

ling. There is a lot here for readers interested in early modern print and academic culture, as well as those who work in fields related to mathematics—astronomy and architecture in particular. And while the book seeks to take in the state of mathematical texts across early modern Europe, the scope is admittedly a little narrower than that, with a heavy focus on England and on Oxford in particular. That having been said, *Reading Mathematics* invites further study at the intersection of the histories of print and math, perhaps across a broader swath of space and time. As the book itself argues, the history of mathematics is written by readers as much as it is by those being read.—Lena Newman, *Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library, Columbia University*

Curating Under Pressure: International Perspectives on Negotiating Conflict and Upholding Integrity. Janet Marstine and Svetlana Mintcheva, eds. New York, NY: Routledge, 2021. Ebook, xxv, 264p. \$40.45 (ISBN: 978-0-8153-9621-5).

Curating Under Pressure: International Perspectives on Negotiating Conflict and Upholding Integrity examines the delicate route curators must negotiate between supporting artistic freedom of expression while managing the expectations of systems of government, stakeholders providing financial support, communities represented in the art, and the potential audience for their exhibitions. It suggests that curators must balance their autonomy with respect to the diversity of their local, regional, or national environments. Both private and public entities may force curators into a position where they must choose between prioritizing freedom of expression and artistic creativity or protecting the reputation of their institutions or safety of their colleagues.

Janet Marstine and Svetlana Mintcheva are well-established in the field of Museum Studies. Marstine’s teaching, research, and professional career focus on museum ethics. She has written or served as editor for four books on ethics and museum theory and sat on the Ethics Committee of the UK’s Museums Association from 2014 to 2019. Mintcheva is an academic and an activist whose research and teaching focus on censorship and free speech in the arts. She is the director of programs at the National Coalition Against Censorship and founded the Arts Advocacy Program in the organization 20 years ago. Their selection of chapters for this book illustrates a broad spectrum of situations in which each author experienced censorship or self-censorship and had to navigate a complicated set of ethical questions in their role as art curator or museum director. It includes international examples from regions including East Asia, the Middle East, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Russia, Colombia, and the United States. Together, these diverse perspectives highlight the idea that censorship exists everywhere and takes different forms depending on the national system of government and the cultural expectations surrounding art and what the public or those in power deem “appropriate” for public display.

The book, divided into two parts, contains a list of black-and-white figures incorporated into the chapters along with a list of color plates cited in the chapters but found near the front of the book. The first part, “Understanding Self-Censorship,” includes six chapters and focuses on recognizing the factors that contribute to self-censorship in a variety of political and cultural contexts. Marstine opens this section by discussing “how censorship, self-censorship and freedom of expression are mutually constitutive and slippery categories” (xix), using examples of her experience navigating the political dynamics between China and Hong Kong while working with art exhibitions in both locations. The remaining chapters in Part I discuss how curators have recognized or employed different forms of self-censorship in response to institutional, government, or public pressure in the United Kingdom, Qatar, Israel, South Africa, and China. In each example, curators had to alter or eliminate specific works of art or entire exhibitions due to pieces deemed controversial by stakeholders or the surrounding community.

Part II, “Negotiating Self-Censorship,” “focuses on the strategies and tactics that practitioners have developed to maintain the integrity of their curatorial vision” (xxi) while experiencing pressures to censor from external groups. Using examples from Palestine, Turkey, East Asia, Colombia, Russia, and the United States, the authors discuss successful and unsuccessful curatorial practices from their own experiences. Mintcheva closes the book by discussing what she terms “adaptive curatorial practice,” which she defines as “a way of working that is always actively aware of the sociopolitical environment and the interest vectors conveying onto art institutions yet succeeds in negotiating the resulting pressures and preserving the integrity of the artist’s and curator’s vision” (212). She offers strategies for successfully navigating these issues by prioritizing communication with stakeholders and developing local, regional, and national communities as networks of support. These communities of museum practitioners can help each other by reviewing exhibitions for content that may face censorship and strategizing methods for communicating with stakeholders through programming and contextualizing works of art in written materials accompanying exhibits. By being open about the intentions of the exhibition from the beginning and seeking out areas of possible contention during all planning phases, curators can mitigate censorship to achieve this balance and avoid conflict.

Curating Under Pressure is unique in the study of museum ethics because of its focus on self-censorship. It argues that self-censorship exists in curatorial practices everywhere and is sometimes necessary to maintain a code of ethics. Rather than something to be avoided, knowing when to apply self-censorship is critical to the profession and a core skill that curators should possess. Its emphasis on combining theoretical and practical approaches sets it apart from other books about museum

studies, as does its focus on international perspectives. It discusses approaches to avoiding legal scrutiny, protecting the security of museum workers and their spaces, and managing public outcry while maintaining curatorial integrity.

Although each chapter tells a different story about its author's experiences with self-censorship, they are weaved together so that common themes emerge around the globe. Each chapter provides a necessary amount of context about the political and cultural environment in its geographical location so someone unfamiliar with the area can understand why the art in question was viewed as controversial, why the censorship occurred, and why the resulting curatorial decisions were made. Historic and cultural context is very important in each example, so it is beneficial to the reader to help them understand the curator's point of view. The book emphasizes that pressure to censor can come from anywhere: the government, corporations, the military, right- and left-leaning activist groups, and from within museums themselves. Providing international perspectives is certainly a benefit, although the continents of South America and Africa are underrepresented, as is Australia, the only populated continent without a chapter devoted to it.

One of this book's strengths is the relevance and urgency of the issues it discusses. Its arguments are representative of current events surrounding freedom of speech and artistic expression. The influence of social media on issues of censorship also appears in several chapters. While social media can be a beneficial tool, in several examples, it serves as a means for the public to mobilize with like-minded groups and unite to protest works of art they deem unacceptable. Curators lose control of the narrative in social media due to the decontextualization of the art, often criticized by people who have never seen it and have no context for its creation. This sometimes resulted in entire programs being canceled due to public backlash. The frequent discussions of social media make the book seem more relevant to current events and curatorial practices.

In most chapters, the author provides enough context, illustrated figures, or color plates to help the reader understand the work in question and why it received scrutiny. However, there are some instances, particularly in chapters 8, 13, and 14, where the reader may need to research the artwork or artists to see a visual of the work and read about its creation and meaning to understand why it was challenged.

Additionally, the authors show a recurring bias against censorship in all forms, often favoring artistic expression above all else. Despite one of the book's main arguments being that self-censorship is sometimes necessary, and should even be embraced, often the authors seemed to describe their self-censorship begrudgingly.

This does not undermine the argument, but it does at times seem to delegitimize the viewpoint of those calling for censorship. This can read as slightly dismissive because one of the strategies for adaptive curatorial practice is to have productive engagement with potential objectors rather than becoming confrontational.

This book is part of a “Museum Meanings” book series and would be most useful for museum practitioners who curate exhibits, work with artists to acquire or showcase their work, or participate in fundraising or museum administration. Most examples focus on contemporary art, but librarians, archivists, and curators in archives and special collections will see parallels in their work, especially regarding the selection of materials for exhibits, presentations, outreach, or teaching. Anyone in a position that requires communicating with donors, administration, local communities, and the general public can find useful advice for negotiating these relationships and minimizing conflict related to controversial collections or programs.

Overall, this book challenges the outdated binary of artistic freedom versus suppression and addresses many examples of the pressures to self-censor artistic works. Under the pretense that “Entirely avoiding controversy is impossible—one can never predict what content will spark opposition” (218), it provides advice for navigating complex relationships by increasing communication with stakeholders and communities represented, creating supplemental materials to contextualize potentially controversial works, and building a community of practice to recognize and address potential calls for censorship before they can multiply through social media or attract unwanted attention. Even those without curatorial responsibilities can appreciate learning about international perspectives on art and the struggles to push the boundaries of art within the confines of what is socially, culturally, and politically acceptable.—*Alison Reynolds, Georgia Institute of Technology*

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