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# Different Types of Curators Based on Field of Work and Responsibilities in OHD Museum

**Khoirul Anam<sup>1</sup>, Lono P. Simatupang<sup>2</sup>, Suwarno Wisetrotomo<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Performing and Visual Arts Studies Program, Graduate School,  
Universitas Gadjah Mada, Indonesia

<sup>3</sup>Arts Studies, Master Program, Institut Seni Indonesia Yogyakarta, Indonesia

*anamdotka@mail.ugm.ac.id<sup>1</sup>*

The development of curatorial work practices will be very important for the development of museums, arts, and culture. However, it is undeniable that studies and understanding of the development of curatorial work practices are still not optimal in Indonesia. Awareness of the realm and responsibility of the curator is also sometimes poorly understood by the public and the practitioners of curatorial work practices themselves. This vacancy becomes an obstacle in the development of the profession of independent curator and museum curator. Where the curator profession is no longer seen only as a museum guard or seen only as a writer in an exhibition. The discourse in this study will raise the question of how curatorial work practices at OHD Museum are based on the field of work and responsibilities, which we can see from the different types of curators in an art museum. This study focuses on explaining and understanding the definition of curator and the types of the curator in the development of curatorial studies in an art museum. The results of this study indicate that from the division of In-House Curators and Guest Curators at the OHD Museum, they are distinguished by their field of work and responsibilities. The In-House Curators has responsibilities, among others; acquisition, deaccession, borrowing, conservation, restoration, documentation, and research, where related to the field of collection. Then, look at the Guest Curator with responsibilities, among others; creating a curatorial concept for an exhibition, selecting the collections and artists involved, producing a narrative document (curatorial text), and designing an exhibition.

**Keywords:** *types of curators, field of work, responsibility, OHD Museum*

*\*Corresponding Author*

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## INTRODUCTION

The fragile situation that occurs in museums in Indonesia —which are privately owned or government-owned— in terms of curatorial presentation of collections, there are almost no models that can be referred to, even the National Museum of Indonesia. The number of museum institutions without the presence of a curator in Indonesia is also a problem in our museums. One of them can be seen in the National Museum which we can call a reflection of museums in Indonesia, which in the organizational structure chart alone does not have the position of curator. Although the National Museum of Indonesia website has a curator tab, after opening it, it turns out that there is no information that can be retrieved, only information is being repaired on the page (accessed February 28, 2021). This also does not happen at the National Museum of Indonesia, several national-level museums that do not have permanent curators (still using experts or guest curators) such as the Yogyakarta Presidential Palace Museum (Anam, 2018:68-69). On the page of the National Gallery of Indonesia, it is also explained that they are still using expert curators (guest curators) from outside the institution, with a period of 3 years working periodically, even though they have a permanent curator, they are conditioned as assistant guest curators (accessed March 11, 2021).

Problems that arise due to the absence of a curator who is responsible for the curatorial narrative of collections in an exhibition at the museum, make museums (including art museums) seen as a repository for collections only, not as museums that present knowledge to the public through existing collections. The law also states in article 41, regarding the use of museums for education, talent and interest development, creativity, and innovation development. The consequence of the absence of a museum curator—who is responsible for the process of selecting, collecting, and classifying objects, designing and presenting an exhibition as well as informational information (Susanto, 2016; Hujatnikajennong, 2015)—causes the role and function of the museum to be not optimal as an institution that aims to entertainment and education, in addition to the messy management. This is due to the absence of someone specifically responsible for the curatorial work of an exhibition at the museum, namely the curator.

This has an impact on the image of the museum, where the museum is often seen as a boring place and only functions as a collection warehouse that stores objects of artistic and cultural heritage. We can still find many of these cases in museums in Indonesia. Fortunately, art museums are a breath of fresh air for the development of museums because they are becoming more and more popular these days among young people. This is also influenced by the development of the curator profession that emerged in the realm of Indonesian art in the 1990s with the concept of an Independent Curator, previously the work and profession of a curator were not known at all, including in the realm of public museums. The meaning of independent curator here is due to the absence of art institutions and institutions, which automatically require working independently. The curator profession in Indonesia was born and used in several museums through the development of contemporary art, although it is not realized and is not based on a structured plan, the emergence of this profession is in direct contact with the necessity to build Indonesian art constructs from nothing (Jim Supangkat, 2017).

In fact, this has also been supported through the government regulation of the Republic of Indonesia number 66 of 2015 concerning museums which is clearly stated in articles 11, 16, 17, and 19 concerning the work of the Curator. Plus the regulation of the Ministry of Education and Culture (KEMENDIKBUD) No. 34 of 2017 requires a curator in every museum. That every museum institution must have a technical person who is responsible for holding, storing, recording, maintaining, managing, and utilizing collections by studying collections for exhibitions and publications, up to the elimination of the collections of museums. Where, apart from maintaining and caring for, they are also responsible for the discourse, narration, and imagery displayed by a museum, of course under the authority of the

museum director. However, this has not had a major impact on the development of curatorial work practices and the development of museums in Indonesia.

Maximum utilization is very important so that museum collections can be alive and relevant in the socio-cultural context of the community. One of the uses—in terms of entertainment—that can be felt in addition to the beauty or aesthetics of museum collections is the distribution of knowledge. This task is indeed held by museum educators according to the Republic of Indonesia government regulation number 66 of 2015, in article 11 paragraph 2, but the one who is most responsible for dealing with the audience is a curator. Whereas, as in a film, there is a director or film director. Even so, it is undeniable that curators in some museums are still defined as experts who only conduct, record, store, and maintain. However, the latest 2017 Ministry of Education and Culture Regulation, added additional regulations within the scope of work of curators, namely utilizing collections with collection studies for exhibitions and publications. Support efforts from the government seem to be growing from year to year. This support can be seen this year, which came from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology (KEMENDIKBUD RISTEK) in 2021, which opened the selection of prospective civil servants (CPNS) for the position of Curator along with the issuance of letter NUMBER: 46801/A. A3/KP.01.00/2021, which will occupy several state institutions such as the National Gallery of Indonesia, the National Museum of Indonesia, the Presidential Museum of the Republic of Indonesia Balai Kirti, and others.

As a profession that is not yet established in the realm of museums and arts and culture in Indonesia, the curator is one of the most important professions in an ecosystem for the sustainability of a museum and supports arts and culture events, especially an exhibition in a museum. The development of curatorial work practices will greatly affect the ecosystem of arts and culture in Indonesia. The government is starting to realize this, and increasingly, the government is very supportive of the development of curatorial work practices. However, it is undeniable that studies and understanding of the development of curatorial work practices are still very minimal in Indonesia. Awareness of the realm and responsibility of the curator is also sometimes poorly understood by the community and the practitioners of curatorial work practices themselves. This vacancy becomes an obstacle in the development of the profession of independent curator and museum curator. It seems that awareness of the important role of a curator must be taken into account, with the dissemination of knowledge about studies and/or discussions of curatorial work practices. Where the curator profession is no longer seen only as a museum guard or seen only as a writer in an exhibition. Because the definition of curatorial work practice is always evolving according to the situation and conditions of the community.

curatorial work practices at OHD Museum are based on domains and responsibilities, we can see the different types of curators in an art museum. This study focuses on explaining and understanding the definition of curator and the types of the curator in the development of curatorial studies in an art museum. The selection of the research object is accompanied by the consideration that; The museum founded by Dr. Oei Hong Djien plays an important role in the development of the fine arts ecosystem (modern and contemporary) in Indonesia, which is shown by more than 2500 collections of artworks, ranging from paintings, sculptures, installations, and new media art. With a history of activity for more than 23 years (1997). In addition, the museum, which has three exhibition venues, regularly holds temporary exhibitions by inviting guest curators (independent). This is an interesting reason compared to other art museums, which mostly use permanent exhibitions and rarely involve guest curators.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research uses a qualitative approach, with the aim of developing and describing phenomena that occur in curatorial work practices at OHD Museum Magelang. Based on a

combination of field research data, library research, documentation research of exhibitions at the OHD Museum that has taken place, and discussions and interviews from several related parties, it becomes an important basis for mapping this curatorial work practice so that it can be an additional curatorial study, as an understanding for the general public, and as input for the practitioners of curatorial work practices themselves.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Museum at this time has developed as a symbol of flexibility and creative fluidity to respond to the conditions of post-modernity. It is no longer depicted as a repressive and authoritarian symbol of solid modernity, although some still exist and are attached to museums in Indonesia. To create a museum free from outdated philosophies, a curator plays a very important and vital role in relation to the collections in museum institutions, whether it's public museums or art museums. According to Obrist (2014), curation is a relatively new type of work, which does not indicate the specific nature of its Latin etymological root, *curare*: to care, but at the end of the eighteenth century, curators were marked as custodians of museum collections. Although the definition of the meaning of this word is always evolving, at this time the work of a curator remains close to the notion of *curare* in processing, growing, pruning, and trying to help the community in various contexts to grow. Curation as a verb is so commonly used today, for curators, and its variants (curating, curated). It records a shift in understanding from a curator to a curating business which is now understood as a separate activity. Today, there is a certain resonance between the notion of curation and the contemporary notion of the creative self, floating freely around the world making aesthetic choices of where to go and what to eat, wear and do.

Furthermore, a curator who used to only act as a selector and interpreter of artistic work in an exhibition, is now an independent producer, commissioner, exhibition designer, educator, manager, and organizer. Even now, curators are better known as writers of exhibition introductory texts or curatorial texts displayed on walls and catalogs to support exhibition content. Where a curator is more responsible for research and writing skills (George, 2015: 1). In other words, a curator's job is more than just selecting art collections and managing them. In parallel, the role of the professional curator began to converge on four functions. First, the preservation of collections, where art becomes understood as an important part of a nation's heritage, is the main responsibility of the curator. The second duty is the guard. Over time, the museum's collection had to be added and the curator had a new job of selecting the collection, thereby becoming the custodian of the national heritage represented by the museum. The third is the task of contributing to the history of art. Scientific research into already collected works allows curators to pass on knowledge. Finally, there is the task of organizing and presenting the collection in an exhibition (presentation), a task that often defines contemporary practice (Obrist, 2014).

However, in general, the responsibility and value of a curator in their particular expertise regarding the physical objects of the collection. Where, this is necessary and vital work on the value of museum institutions, which can generate valuable new discourses, and has been mentioned above in four functions according to Obrist (2014). However, over time, the broad scope and responsibilities of a curator make it possible for curatorial work to be divided into several degree terms, which correspond to more specific work duties and responsibilities within a museum institution. Curator job titles may not apply to a small museum, which only has one position with broad duties and responsibilities, from procurement, and maintenance, to the presentation through exhibitions. Sometimes even some museums only have a Museum Director and without a Curator. This is in accordance with Schonfeld's (2019) opinion regarding the traditional type structure, there is a hierarchical model, featuring a group of approximately six to eight divisions or departments, generally including curatorial, education, collection management, marketing, development, security, and facilities. While the non-traditional organizational chart with a circular shape, seeks to

create a more horizontal organizational chart, the circular structure still relies on hierarchy. The circular structure carries the spirit of encouraging communication and free flow of information between the various parts of the division or department, whereas the traditional structure denotes a distinct i.e. as an individual, semi-autonomous branch, the circular structure depicts all the divisions as part of the same whole. While not necessarily appropriate in practice, this chart attempts to visually reflect the work style that is common in museums today.



Figure 1 Position of Guest Curator in OHD Museum Organizational Structure Chart (Produced by Khoiril Anam, 2021)

The division of the position of curator for small museums seems more suitable to use an approach to the division of tasks and responsibilities according to the work area. Such as the division between the linkage focus on collections and exhibitions. First, the realm and responsibilities of the curator are related to deaccessioning, collection acquisition, collection maintenance, collection lending, and documentation/research. While the second, only focus on the preparation for the presentation (exhibition) of collections about works, artists, movements, culture, or historical moments that cover them. This division aims to enable curators to focus between managing (care) collections and presenting collections to broaden public understanding, which leads to improving the quality of visitor experience (Fisher, 2007: 7-8). We can also see these two types in the types of curators described by George as Collection-based Curators and Independent Curators. Where Collection-based Curators or In-house Curators are only responsible for traditional aspects such as collection management, conservation, and research. Meanwhile, what George calls the Independent Curator or Freelance Curator is more concerned with the presentation of works of art or collections in museum or gallery institutions, usually this type is temporary, sometimes also referred to as Co-Curator or 'Guest' Curator. In addition to these two types, George also mentions other types such as; Subject specialist curators, Artist-Curators, and Heads of the department (George, 2015:6-8).

At this time, the idea of curation and contemporary ideas are floating freely around the world, which causes the notion of the curator to be divided into several degree terms, which are in accordance with the duties and responsibilities of the curator's work practice which becomes more specific in a museum or art gallery institution. Museums show that there are two types of curator types which are divided based on the realm of duties and according to what we have The responsibilities OHD has seen above, namely; First, concern about museum collections. Second, focus on exhibitions. This is in accordance with Fisher's (2007) opinion, which aims to enable curators to focus on managing (*care*) collections and presenting (*exhibit*) collections. We will discuss both types below.

### **In-House Curator (Collection-Based Curator)**

dr. Oei Hong Djien is a Permanent Curator at the OHD Museum, as well as the owner of the museum acting as well as being a permanent or in-house curator, who has absolute

authority and decisions on the acquisition of works that will become museum collections (questioning the selection/selection of artworks), as well as on deaccessioning collections. The acquisition process is not only about purchases and grants, but also about borrowing collections from institutions and individuals, the loan process at OHD Museum itself considers risks, and costs, and is related to insurance and is a complicated process. This causes the borrowing process at the OHD Museum to be rare, and the large number of collections owned by the OHD Museum is sufficient to show off its own collection.

The acquisition process by selecting the artwork is the responsibility of dr. Oei Hong Djien, whose entire selection process was obtained through his direct consideration. We have discussed the acquisition process for this collection in the museum collections chapter above. In addition, knowledge of the repertoire of collections and the history of artists and works is also the responsibility of a permanent curator that must be possessed. This has been done by dr. Oei Hong Djien, he must thoroughly research the work to be acquired to ensure the originality, quality, and historical importance of the work. One of them is studying works when the artists were still alive, by discussing, seeing, and listening directly to the stories of the artists, in the studio, exhibition room, or at his home in Magelang. All of these things are in line with Fisher's (2007) opinion which requires the curator to have broad, substantive knowledge of art history and special knowledge in the field. Curators must maintain that expertise to fulfill their responsibilities for their collections.

Apart from obtaining collections, the responsibility of dr. Oei Hong Djien also discussed conservation and restoration (collection care), as well as presentation and interpretation. This means that a museum collection and museum activities or agenda prepare the collection for presentation —which sometimes the museum also cooperates with independent curators or guests— to the public still under the care of a permanent curator. In this case, he is not only responsible for permanent exhibitions, but also for temporary exhibitions organized by the OHD Museum. For exhibitions that are temporary in nature, guest curators are more often curated, but indirectly the curator remains responsible for the whole thing. Where this is because the selection of guest curators is determined by the permanent curator. However, the guest/independent curator has the freedom to choose the collection, the artist, and how to present it. By building intensive communication with permanent curators. The exhibition “Linkage: 20th OHD Museum” involved artists and guest curators, and the process of determining it was through joint discussion.

The areas and responsibilities described above are appropriate and in line with the four functions of a professional curator according to Obrist (2014). The curatorial work practice of a curator still lies in the focus on special expertise regarding the physical objects of the collection. This practice becomes work that is very much needed and very basic to the sustainability of a museum, which in turn can lead to valuable new discourse results in each collection presentation, whether it be through exhibitions, book publications, art research, and others.

### **Guest Curator (Exhibition-Based Curator)**

In addition to the permanent curator of the museum (in-house curator), OHD Museum also involves a guest curator (independent curator) who has a different work focus. Guest curators who have been invited to participate and be involved in presenting the collections at the OHD Museum include: Eddy Soetriyono, Jim Supangkat, Suwarno Wisetrotomo, Wahyudin, and Joanna Lee. Although in practice sometimes the permanent curator and guest curator help each other and discuss their respective work practices, the focus of the working practice of a guest curator in the specific domains and responsibilities at OHD Museum relates to the presentation of collections. By holding temporary exhibitions, such as “Linkage: 20th OHD Museum”, among others; The guest curator has the authority to compile and decide the title of the exhibition, the theme, and issue of the exhibition, the selection of museum collections, as well as the choice of works from the artists invited to be involved, accompanying

the creative process of the artist, making the narrative text of the exhibition and arriving at the display of the works of art that will be exhibited or presented to the museum audience. The process of these works is the result of communication built through a process of discussions with fellow curators and museum managers.

The domain and responsibility of the guest curator only revolve around the presentation of the collection, in other words, the guest curator does not have responsibilities outside the exhibition such as acquiring the collection, caring for, and maintaining the collection, such as conservation or restoration. Generally, the working practice of a guest curator is for a period of 3 - 6 months, a maximum of up to 8 months (Wahyudin, 2021). In the context of the exhibition “Linkage: 20th OHD Museum”, the guest curator arranged a temporary exhibition aimed at presenting the collection with fresh ideas and concepts, and new lighting by juxtaposing it with the latest artworks from invited artists. Aims to lead to reinterpretation, see developments and newer understandings of museum collections, works of art, artists, art movements, or certain historical moments in art history.

The curator is also responsible for broadening the public's understanding of museum collections and improving the quality of visitor experience by seeing collections that are relevant and connected to the current context, this must be taken into account among the purposes of the exhibition, how the selection of works of art from artists who have collected at least 20 OHD packs year at this exhibition. The practice of curatorial work is not only concerned with selecting collections/choice of works of art to be displayed, a guest curator is more responsible for research, and writing skills.

Furthermore, guest curators are also responsible for and work with other professionals, both inside and outside the museum. Like working with the OHD Museum manager, to collect data on artists and collections in accordance with the requirements that have been made in the draft curatorial narrative. In this case, the momentum of the 20th anniversary of OHD Museum is the background for the selection of the 20-year-old OHD Museum collection, which will be juxtaposed with the latest works of 20 artists who have been selected from discussions between guest curators and permanent curators, from collecting data. submitted by the museum management. Furthermore, the selected artists are contacted directly by the museum management (Wisetrotomo, 2021). This shows that guest curators do not only work as writers of exhibition texts on walls and catalogs as supporters but also work with other parties. The responsibilities are applied to the following curatorial work practices: conceptualizing the curatorial exhibition, selecting the collection and the artists involved, producing narrative documents (text), and designing exhibition.

Table 1 Differences in Domains and Responsibilities between Permanent and Visiting Curators at OHD Museum

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>In-House</b>	<b>Guest</b>
Collections	Deaccessioning	✓	
	Acquisition	✓	
	Borrowing	✓	
	Conservation	✓	
	Restoration	✓	
Presentation	Research	✓	✓
	Exhibition Concept		✓

Selecting Collections	✓
Curatorial Writing	✓
Exhibition Design	✓

## CONCLUSION

The practice of curator work through the realms and responsibilities of the OHD Museum. It can be seen in the context of the presentation of the exhibition, between permanent and temporary exhibitions, and the organizational structure of the OHD Museum. This finding shows two types of curators working in the OHD Museum; Permanent Curator and Guest Curator, and it becomes important to see how the different realms and responsibilities of the two curators. Where the permanent curator (In-House or Collection-Based Curator) is responsible for general issues such as acquisition, deaccession, borrowing, documentation, and research, as well as being responsible for conservation, restoration, presentation, and interpretation. Even though the curator is not directly assisted by experts from the museum or from outside the museum. One of them is a guest curator (Guest or Independent Curator) who is responsible for the presentation or exhibition of museum collections, by being actively involved in all aspects related to the presentation of collections such as; conceptualizing the curatorial exhibition, selecting the collection and the artists involved, producing a narrative document (curatorial text), and designing the exhibition design.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In the realm of art, curatorial work practices are often not properly understood. This makes it ineffective in carrying out curatorial work practices in terms of actors and curator partners in making an art exhibition/museum management. This kind of knowledge production should become material for discussion and learning to advance the curatorial studies sector and the realm of curatorial work practice in Indonesia. How curatorial developments must be followed by public readiness through joint studies and discussions, to see how important the curatorial practice sector is in art events and the development of museums. Based on this, the researcher recommends several things that are expected to be taken into consideration in further curatorial studies. Such as research on how curatorial work practices can be considered equal creative work, as is done by a director in a film, no longer just being a bridge or intermediary between artists/artworks with exhibition audiences. With the presence of research around curatorial studies, it is hoped that it will become material for improving art infrastructure more effectively and efficiently, and become a stimulus for the growth of professional curators who can contribute to art events, exhibitions, and museums that are starting to emerge and appear in every country areas in Indonesia.

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## **Wawancara**

Wawancara bersama Oei Hong Djien pada 25 Maret 2021, 10.00 – 13.00 WIB di Rumah OHD, Magelang, Jawa Tengah.

Wawancara bersama Aryo pada 13 April 2021, 10.00 - 13.00 WIB di OHD Museum,  
Magelang Jawa Tengah.

Wawancara bersama Suwarno Wisetrotomo pada 25 August ,2021 WIB di 16:00 - 15:00  
.OHD Museum, Magelang Jawa Tengah

Wawancara bersama Wahyudin pada 03August ,202119.30 - 21:00 WIB di OHD Museum,  
Magelang Jawa Tengah.

### **Situs Internet**

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