

Shani Khoo Parsons

INDEPENDENT CURATOR, DESIGNER, AND FOUNDING DIRECTOR OF CRITICAL DISTANCE CENTRE FOR CURATORS, TORONTO

7 YEARS EXPERIENCE in independent curating, production of exhibitions, screenings, publications, and events, and arts administration, not-for-profit organizational management, creative collaboration, and community building

20+ YEARS EXPERIENCE working in multiple capacities (designer, art director, project/team manager, artist) within institutional, independent, commercial, and not-for-profit museum/gallery contexts

SKILLS INCLUDE exhibition development/production, curatorial research/writing, print/web-based marketing and promotions, publication design/printing, budgeting and grantwriting, event planning and production, collaboration. Expert level: Adobe Design Suite/Google/Apple/MS apps, Wordpress; proficient: Mailchimp and HTML/CSS.

Biography

Since the mid-1990s, Shani Khoo Parsons (Canada/US, b.1970, Philadelphia) has pursued a multidisciplinary practice focused on exhibition-making—initially through the lenses of architecture and urban planning, then graphic and environmental design, and most recently through research, writing, curation, and collaboration. In the process she has produced an eclectic body of work ranging from intimate artist's books to immersive exhibitions. Advancing a nonlinear career trajectory that diverges from that of many of her peers in museums/galleries and academia, Parsons leverages a truly broad skill set and transdisciplinary perspective in her approach to conceiving and leading a uniquely positioned arts organization in Canada while pursuing a parallel practice in independent curating.

Recent and selected projects include: curation/production of site-sensitive architectural interventions such as *THE FUTURE IS...* rooftop installation for Ontario Place, and *Flights & Landings* and *Signals & Sentiments*, comprising six large-scale stairwell installations for Artscape Youngplace (a 75,000 sf cultural/community hub in downtown Toronto); experimental and thematic moving image programs for InFuture Art+Music Festival (*Slipstreams* in the Cinesphere), Blackwood Gallery, UToronto (*Love's Labours*, focused on the intersections between motherhood and artistic practice, and by extension issues of art world accessibility, or lack thereof, for working families), and *CHINA NOW: Cinema on the Edge* (selected animation and ficto-documentary works from the Beijing International Film Festival); conceptual artist's books, print and publication design for Lyla Rye (*Cyclorama*), Rhode Island School of Design (RISD NY Biennial catalogues), Museum of Chinese in America (*Chinatown Film Project*, and *Virtual Salon: Transnational Chinese Photographers in the Digital Age*); and curatorial and cross-cultural research and collaboration through projects such as *THE NEW GODS* feat. Alejandro Garcia Contreras (Chiapas) and Josée Pedneault (Quebec), and programming partnerships with orgs including Aboriginal Curatorial Collective, SAVAC, and SAW Video Media Arts Centre, Ottawa.

Current Work

CRITICAL DISTANCE CENTRE FOR CURATORS / Founding Director / Toronto / 2013–present

Programming, exhibitions, events, print/digital design and production, marketing/promotions/pr, budgeting, grant writing, fundraising, project management, staffing, long term strategic planning, and day-to-day operations of an independent not-for-profit organization, gallery, and publisher in downtown Toronto.

ANOTHER BEAUTIFUL DAY / Independent Curating, Art, and Design / Toronto, New York / 2003–present

Curatorial and design project development from conception to completion, including research, planning, execution, and documentation. Art writing including essays, summaries, and reviews. Participation on juries, panels, public talks and tours, mentorships, and workshops. Artist's books and installations by commission.

Education

BACHELOR OF FINE ART / RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL OF DESIGN / Providence / 2000

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE, ARCHITECTURE / TEMPLE UNIVERSITY / Philadelphia / 1994

Ongoing coursework in curatorial studies: University of Sunderland MA Curating short course (UK/London), NODE (Berlin), OCADU (Toronto) and NYU (New York) / 2003–present

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Selected Past Work

MIXED GREENS CONTEMPORARY ART GALLERY / New York / 2005–2008

Coordinated, edited, designed and produced all visual materials in support of the exhibition program for commercial gallery in Chelsea, including artwork catalogues, monographs, print collateral, HTML emails and website.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY / New York / 2001–2003

Creative development, direction and design of award-winning permanent and traveling exhibitions and publications including the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites, *EINSTEIN*, *Pearls*, and *Discovering the Universe: A Moveable Museum*.

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART / New York / Summer 1997

Creative development, design and production of visual materials for *More Pieces for the Puzzle*, a group exhibition curated by Robert Storr; departmental design support for Bonnard, Rodchenko, and Kusama exhibitions

Selected Press + Honours

CURATORIAL / 2005–2017

The following exhibitions/programs curated by Shani K Parsons were listed as Must-See Shows or reviewed/featured by *Canadian Art*, *NOW Magazine*, *Akimbo* and others: *Erratic Room* (2013), *Flights & Landings*, *The New Gods*, and *Moving right along* (2015); *On The Surface* and *China Now* (2016); and *Signals & Sentiments* (2017). *The New Gods*, *On The Surface*, and *Signals & Sentiments* were selected as Featured Exhibitions in 2015, 2016, and 2017 by the CONTACT Photography Festival, with *The New Gods* artist Josée Pedneault receiving the CONTACT Portfolio Review and Exhibition Award. In 2015, Parsons was profiled by Independent Curators International for their Spring newsletter. Her first curatorial project, *Naked Singularities* (2005) was reviewed and listed in *New York Press* and *Time Out New York*.

DESIGN + ART / 2000–2017

The following exhibitions designed by Shani K Parsons for American Museum of Natural history received honours or press coverage as listed: *EINSTEIN* (2002) received awards from the Art Directors Club, Society for Environmental Graphic Design, and ID Magazine Annual Review, and press coverage in *The New Yorker*. *Pearls* (2003) received an award from the Art Directors Club. *EINSTEIN*, *Pearls*, *Vietnam: Journeys of Body, Mind and Spirit* (2003), The Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites (2003), and The Discovery Room (2001) all received press coverage in *The New York Times*. The teachers' guide for *Discovering the Universe* received an award from the Association of Educational Publishers. Between 2000 and 2017 Parsons has exhibited her artist's books in Providence, Toronto, Calgary, and Bucharest. Her site-specific installations *Double Helix* and *Inversion* were commissioned by the RISD Museum as winners of the Sitings 2000 competition juried by Ernesto Pujol.

Community Service / Volunteering

Gallery Advisory Committee / Koffler Centre of the Arts / 2019–present

Board of Directors / SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre) / 2018–present

Panelist for ACC-CCA / Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario, Dream Big North Conference / May 2018

Curatorial Advisory Board / Artscape Youngplace / 2013–present

Juror, OCADU Medal for Criticism and Curatorial Practice / OCAD University / Toronto 2017

Q+A for Student Night / with Ryan Rice and Karen Carter / Power Plant Contemporary Art Centre / 2017

Hybrid Practices / artist talk with Deborah Wang / Ten.A.City at Craft Ontario / 2016

Writing Exhibition Proposals / panel discussion with Peter Kingstone / Toronto Arts Council / 2015

Communications Chair / Friends of Roxton Road Parks / 2012–2013

It's My Park Day / Decatur Playground Restoration / Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbourhood, Brooklyn / 2008

Visiting Critic for Design / for Catharine Weese / Parsons The New School for Design / New York / 2004–2007

Selected Memberships / Affiliations

Independent Curators International (ICI NY), Canadian Artists' Representation (CARFAC), Media Arts Network of Ontario (MANO), Power Plant Contemporary Art Centre, Gallery 44, Images Festival, Pleasure Dome