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Even if you are not that interested in contemporary art, it is likely you have heard of Hans Ulrich Obrist. The Swiss polymath, who was appointed director of the Serpentine Gallery in London in 2005, has helped to define the modern idea of what a curator is. In fact, the entire craze for “curated” experiences may be partly due to the popularity, accessibility, and visibility of HUO.

He has written over 300 books and curated hundreds of exhibitions around the world, including projects at the Musée d’Art Moderne in Paris and Art Basel. He has collaborated with huge artists such as Philippe Parreno, Carsten Höller, and Christian Boltanski, and is a contributing editor at Artforum and o32c. Having this amount of creative energy takes organization; Hans is notorious for organizing his life around a number of habits. “I’m interested always in rituals,” he explains over coffee at a hotel bar in Kensington, London. “For a long time, I made all these experiments with sleeping. I didn’t want to sleep when I was a teenager at all. I just thought it was a waste of time. Then I did the Da Vinci rule, which is three hours awake and 15 minutes of sleep. That’s how I wrote my first books. It’s very efficient but it’s not socially compatible

if you have an office job, because after three hours you do need to sleep for 15 minutes. It physically worked and biologically worked, but it didn’t socially.”

After a chance meeting with German chronobiologist and sleep researcher Till Roenneberg, he changed his approach. “I go running in the morning when I wake up at six, read a little bit of Édouard Glissant every morning like a ritual, and the newspaper. And then, I go to the office,” he enthuses. Yet a full day is not enough to keep up with his work, so he created the idea of a night assistant. “There are all these people who don’t want to work during the day, and they’re actually forced to by society. I thought it would be nice to create the position for someone who is a night person to work for me on the books and the research.”

Other habits include starting and ending each day by having breakfast and dinner with his partner, artist Koo Jeong A. The day is filled with meetings, often in and around the Serpentine Gallery in Hyde Park, including for his

ongoing series of artist interviews. Then, around 1 a.m., the night producer arrives. “We work for an hour on some research. Often, it’s giving him things to transcribe, all kinds of book-related matters. Then I go to bed, and he continues to work until 7 a.m. By the time I get up in the morning, lots of things are done, and I can continue to work and pick up on the threads. So, it never stops.”

Another ritual in Hans’s life is to purchase one book a day—online if he is unable to get to a bookshop. Of his own books—which include catalogs and anthologies—30 or so are prose, including *The Age of Earthquakes: A Guide to the Extreme Present* or *Ways of Curating*. He sees the production of his books as something beyond mere text: “A book is a kind of exhibition,” he says. “It’s a curated space. The book object

is actually a portable show—a portable museum.”

The first museum Hans ever went to also had a literary connection: the monastery library in St. Gallen in Switzerland, where he saw a tenth-century codex written and illustrated by monks. “As a child, it was unbelievably deep, this expanse of time. It was an incredibly deep experience to be able to actually touch a book from the Middle Ages and connect,” he recalls.

As a teenager, Hans founded a “nano-museum” in a little photo frame, which he kept in his pocket and would show to waiters, taxi