

Dena Davida, Jane Gabriels, Véronique Hudon & Marc Pronovost, Curating Live Arts, Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 392 p.

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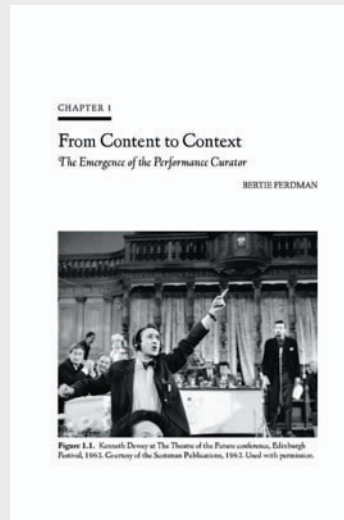
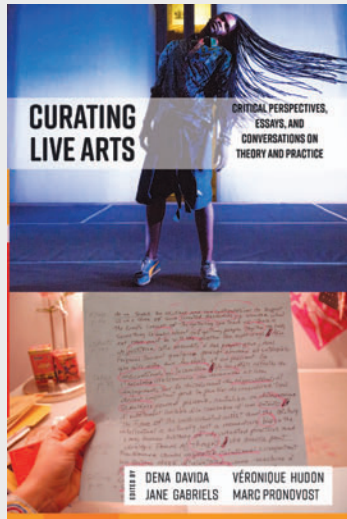
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Dena Davida, Jane Gabriels,
Véronique Hudon & Marc Pronovost

← *Curating Live Arts*, cover & interior
page, 2018.

Photo : courtesy of Berghahn Books

Dena Davida, Jane Gabriels, Véronique Hudon & Marc Pronovost *Curating Live Arts*

Initiated by the symposium “Envisioning the Practice: Montréal International Symposium on Curating the Performing Arts” in 2014—produced by the International Community of Performing Arts Curators (CICA-ICAC)—*Curating Live Arts* is a seminal, effective endeavor to build the field of the *live arts* from the ground up. But what exactly are the *live arts*, what do they encompass? The word “performance” has been used as an umbrella term with the intent of including all mediums using live presence, movement, and action. But “performance” is heavily tainted by visual arts history in performance art and in the end, is not equally inclusive of all media. Could “live arts” consider all disciplines, moving forward with its own history and different issues around curation?

The research of the group of co-editors, all also part of CICA-ICAC, raises important questions around live arts curation, grounding it in their academic and practical experiences, strongly anchored in the reality we find in the cultural sector in Montréal. Acknowledging DIY and independent projects, and that curation is not only for those working in museums, this book recognizes and challenges the idea that curation has not been used as such by many in the field of the live arts, but can be applied to their work. Defined and mostly used within the visual arts, is it possible for other cultural workers to be recognized as curators in other live disciplines?

The anthology includes an attentive prologue by Florian Malzacher (co-editor of the *Frakcija Performing Arts Journal* #55, 2010) and epilogue by Tom Sellar (editor of *Theater*, Duke University Press), in which they situate the subject and question its past, present, and future through their experience as editors of special topic journals in this field of study, as well as contextualizing the many voices included in this collection. Key players and writers have contributed by questioning their roles as curators in this publication, wanting to

be part of influential conversations that are driving the effort to professionalize and stabilize these ideas in the live arts; this field being, matter-of-factly, even more ephemeral if we think of its short life in front of an audience, and the difficulty of archiving and publishing in the same way as do the visual arts in the case of performance art.

The publication gathers academic essays as well as diagrams, powerful images, and short curatorial statements, divided into six sections focusing on different questions and areas to structure and build a history and theory around this young field. Six years and more have passed since the initiation of this anthology, which has become a reference and essential guide. Gathering together members of the Montréal community such as Jacob Wren, Nadège Grebmeier-Forget, Jane Gabriels, and Véronique Hudon, as well as reflecting on the progressive curatorial initiatives in New York (Institute for Curatorial Practice in Performance at Wesleyan University and Danspace Project), and threaded throughout by an inclusive and global mindedness, *Curating Live Arts* provides momentum for the evolution of research in the curation of performance, performing arts, theatre, music, and other media included in the live arts.

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