

PREFACE

Insecurity—a survival instinct and an appetite for partying—prompted the creation of *Young Curators, New Ideas* in 2008. At the time, I accepted a director/curator position at the now defunct Bond Street Gallery in Gowanus, Brooklyn. Not one month into the job, the owner asked me to curate a summer exhibition in four weeks' time. We were on our way to Yale when he mentioned it, followed by, "let's discuss some ideas when we return to the gallery." I panicked. Though I had provided administrative support on a few exhibitions produced by Humble Arts Foundation, the photo-based nonprofit I co-founded in 2005, I hardly identified as a curator. But I needed the gig, so on our way to Yale, I began making calls to my friends who had expressed an interest in curating at the gallery. The proposition was simple: 10 feet of wall space to examine trends in contemporary art photography. By the time we reached Yale, I confirmed six curators, and on August 13, 2008, I presented the first edition of *Young Curators, New Ideas*.

The exhibition was wildly successful. I was not cognizant of it then that *Young Curators, New Ideas* marked the first time curators were contextualized as artists vis-à-vis their curatorial proposals. Viewers judged the ideas and presentation of each exhibition as if they were individual objects; in essence, curatorial positions transformed into the artwork itself. The celebration of curatorial vision is not a new phenomenon, but an attempt to treat curators as artists is unique to this series. Once I realized this, I decided to take my show on the road.

Over the years, criticism of the exhibition is what one would expect: *The ideas are not new, what*

constitutes "young"? and, my favorite, *there are too many curators*. The first and second points of criticism I understand, sort of. *Young Curators, New Ideas* is an aspiration; it is not meant to garner a literal critique. The exhibition itself takes on a fresh approach, but I do not pretend it is on some Christian Marclay, *The Clock* shit. With the title, my intentions were to confront a particular art-world sensibility that claims nothing is new. If this is true, then what better way to gain the attention of my contemporaries than to say otherwise? The latter point of critique is a bit odd for the art world. Complaining that there are too many curators is to admit there are too many perspectives, which of course is problematic. What is ironic about this position is that people often speak of the lack of opportunities for emerging artists and the difficulty in breaking into the New York art market. This exhibition, while not expressly intended, does its part to address this issue.

Young Curators, New Ideas began as a survival tactic that is today a space for new curators to try their hand, and seasoned curators to produce exhibitions that may not fit into an established gallery or institutional program. In *Young Curators, New Ideas IV*, the initiative inches closer toward its goal with 12 curators, including first-timer Larry Ossei-Mensah, Chelsea OG, Stephanie Roach and emerging London-based curator Ariella Wolens, who makes her New York debut. Together, the 12 curators transform ideas into presentations that produce the same aura as individual works of art.

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