

Festivalisation of cultural production

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Abstract

The growth in arts festivals that has taken place since the 1990s has changed the structure of the cultural market place. Based on interviews and discussions with festival directors and arts producers, participant observation as a producer and audience member, primarily in the UK, together with examples from the literature, this paper explores the question of whether festival aesthetics and the particularities of festival production and exhibition are changing the nature of the work that is being produced in response to festivalisation. It identifies a number of dimensions of the festival experience, commissioning, spectacularisation, thematic programming, immersion and participation, that are increasingly prevalent in the performing and visual arts being produced for non-festival settings. This festivalisation of culture poses new challenges and offers different opportunities to artists, producers and audiences to make innovative kinds of work that wouldn't have been possible within the hitherto standard production models.

Key words

festivalisation, cultural production, festival aesthetics

Introduction

Festivals are an increasingly common feature of cultural life. Not just outdoor greenfield site music festivals such as *Sonar* or *Glastonbury*, but also city arts festivals and large outdoor events and parades (Quinn 2005, 2006; Klaić 2007). As such, festivals are a growing market for artists and this paper seeks to understand whether the nature of the work that is being produced is changing in response to festivalisation of cultural exhibition.

Festivalisation of culture has been defined by Négrier as “the process by which cultural activity, previously presented in a regular, on-going pattern or season, is reconfigured to form a ‘new’ event, e.g. a regular series of jazz concerts is reconfigured as a jazz festival” (2015: 18). The causes of this reconfiguration might be found in the need to differentiate the live experience in a market dominated by virtual entertainment opportunities and downloading (Connolly and Krueger 2005); or the potential to benefit from economies of scale in marketing, ticketing and site management; in the case of outdoor events, festival capacities might

also be larger than most indoor venues; or there may be something inherently attractive about festivity (Knudsen, B. T. et al. 2015; Morgan 2007; Klaić 2009).

Festivity can be thought of as a time and space for celebration and play that is distinct from everyday life (Jordan, J., forthcoming 2016). Pieper (1999 [1963]) distinguishes festive periods from times of mundane labour. Falassi (1987) highlights the spatial rituals associated with festivals, such as decorating the site, fencing it off or opening normally restricted spaces. Decorating the festival venue removes as many reminders of the humdrum world as possible creating a message that this space will, for a limited time, obey different rules, welcome different people, symbolise something new or other; something festive.

Making work specifically for festivals requires an understanding of why people choose to attend. Audience motivations have been an area of interest in the events management and tourism literature (Getz 2010, 2011; Glow and Caust 2010; Robinson et al. 2004) and indicate that festival-goers have different motivations to audiences for theatre, exhibitions or classical concerts (Fabiani, 2011). The social and experiential facets of festivals emerge as important attractions, indicating that, at festivals, audiences have an altered frame of mind and are looking for an affective and symbolic intensity in the event design and programme that differentiates the festive time and place from everyday life (Lash and Lury 2007; Lash 2010). This paper will argue that artists and cultural producers are responding to these expectations by creating multi-sensory immersive and spectacular works that create festival-like experiences, both for the growing festival market and for conventional forms of cultural production.

The growth in festival numbers has also attracted attention in the social science literature, where festivals have been considered as sites for exploring McGuigan's conception of the cultural public sphere (Giorgi, et al., 2011), places that encourage the emergence and development of political ideas, both in the art works exhibited and amongst citizen participants. Archer (2015) and Fabiani (2011) are amongst those who feel that artists and audiences mix more freely in a festive environment, creating a sense of community and involvement that is lacking in theatres, galleries and concert halls. This sense of involvement, of the festival being co-created, is enhanced by the fact that many festivals encourage volunteering as a practical management solution to the need for large numbers of staff during the festival itself and because they perceive the festival as having a role in developing and encouraging community participation (Autissier, 2015).

For Comunian (2015) festivals act as communities of practice, connecting artists and cultural managers in similar ways to conferences and trade fairs (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen 2011). The Mladi levi Festival in Ljubljana, for example, seeks to maximise this social and artistic mingling through creating "opportunities where we could invite artists to stay with us for as long as possible..." (Koprivšek, 2015: 119), to develop relationships with each other and the city. The festival holds an annual picnic for artists and its volunteers and encourages use of a bar as an after show meeting place. "It was exactly at these places that a great many friendships and new co-operations came into being" (ibid: 119). Festivals bring together significant numbers of cultural practitioners all sections of the production cycle and, therefore, act as hubs in cultural economy networks that provide practitioners with professional development prospects that are otherwise hard to find outside major cities (Moeran and Strandgaard Pedersen, 2011).

These studies, in their various ways, all point to the fact that there is something inherently different in the way that festivals produce and present work and in the way that audiences experience that work. There has, however, been no exploration of the structural effects that the festivalisation of cultural production and

exhibition is having on the work that artists produce. Based on interviews and discussions with festival directors and arts producers, participant observation as a producer and audience member, primarily in the UK, together with examples from the literature, a number of impacts have been noted, including spectacularisation, participative and immersive experiences, thematic programming and commissioning. This paper is an attempt to theorise the responses that artists and cultural producers are making to festivalisation.

Commissioning

Commissioning new artistic works is a feature that is common to many aesthetically-led festivals, whether they celebrate a historic tradition, or explore contemporary and commercial genres. John Cumming, Director of the EFG London Jazz Festival; William Galinsky, Artistic Director of the Norfolk and Norwich Festival; and Ben Robinson, Director of greenfield music festival Kendal Calling discussed their distinctive reasons for commissioning new works during a conference on 22 May 2015. There were four themes that emerged; artform and artist development, exploration of distinctive local identity, market competition for artists and the creation of a unique product to attract audiences to the festival.

Artform development

For Cumming, festivals have a responsibility to commission new works because “without it the art form doesn’t move forward. It’s the lifeblood”. London Jazz Festival formalised its commitment to commissioning when it invited 21 artists to make new work for its 21st edition in 2013. Saxophonist Courtney Pine, one of those commissioned, explains the importance of being invited: “Musicians who are improvising and looking for inspiration need a springboard to help them — and commissions give them the opportunity to present new work” (London Jazz Festival/Serious 2015).

Evidence from the literature supports Cumming’s observation that audiences are more likely to take artistic risks within festive environments than they are when seeing a concert means buying a ticket for one event and making a specific trip (Morgan 2007; Gelder and Robinson 2009; Uysal and Li 2008; Archer 2015). For Cumming this means that festivals are ideally positioned to “celebrate an art form’s existing repertoire, but also to celebrate the right to fail”. Pianist and composer Alexander Hawkins highlights the distinction between performing at a festival and at other concerts.

The chance to perform a commission comes along with a festival and the commission gives you an opportunity to do something new and something different from the day-by-day gig (in *EFG London Jazz Festival - 21 Commissions*. 2013 at 3mins 18 seconds).

Something new and something different echoes festivity’s sense of being a time and space that is distinct from everyday life.

Unique selling propositions

Something new and something different also enables festivals to compete for high-profile artists in the increasingly competitive live music field. As it has become more difficult to make money from recorded music, the live music field has grown exponentially, a fact that was prophesied by David Bowie in 2002 when he said that recorded music would become as available as running water, leaving live performance as the main source of revenue for musicians (Krueger 2005: 26; Connolly and Krueger 2005). And, although live event numbers have grown, the number of superstar headliners has not. Festivals are forced to either

pay ever increasing fees for names who guarantee ticket sales, or to find inventive ways to build relationships with musicians. Commissioning them to make new work is one method discussed by Comunian (2015) and Glow and Caust (2010), who each highlight the role festivals play in helping artists to launch their careers and develop professional networks. Other festivals, such as Meltdown at London's Southbank Centre develop partnerships with artists who are then asked to curate the festival. Notable Meltdown curators have included David Bowie (2002), Patti Smith (2005), Pulp's Jarvis Cocker (2007), Yoko Ono (2013) and Talking Heads front man David Byrne (2015). Each curator provides access to their contact book and who would turn down an invitation to perform from singer Scott Walker (2000) or dance music producer James Lavelle (2014).

Distinctive place identities

Galinsky feels that commissions are important because they are made for a particular place, reflecting and adding nuance to local identity. In 2015 the Norwich and Norfolk Festival staged *Wolf's Child* by immersive theatre company WildWorks. The specially created site specific show took place in woods surrounding a 17th century manor house in Norfolk and was inspired by the true story of a man from the area who spent two years as a fully integrated member of a wolf pack in Idaho.

In places such as Norwich, which is on the eastern edge of England and does not have its own producing theatre company, commissions create a unique reason to visit or live in a place by filling that gap and telling the community's stories. Narrative layers are provided by the experience of attending the event itself, the rediscovered tales and insights provided by artists who are seeing the place from a new or different perspective.

Ben Robinson is also interested in the pulling power of commissions; in his case to a music festival held in the remote and beautiful Eden Valley in the Lake District National Park in Northeast England. Kendal Calling has piloted an immersive art trail in the woods at the edge of the festival site. The woods became an additional – unique - attraction, adding a surprising feature to the visual and experiential design of the site. The trail, which saw Robinson and his team working with visual artists for the first time, was funded by Arts Council England in an attempt to access audiences who don't normally visit art galleries. The result, *Lost Eden*, is inspired by folklore from the Eden Valley. Audiences are encouraged to co-create new stories in the tale of a legendary lost people, the Carvatti, who inhabited the area. Wandering through the site, participants encounter themed costume parades, bespoke art works and giant installations and sumptuous creatures (Kendal Calling, 2015). The trail creates a link between the music festival, which could be sited in any green field with sufficient access and facilities, and this specific place.

The potential of festive-like events to influence place identity is a key element of many outdoor commissions being undertaken by cities seeking to rebrand or enhance communal identity. During a panel discussion during the Cultural Exchanges Festival in Leicester in February 2015, Shona McCarthy, the director of the Derry/Londonderry UK City of Culture 2013, highlighted the importance of culture in the city's peace process. New shared traditions and symbols of common identity are essential if divided communities are to find commonality. And large-scale spectacular outdoor experiences ensure that all communities feel that they can participate.

Spectacularisation

A spectacular is something highly visual and larger-than-life. Festivals have always sought to appeal and sometimes overwhelm the senses. Indeed, this is one of the reasons that the arts have traditionally been incorporated in to religious festivals. Contemporary sites, whether urban or greenfield music festivals, are decorated with flags, banners and lights. And, as with carnival or South Asian mela, the audience adds to the spectacle by dressing in bright, colourful costumes, creating the atmosphere of a very special occasion that is different from the everyday (Robinson, 2015). Kaushal and Newbold use the word *tamasha* to describe the bawdy, striking and exuberant style of performance found at mela, arguing that it enhances “the spectacle to convey greater emotion and to establish a greater level of empathy with audiences” (2015: 220).

What is new is the tendency of art works themselves to be spectacular, at festivals and, increasingly, in other environments. Giant puppets by French company Royal de Luxe have been seen on the streets of China, South Korea, Chile, Portugal, Sweden, Iceland and Mexico as a key ingredient in city marketing and place-making strategies, the. In 2006, the company’s show, *The Sultan’s Elephant*, toured the streets of London as part of the city’s attempts to renew its sense of community in the wake of the previous year’s tube and bus bombings. More recently, American artist David Best created a 22 metre high wooden structure he called a temple in a park in Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland in the summer of 2015 as a symbol of peace from the sectarian Troubles. The structure references a Protestant tradition of lighting large bonfires to celebrate a victory of the Catholic King James in 1690. Members of both communities came together to build the temple, and to leave messages inside. After a week, the *Temple of Grace* was put to the torch and burnt to the ground (Temple Derry/Londonderry, 2015).

Theatre, too, has taken to the streets to create large scale and spectacular events. In 2011 The National Theatre of Wales staged a version of *The Passion*, in the former mining town of Port Talbot starring Hollywood actor Michael Sheen, who grew up in the area. Working with 1,000 volunteers, the promenade production played out the story of Jesus’s last days in the town’s streets and attracted over 22,000 visitors (National Theatre of Wales, 2011).

In both of these examples, the sheer scale of the event has been used by the artists as a spark to inspire people and a metaphor for their desire to be inclusive, to involve as many people from the community as possible.

Spectacle as advertising

The advertising potential of spectacular was noted by Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1983), in which he argued that the highly visual had become a function of marketisation and commodification, with spectacular events being created solely for selling products. This aspect of spectacle can be found in the use of festivals for city branding and tourism, or in the huge light shows associated with stadium rock gigs and mega-events. Debord classifies such events as inauthentic and manipulative. It is clear that this is not the case in the two examples above, but in an environment where more and more art is spectacular, is it possible to create quiet works and still draw an audience?

In a seminar at De Montfort University in 2012, Jack McNamara, Artistic Director of small scale touring theatre company New Perspectives, addressed this issue in a discussion of his thought process when faced with a blank sheet of paper and the need to make a theatre show for Edinburgh Fringe Festival. Firstly, there are festival-specific practicalities: the show has to be quick and easy to set up and strike down, as venues are very strict on the time allowed between performances and fringe shows tend not to have an interval.

Most importantly, the amount of competition means that the show has to have a really eye-catching hook. This might be a well-known performer or playwright, or a memorable title or gimmick. And, Edinburgh in particular is a market place for the sector, so the audience consists of industry specialists who might want to book the show for an autumn or spring tour as well as the public.

New Perspectives has successfully taken two of its productions to Edinburgh. *Farm Boy*, an adaptation of Michael Morpurgo's follow up to *War Horse*, sold more than 95% of its available tickets and was picked up by Bill Kenwright's production company for a commercial large-scale tour. *The Boss of It All*, a reworking of a little known Lars von Trier film attracted the attention of the Brits off Broadway festival in New York, where it also had a successful run, although it sold less well at the box office.

Both plays appealed to the press and industry because they were adaptations of work by well-known author or directors, but the public responded in larger numbers to *Farm Boy*, a sequel to a theatre production that includes highly spectacular life-size puppets of the war horses of its title. So, despite the tendency of festival audiences to take more risks, the scale of noise in the festival environment militates against the kinds of revivals that might be popular in a regional theatre, or new plays by emerging and relatively unknown playwrights. In this respect, spectacularisation is essential in attracting attention. Busy-ness is not exclusive to festivals though. Mobile devices and online gaming are just two of the new everyday distractions that bombard potential audiences, and with which artists and arts producers have to compete for attention. Star performers, sequels and adaptations of popular books or TV shows have been used by Hollywood producers for many years to reduce risk. In the visual arts, galleries are curating blockbuster exhibitions and even subsidised theatres are relying on well-known names from film and television to ensure media coverage and ticket sales.

Theming

In the absence of an eye-catching name, theming is a technique that arts festivals have used since Earl Harewood introduced a Russian theme to the Edinburgh Festival in 1962. Bryman (1999) sees themes as a method for establishing an intelligible identity for disparate activities and claims that themes create a narrative to explain why particular artistic choices have been made. They also provide curators with a framework that might be a source of inspiration.

John Cumming, Director of the EFG London Jazz Festival, considers that festivals need stories, a narrative that runs across the festive period. Themes are, therefore, especially valuable when programming a festival in suggesting a structure for programmers to work within. He also finds themes liberating in that they inspire him to bring together artists and shows he otherwise wouldn't have thought of. In 2014 Cummings programmed jazz pianist Abdullah Ibrahim, a rare opportunity that stimulated him into developing a South African theme tied into the 20th anniversary of South African majority rule. The festival commissioned a new work from a South African big band to enhance the theme, and supplemented the programme with talks and panels discussing democracy and South African culture.

The festival environment gives an artistic director more space to develop a themed programme than would be possible with a weekly jazz club, or traditional theatre programme. The intensity of festival programming places concerts, exhibitions, and plays in juxtaposition to each other, so one might still be resonating as the next event starts, producing unexpected insights, nuances and reflections. Themes also provide a guide for

audiences overwhelmed by the number of events and they might consequently be more willing to try something new (Festivals Edinburgh, 2005).

Themes inspire artists as well as producers. Ruth MacKenzie, Director of the 2012 Cultural Olympiad associated with the London Olympics, explained at the 2013 Cultural Exchanges Festival in Leicester how artists had been asked to respond to the idea of Olympic Truce in submitting proposals for commissions. The theme resulted in commissions such as Deborah Warner's *Peace Camp*, an installation involving illuminated tents with a soundscape of love poetry and nature emanating from within being installed on remote beaches across the UK (see Artichoke 2012 for more details on the installations).

This was a starting point for some of the most important commissions [...]. The Olympic Truce also provided a framework to allow work by politically marginalised artists and communities, such as the homeless, to be celebrated by the Royal Opera House and Streetwise Opera (Arts Council England and LOCOG, April 2013).

Themes serve as a spark to the artistic imagination and also convey layers of meaning. There is a contrast between the call to "lay down your arms", and the intense international competition embodied in the Olympic Games, for example, that enhanced this artistic experience. Away from the festival sector, theatres in the UK are embracing themes to bring coherence to seasons of work. Nottingham Playhouse's winter 2015-16 programme is branded the Conspiracy Season, for example (Nottingham Playhouse, 2015) and The Bush Theatre in London had a justice theme for its spring 2015 season (Bosanquet, 2014).

Participation and immersion

Robinson (2015), O'Grady (2015) and Anderton (2015) each consider the participative, experiential and immersive nature of festivals to be something that distinguishes them from arts events held in theatres and concert halls. Fabiani (2011) contends that festivals create unique opportunities for encounters between artist and audiences unencumbered by the usual rules that separate performers from audiences in theatres and concert halls. For artists, particularly performing artists, festivals are rare opportunities to meet with and see their contemporaries' work, something that is difficult if they are on tour, or performing most evenings, meaning that audiences are more likely to include other performers. Combined with an increase in event numbers and intensity created by decoration of the site, and programming throughout the day and night, festivals can create a sense of what Turner called *communitas*, an "unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who submit together to the general authority of the ritual elders" (Turner, 1969:19).

Increasingly, those ritual elders, the festival curators and directors, are encouraging carnival-like participation in the production of work. In her work on the Burning Man festival in Nevada, Chen (2011) discusses the way in which spectatorship is replaced with concepts of prosumption and co-creation; audiences are, explicitly, the producers of the festival's programme. There is no main stage, or concert programme, participants are invited to make and stage the festival themselves. For Robinson the No Spectators principle that guides the festival's design and marketing messages means that there is "a fusion of practices based around this ideal [that] obligates festival-goers to contribute to such an extent, that perceptible differences between the producers and consumers of the event are largely eliminated" (2015: 166). Symbolically, participants are

called Burners, a practice also employed by the UK's *Secret Garden Party* (Gardeners), which mixes the traditional concert-style music festival programme with participative zones inspired by the Burning Man ethos. Shambala, which takes place in a secret site in England, resists publicising the acts booked for its stages. Its claims on its Our Principles web page promote the idea of the festival participant as the star not the acts on stage.

Our passion is to encourage creative participation. *Shambala* is a canvas upon which diverse groups have autonomy to create and offer their ideas and create a rich tapestry of experiences in music, art and performance. The idea of the 'Shambalan' being just as important as the entertainment we provide is an essential part of *Shambala's* nature (Shambala Festival, 2015).

As in mela (Kaushal and Newbold, 2015) or traditional pre-Lenten celebrations such as fasching in Germany or mardi gras, striking and colourful costumes are increasingly visible at festivals. Indeed festivals such as Bestival, Standon Calling and BoomTown Fair encourage participants to wear fancy dress associated with themes or festival zones. Costumes, generally considered to be children's wear in most of the Western world, are a form of performance and play that places the festival-goer on a par with professional actors as part of the entertainment for other participants.

Participation is increasingly found outside the festival environment, too, and takes a range of forms. Conceptual artist Marina Abramović, for example, routinely involves the public in her work, whether sorting pieces of rice into piles, or sitting opposite her for five minutes in silence. The context is controlled by the artist and the public are, briefly, actors within it.

Bishop coined the term social turn to describe what she saw as "the recent surge of artistic interest in collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement" (2006: 179), much of which she felt was at least partially politically motivated, a factor that can also be found in festivals. Shambala's principles explicitly refer to a desire "to discover and share ways of moving to a sustainable future" and "to be a place free of corporate influence" (2015), the latter being considered to remove agency from festival-goers. The Woodstock Festival in Poland is run as a thank you to charity volunteers and offers co-creating opportunities, including a virtual game version of the event (Great Orchestra of Christmas Charity Foundation, 2015).

Immersive experiences

Immersion in the festive world is a significant part of festival's otherworldly attractiveness (O'Grady, 2015). Participants are distanced from everyday life through spectacular décor and sensual excess, allowing them to shed their cares and give themselves up to the experience (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Knudsen, B. T. et al. 2015; Falassi 1987). As discussed above, festival-goers are actors whose costume is part of the event for others. Volunteers, too, become involved in festival production in larger numbers than elsewhere in the cultural sector, enjoying the opportunity to meet artists and see backstage.

As festivalisation has taken hold, the desire of audiences to be immersed in a production appears to be influencing work in other settings. Whilst immersive theatre is not entirely new, there has been a noticeable appetite for productions that involve audiences as characters or witnesses since Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, a film noir style adaptation of *Macbeth*, where audiences explore a series of rooms in the McKittrick

Hotel and happen upon scenes reminiscent of the Shakespeare play, opened in New York in 2011. Other examples include a musical adaptation of *War and Peace*, called *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* and *Leviathan*, a production of Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* in which the audience play the ship's crew, or graffiti artist Banksy's anti-theme park, *Dismaland* (Banksyfilm 2015).

For practitioners such as Mark Storer immersive theatre has a political agenda. His 2012 *A Tender Subject* was a promenade performance devised by gay prisoners that asks audience members questions about why they make the judgements they do. Placing audiences within the action changes their relationship from spectator to actor, with agency and responsibility for the subsequent events. For other practitioners immersion is more closely related to Pine and Gilmore's (1998) concept of events as highly memorable experience. They maintain that an immersive event is one in which the audience member is surrounded by the sights, sounds, smells and feel of an event, and that they might be active or passive participants. In Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More*, audience members are immersed in a film noir environment, but wear masks that anonymise them and differentiate them from the actors. His or her movements and decisions make no difference to the action, but each individual's journey through the event is unique.

Large scale immersive installations have also become a feature in art galleries such as Tate Modern, which has commissioned several for its sizeable Turbine Hall, and the Guggenheim in New York. Arguable some of these, such as Olafur Eliasson's *The Weather Project*, a gigantic indoor sun, are spectacular rather than immersive; exhibited primarily as a means of attracting visitors. Others, such as Rirkrit Tiravanija's 1997 *Untitled (tomorrow is another day)*, create an environment in which the audience become actors in the piece. The exhibition saw the Cologne Kunstverein opened 24 hours a day so that visitors could live in the artist's recreation of his New York home. Participants could cook, sleep and even have a shower. More recently Carsten Höller's *Decision* at the Hayward Gallery in London uses mirrors, 'Upside Down Goggles', and twisting helter skelters to disorientate, disrupt and undermine the logical, scientific paradigm that he believes dominates Western understanding (Adams, 2015). Immersion in an artistic world, like immersion in a festival world, invites participants to play in an environment that rejects the disenchanting rationalism of everyday life.

Conclusions

Festivals are unique environments in which to enjoy cultural events and experiences. Each is different from the next, yet there are features that distinguish the festive from the everyday and festivals from other forms of cultural production and exhibition. Immersive and spectacular environments, fewer distinctions in status between artists, audiences and participants, place-specific events and themes have been traditional expectations of festivals. As the number of festivals has expanded artists and producers are adjusting to this new market and it is becoming possible to identify shifts in cultural production that encompass the types of work that are being produced and the production methods. These raise a number of issues for cultural managers and for artists, just as digitisation has created the need for new business models within the music and movie industries. Ethically, too, there may be concerns that festivalisation is a market rather than an aesthetic response to contemporary life.

Spectacularisation

Artistically, the need to be eye-catching in increasingly busy and distracting environments poses problems for artists whose work is quiet, small in scale, or demanding of sustained commitment in order to understand it. For those who know Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for example, Punchdrunk's *Sleep No More* provides an experience that is layered with meanings unavailable to those who don't. Négrier (2015) regards festivals as

entertainment, experiences that anyone can enjoy regardless of their level of cultural capital, a view that is similar to Debord's (1983) arguments about spectacle. If festivals become the dominant mode of production, will the opportunity to learn about a genre or art form over a sustained period be limited? Yet the examples of thoughtful spectacular and immersive artworks discussed in this paper indicate that artists are responding to festivalisation in ways that are thoughtful and thought-provoking, that ask questions about place and society that are just as interesting as more traditional works.

There are, however, practical considerations in regard to spectacular events. Large-scale performances are inevitably expensive to produce and, despite the intentions of the artists, may be distorted by funders and sponsors with city or brand marketing priorities. The need to make events eye-catching simply to be heard above the noise in the market place, whether that market place is a festival, or the increasing competition from the virtual world that is providing cheap access to the best (and worst) of global culture, is also a pressure facing cultural managers. Some, as Négrier notes, are using the festival model as a solution to this problem. But if more and more venues and cities focus their resources on festivals or spectacular events, it will create a dilemma for companies such as New Perspectives; can they continue to commission new, small-scale plays from unknown writers, or will they, too, have to bow to market pressure and choose projects primarily for their ability to attract attention?

And there is the need for new production skills. Do you know how to hire a crane? An outdoor events producer recently admitted that she had just fulfilled a professional ambition of hiring a crane when she coordinated an event at a ruined castle. On a practical note, crane hire is not a skill often taught on cultural management courses, but perhaps it should be. ISAN, the network for street arts organisations in the UK, publishes guidance documents for its members; Guidance Document No.2 is entitled *Guidance on the Use of Cranes for Performance* (2014). Large scale performances are, effectively, building sites which are then opened to the public.

Themes

Themes emerge as an important tool for artistic directors, audiences and artists. They give a structure to a festival's narrative that can inspire ideas for commissions or the selection of particular works, or highlight links that would not otherwise be obvious. Audiences, too, can use the theme to guide their choices about what to see in a crowded market, which encourages them to take risks they otherwise might not. When combined with commissioning, thematic programming adds layers and depth to the potential of the work to reflect a particular place identity or to develop an artform. It can also encourage audiences to take risks on shows they might not otherwise attend as the theme highlights connections to cultural works they know and enjoy.

Immersion and participation

As festivals have become more mainstream, so too have immersive and participatory arts. This is a phenomenon that is both rationally commercial – the immersive experience cannot (yet) be digitally replicated, you do have to be there – and a meaningful, affective response to the demands of contemporary life. Artists and participants are seeking playful, sensory, surprising experiences that bear little relationship to their everyday lives.

But marketisation is not the only reason for this phenomenon. Artists are also employing immersive techniques more often found in commercial leisure and marketing fields to reflect upon and critique society, to highlight individual social and political agency. Just as festivals can provide alternative visions of society (Bakhtin, 1994 [1965]) in which the personal is political, so too can immersive and participatory art experiences.

The practical production processes of festivals differ from those found in venues or touring companies. The particular relationships that festivals have with place is highlighted in their commissioning of site specific works. Both Norwich and Norfolk Festival and Kendal Calling have commissioned work related to local myths, and added to the local myth-making in doing so. Theatres and concert halls are constrained by maintaining a building and selling tickets for a regular season of events, but festivals have the flexibility to explore new sites and create links between venues, places and communities in new and playful ways. For those that produce one festival a year, or even biannually, there is also the time to build relationships and develop larger, more complex shows.

For artists and producers, festivals pose different challenges and offer different opportunities to those facing venue managers and touring companies. But festivalisation is changing and reshaping the cultural market place, audience expectations and production processes across four key dimensions, creating new kinds of festivalised cultural aesthetics.

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