



The following conversation took place online between artist and curator Jack Brown and writer Joe WT Scott in the lead up to Brown's group show *Some of Them Got the First Look at Kings ARI*.

Joe WT Scott

In previous conversations you've spoken about the necessity of seeing your chosen artist's work in the gallery space as a starting point to articulate how individual pieces work collectively with others. Through this interaction a conversation between artworks begins to form. Can you talk about this process? Does this practice of meaning making stem from the artists, the works, or the curator?

Jack Brown

I suppose the process I mentioned is the act of installing the works within Kings ARI. It has to do with the works finding their right place in the gallery with a bit of an elbow from myself. They are already so loaded, I think that my role at best is to neglect their origins, their attachment to a particular artist and try and figure out what they are up to in the here and the now. How they can come together, encounter or unravel one another. Since the 'meaning' isn't something I give the works, it's something that I just have to be receptive to. That's why I'm at a bit of an impasse at the moment, the install isn't for another two weeks and there is only so much I can anticipate with the exhibition. The individual artists have already done the hard yards; it's just my job to figure out how to galvanise the install and animate the space between the works.

JWTS

I'm interested in the way in which collage can remove and de-contextualize material from its original state, making something new and often subversive and contradictory to its origins. I'm thinking of real twentieth century originators like Hannah Hoch and John Heartfield who were essentially radical activists and anti-fascists as much as artists. I feel that collage was intrinsic to their politics. In contemporary practices however, collage often seems to be considered less art and more craft. Something with a kind of apolitical innocence to it. What does the act of collage mean to you in a contemporary climate?

JB

The act of collage allows me to draft. It's a diagrammatic process where content, scale, resolution etc. is all up for grabs and gives me a format in which to enact scenarios and test images against one another. But the collage can function in many different ways and can take innumerable forms. There is a sort of compression in collage, a narrative and pictorial compression, and their reality is a hypermediated one – which is also the reality of magazine covers, advertisements and television news. It is a format where the mediation of the content is as present as the content itself; a visual dialect which we know very well how to read because it's everywhere. So it certainly lends itself to a commentary of the politics of image, consumption and promotion. But it can also be a lot of other things.

JWTS

People often mourn the supposed bastardisation of the term 'curation' and it is kinda omnipresent; curated shopping, curated blogs, curated holidays. But rather than being just a fad, it seems more like a

kind of cultural logic that instead of really creating anything genuinely new or original at this moment in time, we're currently just shuffling the deck and cycling through endless iterations of nostalgia and simulacra. So if we're to accept that logic, accept the kind of hopeless and hollow inevitability and superfluosity of cultural curation, then we're probably going to have to question the legitimacy of the curator themselves. What actually is their role? Is this just a symptom of the increasing professionalization of the industry? What is it that they bring to the conversation?

JB

Each curator will have their own logic so I can only speak for myself here, but I recognised certain impulses operating in the act of collage could also be found in a curatorial action. Whilst the term 'curation' has become incredibly ubiquitous and the challenge of separating the art-curator from the blog or showroom curator more difficult, I think that this problem is a propagative thing. It doesn't put the legitimacy of the curator at stake; it just makes the frontiers of what they can do less standardised. The overuse of the term 'curator' may be a product of the professionalisation of the 'creative industries,' but it allows one to take on a role that has a history and lineage with which to consult with and push forward. The role of the curator can be a great curtain to hide behind, and a strong show could completely erase their presence. But a strongly curated show could also become an exposé on their motivations and dispositions.

I think there is a correspondence here to the format of interview that you have chosen for the text. An interviewer could almost vanish behind the questions they ask, or their questions can gesture toward their own impulses. I was wondering how you find yourself managing this negotiation when you are composing your interviews?

JWTS

I think that's a really compelling analogy and one that speaks to the reasons that I'm interested in interviews as part of a creative practice. I think both forms exhibit similar tendencies and propensities; collective meaning making, dialogue and discussion and the possibility of agreement or divergence which are both equally valued. Both forms acknowledge the fact that we can't be whole in isolation. I guess a lot of the ways in which I want to work and write are similar to your ideas regarding the kind of collagic nature of our navigation and consumption of media. I'm made up of unattributed images and unsourced quotes and opinions yet to be fully formed. I find it difficult to entirely anchor my thoughts, but perhaps there is something useful in that fact? The idea of the potentiality found in collage and eclecticism and sampling seems not only logical but exciting. As a writer I suppose I try to make unforeseen connections and unanticipated conversations. I'm usually more interested in the kind of engagements that take place at coffee shops and bars and parties than I am in what takes place in museums and lecture theatres. It's not necessarily something "new" or "original" but it's a recontextualisation and I think that act has the potential to be radical. So for that reason I can't wait to see what emerges from *Some of Them Got the First Look*.