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# Ways Of Curating



## Synopsis

The world's most influential contemporary-art curator explores the history and practice of his craft. Hans Ulrich Obrist curated his first exhibit in his kitchen when he was twenty-three years old. Since then he has staged more than 250 shows internationally, many of them among the most influential exhibits of our age. *Ways of Curating* is a compendium of the insights Obrist has gained from his years of extraordinary work in the art world. It skips between centuries and continents, flitting from meetings with the artists who have inspired him (including Gerhard Richter, Louise Bourgeois, and Gilbert and George) to biographies of influential figures such as Diaghilev and Walter Hopps. It describes some of the greatest exhibitions in history, as well as some of the greatest exhibitions never realized. It traces the evolution of collections from Athanasius Kircher's seventeenth-century Wunderkammer to modern museums, and points the way for projects yet to come. Obrist has rescued the word "curate" from wine stores and playlists to remind us of the power inherent in looking at art--and at the world--in a new way.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

“Ways of Curating is a unique and insightful guide which enables the reader to discover unexplored paths for a new curatorial approach.”  
— Marina Abramovic  
“Hans Ulrich Obrist is a passionate communicator. In result, half the world is starting to live in the future now.”  
— Yoko Ono  
“Obrist educates and delights, with the simple goal of sharing his life's joy.”  
— Publishers Weekly  
“A succinct, personal perspective

on the intellectual sources and enthusiasms of a distinguished figure in the contemporary art world. Kirkus "An engaging and erudite work that argues persuasively for the continued relevance of curating for the arts and wider society. His book is about the curator's role as a maker of exhibitions, a task that involves tracing hidden connections between artworks and forging untrammelled routes across culture in search of new ways of experiencing art; new ways of looking at the world around us. If that sounds like an impossibly romantic definition it's because this is an unapologetically personal account of the profession's development. Ekow Eshun, *The Independent* "This is a highly intelligent, thoughtful and thought-provoking book. Obrist emerges as both scholarly and energetically engaged with the proliferation of ideas in modern culture today. Carl Wilkinson, *Financial Times* "Brisk, eclectic . . . In recent decades, the art world has been somewhat tediously obsessed with this 'curatorial turn' and its apparent undermining of artists and critics alike. But Obrist is a good example of the expanded possibilities of the job, and the sheer energy he has brought to working with artists themselves is the abiding impression of *Ways of Curating*. Brian Dillon, *Literary Review*

Hans Ulrich Obrist is a Swiss-born curator and writer. He is the co-director of exhibitions and programs and the co-director of international projects at the Serpentine Galleries, London. His previous books include *A Brief History of Curating*; *A Brief History of New Music*; *Everything You Always Wanted to Ask About Curating but Were Afraid to Ask*; *Sharp Tongues, Loose Lips, Open Eyes, Ears to the Ground*; *Ai Weiwei Speaks*; and nearly thirty volumes in his *Conversation Series* of interviews with contemporary artists.

I enjoyed this beginning of this book which gave me enough knowledge to curate a show on my own. Since losing the book on the bus I will buy it again. Very informative!

Excellent first person experiences on the various ways to approach mounting an art exhibition. Creative and informative.

Really interesting, I have never highlighted a book with such gusto. Full of ideas to open Art into a wider arena than just the walls !

an excellent overview of how Art and the presentation of art has evolved and influenced Obrist's

approach to curating. Highly recommended.

The first two or three chapters of *WAYS OF CURATING* were very engaging, and quite promising. Then the book descended into a fog of buzzwords, cliches, and what seemed like self-aggrandizement. "I met him. I talked with her. He is one of my role models. I taught him this. I am making this grand synthesis." So much name dropping – but not very interesting names to those not in the German-centric art world. What comes through is a kind of strange ego-less egotism. Mr. Obrist seems a very earnest and energetic peripatetic curator, but perhaps way too caffeinated, and focusing too much on the surface of things. (Or, perhaps he just hasn't communicated his deeper thoughts and feelings? It's the "authentic" story that we readers crave.) Overall the book provides no profound insights whatsoever about the content of Mr. Obrist's collaborations. It is as if all that interests Mr. Obrist is scintillating sparkle. Two additional points: (1) The book's dust jacket, though tactilely delightful, smells horrible. And the smell doesn't go away with time. I eventually threw the dust jacket away. (2) I purchased this book in a brick and mortar bookstore.

I quite like this book, as it did open my eyes to the fact that the curating world is a fairly multi-layered world, and it goes way beyond just hanging pictures on a wall. What I like is the rather simple manner in which he writes, and this kept me somewhat engaged throughout. There is a lot of name-dropping, and this does spoil the book somewhat. Also, when he uses terms like 'the greatest artist' etc, I cannot help but think that he, like many Western writers, cannot see beyond the Western / Northern Quarter of the world. Latin America, Asia, Australia are beyond their vision. I would have liked some photographs. This would have helped to illustrate the points he was wanting to make. Apart from these, for me, a good book.

Less 'Ways of Curating' and more 'Who I Worked With While Curating', this book is a work diary of sorts for Mr. Obrist. It is peppered with (important) names he has collaborated with, but there is little in the way of gems - you'll find one or two in each chapter on average. There is also little mention of how other curators did their jobs - just a few passing mentions and pretty much only for those he have met in person. Some of the examples might have been better brought to life with illustrations, especially if there is no proper chronicles to be found online. But alas... no such luxury was afforded the readers. An okay read, but I felt the title was rather misleading. Felt that such a rich and interesting topic would have had so much more to offer.

What an exuberant, border-crossing, time-and-space traveling missile of a book! With Obrist as our guide we enter into the fascinating history of curation as well as countless conversations and exhibitions of the present. This linked series of essays far exceeded my expectations and provided pleasure and learning beyond its relatively few pages. Obrist's life pulses with creativity, experimentation, and cosmopolitanism; this is an exciting introduction to the world of curation -- and for my money not at all mere name-dropping, as other reviewers have suggested. My only complaint is that the book would have been better with photos of the art described. Check it out!

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