

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

### **In Favor of One's Time: Locating the Curatorial Practices of Kynaston McShine**

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Kynaston McShine (1935–2018) curated some of the most important exhibitions of postwar art and was also the first person of color to work as a curator at two major museums in New York (MoMA, 1959–64; 1968–2008; The Jewish Museum, 1965–68). Although scholars have widely acknowledged curating as an inherently subjective practice, the relationship between McShine's work and his subjective position, personal history, and Trinidadian background remain markedly understudied in existing scholarship. My project will bridge art historical and curatorial studies scholarship with the growing discourse on Afro-Caribbean diasporas by exploring the ways in which McShine's exhibitions from the 1960s to the 1990s inflected aspects of his Trinidadian upbringing and diasporic experience. This study will explore facets of McShine's curatorial philosophy of being "in favor of one's time," a poetic phrase that he attributes to poet-curator Frank O'Hara.<sup>1</sup> While seemingly straightforward, this phrase is an expression of McShine's evolving relationship to the New York arts scene and his place within a distinct generation of twentieth-century Caribbean thinkers. The four main chapters of the dissertation examine the exhibitions that were definitive for McShine's career. Through fieldwork, archival research, oral history interviews, and formal analysis, my dissertation will offer an alternative framework for understanding more critically and comprehensively McShine's curatorial practices and their central position in defining American postwar art.

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1. Kynaston McShine quoted in "50 Years Later, a Conceptual Art Exhibition Still Courts Controversy," *MoMA Magazine*, 28 January 2020. See also Oral History Program, interview with Kynaston McShine, 2010 and 2011, The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York, 48.