

In this regard, curating, untethered from its confinements, but nevertheless still existing as an approach, a way of finding and linking, becomes a methodology of drawing new relations, ones that reframe/reimagine rather than reproduce relationships between knowledge and power/infrastructure (Rogoff 2013, 47). This is the basis for the understanding of curating music that is being formed here, in that it is focused on drawing together relevant histories, ideas, and examples, in order to create an alternate point of departure for both understanding, and hopefully also conceiving of, festivals for contemporary music.

2.5 Conclusion

The Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 has been shown to be a common ancestor between festivals for both music and visual arts, in that it represents an exemplary system of commodification of artistic practice not limited to one medium or another, but rather exhibiting an imposition of modernist values onto artistic and technological production. This applies as much to visual art practices as it does to those of music.

The approach taken by the 1851 fair, continued and refined in subsequent universal expositions, would serve as the conceptual basis for the smaller, more specific arts-focused festivals that would come shortly later. These festivals would focus variously on performing arts, music, or visual art, but share significant similarities in their construction. While these festivals are normally written about from separate academic perspectives within their own disciplines, this chapter has attempted to think of them within a unified, more general history of the arts festival. It has argued for not only similar origins, but also that all arts festivals share a range of organizational and programmatic similarities.

After having established these similarities, it has been argued that the music festivals that have been examined do have a different approach to these common characteristics, namely that there exists a history of experimentation with the festival format as a critical curatorial practice mainly in the visual arts, with a similar history not being readily discernable in music festivals.

These aspects being however crucial to understanding the administrative practices of the two case studies examined later, an overview of critical curatorial practice as it has developed historically in the visual arts had to be undertaken. This would establish an archive of practices and ideas that could subsequently be used in understanding and analyzing those case studies and how they fit in or diverge from that history of curating in the visual arts.

Curatorial approaches to Documenta were then examined over the years, as they provide important examples that have all had a great deal of resonance in the field.

That festival also has the advantage of having followed Germany periodically through the 20th and 21st centuries, allowing for the different approaches to its leadership to be put into historical relief. Perhaps the most famous documenta, Documenta V, was examined for the role that it plays in curatorial discourse as representing a watershed moment in the emergence of artistic critique, and artists taking control of the contextualization of their works. It is also significant for its curator, Harald Szeemann, and how he transformed the role of curator into a kind of meta-authorship over the exhibition. Documenta 11 was profiled because of the non-art-teleological methodology it employed in addressing the artistic production of Western and non-Western art alike. Connected to this, it is also exemplary in its use of a curatorial team, rather than a singular figure.

As a final element of examining curatorial practice and discourse in the visual arts, before investigating its transformations in the performing arts, several important theoretical positions have been examined, in order to better establish a definition of the term: O’Neil’s history of the profession argues that attempts at reckoning with its increasing power and influence in the art field only strengthen its practitioners, who have turned, for better or worse, into a nexus of debate and criticism. A second position, adapted the positions of Raqs Media Collective and Beatrice von Bismarck regarding curating as a form of responsibility, and combined this with an actor-network-based approach to understanding the relationships between curatorial practice and the stakeholders that it must work for and with. Such an approach will help conceive of curatorial thinking in other fields as well in the next chapter.

Finally, curating was examined from the perspective of immaterial labour and a critique of cognitive capitalism. The unique mix of artistic and managerial skills required of the profession make it the *Leitindustrie* for the creative economy. What this also means is that the critical project of both artistic and curatorial practice must be rethought in order to effectively respond to this new integration of their skillset by capital.

This rethinking must take place with a disregard for the “disciplining” of knowledge by capital, keeping it siloed away in separate categories. Arguing with Irit Rogoff, curating can be understood as the methodology for doing this, because of the focus that it puts on combining knowledges irrespective of background in the interest of achieving new and necessary perspectives. This approach recursively also informs how this volume is itself conceived, in its attempt to establish new, solid connections between curatorial practices in the visual and performing arts and leadership practices in music, where these ideas and perspectives are needed in order to enrich and empower budding curatorial practices in that field.

In this way, knowledge and ideas from curatorial practice in the field of the visual arts has been drawn into a large new arc that extends also to festivals for music. The next chapter will fill in some further important pieces in this puzzle

through its examination of how curatorial practices have been developing in the performing arts of theatre and dance, where they are also related to similar practices there, but are also ultimately imported from the visual arts.