

Trance-Forming Exhibitions:

Fusing contemporary art, rave culture, and nightlife

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Abstract

This study proposes an experimental curatorial concept that explores how the elements and culture of raves can transform art exhibitions into immersive, inclusive, and transformative experiences. It looks at how people's individual experiences and subjectivities interact within these curated spaces. By asking what art curation can learn from rave culture—how to stage a rave-like atmosphere in an exhibition, and how a “rave sensibility” can reshape art institutions and aesthetic experiences—this study aims to create both a theoretical and practical framework for this new exhibition format. Drawing on an interdisciplinary approach, the research includes personal observations from attending raves, reviews of academic writing on rave culture and museum studies, and an analysis of three case studies featuring hybrid art-rave events. It argues that combining music, exhibition design, and technology can go beyond conventional aesthetic experiences and initiate new art movements, potentially empowering underrepresented groups and sparking renewed interest in contemporary art—especially among younger audiences. The appendix presents the lists of expenses and funding for the event, and a semiotic experiment proposal, highlighting possible ways to put these ideas into practice. Overall, this work lays a foundation for further innovation, suggesting that bringing together rave culture and art for such ephemeral autonomous events may lead the future of cultural production and curatorial practice.

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*"Let the museum be a place to encounter art, but also to
encounter each other."*

- Thelma Golden (Tomkins 2024)

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Introduction

As an independent artist, curator, and art lover, I have visited countless different exhibition spaces. Yet what appeals to me is the idea of turning an art gallery or exhibition visit into a collective full-bodied sensory experience that unites visitors for personal exploration and shared connection. I have always believed that the contemporary art space of the future would be filled with all kinds of technology to serve every individual, especially subordinated groups, thus allowing them to express their narratives freely through their creativity, building their own cultural discourse, and eliminate the misunderstandings and barriers between different backgrounds and cultures. Despite working in the art industry, I often enjoy going to concerts or raves in my spare time, and music has always been an essential inspiration. After attending concerts and major music festivals in the last six years such as Rolling Loud and other underground techno raves in Toronto, I sensed that a combination of art integrated with a loud sound system, youth culture, underground rave, and nightlife would have the potential and power to bring about my longed-for changes and innovations. Curator Mariana Fernández elaborates on why the introduction of shared aural spaces in museums remains an unpopular anomaly:

Most radically, to attend to sound and its acoustics within the museum means to also deprivilege sight as the primary means of aesthetic experience and objecthood as the primary material of aesthetic consumption. To swap the fragmented, isolated “viewer” for the more embodied, collective “audience,” which challenges the foundations of an enterprise created by and for an objectifying gaze. Sound has the potential to ‘literally start shaking buildings apart’ (Fernández 2024).

In addition to the changes that sound can bring to the traditional aesthetic experience, the combination of art and raves could generate a sizable market not only today but also in the future. Music critic Simran Chopra holds a confident outlook on the future of rave based on his analysis of raves' history. He argues:

Rave culture has the potential to be a positive force for change, but only if we approach it with care and consideration. The history of rave parties is a testament to the power of youth culture.... As long as there are young people looking for a place to dance and let loose, rave culture will continue to evolve and thrive (Chopra 2023).

At the convergence of art, music, and youth culture, raves carry transformative energy that holds the potential to not only break down cultural barriers, but also to reshape the ways to interact with and experience art. Rave culture goes a long way towards creating inclusive spaces and communities that resonate with freedom, expression and solidarity.

My rave friends and I usually get together two hours before the event starts, which is the time we use to catch up, introduce new friends to each other, and get ready. During the ride departing for the venue, our ideas and discussions become more spirited and creative due to the excitement. As our car pulls up in front of the venue, I can somewhat feel the vibrations of the bass traveling from the fenced-up industrial buildings across the street to my feet. We get out and walked along with others, and I can clearly sense that the people here have a different, elevated mood and energy compared to elsewhere. Seeing the queue at a rough entrance with no signs or decals, we know we were in the right place. After passing through ticketing and security checks, we finally make it to the dance floor. Upon entering this dark room, we explore the space and

choose our spot on the dance floor before immersing ourselves in the repetitive rhythms emanating from the sound system. As the room grows hotter, the cheers of the crowd behind us rise and fall but harmonize into a collective energy field. Through my sunglasses, the scene looks like a movie. The silhouettes and movements of people's dancing bodies, illuminated by flashing strobes and stage lights, blur into an autonomous, fluid whole that surrounds and infects me, seamlessly assimilating me as part of the collective. Taking off my sunglasses, I briefly tap back into reality. I see the crowd around me more clearly, and I am once again captivated and inspired by each person's unique fashion style and dance moves. The immense visual and auditory information causes me to lose perception of time and become completely immersed in a full-body, visceral, and sensory experience. Before we know it, the night has come to an end, and we are left with a personal memory that will be etched in our hearts forever.

“Rave” was a term used to describe the “wild bohemian parties” in the late 1950s in London and soon used to describe any wild party in general in the early 1960s. In the 1980s, the music played at the raves had its origins in techno from Detroit, acid house from Chicago and garage from New York, which later evolved into various subgenres like jungle, trance, hardcore, electronic, and more. The enthusiastic party attendees were referred to as “ravers.” Sociologist Antonio Melechi states that Acid House started in the end of the summer of 1987 by ravers returning from the Ibiza club scene who then sought to resurrect its spirit in London to offer “a cultural void, a seductive absence and enticing void where one can partake in the ecstasy of disappearance” (Melechi 1993, 32). In 1989, the rave scene began to attract wider audiences, and the idea had shifted from celebrating selflessness and oblivion to belonging and togetherness. The spaces of club and rave culture represent a fantasy of liberation, and an escape from daily realities. It is “a place where nobody is, but everybody belongs” (Melechi 1993, 37). This

historical context underscores the potential of raves as alternative art spaces, where audiences can escape from mainstream cultural frameworks and experience a sense of belonging and art from a state of communal ecstasy.

From its origins in late 1980s acid house to early 1990s, techno and breakbeat hardcore warehouse parties -- where neon smiley faces, DIY laser shows and the introduction of PLUR (Peace, Love, Unity, Respect) ethos defined an underground revolt against mainstream culture -- rave culture's semiotic landscape has continually reinvented itself. By the mid-1990s and early 2000s, trance, drum-and-bass and jungle sounds migrated into commercial clubs alongside cyber-inspired fashion (phat pants, glow sticks, and fluffy leg warmers) and professional-grade sound systems, marking the scene's flirtation with mainstream acceptance. The mid-2000s ushered in EDM's festival era, with electro-house and dubstep anthems booming over gigantic stages. Kandi bracelets and animal hats symbolized both personal creativity and collective euphoria, while pyrotechnics and immersive visuals elevated the spectacle through a heightened sense of escapism. Today's rave aesthetic blends bold colors and earthy tones across streetwear, bohemian and high-fashion influences, implements VR/AR and projecting installations with a renewed interest in underground techno, and foregrounds harm-reduction and inclusivity -- demonstrating how rave's signifiers continually oscillate between anti-establishment roots and global commercialization.

This thesis explores the methods and possibilities of reinventing contemporary art exhibitions by integrating elements of raves, nightlife, and club culture. Through a sociological and ethnographic lens, I investigate how these subcultures can transform art experiences, encourage and facilitate interaction and communication inside of the exhibition space, and foster new forms of social and cultural engagement. As curator Thelma Golden opines in the epigraph,

art exhibits and institutions should serve as hubs for social interaction and the exchange of ideas. Rave culture, with its ephemeral sensorial experience, historical roots as rebellious anti-establishment gatherings, and optimism for technological progress and social transformation, can inspire curatorial strategies to build immersive and inclusive rave events within this reimagined exhibition space to encourage self-expression, interpersonal communication, and a sense of belonging.

Before raves were commercialized and turned into major music festivals, the events were always held at vague locations with the address not revealed until the last few hours before they start. This created a sense of liberation from social control. Sonic studies scholar Hillegonda Rietveld articulates that the unstoppable ravers formed this tradition of gathering to avoid government regulation and still enjoy practicing it to this day:

As police surveillance intensified, parties were held at increasingly obscure places, ravers would drive into the night, at times in convoys, music blasting and spirits high on energetic ‘vibes.’ Sometimes the destination would never be found, giving the ambiguous pleasure of being part of a conspiracy and a sense of adventure of travelling into the unknown. Besides, anything seemed better than being back home in the mundane environment of daily reality. The long night suspends a feeling of an everlasting present (Rietveld 1993, 64).

Heading to an unknown destination in the nighttime brings participants a thrill of adventure, and an escape from the established order of society and omnipresent government surveillance. Even now, some smaller raves still maintain this tradition. However, regardless of

how raves have changed, their core values always involve optimism, inclusivity, and a blend of individualistic expression and collective experience. According to cultural worker and educator María Muñoz-Martínez, “repetition and simplicity are the essence of techno music... Repetitive sounds, smoke and movement have been the recipe for transcendence from time immemorial. Clubs can be, why not, spiritual places” (Muñoz-Martínez 2022, 258). I wonder, then, why these transcendent musical concepts and sensory effects could not be applied as well to exhibition curation to evoke similar states of human experience? Moreover, Muñoz-Martínez notes that the “dance floor could be a place to generate seed of change, a place for revolution,” which testifies to the transformative power of such immersive environments for self and social movement formation (Muñoz-Martínez 2022, 260). In conclusion, this thesis offers a conceptual framework for the experimental reinvention of the contemporary art exhibition. Through this exploration of an innovative format for cultural dispersion and consumption, I hope to stimulate new forms of cultural community, aesthetics, and public art production within the exhibition space and beyond.

To orient the research, I proposed three research questions: 1) What can curating learn from the rave scene? 2) How can a rave be staged within an exhibition, and what practical issues would arise? 3) What implications would a rave sensibility have in terms of rethinking art institutions and aesthetic experience? The thesis aims to explore the intersection of rave culture and curatorial practices, beginning with an Introduction that provides the background, aims, and scope of the research. The Methodology chapter outlines the research methods used to examine existing literature and analyze the practical implications of incorporating rave sensibilities into curating art experiences. The methodology relies on a combination of literature review, historical analysis, and practical exploration of case and site studies. The literature review includes two sections, wherein the first section examines how rave culture, clubs, and youth culture have been

discussed in academia since the 1980s, noting shifts in discourse. The second part reviews the management of museums and the evolving emphasis on visitor experiences, with the researcher's position integrated into each.

After reviewing the literature, the first chapter “Rave Ethos and Curatorial Inspiration” investigates what curating can learn from the ethos of raves, looking into the key characteristics of raves, such as immersive environment, inclusivity, and unconventional locations. This is contextualized by historical examples. The second chapter “Building the Rave: Logistics, Space, and Safety” moves into the practical challenges of staging a rave within an exhibition, addressing logistical concerns such as budgeting, audience safety, and legal permits. Finally, the last chapter “Transformation through Rave Sensibilities” explores the broader implications of incorporating rave sensibilities into art institutions, suggesting ways in which this could transform the focus from objects to relational experiences, incubate cultural capital, and reimagine institutions as spaces of autonomy and eclecticism.

The thesis concludes by reflecting on the findings and offering insights for future curatorial practices. To empirically evaluate the transformative potential of incorporating rave elements into exhibition design, I also propose a semiotic experiment using rave elements within the exhibition space as independent variables, and conducting pre and post event surveys on random attendees to collect valuable feedback data on the efficacy of introducing rave to art exhibitions as a way of enhancing audience experience and reshaping exhibition dynamics.

Methodology

My methodology for this thesis employed several strategies. First, I conducted autoethnographic site research by attending various rave events and visiting different venues, observing and

examining the event management and space layout, and identifying what the event organizer did well and what could be improved. The insights will inform subsequent analyses and applications, serving as a foundation for innovative curatorial strategies. Second, I examined theoretical writing on rave culture and museum experience through interdisciplinary literature by scholars, artists, curators, and nightclub industry professionals, who write about dancing and curatorial projects. The sources include diverse fields such as historical, sociological, anthropological cultural studies of nightlife, aesthetic experiences, club design, museum management, and rave culture. Third, I present three case studies on exhibitions, artworks, and events that exemplify hybrid practices aligning with my research objectives that I analyze to provide empirical evidence of the motivations, methodologies, and outcomes associated with blending rave-inspired elements into museum contexts. Through this I ascertain the viability of such hybrid exhibition forms and how they might contribute to practical design solutions. By employing this integrative methodology, this project illuminates the potential of hybridizing rave with museum and art exhibition experiences and explores actionable frameworks for curatorial innovation.

Literature Review

This literature review is split into two parts, each addressing key areas that form the theoretical foundation of this project. The first section explores the historical context of writing about raves. The second section focuses on museums and their increasing interest in providing experiential encounters. Together, these two streams of literature help situate this study within broader discussions around curatorial practice and the evolving role of art institutions.

Raves, Clubs, and Youth Culture

Since the 1980s, the interconnected domains of raves, clubs, and youth culture have been extensively explored in academic literature. These studies highlight their evolution as social, cultural, and political phenomena. This thematic review organizes past scholarly research on various aspects of raves. It evaluates what characteristics make raves a good candidate for integration with contemporary art exhibitions in the post-digital era, to create new concepts on top of previous arguments for further research, and to fill the academic gap in the sociological and ethnographic aspects of the integration of contemporary art exhibitions and underground raves in the academic world.

Rave culture as a counterculture movement goes back a long way in relation to its political context. Cultural studies theorist Steve Redhead's *Rave Off* (1993) situates 1980s British rave culture within a socio-political landscape of deviance and regulation. Redhead highlights the inextricable connection between rave culture and the 'politics and deviance' of the social environment in which it exists. Architectural anthropologist Lucas Duncan's 2023 research project *RAVE Creating Community* underscores raves as radical heterotopias—temporary utopian spaces challenging dominant power structures and fostering belonging for marginalized communities. Duncan's work reveals rave's cultural, social, and political power and the necessity of converting underused spaces into collective rave space in a time of increasing authoritarianism and inequality and post-COVID pandemic. This demonstrate the rationale, feasibility, and potential social demand for the art rave that I am proposing. However, they leave unexplored how raves can influence the realm of contemporary art exhibitions. By examining how political resistance and identity formation within raves can inform curatorial practices, the proposed study addresses this gap and extends the application of these ideas to curatorial practices.

Nightlife, as a moment when social norms and the established order fade away, contributes significantly to making rave an occasion to produce experimental art. Artist-scholar Madison Moore's *Nightlife as Form* (2016) frames nightlife as the source of popular culture and one of the most crucial sites for self-production. He writes: "A nightclub is a space of exhibition, perhaps even exhibitionism, but also of innovation" (Moore 2016, 51). Art historian Craig Houser's analysis of Area nightclub in New York during the 1980s (2018) highlights the transformative power of fusing art with nightlife despite ethical concerns arising from curated interactions. Their cases imply the feasibility of my envisioned art rave, but do not discuss how nightlife as an art form can reimagine traditional art spaces. My proposed thesis builds on this foundation, trying to integrate these aesthetic principles and practices into the design of an exhibition by intermixing of art and nightlife, and curation of experience, which not only redefines the boundaries of art spaces but also bridges the gap between nightlife culture and institutional art practices.

Building inclusive communities always been a central tenet of rave culture. Ethnographer Alexander Gage's ethnographic thesis of rave and its culture (2017) argues raves facilitate alternative social-aesthetic models, fostering relationships between personal and cultural-social realms in ways that have political implications. He also suggests raves have the potential to challenge and redefine traditional art forms and create an alternate artistic reality and human relationships. Music journalist Denise Benson's historical account of Toronto nightclubs (*Then & Now*, 2015) situates these spaces of connection as incubators of creativity and social movements. The spirituality and religious ethos of raves—as potent sites of being together—is further elaborated by cultural anthropologist Graham St John's *Rave Culture and Religion* (2004), which connects the spiritual dimensions of raves with broader processes of societal renewal. By

applying the communal and participatory ethos of raves to art exhibitions, the proposed research aims to foster spaces that are not only inclusive and interactive but also address the lack of community-driven dynamics in traditional art settings.

Most sociological study of scenes like music and live performance focus on their origins and evolution, whereas systematic studies on the scene's decadence and decline are scarce. Sociologist Tammy L. Anderson's (2009) investigation into the decline of the Philadelphia rave scene identifies five key causing forces: generational schism, commercialization, cultural otherness, social control, and genre-based fragmentation. Sociologist Beate Peter's studies (2019, 2020) on contemporary raves emphasize the resurgence of DIY practices and the critical role of technology and older ravers in preserving the participatory ethos of rave culture. Their research presents challenges within rave scenes and informs possible solutions to avoid a scene's decline. My thesis thus draws inspiration and tactics from their studies to preserve the participatory essence of rave culture while integrating it into art exhibition settings, aiming not only to circumvent the scene's decline but also explore innovative ways to adapt art rave to the needs of contemporary society.

The academic discourse on raves, clubs, and youth culture underscored their political and cultural significance and outlined raves' potential for artistic experimentation and community building. From a personal perspective, these studies align with my envisioned purpose of blending raves with contemporary art exhibitions. By integrating art, technology, and participatory experiences, such events can challenge traditional boundaries and redefine artistic and social interactions. But the challenge remains to balance the DIY aspect of raves with their trend toward commercialization. Drawing on lessons from prior studies, my research aims to

keep the rave vital by filling in these academic gaps with the proposal of a workable curatorial model that meets the challenges of making inclusive, sustainable, youthful spaces.

Museums, Management, and "Experiences"

The academic literature on contemporary museums and art experiences focuses on ways to shift art galleries and museums from static repositories of artifacts into more dynamic spaces of interaction and innovation, challenging traditional curatorial practices and reflecting broader societal demands for participatory and immersive art experiences. This thematic review cites scholars on art and museum experience, as well as their experimental theories and design strategies, exploring how they can be applied when combining rave into curatorial practice.

In the field of museum management, Barry Lord is not only seen as the inventor of museum planning as a profession but also known for his advocacy of a people-centered, public-first museum notion. Museologists Gail Dexter Lord and Barry Lord's *The Manual of Museum Management* (2009) articulates the shifting landscape of museum management. They argue that museums are amid another transition from the government/corporate sector to the realm of civil society that places museums at the heart of social change with tremendous challenges ahead; the challenges can be solved by teamwork, which requires leadership and management skills to be activated throughout museum organization and museums of the twenty-first century are thus exploring new levels of meaning. This shift emphasizes a need for experimentation to help transition and find new meanings and roles for museums within society, which lays the groundwork for exploring new approaches to exhibition curation like raving.

Exploration of relational concepts appears as a recurring theme in the literature on contemporary aesthetic experience. Curator Nicolas Bourriaud's *Relational Aesthetics* (1998)

emphasizes forms of interdependence of subjectivity in contemporary art. Cultural historian and theorist Michel Foucault (1984) notes we are living in sites defined by a set of relations. Contemporary art historian Jim Drobnick's "Inebriationism" (2017) and "Intoxicating Scenes" (2016) examine how sensory and relational practices, such as those involving alcohol, possess transformative political power and challenge traditional museum paradigms. His analysis of artists' bars as experiential artworks shows the potential of integrating elements like rave culture into museum spaces, suggesting a shift from a distanced objective gaze to a participatory embodied experience in art viewing. On the basis of Bourriaud and Drobnick's work on relational and sensory practices, this thesis presents research towards integrating rave as a relational approach to exhibition-making, where the beholder is a joint creator of the work and is part of an interdependent subjectivity-network within the exhibition through collective interaction and social exchanges within the rave.

Design plays a significant role in the construction of the club experience. Researchers César Lugo-Elías and Pedro Cardoso (2021) explore design as the discipline in charge of the creation of artificial environments capable of triggering emotions, organizing experiences, and challenging traditional notions of space. Their insights into sensorial design, narrative layering, and "Gesamtkunstwerk" of design attest to rave and club's potential as space for design exploration and the versatility of these design strategies, which are not only limited in creating club experience but also can be applied to other spaces and events like music festivals, museum and galleries. While their text concludes with club design strategies, it does not address their application within both exhibition curation and the institutional constraints of museums, highlighting an area that needs further exploration.

Foucault's concept of heterotopia, articulated in "Of Other Spaces" (1984), provides a theoretical framework for my experimental study by understanding museums as heterotopic spaces of time accumulation. He describes heterotopias as real places that exist in every society as counter-sites, functioning as sites of both illusion and compensation, representing, contesting, and inverting all the other spaces. According to Foucault, my envisioned underground art rave can be seen as heterotopia of illusion and festivity made for those creative individuals who are seen as deviants of other spaces in societies. While Foucault's principles offer a philosophical lens for a new interpretation of museum and rave spaces, their practical application to curatorial strategies remains underexplored, presenting an opportunity for research to bridge this theoretical-practical divide.

The utopic feeling of club experience offers relief, as artist Nicholas Tee examines in his 2018-2019 curatorial experiment, *Diaspora Disco*, held in a London nightclub mainly for artists from the East and Southeast Asian diaspora (2022). Tee's project attests to socially engaged nightlife's liminality and heterotopic ability to indulge in utopian fantasy while simultaneously functioning as a site for activist mobilization, socio-political critique, artistic innovation, and identity formation. Tee's attempt at curatorial activism within club spaces, particularly for marginalized communities, aligns with the purpose of the thesis and the vision of rave as a curatorial site. Nightlife's prospect in promoting artists and cohesion of community from the Asian minority diaspora, and potential incubation of grassroots activism and social change through collaborative ethos and new technologies, foster the question of how to curate for people who share complex contemporary Asian identity. Through nightlife, Tee unites community, expands the utopic feeling of clubbing and advocates for changes beyond the nightclub context

by combining traditional Asian cultural practices that share a similar collaborative spirit such as reunion dinner.

The existing literature underscores the changing climate of museum management, the importance of experiential, relational, and design-driven approaches to museum management, and the transformative potential of rave as a heterotopia. While Bourriaud and Drobnick explore sensory and relational practices, and Lugo-Elías and Cardoso provide design strategies, there is limited research on how these elements can be synthesized to create immersive events that bridge the gap between raves and museum cultures. Foucault's writing highlights the importance of indispensable heterotopias in society, but he does not provide examples that reimagine contemporary art exhibitions as heterotopias. My research fills these gaps by proposing a novel framework of integrating rave culture into curatorial and museum practices, offering both theoretical and practical contributions. By drawing on relational aesthetics, sensory design, and heterotopic principles, the thesis aims to create a blueprint for future exhibitions that prioritize community engagement, self-expression, and cultural exchange. This approach can not only redefine the role of museums and art exhibitions in society but also challenges traditional boundaries between art, entertainment, and activism, thus making it a timely and necessary experimentation within the field of contemporary art and museum studies.

Part 1: Rave Ethos and Curatorial Inspiration

1.1 “Just-beginning-to-stir”

Prior to attending the rave, my friends and I experience a feeling of tension and excitement for the uncertainty of the night show -- a phase of pre-rave nervousness. This phase helps build up emotion for a whole night of dancing with the exponential potential of the event, “or what the philosopher Brian Massumi has called the ‘just-beginning-to-stir.’ As Massumi sees it, the just-beginning-to-stir is a theory that explains how space holds anticipatory energy before an event, an energy that will eventually transform our experience and bring us to a new state of emotions” (Moore 2016, 49). This sensual phenomenon plays an inextricable part of every rave experience and even holds more communal and coalescing potential than the actual event.

Through online distribution, this phenomenon could also serve as foundation of the grassroots advertising and marketing strategy for every rave event. Grassroots marketing resonates with the missions of the art rave, targeting a niche group of individuals or set of demographics that are most relevant to the brand’s goals. This strategy could build a strong relationship with the audiences by appealing to their emotions, especially disadvantaged and marginalized young open-minded people and artists from the Asian diaspora. A start-up brand should adopt grassroots marketing not only for its cost efficiency, but also to keep the branding highly fan focused. That ensures audience loyalty, authentic customer feedback and organically furthers a brand’s image and message through word of mouth.

1.2 Format

Over two-thirds of nightclubs have collapsed and disappeared globally since 2009 (Gillen 2023, 162) whereas many ephemeral music festivals that only run through certain weekends annually are proliferating such as Rolling Loud, Coachella, Ultra Music Festival, and Sojourn Festival. From a post-rave perspective in a post-Covid and post-club era, I would argue that ephemeral events offer a more sustainable model for holding live events. However, this ephemeral event model extends beyond the large outdoor festivals mentioned above, and applies to nightclub experiences like The Warehouse Project, a series of club nights initiated by Sacha Lord and Sam Kendall in Greater Manchester since 2006. Temporary space designer and producer John Leo Gillen describes how the Warehouse Project operates by capitalizing on transience to sell tickets:

Unlike most clubs, the Warehouse Project has a seasonal approach, open from September through to New Year's Day and going into hibernation for the remaining nine months of the year. The period corresponds with the busiest time of nightlife and student calendars. The combination of anticipation and timing has made for an unbeatable formula that regularly sells out (Gillen 2023, 189).

The Warehouse Project's success in regularly selling out lies largely in Lord and Kendall's choice of timing for the event, as they held it at a time when their patrons were most available and willing to travel. Understanding the market and the audience's schedules is also crucial to the prosperity of the event. The first choices are holding it during public holidays or students' summer and winter breaks, which is when most potential clients complete their life responsibilities and plan their travels. Otherwise, for instance, the main reason I have not been

able to go to Coachella all these years, apart from the price, is that they are always scheduled for two weekends in April, when many students are at busiest with finals and do not feel like travelling.

Holding the event over a shorter period of time each year would also give the event organizers enough preparation time to take stock of the previous event, improve on it, and brainstorm themes and collaborating artists for the next event. In this way, the quality of the event improves over time, and the theme of each event becomes more resonant with contemporary audiences and responsive to any social events or trends at the time. For the audience, the publicity about the event builds up anticipation as they wait for the next one, prompting them to buy tickets and encouraging word-of-mouth marketing. With systematic and strategic management and planning, the ephemeral event format can snowball into a sustainable cycle of supply and demand.

Trouw was an Amsterdam temporary nightclub and art space held in a former printworks of a newspaper of the same name. Its founder, Olaf Boswijk, also declares his confidence in short-lived event: “I firmly believe in temporary projects, it creates a lot more awareness about what you're doing, and it bundles all the creativity and energy. At the same time, it's the crowd because they know we're going to end so they have to come more often or be crazier or dress up more” (Moore 2015). The awareness that the project has a finite endpoint likely heightens the urgency, focus, and participation of the participants. The sense of limited temporality creates an atmosphere that urges everyone to fully contribute their creativity and energy because the opportunity passes quickly. Ephemerality, in this context, serves as a motivator of expression, interaction, and unification for the crowd.

1.3 Venue

In choosing the location and venue, for the initial staging of the event, holding it in a traditional indoor exhibition space is the safest option. However, considering that rave events are opportunistic in nature, the event will run in an impermanent pop-up format as a response to the increased financialization of urban spaces. Inspired by sound system collectives, who occupy unconventional, found, and transient spaces, I propose using such marginal spaces for my event. These spaces are located on the margins of society, where there is low demand for property, and places such as abandoned warehouses and underused or vacant sites. Such an event can practice ephemeral spatial appropriation, challenging planned functionality of the space and artistically subverting geographical imagination through an atypical squat party. On top of that, land rental and housing in such places is less expensive, and far from surveillance, and social control, giving ravers a sense of autonomy, liberation, and otherness, as well helping them to avoid noise complaints. The mysterious setting of an unconventional venue, and upon arrival, the spatial experience of its interior and exterior, fosters the “just-beginning-to-stir” emotion. Based on his own experiences at Trouw, DJ Madison Moore claims that an unconventional setting can prepare the audience for the event. He writes:

As you approached the venue you weren't sure if it was a nightclub or an office building, but because of the way the bass rattled through the building and outside of it, creating a sense of something “just-beginning-to-stir,” or actually a pot that has been brewing, you knew you were in the right place. You made your way into the club, past the security guards, down two sets of metal stairs, and suddenly you fell onto the booming, gritty edge of art, music, fashion, and performance (Moore 2016, 58).

Fostered by government's oppression, the liberating and democratic environment of such abandoned spaces resonate with marginalized identities and promote a DIY ethos for participants to create their own scenes by focusing on each other. As a "Spiral Baby" of the 1990s UK free party scene, Artist and photographer Seana Gavin prefers partying at these discovered underutilized spaces. As she explains:

A found space transformed from scratch for an event creates more energy. Part of what I enjoyed about attending the underground free parties in my youth was the opportunity to see the interiors of abandoned spaces: old factories, post offices, theatres, cinemas. It added to the edge. And there are so many empty, abandoned buildings, so it's great to use them! (Gillen 2023, 139)

The energy that results from creating something "from scratch" fosters an unspoken agreement among attendees: everyone shares in both the risk and the reward of occupying a site that the rest of society has left behind. These derelict places within society resemble the neglected identity of the marginalized attendees. The presence of artists from Asian diaspora communities in these places revives these abandoned sites and at the same time illuminates their own socially neglected identities.

1.4 Curating Scene

The venue only provides the veneer or container for the event; the design and curation of the internal environment and content of the event is more important. The inspiration for my project

comes from the complementarity I sense between the environments of rave spaces and contemporary art exhibition spaces. The underground rave scenes always induce an atmosphere of community collaboration and inclusive communication, which is something contemporary art events are supposed to provide but which still is scarce, especially for marginalized groups. Therefore, one of the most important things I think curation can learn from rave culture is that curatorial practice should no longer be confined to planning discrete artworks, instead curating for a whole scene. This type of scene-making curatorial practice needs to consider not only the exhibits, the architecture and environment of the exhibition space, and the audience, but also the audience's response to the space and exhibits as well as the encounter and interaction between audience members themselves. Such a focus on theatricality and subjectivity is similar to the vision of relational aesthetics put forward by French curator Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s. The emergence and prosperity of the rave scenes can also be attributed to the culture's persistent attention towards and appreciation of subjectivity, from which contemporary curating could learn. Lucas Duncan's writes about the functions of rave space:

The focus on the material and phenomenological conditions of the present movement diminishes the significance of the physical space in favour of spatial typologies which prioritize divergent and itinerant performances of collective and individual subjectivity. as a built environment the rave space functions to facilitate subjective experimentation via perception and corporeal surrender, and thus the dissolution of spatial awareness becomes the primary design consideration (Duncan 2023, 18).

So, what spatial awareness-dissolving tactics from the immersive environments of raves can be applied to curatorial practice? First, the physical facilities that make raves happen should be considered, which foregrounds the indispensable role of technology in creating a rave environment. Ever since the early days of rave scenography, the systems of sound, light, and fog have been the most common and iconic technologies used to create immersive and sensorially communicative environments for raves. Strobes, lasers, and fog machines shape the experience of raves by altering spatial appearance and audiences' perception, producing a sense of spatial dissolution, movement, mystery, and timelessness. Lighting can also foster and direct the spontaneous theatricality and alter raver's subjectivity in raves. Regarding the effects of rave music played by the sound system, Duncan explains how it is different from a traditional sound experience:

Unlike other types of musical performance that have directionality and linear progression, rave sound is all encompassing and cyclical, creating a sense of endless immersion wherein bodies feel and move to the same energy. The movement of bodies on the dance floor to techno or house music translates the auditory experience into visual and kinetic energy, creating a synaesthetic drama that imprints itself onto the physical space of the event. This interplay between sound, movement, heat, and the ways in which it affects the perception and interpretation of the event by attendees, is a key aspect of the rave experience (Duncan 2023, 21).

Moreover, beyond their uses for rave events, these technologies and equipment have long been a medium for the work of many visual and sound artists and part of their exhibitions,

through which they have prioritized different sensory engagements within the museum, as can be seen in works of artist Ann Veronica Janssens (Morris 2015), and composer Laurie Spiegel (Fernández 2024). However, the potential for incorporating these elements into contemporary exhibitions beyond merely using them as artistic medium and implementing them directly as curatorial devices in coordination with the exhibits, audiences, and the space to create a scene, remains undertheorized.

1.5 The Night

Aside from the technological aspect of creating scenes, one natural means stands readily available: the night. One cannot ignore the impact that hosting an event at night instead of during the day can have on the scene. Nightlife's mystery, temporality, and darkness make it such a good scene maker, inducing people to attend and stimulating them to experiment with their identity in ways that are not possible in daily life, no matter their level of social status. Madison Moore points out the versatile potential of nightlife, as he argues:

Clubs need to be staged, lit, and set designed in much the same way as a piece of theater or performance work to properly set the tone for the social scene of the evening. In addition to being a staged experience, nightlife is also a creative space, a laboratory for experimental new ideas in self-presentation, art, performance culture, music, fashion, and design (Moore 2016, 50).

Curating should therefore also consider and utilize the scenic attributes of nightlife and nightclubs to energize the exhibition's scene. So, what makes the nightlife so creative and scene

productive? One of the biggest attributes of nightlife is darkness. The cloak of darkness facilitates a sense of anonymity, uncertainty, disobedience, and freedom that establishes nightlife as a safe and ideal site for acts of transgression, experimentation, and innovation. In the flashing darkness, people feel comfortable to discard the social mask they wear in the daylight and to experiment with being their “nocturnal selves”. They can anonymously generate and pursue their unknown desires and fantasies. As Moore confides, “Through darkness, audiences transition out of their domestic, private selves and go in search of a ‘wider life’” (Moore 2016, 53). While performing these acts together under the cover of darkness, people also found community. Historically, that is not the first in this attempt to see nightlife and partying as an art form to be featured in contemporary art exhibitions, as Moore relates:

The idea of the party as an exhibition or multidisciplinary creative space could stretch back in popular culture to Andy Warhol’s Factory, but even his first ever solo exhibition, held at the Institute of Contemporary Art at the University of Pennsylvania in 1965, was a party..... By the ’80s entire magazines dedicated to nightlife had emerged, and these magazines created narratives of nightlife as art form for popular consumption (Moore 2016, 60).

Using nightlife in the exhibition space can bring about alternative scenes and spaces that diverge from the “appropriateness” of the mainstream society. When one is in such scene, the specialized knowledge and the common environment of darkness can bring a sense of community, which further strengthen nightlife’s communal power.

By exploring the rave scene, I have identified that rave culture's grassroots promotional strategies, ephemerality, improvised gatherings in unconventional venues, and use of technology and darkness to create immersive scenarios, promotes inclusivity, exchange, and collaboration. These are useful tools for the art rave to experiment with. The next step towards implementing these aspects of rave within curatorial practice will be to consider practical challenges and how to solve them. In the next chapter I investigate the challenges I might face if I try these tactics in curatorial practice. What practical problems surface? How can they be solved?

Part 2: Building the Rave: Logistics, Space, and Safety

2.1 Audience Persona

This section comprehensively addresses the practical issues and logistical challenges of holding live rave events as part of exhibitions. First, organizing an event requires a budget. This step must be taken meticulously and realistically. The cost and overhead of an event tie in closely to its management and format, which in turn caters to the capacity and preferences of the target audiences. To create an accurate list of expenses means to understand the audiences first, i.e. to figure out the image of the art ravers persona. Understanding the audience remains crucial for the success of the service, as American strategist David Meerman Scott remarks:

By truly understanding the market problems that your products and services solve for your buyer personas, you transform your marketing from mere product-specific, egocentric gobbledegook that only you understand and care about into valuable information people are eager to consume and that they use to make the choice to do business with your organization (Scott 2009, 24).

Everything from the promotion of the event to its curation aims to instill my target audience with a sense of belonging and identity. This creates a new type of exhibition experience with music and arts that will indulge the audiences in something similar to what Seana Gavin describes as the perfect clubbing experience:

The feeling of community, or being part of something that comes from the regularity of going somewhere or being part of a scene. The music, of course. A good quality sound

system - clear sound that doesn't give you tinnitus. I like a club or party with different rooms or areas to explore. An outdoor area, a good bar area with affordable drinks, a place to cool down and chat. A space that combines elements from art and music. Lights, backdrops and installations create an environment that can help you escape, and transport you into a temporary other world (Gavin and Gillen 2023, 138).

Through personal observations at raves, these conditions and amenities indeed make for a good rave experience and create a sense of community. The event design in this section also incorporates these amenities.

To illustrate the persona portrait of my audience, I should first identify my target audience and their pain points, i.e., what specific challenges or issues they encounter and what needs they may have for a rave event. The notion of the event and curation aims to respond to and address the pain points of young creative minds and artists, especially from the Asian diaspora, making the event impactful and valuable to them. Through my personal observations, their pain points include the lack of free and inclusive art communities, markets, networking events to showcase and promote their works, and a decentralized trading platform to sell them. Based on the identities of the groups with these pain points such as underground artists, fashion designers, creatives, ravers, and art lovers, the profile of my audience persona can be mapped out through their general commonalities:

Demographics:

- Age: 20–40 years old.

- Location: Urban areas with vibrant nightlife and art scenes (e.g., Toronto, Berlin, London, etc.)
- Education: College-educated, often in arts, design, or related fields
- Occupation: Artists, designers, freelancers, event organizers, or professionals in creative, retail, and service industries.

Psychographics:

- Interests: Contemporary art, underground music, rave culture, experimental design, and immersive experiences.
- Lifestyle: Open-minded, empathetic, receptive to new ideas, often nocturnal, thrives on creativity and collaboration, enjoys both making and consuming avant-garde art.
- Values: Self-expression, inclusivity, innovation, and a deep appreciation for subcultures.

Behavior:

- Tech Usage: Active on social media platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and Twitter for networking and inspiration.
- Event Attendance: Frequently visits galleries, music festivals, underground parties, and experimental art shows.
- Spending Habits: Allocates budget for unique, transformative experiences and niche artistic and fashion products.

Pain Points:

- Lack of platforms that authentically merge art with rave culture and nightlife.

- Limited opportunities in daily life to connect with like-minded individuals in a setting that respects and celebrates underground creativity.
- Speculated desire for accessible, yet exclusive events.

Goals:

- Find inspiration and stay ahead of trends in both art, music, and nightlife.
- Engage with a community that shares their passion for breaking norms.
- Experience art in unconventional, immersive environments.

2.2 Scale of the Event

Having an overview of the event's practical organization can help establish an efficient and practical financial plan for the project. With the audience persona identified, the design and organization of the event can be better tailored to their needs and preferences. Along with that, the curation must be pragmatic. The list of expenses can be developed according to the costs of items required for the management of this customized event. Regarding the event's practicality, its scale needs to be determined first: how many people are expected to attend? Considering the event's indie spirit and experimental curatorial theme, and the audience persona's desire for an accessible but at the same time exclusive activity, instead of going for a big corporate-style event format like music festival or art fair, the event would be suited to a smaller underground form more like a gathering of a network of friends. It thus boosts intimacy and indie sentiment, establishing something exclusive and underground that is both stirring and thrilling and has the anticipatory energy of Brian Massumi's "just-beginning-to-stir" theory. Drobnick's discussion of artist bars in museums also points to the pleasantness of small events:

The intimacy, physicality, and interactivity brought about by drinking would seem to be the perfect embodiment of conviviality that Nicolas Bourriaud (1998) defined when theorizing his version of relational aesthetics. The pleasant fellow-feeling brought about by artist-created microtopias, small scale situations encouraging dialog and a rethinking of social relations, is an indicator of how the world could work outside of the competitiveness and ruthlessness of capitalism (Drobnick 2016, 297).

Speaking from my personal experiences at live events, the scale of a small- to medium-sized underground event with the number of attendees at around 500 to 2,000, possesses the right sense of community and intimacy in terms of the size of the venue and the energy of the crowd. It provides a more conducive environment and atmosphere for my targeted audiences to build connection and form a niche community. Moreover, at the early developing stage of the project, the extent of funding may not adequately ensure the capacity to host larger events. When considering the people and space requirements for sourcing sites, one must also be mindful to include an outdoor space for resting and socializing, as well as enough space for art, installations, and performance.

Once a suitable venue is found, the relevant key permits and licenses need to be applied for in order to ensure the safety of the public and the legality of the event. Different venues might have different regulations. Take Toronto as an example, hosting a rave event requires organizers to have a special event permit from the local municipality, a noise exemption permit specifying the decibel levels and operating hours allowed, and a special occasion permit (SOP) from AGCO if alcohol is served, or a sponsor who holds caterer's endorsement. Additional

permits may be required depending on extra demands like building a temporary construction or road closure. These permits generally require notification and application to the local municipality, city hall, police department, health department, and other authorities at least one month in advance, and compliance with all conditions specified on the permit.

Another reason for choosing a smaller event stems from concerns about the potential downsides of having too many people at a live music event. More participants create extra safety hazards that inevitably raises the budget, due to renting a bigger venue and increasing the number of security and medical staff hired. Although more participants bring increased ticket sales, the margins generated by high attendance may attract partner organizations or sponsors who only care about profit. In recruiting a co-organizer or business partner, the common goal should always be to produce a quality event and to push the boundaries of contemporary art with care and consideration. An event done solely for the sake of commercial purposes and monetization inevitably leads to the downfall of a cultural scene and movement. DJ Chez Damier advises the next generation of club organizers to act similarly:

I think the best advice I could give is to look at it as if it's your home, your own space.

How would you treat that? I think it should be private; call it memberships. It started out that way, and I think it should be that way. When you invite too many things together, you also invite problems and issues. And at that point, you have to go from private rules to commercial rules. I think that's what killed it – when it went too commercial. You know, open to everyone (Damier and Gillen 2023, 99).

Creative designer Kristian Russell also points out the damage that results from over-participation and over-promotion of the event: “excess in participation (with increased production comes more misinterpretation); and excess in marketing (by introducing it to an outside market the lifespan is considerably shortened due to those alien consumers’ need for novelty and variety)” (Russell 1993, 169). In other words, do not try to please everyone. Instead, start establishing a solid fanbase from a small group of supporters. To do this, the management must use strict ticketing and admission to limit the attendance, and a grassroots marketing strategy to focus on the target audiences. Through controlled publicity and non-coercive marketing, the event gains an organic growth of followers.

2.3 Grassroots Marketing

Grassroots marketing starts with staying in touch with the target audience and appealing to their emotions and pain points, building an organic and loyal fanbase. The way it generates interest in a brand for a highly niche audience makes it a cost-effective marketing strategy. Filmmaker Elettra Fiumi gives succinct advice on how to start up the event with a grassroots approach:

It’s simple. Find or create a space – it could be your backyard or the abandoned factory down the road. Find a theme and develop it, build a universe around it – experiment with what that means to you. Identify the artists and create the space to bring them together, have some of them do performances or installations, and then invite everyone you know and ask them to spread the word. Create connections with local museums, institutions, or any entity struggling or [experiencing] huge success, then team up and make it happen.

Today we need to foster our spontaneity, determination and intuition (Fiumi and Gillen 2023, 53).

The best way to get in touch with rave attendees involves identifying where, in the online and offline worlds, the target customers generally spend most of their time and then tap into their online communities or offline events as an active, valuable presence. However, in today's post-internet era, people tend to spend far more time on online social media such as Instagram than attending offline events especially those in the same age group as the audience persona. Therefore, active online engagement and appearance becomes imperative for grassroots marketing, which includes strategically posting and creating unique, shareable content to reach the target audience, tuning into their social conversations, and tracking the campaign's performance.

In question of how does art rave address target audiences' pain points and convey, through social media, content that creates anticipatory energy and stimulate audiences' curiosity. Management could post intriguing content about the event on social media with a website link for tickets and announce the location of the event to ticket buyers only on the day of the event to build up a sense of mystery and tension. This is crucial, due to the collective effort of all the attendees to find the location and endows everyone with a shared experience before the event even starts. The material for creating viral promotional content can be acquired by hiring photographers or videographers to document the event or directly reposting participants' posts about the event through their social media hashtag. Moreover, supporting a charitable cause can establish a stronger appeal to those who have the same vested interests and can make people

naturally gravitate to the brand, especially in response to issues related to children and youth, cultural education, disabilities, animals, disaster relief, the elderly and social justice.

2.4 Curatorial Practice

After planning for site selection and marketing, the curation of the event comes into play. How can one use and arrange the space and artwork to integrate the rave with the exhibition? How can musical performances be harmoniously coordinated with the artworks on display? The artwork selection and commissioning process aims to collaborate with pioneering artists who experiment with their styles and create vanguard works that respond to or resonate with current technological developments and social discourses. Their works can include traditional painting, sculpture installation, performance art, digital work presented through projection and other types of media. The placement of the works in the space should form an alignment with the rave and the layout of the venue, which echoes the space and complements the rave experience, not hinders it. For example, the artwork in the space should not make the rave audiences feel that their body movements may damage the work, nor should the artists worry about the safety of their pieces. Thus, the artwork on display can either take place in a secure place from the viewers or take place near the dancefloor if the work is originally designed to interact with the viewers. Besides the artworks, the overall curation and setup of the event should exploit and maximize the benefits of digital technology to bring about new forms of artistic and musical expression. Therefore, in addition to the event setup, I hope to develop a selfie stand that produces digital portrait paintings. It converts the audiences' selfie photos into digital paintings in an art style of the curator and artist's choice through a pre-trained AI model. The images then get printed and mailed to the participants as a commemoration of that moment of the night.

The music, of course, contributes another significant component to the art rave. For each rave, the selection of DJs and genres should follow the curatorial theme and artistic style as well. The DJ's stage set up includes the mixing decks, immersive light systems, music visualization, and projection screens that align with a theme that synchronizes with the music. The quality of the sound system remains a paramount factor in determining the quality of the live music experience. This is the approach of DJ Justin Berkmann, one of the founders of Ministry of Sound, a club established in London in 1991, which continues to operate to this day. In creating the club, Berkmann advocates "100% sound system first, lights second, design third... the reverse of everyone else's idea" (Gillen 2023, 173). Therefore, to ensure optimal acoustic experience, procuring a sound system of the highest caliber and placing in every corner of the room proves essential. Of particular quality are those manufactured by companies like Funktion-One and Void. An overwhelming soundscape can re-energize the crowds' spirituality. The bass and treble released from good quality speakers can take hold of the dancers and vibrate them through their cores. As John Leo Gillen describes the experience brought by the sound system in New York's The Paradise Garage from 70s, "The music was no longer heard: it was felt and experienced, as mind, body and machine amalgamated" (Gillen 2023, 64). The sound system placement should cover the entire room to provide new level of physicality to the dance floor through vibration while avoiding the conflict with exhibition and audiences.

The function and appearance of the space changes as the exhibition and rave alternate from day to night. This model retains the traditional exhibition model, increases the exposure of the artists, and makes full use of the rented space. This approach parallels the operational model of the Continental Baths, a discotheque launched by Steve Ostrow in New York in 1968. "The venue acted as a health club by day and a nightspot for the city's gay community after hours,

with a cabaret lounge and dancefloor” (Gillen 2023, 23). Inspired by Ostrow's dual use of a space, the operational model devised to coordinate exhibition and rave entails the following procedures: the art exhibition takes place during the day, followed by preparations for the event, including rehearsals and adjustments to the venue and artwork, which commence after the regular business hours of 6 p.m. The art rave itself starts at 9 p.m. and continues until the early hours of the following morning. To complete preparation within three hours, the venue should have a pre-setup, with help of some mechanical devices, to speed up the transformation process.

This venue metamorphosis idea took its inspiration from French artist Philippe Parreno's 2016 work *Anywhen*, a site-specific exhibition shown at the Turbine Hall in Tate Modern, wherein Parreno devised a moving installation of 19 acoustic screens that descend from above throughout the day. The movement of the acoustic panels and the fish-shaped balloons, the light configurations and sound environments established by the screens, the grid speakers and the projectors transform the exhibition into an automaton and immerses the public into its constantly changing situation. Parreno and Tate Modern's use of a suspension system to hang and move these massive screens could inform the coordination between exhibition and rave settings. During the day, the room will showcase the works along with moderate sounds and lights. Surrounding the room, painting and screens hang from the ceiling through a suspended track system, in which paintings suspend beneath the screens. A big screen hangs in the center playing videos and digital works. Objects and installations installed in the open space in the middle of the room invite the audience to interact with them. In the night, the positions of paintings and screens that surround the room get switched by the suspension system; the big screen in the middle also gets lifted to reveal the DJ stage in the back, thus forming the setting for the rave's dancefloor along with the artworks hanging in a safe distance still available for viewing.

Beyond the curation of art and music, the design and management of the overall atmosphere and service of the event appears extremely important in providing a safe and comfortable experience for the audience. From a personal standpoint, the provision of adequate air ventilation and easy access to water emerges as paramount factors. On July 27th 2024 I attended Sojourn Festival in an industrial warehouse in Toronto. The event, described by one of the performing DJ Jayemkayem: “you’re going to feel like you’re in a mixture of an art gallery, a concert and a rave” (Assaly 2024). I did not feel swelteringly hot all night because not only did the organizers hold a backyard rave in the outdoor area of the venue in the comfortably cool weather, but the layout and design of the indoor air spaces enabled air to flow in such a way to makes one stay cool and dry, even inside near the dancefloor area. From my observation on site, the organizers achieved it through scientifically coordinating the fan positions at airways to form ongoing air flow inside. From observation on people’s energy level, it is obvious that a good airflow that allows people to breathe easier and stay dry can generate more energy in the crowds, thus elevating the vibe for the whole night.

Part 3: Transformation through Rave Sensibilities

3.1 Heterotopia

This section discusses the broader implications of the art rave idea. The goals of the project go beyond a personal desire to combine music and art in order to create a new exhibition model and promote minority underground artists. The project also endeavors to explore the impact of blending rave sensibilities into art institutions in order to fill a gap in the contemporary curatorial discourse and inspire the next generation of curators. Raves have a history of serving as safe spaces for marginalized groups worldwide, where disenfranchised individuals and those with non-conventional identities can form a sense of community and belonging. As a countercultural movement, raves diverge from the oppressive societal norms and values that official culture propagates. They endorse cultural, creative, and artistic innovation, and establish social and cultural capital for rave communities. Therefore, raves function as a change-fostering heterotopia within the urban space where “otherness” can flourish and remind us to rethink art institution and aesthetic experiences. The constitution of heterotopias plays an important role in the development and stability of any society and its culture, as well as in the physical and mental wellness of its people. The heterotopic power of rave is reflected in the relational interactions between the raver groups and the outside society. Hillegonda Rietveld presents the relationship between rave culture and the established rules of consumer society:

In the autumn of 1988 the tabloid press started to create an image of “Acid House” and its cultural trappings as that of gendered and sexualized evil. This reveals less about the rave than about the contemporary social order itself.... As a result of this type of publicity, rave

events became big business, as though constituting a self-fulfilling prophecy. Major police interference in the form of raids and harassment eventually accumulated into the criminalization of the Acid House or rave, i.e. more people, who were previously law-abiding, were defined as behaving in a criminal manner... According to Dick Hebdige, young people pose in order to “pose a threat”, to “challenge the symbolic order which guarantees their subordination”. Their visual style is the expression of resistance. The raver was seen to enter the world of consumerism, in order to keep ahead of the recuperation of its own 'secret' signs. In this way, youth subcultures seem to develop like eternal cycles of resistance, recuperation and a new resistance (Rietveld 1993, 42-43).

Police harassment further pushes raver communities to the margin of the city, leading to the free party movement, where squat parties and portable sound system collectives form. I would argue that those enlightened young ravers found their inevitable subordination to the establishment and own few material assets. These groups thus tend to pay for experiences and memories instead of buying things. Rietveld points out that ravers respond to materialistic mainstream society and structural oppression by joining this heterotopia to form new values:

A (political) critique was never posed. Rather, a threat to the symbolic order was made by the attempt to avoid it altogether. No meaning could be found other than pure escape... There was the excitement of spending money that had lost its exchange value and of driving into the darkness, the unknown. A disappearance from daily material realities by an undoing of the constructed ‘self’ in a Dionysian ritual is the ultimate effect (Rietveld 1993, 43).

A rave venue serves as a heterotopia within society and allows the attendees to temporarily escape from social norms and official culture and venture into collective timelessness and hedonistic rebellion. People can encounter those who share the same spirit of resistance, thus planting the seeds for the incubation of new communities.

3.2 'Lack' of Style

Most of these rebels are young people in a moment of change who have had enough of the “common sense” of mainstream morality and aesthetics. It can be dangerous and difficult for young people to directly challenge hegemonic structures, but in a rave, youth can convey their resistance through personal style, aesthetics, or collective consumption rituals. Reitveld also gives examples of how fashion styles make a difference in representing a person's stance and attitude:

The usual club goer dresses up to go out dancing. The raver, however, dressed down. This could be called an anti-fashion statement...one may compare an anti-style to an anti-language which, according to Hodge and Kress, “marks on oppositional and marginalized group”, whilst “a ‘high’ culture and language normally signify the values of the dominant group” It can therefore be assumed that the ‘lack’ of style is a style in itself which marks the identity and differences as a ‘marginalized’ social group ... Pierre Bourdieu points out that the consumption of ‘high’ art displays ‘ease’, which is a freedom allowed by a surplus of money. The consumption of designer goods shows a similar kind of ‘ease’ (Rietveld 1993, 53).

Ravers have developed this 'lack' of style fashion language on the dancefloor as an expression of non-conformist lifestyle and their marginalized identity, lack of finance, and dance habits. This anti-style fashion aesthetic and language can be seen as a uniquely powerful cultural capital for ravers. With the influx of Gen Z and younger disempowered groups, this style could make a comeback as more and more young people recognize the oppressive nature of capitalism and their own capability to create new types of cultural capital by developing their unique aesthetic and fashion statements. This also informs the style choice and artistic direction for my future event's management. In catering to these anti-stylers, experience-based curatorial practice should avoid displaying or performing that 'ease' of financial freedom that lurks within the language of 'high' art and culture.

3.3 Affect as Language

Language has been seen as an Apollonian creator of the symbolic order, while on the other hand, raves always relate to a Dionysian lifestyle. "Apollonian" and "Dionysian" are terms used by philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* to designate the two opposing forces within human nature and art in Greek culture. Therefore, language sits intrinsically at odds with raves, and the use of language to describe the experience of a rave often falls short. Rietveld also argues how raves dilute language and established discourses:

The use of a dance-drug like 'Ecstasy' in a rave environment makes one 'return' to a stage in psychological development which is before the acquisition of language, thereby

undoing the self that is constituted in and by language and in and by its constructed discourse (Rietveld 1993, 65).

This does not mean that art rave endorses drug use or implies an abandonment of language; on the contrary, utilizing immersive technologies can evoke similar transcendent experiences without substances, and raves' specific time and place settings can even bring new possibilities for language and expression. Rave as a countercultural movement differs from other countercultural movements in that it does not directly confront and criticize authority, but instead undoes the established order and offers ravers an escape and disappearance from it. This can cause a temporary break to the symbolic order which could pose a bigger threat to it than simply proposing a subcultural style within its context. A subcultural style may even entrench the established order, because it still uses the context of the order as its reference to be 'different' from. Hence it is defined by the dominant culture. Rietveld explains why the direct opposition to politics is ineffective:

Beyond the binary oppositions of private-public self or death-rebirth, it is difficult to find an opposition with regards to politics. By dissolving the self, no counter-culture was established which offered an alternative. When one is in opposition, the thing that is opposed is acknowledge(d). When one escapes instead of opposes, no alternative moral values are proposed at all (Rietveld 1993, 65-66).

Destruction is a form of creation. As ravers attempt to undo the part of themselves constituted by real life's formal language and constructed discourses through raves' dissipation

of established rules, the community at the same time establishes a new system of language, as Rietveld describes, “a ‘double-language situation’ occurs, the formal and the informal. The public and the private self” (Rietveld 1993, 64). There’s a separate, amorphous ‘language’ system being constructed in the rave through the surrender to a complete void of meaning. The ‘language’ does not confine to mere textual expression, but more to communications of emotion, sounds, signs, visuals, performances, and body languages. This new underground rave ‘language’ system resembles the discursive traits of informal and instantaneous conversations among present Internet users and social media communities. This language system can be regarded as an affective interaction, as cultural analyst Marianna Leszczyk describes:

It is exactly this “nonresidence” of emotions that makes them “bind” subjects together and produces “‘sticky’ associations between signs, figures, and objects” (ibid). This notion of “sticking” is particularly important for the inbetweenness that characterises affect, whether defined as emotion, impulse, or potential for (inter)action: affect never “belongs” to one individual subject but, to cite Seigworth and Gregg (2010, 1), “is found in those intensities that pass body to body (human, nonhuman, part-body, and otherwise)” (Leszczyk 2023).

Such an affective language system possesses great potential to launch new art movements if artists get the chance to familiarize themselves with it, explore, and maneuver it to perform and make art. This rave sensibility of constructing a private informal language system under the influence of loud music, darkness, alcohol, and even drugs can stimulate artists into free physical and mental states that they normally cannot reach, which leads to new creative inspiration and

enlightenment, and interrupts the established discourse of current art institutions. Moreover, the unique language system and environment that raves create through technology not only inspires artists, it creates opportunities for artistic expression for all, as architectural anthropologist Lucas Duncan claims: “In the context of rave technology, the social interactions among the attendees, the collective experience of the event, can be seen as a form of artistic expression that is mediated by light, sounds, and bodies” (Duncan 2023, 28). Providing the attendees with a creative medium through technology and letting them to express themselves in a trance state brought about by rave’s unique ‘language’ system and immersive environment, the art rave offers a new mode of artistic creation, consumption, and experience. At a rave, everybody is an artist, and people just need the tools, conditions and encouragement to create.

3.4 Technology

The next implication that a rave sensibility offers in terms of rethinking art institutions and aesthetic experience pertains to the culture’s full embrace of technology. Creative designer Kristian Russell observes that rave culture’s use of technology was established a long time ago:

Progressive thinking is the key motive behind most of the recorded output of Ambient House. Ambient is defined in the dictionary as 'surroundings' which helps to explain the large amount of sampling from the environment and full use of recently developed technology... this dehumanizing of traditional music ‘icons’, the performance, the songs and instrumentation, are all signs of a progressive acceptance of the powers of computerized technology that has increasingly been adapted into our societies, and now culture, since the late 50s (Russell 1993, 163).

Technology's impact on raves can be seen in two major ways: the rise of music festivals and superstar DJs through extended digital networks and online streaming of the sets, and the use of social media on the dancefloor. And now, as humanity enters an even faster pace of new industrial revolution with artificial intelligence and digital technology, these newly emerged AI-trained technologies not only inspire and assist in the production of art and music but also can help in facilitating an immersive and interactive experience. Sociologist Beate Peter claims the crucial role of technology in creating a participatory live event if applied purposefully:

In that sense, it was an event of the post-digital era, one at which the use of technology was normalized to enhance the overall experience. The overt use of technology to 'create' an event does not contradict the banning of social media engagement. Rather, it constitutes an attempt to encourage people to engage with one another in person and through music without ignoring the technological developments of the twenty-first century... And yet, it showed how technology could facilitate a communal experience. Additionally, it made obvious the tensions between self-representation in form of social media and the loss of self, promoted through dancing as an immersive experience. Future raves cannot and should not be defined through the banning of technology. However, technology should be used selectively (Peter 2020).

Rave's progressive thinking and selective use of technologies as a tool to enhance the event, instead of perceiving it as a threat, could inform the next generation of art institutions and curators. In this era of progressive global digitization and futurization, actively engaging and

innovating with new technologies and ideas offers a potential solution for contemporary art discourse and institutions to make themselves impactful again. Artists and curators alike should work with an ethic of exploring new technology and an open-minded eclectic approach.

3.5 Eclecticism

The eclecticism of rave culture manifests itself in its free atmosphere and the community's openness to new ideas and diverse range of art forms, music genres, and technologies. It does not imitate but frees the imagination to foster further creativity. Eclecticism as a rave sensibility suggests a syncretic boundary-crossing approach that could challenge current institutional norms and aesthetic conventions in many ways. As Rietveld describes, rave events hold a similar eclectic logic as diasporic communities:

For those who feel they have been dislocated in a political sense, made homeless in more ways than one, intense dance parties, such as raves, can provide a strong sense of community. At times, the cultural output of rave-styled events seems to take on a cultural logic, comparable to that of migrant and diasporic communities: The syncretic popular musics cultivated by such communities often exhibit... contradictions with particular clarity, combining pre-modern folk elements with the latest mainstream pop styles in a self-conscious and often deliberately ironic sort of eclecticism (Rietveld 2004, 46).

Rave's eclecticism dissolves the distinction between art forms and mediums, facilitating interdisciplinary exhibitions and aesthetic practice. It could encourage full-bodied immersive experiences that engages audiences' multiple senses. Art institutions' spaces and curatorial

practices could evolve toward a more community-driven and participatory model, where the organizers and audiences actively co-create experiences, and non-experts and diverse communities can all contribute to what gets displayed. This indie idea that everybody can create and publish music and art seems inevitable in a social context with consumerist tendencies. Cultural studies scholar Judith Williamson further explains, “It is the context of a society in which the majority of people have no control whatsoever over their productive lives: no security, little choice in work if they have work at all, and no means of public expression” (Williamson 1993, 168). Eclecticism promotes democratic “do-it-yourself” practices in hope to endow style expressing agency to every participant, transforming the participant’s role from passive observer to active participant.

3.6 Temporary Autonomous Zone

By combining DIY ethos and technologies to create alternative hybrid experiences, rave culture manifests a temporary autonomous zone for its communities. As curator Tobias c. van Veen argues, rave culture adapts to the economic system and asserts its autonomy precisely by withdrawing from conventional political expression and embracing the hybridity of labor and leisure, while still being aware of the socioeconomic marketplace forces around it:

The parallax of rave culture’s “politics”, then, is that it operates through withdrawal from representative and expressive modes due to its constitutive adaptation of the hybridity of labour and leisure. There is a word for this hybridity: culture. In this sense, what rave culture embodies – and enacts worldwide – is the autonomy of a culture, not from the simplism of socioeconomics (from which escape is consumed as ideological fantasy), but

to be culture. By being culture, it enacts the only autonomous position possible within network socioeconomics (Veen 2010, 33).

The autonomy of underground raves motivates people in the scene to improvise and spontaneously interact and communicate with others to form a new social order, each one with its own creative voice and connected to others through shared values and practices. This autonomous sensibility favors individual interpretation and freedom which could decentralize the authority and hierarchical structure of current art institutions. Moreover, with its emphasis on DIY practices and self-regulation, it could induce self-organized curatorial practices that blurs the lines between curator and viewer, thus making the aesthetic experience an interactive and collaborative act. Inspired by the concept of party, French artist Philippe Parreno explores the self-organizing system of party in many of his artworks. Especially his 1995 project, *Snow Dancing*, a festival held at Le Consortium in Dijon, in which he transforms an exhibition space to host a party and invites audiences to visit the architecture produced by this party the next day. Parreno introduces the blueprint for the design and production of an exhibition through self-organization. Art historian Ina Blom sees the self-organized social activities in *Snow Dancing* as a projection of social reality:

At the most obvious, narrative, level, the building described in the scenario houses typical instances of political and cultural self-organization. But self-organization—the unpredictable effects of multiple non-coordinated agents—also informs its mediatic status as an emergent location, an event-location housing “social events”... In this work, self-organization is less a political ideal to be realized than the projection of a social reality

animated by an unruly composite of sentient beings. In *Le Consortium*, the half-empty rooms and disparate object arrangements exhibited to the public on the day after the party (some walls covered in blue denim, an empty hair-dressing station, a limp giant T-shirt) were not the dismal relics of a past event or series of events, but elements in that same projection: part of the inherently messy shaping of things to come (Blom 2016).

This next day's exhibition of *Snow Dancing* embodies political and cultural self-organization. Self-organization serves as a media for social events wherein the unpredictable interactions of independent agents create emergent social realities. It does not bring an intentional order or a controlled outcome, but a messy projection of broader social reality that reflects the complex human interactions. Therefore, rave's self-organizing spaces serve as microcosms of broader societal dynamics which also fits with rave's heterotopic mission as counter-sites within society.

3.7 Relational Aesthetics

Raves as heterotopias accommodate diverse kinds of people and certainly reflect the broader human relations of the society outside of them. Nicolas Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics, a social way of making art, further affirms why rave as a relational experience can contribute to rethinking aesthetics and art experience. Bourriaud declares that contemporary artistic practice is rooted in the production of a subjectivity that is constantly self-enriched through its relationship with the world, and aesthetics must above all else go hand in hand with societal changes and inflect them. He argues that the liveliest factor of art revolves around interactive, user-friendly and relational concepts; artistic activity serves to connect different

levels of reality in the age of new technological communication; and the social bond has become a standardized artifact in a world governed by mechanization and the law of profitability. The art object and gallery become obsolete as the focus shifts towards life experience or the flux of living. Bourriaud sees today's art as a fertile ground for social experiments—a kind of protected space where artists can explore alternative, even utopian, forms of relationships and interactions. Discussing Bourriaud's relational aesthetics, Duncan underlines its relationships to raves:

According to Bourriaud, Western artistic expression and practice have come to be seen as both a theoretical and practical function of the human relations and social context in which they are embedded. This view emphasizes the importance of the social and interpersonal dimensions of art, and suggests that raves, with their emphasis on collective experience and participation, can be understood as a form of relational aesthetic practice (Duncan 2023, 28-29).

Taking rave as a relational aesthetics form, aesthetic experience could generate a relational heterotopia wherein the viewer can explore alternative relationships that completely differ from daily reality, whether it is with themselves, with objects, or with a social scene. This might involve shifting the focus from curating art objects to curating the interdependent relationship between each subject within an experiential space, i.e., focusing on the subjective experience and expression rather than on the objects on display.

Utilizing rave as relational aesthetics to produce art and curate exhibitions in art institutions can connect with and solidify the identity of the target audience. On July 26, 2024, I visited the AGO's exhibition *Bright Signs: Spotlight on Video Art* and saw American artist

Theaster Gates' work: *Progress Palace*, a room of immersive multimedia installation work dedicated to Frankie Knuckles, also known as "Godfather of house music". This room was a part of his 2016 show *How to Build a House Museum* at AGO. According to artist and professor Ashley Johnson's introduction of the show, "For Gates, institutions enshrine prejudice in their very architectural structure and by infiltrating the AGO he can begin laying his own bricks within that prejudice" (Johnson 2016). The *Progress Palace's* entryways had its own unique wooden doors salvaged from demolished buildings in Chicago by Gates' foundation, Rebuild. Coupled with a series of immersive art forms like music and video memorializing Frankie Knuckles, this room differs conspicuously from a traditional museum space. This distinction highlights the mainstream exclusion of Black artists and people who can identify with the cultures presented in this room. Not only can a Black audience identify with the music, the spinning club lights, and the Ghost DJ Booth, but so too can anyone who has been to a rave. Like Gates' use of music and Bourriaud's relational aesthetics to present art that is social and which expands Black identity, the art rave aims to create the right situation that other nocturnal artists and ravers can identify with and participate in, thus expanding rave culture and integrating its communal and participatory activities into the art world.

3.8 The Museum-Rave Paradox

Museums as the epitome of establishment seem in conflict with rave's embodiment of an anti-establishment gathering. However, I see this conflict as a paradox that induces the dynamic tension required for my project, rather than as a contradiction. Paradox serves as the kernel of artistic expression and illuminates the enigmatic nature of art, as philosopher Bert Olivier writes, differentiating paradox from contradiction:

It should be kept in mind that a paradox is different from a contradiction (where something is both asserted and denied at the same time). While it also asserts ostensibly contradictory things, in the case of a paradox these things are both demonstrably the case. ... the paradoxical claim, that the rational beings called humans are capable of, and often perform, irrational actions, bears the hallmark of experiential truth, ... Art is such a complex phenomenon. Paradox is therefore a suitable figure for grasping its multi-facetted, mercurial, often enigmatic “character”, because a straightforward “description” of its features – one that obeys the laws of logic concerning contradiction, for example – is bound to run into difficulties (Olivier 2013, 200).

In the same sense that rational beings perform irrational actions, established institutions should be able to house anti-establishment exhibitions. Accommodating rave in the museum does not only show proof of the establishment’s self-confidence but also establishes a fundamental paradox for the exhibition by treating the entire hybrid curatorial approach as an artistic act itself. This paradox underscores the complexity of art as a phenomenon that simultaneously resists and embraces the structures it occupies. By embracing this paradox, the museum reframes itself as a site of creative collision, inviting visitors to contemplate how aesthetic experiences can be liberating within an established framework, allowing for engagement with both perspectives. This could demonstrate art’s “multi-facetted, mercurial, often enigmatic ‘character’” (Olivier 2013, 200) and challenge the rigidity of institutions, like Theaster Gates’ exhibition mentioned above. By bringing the rave’s immersive, countercultural spirit into the formal exhibition space, the curation expands beyond the conventional practice of selection and display; it becomes a

performative statement that embodies the tension between order and chaos, establishment and subversion.

3.9 Cultural Capital

In this postmodernist world, art remains deeply intertwined with capitalism, and the hierarchical structure that favors capitalism appears institutionalized in most of the art establishment.

Although art may depend on capitalism to survive, it should not present itself in such a way that it only serves the upper class without caring for and including the perspectives of the lower class and the underprivileged. To many, the art world no longer challenges or innovates against capitalism and thus needs a more inclusive model. Cultural capital, a concept introduced by the sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (Bourdieu 1986), refers to the non-economic social assets—such as knowledge, skills, education, and cultural practices—that confer status and power within a society. Marginalized groups can also create new forms of cultural capital, and the culture of economically disadvantaged groups should receive attention and engagement from wider society. As ways of bringing these people together to realize their own cultural capital, dancing and raving could not be more appropriate. In a rave, subordinated group members can recognize the distinctness of their shared culture through a common struggle, the infusion of different cultural heritages, and a uniquely curated environment, thus creating new cultural discourse and capital to detach from the oppressive capitalist system. Cultural critic Harry Boulter claimed that rave can let people see an alternative to the capitalism that submerged them:

It is here where the arts could reignite. To form heterotopias that are disenfranchised from relying on higher society and show people that alternatives are possible. The arts could

harness this feeling of change while also using the spirit of the rave scene. Using the ability to take space and distribute it to all and to incentivize people to take steps away from Capitalism. To be focused less on the individual artist and more on the freedom of expression for all (Boulter 2021).

Under these new circumstances and alternative scenarios made by rave culture, unique cultural and social contexts can emerge and bring forward new art forms combining artists, DJs, and dancers. If the subordinated group can unite with a common purpose, new forms of cultural capital can be recognized and valued. The art rave, with its premise of subverting social hierarchies, could temporarily remove the hierarchical structures and deconstruct the identities forged under the cyclical world of capitalism, offering a new possibility to create a new democratized community and cultural capital. Attending a rave event can endow individuals with both embodied and objectified cultural capital. The embodied capital alludes to the insider knowledge about the event garnered from the live experience of existing in the scene, as well as the personal skills, such as one's musical and aesthetic competence and subcultural fluency, and collective connections that are discovered and formed during the event. The objectified capital refers to exclusive event merchandise or the swapped Kandi bracelet with someone else on the dance floor. Individuals can mobilize this cultural capital in their social life and artistic, academic, and professional fields to convert it into economic capital.

Conclusion

This thesis explores the feasibility of introducing rave and nightlife culture into contemporary curatorial practice, seeking to coordinate visual arts and live music through technological means that make the consumption of art a body-altering sensorial experience. I have argued that rave culture could offer new forms and opportunities for contemporary art exhibitions and movements, thus holding the power to alter the current hierarchical structure of art institutions and aesthetic experiences. It is evident that the existing academic scholarly literature falls short of providing a theoretical and methodological discourse on practicing rave as relational aesthetics in curating exhibitions. However, the theories of scholars writing about club and nightlife experiences, and addressing experiential innovation in exhibition aesthetics have greatly inspired and assisted in the creation of this thesis.

In Part 1, the exploration of the rave scene uncovers many of its merits from which curatorial practice can learn to build new exhibition models. The “just-beginning-to-stir” energy as an anticipatory tension not only amplifies individual and collective emotions but also fuels grassroots, niche-focused marketing strategies rooted in authentic engagement. Rave’s ephemerality, which harnesses finiteness and urgency, demonstrates a more sustainable model for hosting live events. Moreover, the innovative uses of unconventional venues, immersive technologies, and the transformative power of night dissolve conventional spatial boundaries and foster an environment ripe for creative expression and community collaboration. I argued that future curators should shift towards rave’s scene-making practices to consider the whole atmosphere and the potentiality of audience interaction.

In Part 2, I addressed the practical issues of building an art rave. The design of the event aims to appeal to audiences’ emotions by planning in accordance with the specific needs and pain

points of the identified audience persona. Key logistical challenges include securing appropriate permits, managing the venue transformation from exhibition to rave within a limited timeframe, and deploying advanced technological setups to harmonize art displays with musical performances. The success of such a dual-format event hinges on coordinating artistic vision with logistical support and requires careful orchestration in financial planning and spatial design.

Part 3 investigates rave sensibility's broader implications and cultural significance in arts and academia. Raves have long served as a heterotopia for marginalized groups with an anti-consumerist spirit that values experience over material accumulation. Within this context, I argue that a rave sensibility challenges the hierarchical capitalist paradigms of mainstream narratives by subverting the established symbolic order through its anti-fashion, DIY ethos, and innovative use of technology. Furthermore, rave as relational aesthetics practice can induce new modes of artistic expression and aesthetic experience. A rave sensibility can also transform art institutions from static repositories of 'high' art for 'high' culture into vibrant community-driven platforms that create new cultural capital for disempowered groups and inspire innovative curatorial practices for the next generation.

This thesis reveals a new way of curating arts as live events that support underrepresented groups and help them to meet people with similar interests. However, my proposal still faces a series of practical problems yet to be solved during its implementation. The exploration of this new curatorial concept should act as an ongoing and evolving pursuit, especially regarding how curation with technological means from raves can enable a holistic immersive experience in balancing art, music, space and audience. An initial experiment could coordinate with a gallery exhibition and incorporate rave elements as an independent variable. The collected data would testify if rave elements can transform the aesthetic experience as expected. The investigation of

rave's distinctive signifiers in each of its eras provides informative references for the overall design of future events. This curatorial project seeks to connect rave culture with contemporary art events as an attempt for a new format of raves, trying to revive and preserve some of the original rave ethos in refer to the iconic rave symbols from previous eras.

This journey has been a profound academic learning experience. Along the road, I explored various theories and approaches, each of which solidified the thesis's concept. Setbacks and limitations exist too, but they only fuel my determination of not stopping until I reach the exact vision that initially inspired me. As an artist and curator, I have always thought about this new exhibition model as a way of merging art and soundscape. Prior to this study, I never pictured that I would engage in academic discourse on such an experimental curatorial concept. This study reinforces my belief in the potential of merging rave with an exhibition to create cultural capital for underrepresented artists. While this thesis may not realize the curatorial vision of an actual event, it has formulated the theoretical rationale for further experimentation with the interaction of raves and art. This study marks the beginning of an ongoing venture to close the gap between my creative vision and its practicability in real life, through the possibilities of technology.

As the curator, artist, and producer of this project, my multifaceted role requires me to be both visionary and pragmatic. As a curator, I propose an interdisciplinary exhibition that fuses rave culture and contemporary art in the hope of building community and representing marginalized identities. The curatorial practice aims to employ innovative concepts such as scene-making tactics and relational aesthetics to disrupt institutional hierarchies and reimagine the audience experience. As an artist, my artistic experience and practice inform the entire aesthetic of the project. Engaging the audience with an immersive setting and narrative requires

the sensitivity of an artist to create corresponding artworks, visual effects, music soundscapes, and spatial dissolution installations. Moreover, as the event's producer, I must navigate all the practical problems by securing permits, promoting the event, managing staff and venue transformations, and ensuring public safety, all within budgetary and temporal constraints. At the convergence of these roles, the core of the design is to ensure that the project's theoretical aspirations remain grounded in inclusivity and communal resonance. By interweaving curatorial theory, artistic intuition, and production management, I sought to prototype a curatorial model wherein marginalized voices could emerge through shared sensorial experiences—a testament to the power of an interdisciplinary practice.

In this study, the endeavor to advocate for a new exhibition model and an investigation into rave culture's transformative power contribute to understanding rave's potential significance in the art experience. The approach underscores a curatorial inclination towards the dynamic interplay between artistic expression, technology, space, and audience, to foster a stronger bond between artists and their audiences. As this thesis delved into the possibilities that a rave can activate exhibitions, it also paved the way for future research and curatorial practices. For instance, a promising direction for future study involves constructing immersive experiences using interdisciplinary and scene-making applications. The scrutinization of how rave can invigorate an exhibition attests to the art rave's potential for bridging cultural and social divisions through a shared body-altering audio-visual experience. Deploying artificial intelligence technology to improve the management and service of such hybrid event, is an unexplored path for the impending research.

These future study directions aspire to not only realize this art rave concept but also to examine the broader implications of rave on contemporary art and academia. These could

manifest through subverting the existing paradigm of an exhibition, and the decentralization of existing power structures between the audience and institutions, artworks, and artists. This project aims to transform conventional art production and practice to make contemporary art relevant and compelling to young, emerging artists. The art rave's impact on contemporary scholarship could generate several outcomes: the redefinition of exhibition spaces could provoke a broader exploration of innovative exhibition formats; the intermixing of visual arts, music, performance, and technology could inspire interdisciplinary research on new modes of artistic expression; the decentralization of power structure in the arts could trigger discussions about the democratization of the arts; the focus on body altering and sensory experience could motivate further research on the phenomenology of art; the emphasis on providing a platform for young artists to experiment with their artistic identities could facilitate research on the challenges faced by emerging artists nowadays; and the aim to revitalize interest in contemporary art among younger generations could catalyze cultural and sociological studies on the evolving tastes and engagement patterns of art audiences.

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Appendices

Appendix #1: List of Expenses

Based on this customized event, and the management tools and financial support needed to execute it, we can then create a more targeted spending list to help rationalize the allocation of funds and prepare the budget more effectively. The list needs to be as comprehensive as possible. Specific categories of expenses may vary according to the themes or types of events organized, but there are mandatory expenses that organizer always have to take into special consideration, which are: the venue, the arts, the systems, the music, the staff, the caterings, and a safety margin to cover anything I may have forgotten or any unforeseen situations that could jeopardize the success of the event. To determine the budget distribution and calculate the approximate budget I need to prepare, I further list out all the items that require overhead in detail.

1. Venue & Space

Costs:

- Venue rental: \$5,000–\$15,000
 - (depending on size, location, and duration)
- Permits & licenses: \$500–\$1,500
 - (alcohol, Sale SOP, sound, event permits)

Considerations:

- Pick unconventional venue to resonate with the target audience.
- Ensure that the venue has enough space for audience dancing and art installations

2. Art & Installations

Costs:

- Artist fees: \$10,000–\$30,000
 - (time, materials, licensing fee, presentation fee, consultation fee, writing and editing fee, preparation fee, Installation fee, according to CARFAC 2025 Artist Professional Services Fee Schedule)
- Artwork transportation: \$1,000–\$3,000

Considerations:

- Focus on underground artists from Asian diaspora.
- The fee can vary depending on the size and scale, and market value of the work.

3. Music & Performances

Costs:

- DJ/performer fees: \$5,000–\$15,000
 - (underground, emerging, or local artists)
- Equipment rental: \$2,000–\$5,000
 - (sound systems, mixing boards, etc.)
- Stage setup & decor: \$3,000–\$7,000

Considerations:

- Prioritize genres like techno, house, or experimental underground music to match rave culture.

4. Event Design & Atmosphere

Costs:

- Lighting & visual effects: \$3,000–\$8,000
 - (AV systems, strobes, projections, LED setups, lasers, fog machine)
- Air ventilation: \$1,000–\$2,000
- Furniture & decor: \$2,000–\$5,000
 - (bean bags, modular seating, art-inspired design elements)
- Interactive elements: \$2,000–\$5,000
 - (photo booths, AR/VR stations)

Considerations:

- Create an immersive and Instagram-worthy environment that encourages social sharing.
- Highlight art as the centerpiece, blending seamlessly with the party vibe.

5. Marketing & Promotion

Costs:

- Grassroots marketing: \$1,000–\$6,000
 - (social media appearance, influencer collaborations, giveaways, support causes)
- Content creation: \$1,000–\$2,000
 - (viral content, photography, videos, graphic design)
- Print materials: \$500–\$1,000
 - (posters, flyers, zines)

Considerations:

- Mainly utilizing the platforms where my target customers are most active online, such as Instagram and TikTok, using reels, stories, and hashtags.
- Targeting my audience persona, appeal to their emotions and pain points

6. Catering

Costs:

- Mobile bar setup: \$2,000–\$5,000
- Bartenders/staff: \$1,500–\$3,000
- Food & drink supplies: \$3,000–\$8,000

7. Logistics & Staffing

Costs:

- Event staff: \$5,000–\$10,000
 - (security, setup crew, tech support, ushers)
- Transport: \$1,000–\$3,000
 - (for equipment and staff)
- Miscellaneous supplies: \$1,000–\$2,000

Considerations:

- Ensure staff are familiar with both art and event management to maintain authenticity.
- Allocate contingency funds for any last-minute logistical needs.

8. Documentation & Post-Event Content

Costs:

- Photographers and videographers: \$1,000–\$2,000

Considerations:

- Capture high-quality content to promote future events.
- Consider a short documentary or featurette showcasing the event.

9. Administrative & Miscellaneous

Costs:

- Insurance: \$2,000-\$5,000
 - (liability, cancellation, equipment, artists, and artwork coverage)
- Project management tools: \$500–\$1,000
- Ticketing and admission management: \$2,000-\$5,000
 - (online ticketing platforms with integrated analytics, custom wristbands or passes, payment processing fees)

Considerations:

- Plan my cash flow by tracking expenses in real-time on a calendar to avoid any overspending.

Estimated Total Core Costs Range: \$55,000–\$150,000

Safety Margin (15%): \$8,250–\$22,500

Final Total Budget Range: \$63,250–\$172,500

With a budget for costs in place, the next step is to find and raise funding for the event and determine the expected income the project can make to cover the cost. To attract sponsorship and secure funding, I need to present the benefits of supporting my brand and show sponsors how the event can help them achieve their goals. To clearly plan out the financing of my project, I likewise make a detailed list of each projected sources of revenue:

Appendix #2: Event Funding & Expected Income List

1. Ticket Pricing and Sales

Pricing Tiers:

- Early Bird Tickets: \$20–\$40
 - General Admission: \$50–\$80
- Estimated number of sales: 500–2,000 tickets
Projected Income: \$25,000–\$120,000

2. Sponsorships & Partnerships

Potential Sponsors:

- Brands with their company image associated with art, music, nightlife, or youth culture (e.g., Red Bull, Spotify, Adobe, alcohol brands, fashion labels).
- Local Businesses: Bars, clubs, galleries, or art supply stores

Sponsorship Packages:

- Financial Sponsorship: \$10,000–\$25,000
 - “Estimate how much revenue the sponsor could generate from the sponsorship. For example, if a sponsor expects to gain 100 new leads from the event, and each lead is worth \$1,000, that's a potential \$100,000 in revenue. Sponsors might be willing to pay 10-20% of that potential revenue, suggesting a sponsorship price of \$10,000 to \$20,000.” (Kevin Van der Straeten, 2024)
- In-Kind Contribution: \$5,000–\$15,000 worth of non-monetary contribution of goods and services in all kinds

Projected Income: \$15,000–\$40,000

3. Grants & Donation

Potential Sources:

- Grants: Local arts councils or national programs supporting cultural events, Nonprofits & Foundations, Organizations supporting creative or community-based projects, Patrons, Public funds.
- Donation: through reward-based crowdfunding that offers free tickets, exclusive merchandise, or signed artwork based on the donation amount.

Projected Income: \$10,000–\$50,000

4. Merchandise Sales

Potential Items:

- My brand’s merchandises (T-shirts, hoodies, sweatpants, tote bags).
- Collaborating artists’ merchandise.
- Posters and prints of showcased artworks, prints of photo booth portraits

- Limited-edition zines or catalogs documenting the event.

Pricing:

- T-shirts: \$30–\$50
- Hoodies: \$60–\$90
- Posters/Prints: \$20–\$100
- Zines/Catalogs: \$15–\$30

Projected Income: \$5,000–\$20,000

5. Bar & Beverage Revenue

Structure:

- Collaborate with the venue or local bartenders for a profit-sharing model.

Pricing:

- Average drink price: \$6–\$15
- 60% of attendees purchase 2–3 drinks.

Projected Income: \$10,000–\$25,000

6. Art Sales & Auctions

Structure:

- Commission-based revenue: Take a percentage of sales (20–50%) from artworks sold at the event.
- Host a silent auction using a bidding app among attendees

Expected Sales:

- 10–20 artworks sold at \$500–\$5,000 each.

Projected Income: \$1,000–\$50,000

Projected Total Revenue Range: \$66,000–\$305,000

Appendix #3: Semiotic Experiment Proposal

Title: The Impact of Rave Elements on Communication, Self-Expression, and Sense of Belonging in my Experimental Exhibition Space

To demonstrate how rave elements can transform the exhibition space, I would like to propose a semiotic experiment to answer these **research questions**:

1. Will adding rave elements to an exhibition space increase interpersonal communication?
2. Will adding rave elements to an exhibition space enhance self-expression?
3. Will adding rave elements to an exhibition space foster a sense of belonging?
4. Are audiences satisfied with this new form of experience? What are their impressions?
5. Would audiences want to attend the event again?
6. Does the choice of artwork influence the above outcomes?

Variables:

- **Independent Variable:**
 - Rave elements within the exhibition space
- **Dependent Variables:**
 - Interpersonal communication: can be measured through on-site field observations of the frequency of participant interactions.
 - Self-expression: can be measured through pre and post experiment surveys and on-site field observation of participants' expressive behavior.
 - Sense of belonging: can be measured through pre and post experiment surveys and interviews.
 - Audience satisfaction: can be measured through pre and post experiment surveys.
 - Intention to attend future events: can be measured through pre and post surveys.

Testable Research Question:

How do the presence and intensity of rave elements in an exhibition space affect interpersonal communication, self-expression, and sense of belonging among attendees?

Hypothesis:

Adding rave elements to an exhibition space will increase audiences' interpersonal communication, enhance self-expression, and foster a sense of belonging compared to the pervasive traditional white cube exhibition spaces. The rave elements might surprise or intimidate some traditional gallery goers, but they should soon perceive the whole idea of inclusivity behind the designed space. Rave elements will enhance audiences' sensory satisfaction, increasing the likelihood of returning. Additionally, the selected artworks should boost these effects and audiences' visual experiences.

Levels of the Semiotic Interventions:

1. **Control Group:** Traditional white cube exhibition space with no rave elements.
2. **Low Level Intervention:** Exhibition space with some minimal rave elements such as subtle lighting, low-volume music, public art project, interactive installations.
3. **High Level Intervention:** Renovated exhibition space with extensive rave and nightlife elements such as full P.A. system, CO2 jet machine, dark rooms, laser lighting, smoke machine, experimental public art projects, interactive installations.

Study Size: There are three levels of intervention so the participants will be equally divided into three testing groups. Aim for a sample of 300 participants, with 100 participants per group. Each group needs to contain all age groups, genders, minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Design: The experiment will run for three days: the first day condition will be the control group; The second day will be with low level intervention; and the last day will be high level intervention. The experiment will adopt a between-subjects design in which each testing group will experience only one of the experimental treatments to avoid carryover effects and to ensure that responses are attributable to the specific treatment condition they experienced.

Methodology:

1. **Recruiting Participants:**
 - Post short videos on social media, put up posters on university bulletin boards, and in local community centers, and hand out business card or invite people directly on streets. Use QR codes for social media post and physical posters.
 - Make sure each group contains all age groups, genders, minorities, and persons with disabilities. All applicants will be asked to fill in their identity information on the recruitment form, which is only required for screening purposes and will not be documented. If the diversity cannot be satisfied by the end of all screening, we go out on the street and looking for the required participants.
2. **Use Pre-Experiment Survey to** Collect baseline data on participants' usual levels of interpersonal communication, self-expression, and sense of belonging.

Pre-experiment survey askable questions:

Demographic Information:

- Age
- Gender
- Occupation
- Education level

Previous Experience with Exhibitions:

- Are you a frequent gallery or exhibition goer?

- What type of exhibition do you usually attend? (Contemporary Art, museum, history, science, etc.)
- Have you ever attended an exhibition with rave elements before? If yes, please describe your experience.

Expectations and Preferences:

- What are your expectations for this exhibition experience?
- What elements do you think are crucial for a good exhibition experience? Feel free to describe.
- Is it important for you to feel a sense of belonging in an exhibition space or art fair?

Social Interaction Preferences:

- How comfortable are you interacting with strangers in a social setting?
- Do you prefer visiting exhibitions alone or with others?
- How often do you engage in conversations with others during your prior exhibition visits?

Self-Expression:

- How often do you express yourself creatively in any exhibition space? (e.g., through conversation, art, writing, music, etc.)
- How comfortable are you with expressing yourself in public or social settings?

3. Observe, and record participants' interactions and behaviors related to their communication and self-expression during each session.
4. **Conduct post-experiment survey** at the end of each participant's visit to collect their opinions and feedback to measure their satisfaction, sense of belonging, satisfaction, and intention to attend future events. This survey will be linked with the pre-experiment survey for better comparison.

Post-experiment survey askable questions:

Interpersonal Communication:

- **On a scale of 1-10, how much do you feel your communication with other people increase comparing to your previous exhibition experiences?**
- How many new people did you interact with during the exhibit?

Self-Expression:

- Did you feel encouraged to express yourself in this space? If so, how?

- Did you participate in any interactive or expressive activities? Feel free to describe.

Artwork Choices:

- How did you feel about the artwork on display?
- Did any artwork enhance your overall experience?

Satisfaction:

- On a scale of 1-10, rate today's experience?
- What is your favorite thing from this exhibit? Anything?
- What did you enjoy least about this exhibit?
- Anything suggestion for our future events?

Sense of Belonging:

- On a scale of 1-10, how much did you feel a sense of belonging in this exhibition space?
- What specific elements contributed to that? (loud music, atmosphere, darkness, artwork, etc.)
- Did you feel connected to other people during the visit?

Intention to Attend Future Events:

- How likely are you to attend another event like this in the future? (Very unlikely, Unlikely, Neutral, Likely, Very likely)
- If not, what would make you more likely to attend similar events in the future?

Questions for high-level intervention group only:

- How did the rave elements affect your experience?
- Did the rave elements enhance or detract from your overall experience?
- How do you like the presence of rave elements compare to your previous rave experiences if you have been to one?

5. **Post-Experiment Interviews can be** conducted with a subset of participants from each group to gather qualitative data on their experiences, opinions, stories, and perceptions of the experiment exhibit.
6. After all the data from the interviews and surveys are being collected, run an analysis of variance (ANOVA) to compare the mean levels of interpersonal communication, self-expression, sense of belonging, satisfaction, and intention to attend future events across the three groups. Also use post-hoc tests to identify specific group differences. Furthermore, conduct thematic analysis of data collected from interviews and surveys to

identify any common topic in feedback regarding participants' encounters with the rave elements and artwork choices.

7. Expected Outcomes:

- High-level intervention group is expected to generate more interpersonal communication, self-expression, and sense of belonging among the attendees compared to the low intervention and the control group.
- Participants in the high intervention group are expected to have a higher emotional and sensorial satisfaction, and greater intention to attend future events.
- Artwork choices should interact with the presence of rave elements to enhance the experience and influence the dependent variables.