recognition.
- K-12 environments used exhibitions to elevate student voice and challenge traditional hierarchies.
- Informal venues like Blick fostered community, peer support, and new confidence in emerging artists.
- Strategic curation can deepen personal narratives and broaden audience engagement.



CONCLUSION

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- Curation is not just an aesthetic choice—it is a means of equity, representation, and pedagogical growth.
- Recommendations:
 - Institutions must expand curatorial opportunities beyond traditional Fine Arts tracks.
 - Educational settings benefit from exhibitions that prioritize process, inclusion, and dialogue.
 - Student-led and cross-disciplinary shows can foster deeper learning and identity exploration.
 - Curators and educators should design with audience engagement and clarity in mind, especially for broader publics.



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THANK YOU
SO MUCH