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BOOK REVIEW

CULTURAL TRENDS (2016) Volume 25 (2), Pages 138-139

The Routledge companion to the cultural industries, edited by Kate Oakley and Justin O'Connor, Abingdon, Routledge, 2015, 576 pp., £131.00 (hardback), ISBN 978041570-620-9

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Edited by Kate Oakley (Professor of Cultural Policy at the University of Leeds) and Justin O'Connor (Professor of Communications and Cultural Economy at Monash University) The Routledge Companion to the Cultural Industries brings together 43 individual chapters by leading and emerging researchers from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and countries, to review and update key ideas, concepts and debates within cultural industries scholarship. This is a necessary and significant publication, which is both critically engaged and, importantly, empirically informed. It is a reaffirmation of why the cultural industries matter and it moves the debate beyond the recent creative industries agenda. Throughout, the various challenges facing the contemporary cultural industries are assessed from a broad range of perspectives, and the question of cultural value(s) is confronted head-on. The editors have brought together an impressive set of contributions, although there are notable absences. The collective works aim at instigating a productive dialogue between the "cultural" and the "economic" values of the cultural industries, focusing on questions of industry and policy from the perspective of both, and combining different sectoral, policy and socio-cultural themes. As such, this companion will appeal to students and scholars across a broad range of disciplines including cultural studies, media and communications studies, political economy, sociology, economic geography, and urban and regional studies. Scholarship around the cultural industries – what they are and why they matter – has extended considerably over the last few decades. In the introductory chapter, which provides a rigorous historical analysis and primer to the key debates – and a reminder that these predate the invention of the creative industries circa 1997 – Oakley and O'Connor explore the duality of the "cultural" and the "economic" and how the taxonomic inconsistencies and complexities associated with "cultural industries" and "creative industries" discourse have made the concept of value illusive. The cultural industries in 2015 are then situated within the context of (at least in the UK) post-crisis economic austerity and crippling cultural dis-investment; persistent neo-liberalism; and the aftermath of a reductionist creative industries agenda which, the editors argue, have succeeded in reducing cultural value to the purely economic while augmenting, rather than reducing, spatial, socio-economic and labour inequalities. It is this uncoupling of cultural production and consumption from cultural value(s) that leads Oakley and O'Connor to call for the retrieval of the notion of "cultural industries" as distinct from, rather than interchangeable with, "creative industries" – and it is this "call to arms" that guides the remainder of the volume. The notion of a return to cultural value(s) is, of course, highly topical, as attested by the recent special Issue of Cultural Trends (Volume 24, Issue 3, 2015), which itself coincided with the conclusion of the AHRC's major two-year Cultural Value project. This project engaged scholars across arts and humanities disciplines in empirical research to advance the ways in

which cultural value can be understood and evaluated. Divided into seven substantive sections, covering themes such as industry structure; international development; spaces and places of cultural production and consumption; cultural labour; audiences, intermediaries and markets; regulation, policy and politics, this is by and large a pragmatic ordering. Each chapter is united by a primary concern with the culture that is being produced and consumed by these industries, and the wider symbolic and social value from which they derive their economic value. In addition to the “what”, emphasis is placed on asking “how” we should value the cultural industries and, in particular, understanding the multiple, complex and often contested ways in which value is defined and measured, by whom and for whom. The volume also engages critically with key questions of “who” and “what” are included and excluded from these processes. The various empirical approaches adopted steer away from the instrumental measurement of value, reframing the issues facing the cultural industries in more insightful ways. These contemporary debates are, however, historically contextualised, providing a critical orientation for readers. As well as the “usual suspects” that have been the focus of much recent scholarship (popular music, TV, film, videogames, etc.), chapters on industries often overlooked are included: PR and Advertising as cultural industries (Edwards; Sinclair); Literary Publishing (Brouillette and Doody), Radio (Tebbutt) and Sport (Redhead; Rowe). There are also provocative chapters, including on data as culture (Kennedy) and on environmental damage and cultural consumption (Maxwell), which initiate a welcomed broadening of the taxonomic boundaries of the “creative industries” discourse. Refreshingly, the notion of thinking spatially about the cultural industries is also broadened from Floridean notions of the “creative city” to include rural cultural industries (Bell); and there are welcome chapters on cultural industries development in India (Govil), China (Gu; Edney) and EU transition economies (Lange). As an indication of how important the issue of cultural labour has become, an entire section is devoted to this topic (and several chapters not allocated to this section also address this). While seeking to include a variety of angles, it is nonetheless hard to deny the inequalities of who gets to produce culture and the conditions under which cultural is produced. An important addition to this debate is thus the discussion of different forms of worker organisation including activist and collective models of work and an emerging labour politics in cultural industries (de Puyter and Cohen). Although a hefty volume (at 575 pages), it is available as an e-book in addition to hardback. An engaging and intellectually broad volume, it is undeniably essential reading for both students and researchers alike. Sadly, the price of £131.00 for either version may limit its wider audience.