

Shani K Parsons

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

Current Work

2013–present **Founding Director / Critical Distance Centre for Curators (CDCC) / Toronto**

Day-to-day operations, long-term visioning, and strategic planning for independent not-for-profit gallery, publisher, and professional network devoted to supporting and advancing curatorial practice and inquiry. Have worked collaboratively over the past 7 years with over 200 guest curators, artists, and co-presenting partners to produce nearly 40 exhibitions and curatorial projects supported by critical writing, public programs, and educational/discursive events.

2003–present **Independent Curator, Artist, and Designer / Another Beautiful Day / New York, Toronto**

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

Selected Past Work

2005–2008 **Designer / Various clients in museums, galleries, and creative industries/independents / New York**
Independent design of identities, visual materials, publications, and digital for Museum of Chinese in America (Chinatown Film Project, Here+Now: Chinese Artists in New York), Mixed Greens (art gallery in Chelsea, RISD NY (2016 and 2018 RISD Biennial catalogues), Nam Klm Design, and others.

2001–2003 **Lead Designer, Department of Exhibitions / American Museum of Natural History / New York**
Creative development and design of award-winning traveling exhibitions and permanent halls such as the Arthur Ross Hall of Meteorites, EINSTEIN, and *Discovering the Universe: A Moveable Museum*.

1997 **Design intern, Exhibitions Department / Museum of Modern Art / New York**
Creative development, design and production of visual materials for *More Pieces for the Puzzle* (w/ Robert Storr); departmental design support for Bonnard, Rodchenko, and Kusama exhibitions.

Education

2020–2022 **Candidate, MVS Curatorial Studies / University of Toronto, Daniels Faculty / Ontario, Canada**

2000 **BFA Honours, Graphic Design / Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) / Providence, Rhode Island**

1994 **BS Architecture / Temple University / Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Professional Development

2020 **Superheat: Bearable Substructures / Columbia GSAPP and Studio-X Amman**
Selected to participate in month-long seminar with Amman-based architect/artist Ala Younis focused on the physical, political, and poetic implications and impacts of construction sites, specifically within developing countries and contexts. This 4th edition of the Janet Abu-Lughod Library Seminar is organized by the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation at Columbia University and Studio-X Amman in partnership with the Sijal Institute for Arabic Language and Culture. A collaborative publication by participants is forthcoming.

2019 **Expanded Practice / Curatorial residency at Knot Project Space, SAW Video Media Arts Centre**
Two-week invitational intensive exploring and expanding the intersections, poetics, and potentials between curating and media art presentation in a nonstandard, spatially complex and dynamic context (w/ Neven Lochhead).

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- 2019 **Curating After New Media / MA Curating (nonmatriculating) / University of Sunderland / UK**
One-week intensive in London, UK meeting curators at Tate, Furtherfield, Wellcome Collection, V&A, Science Gallery, Autograph, Machines Room, Somerset House, and others (w/ Beryl Graham).
- 2011–2013 **Department of Criticism and Curatorial Practice (nonmatriculating) / OCAD University / Toronto**
Selected coursework: *Museums, Galleries, & Alternative Spaces* (w/ Michelle Gewurtz), *Exhibitions: Processes and Practices* (w/ Jennifer Rudder), and *Art Today* (w/ Johanna Householder).
- 2003–2004 **The Institute of Fine Arts (nonmatriculating) / New York University (NYU) / New York**
Selected coursework: *Exhibitions for Museums and Galleries* (w/ Bruce Weber), *Gallery and Alternative Space Management and Contemporary Curatorial Practice* (w/ Lia Gangitano).

Selected Curatorial Projects

- 2021 pending **Postcards from the Antipodes / Toronto Media Arts Centre (TMAC) / images Festival**
Site-responsive multidisciplinary group exhibition presented in conjunction with the 2021 Images Festival (postponed from 2020 due to COVID-19). Featuring Johanna Hedva, Black Quantum Futurism, Justin Barton+Mark Fisher, Midi Onodera, Andy Slater, Vera Frenkel, and others. Programs include live performances, curatorial/artist's talks and tours, and an experimental anthology/publication.
- 2019 **Publishing Against the Grain / Critical Distance x Independent Curators International / Toronto**
Traveling exhibition focused on the state of independent critical arts publishing from around the world. Alongside the international selection from ICI, Critical Distance presents a "capsule" exhibition of socio-politically and aesthetically engaged arts publishing projects, including *Scapegoat*, *Lola*, *HIV Howler*, *Redwire*, *Charcuterie*, and *MICE Magazine*.
- 2017 **Love's Labours / Blackwood Gallery / University of Toronto / Mississauga**
50-minute moving image program on intersections of motherhood and artistic practice as they relate to issues of care. Featuring Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollens, Lu Heintz, Mary Kelly, Mirha-Soleil Ross, Melissa Mollen Dupuis, Jules Arita Koostachin, Tracey Kershaw, Megan Wynne, Betye and Alison Saar, Cara Mumford and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, and Kelly O'Brien.
- 2017 **Signals & Sentiments (stairwell installations) / Artscape Youngplace / Toronto**
Large-scale site-responsive installations in three public stairwells by Maggie Groat and Jimmy Limit (St. Catharines), Karen Henderson (Toronto), and Josée Pedneault (Montreal). Public art component of two-part group exhibition produced as part of a curatorial mentorship program for CDCC intern Katelyn Gallucci. A Featured Exhibition of the CONTACT Photography Festival.
- 2016 **The Future Is... / Ontario Place / Toronto**
Site-specific rooftop installation at Ontario Place for InFuture Art + Music Festival, featuring artwork by Tamara Gayer (Brooklyn).
- 2016 **Slipstreams / Cinesphere at Ontario Place / Toronto**
Experimental moving image program featuring Morehshin Allahyari (Brooklyn), Maria Flawia Litwin (Toronto), Marianna Milhorat (Chicago), Terence Nance (Brooklyn), and Manuel Saiz (Spain).
- 2015 **The New Gods: Alejandro Garcia Contreras + Josée Pedneault / TYPOLOGY Projects / Toronto**
- 2014 **Flights & Landings / TYPOLOGY Projects / Toronto**
Group exhibition in gallery and stairwells at Artscape Youngplace featuring Tamara Gayer (New York), Christine Gedeon (Berlin), and Janine Miedzik (Toronto).

- 2014 **Of Other Faces / TYPOLOGY Projects / Toronto**
Group exhibition featuring Andrea Cohen and Wiska Radkiewicz (Paris, New York), Victoria Fu (Los Angeles), Marta Ryczko (Toronto), and Manuel Saiz (Berlin).
- 2013 **Erratic Room / TYPOLOGY Projects** (former name of Critical Distance) / Toronto
Solo exhibition of immersive site-responsive installation by Toronto-based midcareer artist Lyla Rye.
- 2004 **Naked Singularities / Nix Gallery / Tribeca, New York**
Group exhibition featuring New York-based painters Håvard Homstvedt, Charlie Ledbetter, Mia de Bethune, Minako Iwamura, Nicholas Papadakis, and Elinor Dei Tos Pironti.

Selected Awards, Press + Honours

- 2019 **Lacey Prize: Honourable Mention / National Gallery of Canada / Ottawa**
Under Shani K Parsons' directorship, Critical Distance was nominated by Vera Frenkel for the Lacey Prize and was subsequently awarded an honourable mention from a field of over 50 nominees nationwide. Established in 2019 in association with the National Gallery of Canada, the Lacey Prize recognizes the crucial role of small arts organizations in supporting artistic practices in Canada.
- 2019 **Ontario Arts Council: Compass + Market Platform grants for CDCC**
Funding awards for strategic planning and digital platform initiative to upgrade our Curators' Directory.
- 2018 **Ontario Arts Council: Skills and Career Development: Arts Professionals of Colour**
Professional development grant to attend *Curating After New Media* with Beryl Graham, a noncredit curatorial intensive administered by the MA Curating program at University of Sunderland, UK.
- 2017–2019 **Ontario Arts Council: Visual Arts Project, Compass, and Market Platform grants for CDCC**
Project funding received for three exhibitions: *Forward Facing* (2017, curated by Cass Gardiner), *Publishing Against the Grain* (2018, curated by Shani K Parsons), and *Access is Love and Love is Complicated* (2019, co-curated by Emily Cook and Sean Lee). Awards for strategic planning and digital platform development (Curators Directory) for organizational development.
- 2016–2019 **Toronto Arts Council: Visual and Media Arts project grants for CDCC (total of 4 awards to date)**
Project funding received for four exhibitions: *Precious Commodity* (2016, curated by Alison Cooley), *We Look At Animals Because* (2017, co-curated by Nahed Mansour and Toleen Touq), *An Archive, But Not An Atlas* (2018, curated by Liz Ikiriko), and *A Big Heritage with a Glorious Past* (2019, co-curated by Magdalyn Asimakis and Heather Rigg, aka ma ma projects).
- 2013–2017 **Selected Press + Honours: Curatorial work / Toronto, New York**
Exhibitions/programs curated by Shani K Parsons listed as Must-See Shows or reviewed/featured in *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), with *The New Gods* artist Josée Pedneault receiving the CONTACT Portfolio Review and Exhibition Award. In 2015, Parsons was profiled by Independent Curators International. Her first curatorial project, *Naked Singularities* (2005) was reviewed and listed in *New York Press* and *Time Out New York*.
- 2001–2003 **Selected Press + Honours: Design work / New York**
Exhibitions at American Museum of Natural History for which Shani K Parsons was lead designer received honours and/or press coverage as follows: *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 The Golden Lamp award from the Association of Educational Publishers.

2000–2017 **Selected Awards + Exhibitions: Art work** / Providence, Toronto, Calgary, Bucharest
Site-specific installations *Double Helix* and *Inversion* commissioned by the RISD Museum as dual winners of the *Sitings 2000* competition juried by Ernesto Pujol, produced in collaboration with Luke Parsons, Lise Andersson, and Alex Ching. Between 2000 and 2017 Shani K Parsons has exhibited prints and artist's books in group shows in Providence, Toronto, Calgary, and Bucharest.

2000 **Meridian Printing Award for Innovation in Art and Design** / Providence, Rhode Island

1998 **Wayne E Smith Memorial Award for Design Excellence** / Providence, Rhode Island

Selected Presentations + Public Events

2019 **Public Drop-in Sessions: Expanded Practice residency at Knot Project Space** / SAW Video, Ottawa
Panelist: The CONTACT Photobook Lab: In Detail (w/ Sara Knelman) / Scrap Metal Gallery

2018 **Moderator: Generators: Conversation w/ Anthony Stepter + Erika DeFreitas** / Toronto Art Book Fair
Panelist: Contemporary Intersections in Artistic Practice (w/ ACC-CCA) / CPAMO Conference
In conversation with Cass Gardiner and Sarah DeCarlos, moderated by Clayton Windatt (Executive Director, Aboriginal Curatorial Collective), for Cultural Pluralism in the Arts Movement Ontario (CPAMO).

2017 + 2018 **Workshop leader (w/ Leah Sandals): Art + Parenthood, Labour + Love** (2 sessions) / Gallery 44

2017 **Panelist: Student Night (w/ Ryan Rice + Karen Carter)** / Power Plant Contemporary Art Centre

2015 **Panelist: Writing Exhibition Proposals (w/ Peter Kingstone)** / Toronto Arts Council

Selected Publications + Writing

2019 **Exhibition review: *Ban' yuh belly: Anique Jordan at Zalucky Contemporary*** / Akimblog

2016 **Essay: *Proof 23*, annual exhibition of emerging Canadian lens-based artists** / Gallery 44
Hannah Doucet, Anyse Ducharme, Jeneen Frei Njootli, Anique J Jordan, Noah Spivak, Agnes Wong

2013–2015 **Curatorial Essays: selected exhibition catalogues** / TYPOLOGY Projects
Erratic Room (2013), *The Order of Things* (2014), *Of Other Faces* (2014), *The New Gods* (2015).

Jury, Board/Committee, and Community Service

2020 **Juror: Multi and Inter-Arts Project Grants** / Ontario Arts Council

2019 **Juror: Exhibitions of the Year + BIPOC Changemaker Awards** / Ontario Association of Art Galleries

2019 **Juror: Toronto Arts Council** / Visual Arts Project Grants

2017 **Juror: OCADU Medal for Criticism and Curatorial Practice** / OCAD University

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

2018–2020 **Executive Board** / SAVAC (South Asian Visual Arts Centre)

2013–present **Curatorial Advisory Board** / Artscape Youngplace

2008 **Volunteer: Decatur Playground Restoration** / Bedford-Stuyvesant neighbourhood, Brooklyn

2004–2007 **Visiting Critic for Design (with Catharine Weese)** / Parsons The New School for Design / New York