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Let me test out a natural metaphor to explain my idea of bumpiness. A rock, for example, begins rough when it breaks off of a cliff face, but smooths out while tumbling down the river. Somewhere on this path from mountains to beach, it has become *bumpy*: no longer jagged or sharp, yet textured enough to retain a unique shape and character.

In contrast with high-gloss finishes—which maintain their sealed surfaces in the face of water, oil, acid, or worse—*bumpy* objects are irregular and inviting. These contours pick up particles along the way.

But what does this mean for
curating, design, art, and beyond?

Sometimes it seems we're being taught that the main aspiration of curating and design (as well as art-making, public speaking, cooking, parenting, or whatever else) should be to create perfect products. The idea of bumpiness rejects the notion that a sexy, smooth work is the only thing worth pursuing.

In my mind, the purpose of cultural production in particular is to engage *and* provoke, enamor *and* irritate. Achieving both may require a bit of irregularity, uneven surfaces to stimulate the senses.

That being said, not every piece of design or curating should be bumpy. A highway sign that's difficult to read causes accidents; a voting ballot with a confusing layout may change history for the worse. In these examples and others, our choices are fast-paced and mission-critical; design's function has grave importance.

But most cases are not so clear cut. Many of today's choices are manufactured, with the implicit goal of *making us choose more*—the cornerstone of a society founded on the myth that choosing things, whether shoes or books or artworks or social media platforms or cities or lovers, equals freedom.

Here's where I think bumpiness comes into play. By rendering situations reflexive, turning presentation itself transparent, design and curating might start to reveal the hidden structures driving our contemporary world. Perhaps this acknowledgment could help us develop in different directions.

Even though it might involve—irony of ironies—having to make certain choices—