

## **The Curatorial Practices of Exhibiting Popular Music in Portugal at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century: An Overview**

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### **Resumo**

Desde o seu aparecimento, os museus de música têm privilegiado narrativas sobre música erudita através da exposição de instrumentos musicais singulares segundo uma categorização científica. Mais recentemente, contudo, as mudanças teóricas que marcaram tanto os estudos musicológicos como os estudos museológicos vieram colocar novos desafios e oportunidades aos curadores, permitindo que a música possa ser exposta e celebrada enquanto objecto patrimonial nos museus. Neste contexto, desenvolvi um estudo que visou o levantamento das exposições sobre temas da *popular music* que tiveram lugar nos museus em Portugal no início do século XXI, bem como a descrição da respectiva prática curatorial e expositiva com o objectivo de contribuir para o seu desenvolvimento. Este artigo reporta uma parte deste estudo, nomeadamente a análise das entrevistas realizadas com os vários curadores envolvidos nas exposições e com os profissionais responsáveis pelos museus que acolheram estas exposições. Pretendo demonstrar que o discurso destes profissionais, assim como as suas narrativas expositivas sobre *popular music*, é movido sobretudo por conceitos tais como *homenagem*, *localidade*, *arte*, *estatísticas*, *indústria*, *estratégias cronológicas de pensamento* e *cultura material*. Identifico, ainda, que os discursos sobre a *popular music* em Portugal estão, na sua maioria, organizados de forma convencional atribuindo poder e autoridade à voz do curador. Termino apresentando uma proposta de alternativas a esta abordagem.

### **Palavras-chave**

*Popular music*; Património Musical; Portugal; Exposições em Museus; Museus de Música.

### **Abstract**

Music museums have traditionally addressed art music through exhibitions of remarkable and unique collections of musical instruments organized according to rigorous scientific criteria. Nevertheless, striking shifts in the theory of both music studies and museum studies have presented new challenges and opportunities, leading curators to structure their narratives round the celebration of music as heritage in museum settings. Within this framework, I carried out a study with the primary aim of mapping and

understanding the characteristics of exhibitions of popular music in museums in Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century, and with the secondary goal of contributing towards its development. This paper provides an account of one section of this research project, in particular examining the profiles and discourses of a group of curators and professionals responsible for museums through a series of interviews. I aim thereby to illustrate concepts such as tribute, locale, art, statistics, industry, chronological rationales and material culture and the way in which they are forged together by dominant narratives concerning popular music. Furthermore, I identify and discuss the underlying trends framing popular music in Portugal so as to endow the curator's voice with power and authority whilst arguing in addition for a fresh shift in the conventional approach.

## Keywords

Popular Music; Musical Heritage; Portugal; Museum Exhibitions; Music Museums.

## Introduction

**B**ETWEEN 2013 AND 2014, I completed a qualitative study characterising the practices of curating and displaying popular music themes in Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The whole study entailed mapping popular music exhibitions held in Portuguese institutions between 2007 and 2013, which constituted a total sample of nine exhibitions, including ethnographic work with the curators and other museum professionals associated with each exhibition, and close analysis of two exhibitions in particular by focusing on their written—by means of discourse analysis—sonic and visual narratives.

As regards the present article, this sets out mainly to convey an account of the ethnographic research findings. Whilst I do not specifically address the more detailed analysis applied to the aforementioned two case studies (which produced accounts of the textual, sonic and visual narratives of the respective exhibitions), the ethnographic approach, in turn, focused on all nine exhibitions and underpinned the grasping and the understanding of the major concepts and approaches regarding popular music shared by the group of museum professionals involved in these exhibitions. More specifically, this ethnographic study incorporated the qualitative analysis of twenty-one in-depth interviews conducted with the curators and museum professionals responsible for the exhibitions mapped, and particularly focusing on their respective personal motivations, political agendas and their perspectives on exhibiting music-related themes in museums.

Before discussing the research results, this introduction continues with some conceptual clarification, especially focusing on the term *popular music*, to which have been attributed many meanings. I then progress with a historical overview of music museums in the West intertwined with discussion of the significance of this research project. Since it would seem that the current music museum remains generally coupled to and determined by past modes of thinking, I have found that this historical overview significantly adds to flagging the need for the analysis

undertaken by this project. I then briefly outline the Portuguese music museum scenario with the aim of assisting readers to contextualise the discussion developed in the second section of this article, concentrating on practices relating to the exhibition of popular music in museums in Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

Although the Portuguese term *música popular*<sup>1</sup> has mainly been connected with the musical practices of the people, within this article I apply the focus of the term *popular music* in accordance with its current English meaning, which mainly connotes mass-produced urban music distributed by means of the phonographic industry (CASTELO-BRANCO - CIDRA 2010, 878). Nevertheless, a wide range of musical genres actually becomes subsumed into the broad category of popular music. As a result, there have been innumerable exhibitions addressing 'popular music' in general in Portugal, which certainly would have made its mapping virtually impossible within the project's time limits. This led me to carry out a survey of popular music exhibitions restricted to the sub-genre of pop-rock. Nevertheless, my sample contained two exhibitions that mainly addressed pop-rock music alongside brief mentions of other genres of popular music.

My interest in the representation of music in museums encompasses all musical genres and thus the fact that I here specifically address popular music exhibitions should not be interpreted as any intention to privilege the exhibition of narratives about popular music over other genres. The main reason for my study's focus stemmed from the practical impossibility to complete a large-scale research project that would otherwise have ranged from more traditional permanent exhibitions of musical instrument collections to more contemporary approaches to staging musical themes. This being the case, I focus here exclusively on the study of the exhibition of popular music themes as a specific sample of the practice of addressing music in Portugal.

At the international level, several interesting studies of exhibitions and other insightful accounts adopting different approaches to popular music have been published (BARDEN 1997; BAKER 2013; BERGENGREN 1999; BRABAZON – MALLINDER 2006; BRUCE 2008; CATEFORIS 2009; COHEN - ROBERTS 2014; EDGE 2000; HENKE 2009; JUCHARTZ - RISHOI 2006; LEONARD 2007, 2011, 2014; MAGUIRE *et al* 2009; MARTIN 1999; MULHEARN 2011; REISING 2001; SANTELLI 1997; SOUHAMI 2005; STEPHENS 2010; THORNTON 1990). Of these, only the work of Leonard is based specifically on in-depth interviews with curators and museum professionals. In Portugal, despite there being a set of reflections on music museums produced within the scope of non-material heritage publications, as well as on standards of inventorying and conserving, ethnographic study of the practices adopted by music museums remains virtually non-existent. This makes it correspondingly difficult for museum professionals to incorporate new and valuable perspectives

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<sup>1</sup> Popular music.

into the representation of music in museums. The work by HOLTON (2002) on the exhibition *Fado: Vozes e Sombras*, held at the Museu de Etnografia as part of Lisbon 94, European Capital of Culture, may be mentioned as an exception.

The fact that little attention has been paid to the curatorial practices of representing music in Portuguese museums, in conjunction with the abiding assumption that for museums to produce heritage they must end up intervene (KIRSHENBLATT - GIMBLETT 1995, 2004), establishes the impetus for Portugal to map and theorize on its own exhibition spaces, in order to analyse currently prevailing practices. As I hold a specific interest in laying the groundwork for a significant move towards collecting, documenting, narrating and exhibiting within the scope of music museums, alongside a particular concern for exhibiting sound and music in their narratives—given its focus on the musical artifact itself and its specific ability to engage with the public in meaningful ways—I have given particular prominence to popular music exhibitions within the scope of my project to ascertain whether or not they might add significantly to the musealisation of music.

Furthermore, my past experience as a museum professional, with an academic background in music studies, has provided me with a set of significant topics that have plagued me and thus also nurtured my interest in studying the exhibiting of music in museums. To a large extent, the overall purpose of my work involves appealing to music study researchers to disseminate publicly and effectively their outcomes and perspectives on museums, so that a broader audience may enlarge their thinking about music in insightful and engaging new ways. In fact, the bulk of contemporary Western music research has ended up remained exclusively within the boundaries of academic knowledge and, despite countless publications and articles, has provided no real direct benefits to society. It is hence my firm conviction that there is a responsibility for both contemporary museums of music and for the cutting-edge field of music studies to provide a valuable window of knowledge onto these more recent understandings and meanings of music. More accurately, I subscribe to the view that the expertise of music and museum scholars is fundamental for any museum seeking to provide visitors with a reinterpretation of established collections under new critical approaches, and alongside the practice of producing innovative museum narratives about musical themes. Advocating such a course of action holds particular relevance in Portugal as we perceive that there is no longstanding, established tradition of specifically calling on music studies experts to curate music exhibitions, or of specifically addressing the curation of music in MA and PhD museum studies and music studies degree programs. In a troubled world such as ours, I believe both museum studies and music studies ought to launch discussions on just how they might add to establishing a sustainable future for communities by drawing upon a powerful social technology such as the museum.

The first matter with which I believe we must start the debate on exhibiting music in museums is the more philosophical dimension: what might it mean precisely to depict music in a museum of such a remit in the twenty-first century? And I believe this inevitably leads to the more specific question: what are the specific issues of representativeness and exhibitability in music for museums to address this field accurately and effectively? Bearing in mind that the majority of music museums in the West primarily exhibit their former collections of musical instruments, another question also arises: do we actually match the twenty-first century academic understanding of music in museums by exhibiting a set of musical instruments? I cannot be more tempted to say: of course not.

While raising these questions I am aware of the difficulties of addressing an immaterial object such as music, and coupled with the limitations inherent to the act of exhibiting *per se*. Some authors have clearly shown that moving an object from its authentic context to that of a museum inherently means imposing new meanings on that object (MULLER 2010, 297), whether restricting or enlarging them. And this bears witness to the finding that the entire exhibitiv act, regardless of its object, results in the alienation of that same object. Nevertheless, I truly believe in the opportunities offered both by contemporary knowledge on heritage issues, and by technological devices to deal effectively with these matters, and hence still find starting this discussion by pursuing the question of how we might capture music in all its complexity within museums of the greatest relevance.

While I was pondering this matter, what came to my mind was the fresh excitement that I experienced while reading more recent academic books and papers on music versus the uninteresting attention and demotivation experienced when visiting traditional museums of music all over Europe—and this, of course, despite the in some ways extensive list of remarkable examples of innovative museums and approaches to music and to collections of music instruments all over the world.

This in no way means that I advocate the dismissal of the exhibition of significant collections of musical instruments that has notably resulted from the affectionate and enduring work of collectors: together with the singular interest in the objects collected, collecting itself embodies one aspect of the individual and social practices which represent the way in which men relate to the material world and their human experience. My overall quest rather involves challenging the current perimeter of the nature of music museums on the grounds of the new sophisticated and compelling theoretical frameworks carried out in museum studies and music studies spanning over at least the last fifty years.

Several interacting factors are, as it seems to me, involved in any such reconfiguring and deemed both worthy of discussion and challenging in nature. For epistemological reasons, I distinguish between two overall domains: firstly, the attachment of museums to long-established

forms of narrative and displaying different arrangements of their existing collections; and secondly, the limitations of the ontological concept of music addressed in music museums.

Regarding the first domain, it is well-known that from its earliest origins, the Western museum has mostly served as the public manifestation of a collection. Susan PEARCE (2005) has deciphered 'collecting' as an expression of man's relationship with the material world of things on which his survival strongly relies. Thus, the majority of Western music museums come out of outstanding collections in which the process of collecting itself represented facets of individual and social life. Collecting in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a widespread phenomenon among the Western aristocracy, and symbolically expressed their power and domination over both the natural and artificial worlds (BENNETT 1995, 36), thus, in other words signposting principles of power, sovereignty (BENNETT 1995, 22), and the respective monarchy's advanced and distinguished view of the world (PEARCE 2005). During the eighteenth century, as a result of reconfigurations driven by the French Revolution, these royal collections tended to become accessible to the public and moved from signifying royal power to signifying the state (BENNETT 1995, 36). The early trend for the nobles to collect objects led to the founding of museums in which exhibiting these collections was the most logical move, and in no way a signal of a more contemporary mental geography in which curators and museum professionals become mesmerized with the exercise of just what form a museum should take from the conceptual point of view.

Concerning music museums, according to ARNOLD-FORSTER and LA RUE (1993), who have studied British museums of music in depth, the gathering of former collections was guided by a number of principles: aesthetic interest, willingness to preserve historical instruments without them being played, desire to collect outstanding, representative and singular musical instruments, a scientific interest in the development of sound, a scientific interest in establishing and showing examples of types of musical instruments, and also the aim of promoting opportunities to hear and play historical instruments. These were allocated to significant museums, which then exhibited them with a clear emphasis on the visual in conjunction with the practice of displaying them within classification arrangements themselves designed and established with the objective of incorporating all instruments worldwide—among these, the majority of Western music museums display frameworks thus followed the most widely accepted classification system, that devised by Hornbostel and Sachs in 1914, with no associated contextual information. In terms of the expected behaviours of people visiting these exhibitions, they were endowed with the opportunity to profit from the wonder of the instruments selected for exhibition on account of both their aesthetic interest and their ability to provoke concentrated attention (GREENBLATT 1991) in addition to the task of conveying the systems of scientific classification manifested throughout the sets of instruments exhibited. The problem today, I believe, stems from how the majority of Western music museums

still present their instrument collections chronologically within the scope of this long-established framework, even whilst contemporary knowledge across a wide range of music studies has largely surpassed such knowledge.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, contemporary music academic domains portray musical practices through a variety of intersecting and ground breaking perspectives, that simply cannot be fully addressed by means of exclusively showcasing musical instruments in museums. Again, this does not mean that I consider the course of action hitherto adopted as unremarkable or intrinsically inappropriate either as a scientific achievement or as a museum practice. This constitutes, naturally, a great achievement in knowledge about music; at the very least, it would not even have been possible for museums to store and retrieve their collections if men had not acted in this way. My quest instead encapsulates how this practice alone has now fallen behind the academic and museological outputs on this field.

The current comprehensiveness and therefore deeply enriching state of scientific knowledge about music and musical instruments clearly elicits new approaches. Regarding collections of musical instruments, besides these conventional classifications, museums ought also to provide visitors with pathways towards cultural and social memory and interpretation. To address musical instruments comprehensively today involves not only classifying, measuring and investigating their acoustic properties, as organology has enduringly taught us, but also researching their webs of social and cultural meanings: every shape and decoration embodies the values, politics and aesthetics of the communities having recourse to them. Contemporary trends of thought in music studies have led scholars to perceive musical instruments as ‘social and cultural beings’ and hence, intrinsically prone to informing us about their lives (DAWE 2012, 196).

The theoretical expansion of the scope of museum studies also points to the dismissal of primarily valuing wonder at musical instruments and the trend for classificatory arrangements. In fact, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, museum studies and heritage practices have also been subject to severe critical examination resulting from a newly emerging driving principle: the assumption that only by experiencing knowledge can visitors become able to grasp knowledge. Macdonald considers this ‘the new orthodoxy of visitor sovereignty’ (MACDONALD 2011, 8), an assumption that leads exhibitions to be thought of in terms of inducing visitors to engage meaningfully, and thereby experiencing knowledge rather than collecting it. The focus on visitors has come to mean a willingness to engage with the immersive and the spectacular along with the pursuit of the emotional and affective in museum narratives and displays. The earlier museums of the nineteenth century, enhancers of the wondrous and scientific order of objects (BENNETT 1995), have given way to a commitment by museums to enable visitors to grasp the

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<sup>2</sup> Exceptions might be mentioned, such as the gallery of musical instruments at The Horniman Museum and Gardens.

emotional resonances of objects. In other words, the meaning of objects now falls within the scope of the intangible. Succinctly, the contemporary museum seeks to forge connections between people and phenomena so that the latter are not only subject to interpretation but also, and to a large extent, become embodied through experience.

Remaining with this perspective, music museums cannot only stand as the warehouse guardians of instruments but need to becoming fluid providers of information so as to engender an imaginative immersion, that is to say, to work within the backdrop of a social paradigm. From the theoretical point of view, museum studies have been setting out an agenda advocating a conceptual move from a commitment to the real object to that of the real experience (FALK *et al* 2011; LEVENT - PASCUAL-LEONE 2014; WITCOMB 2011) and this deserves corresponding consideration when curating music exhibitions.

Lastly, the museum today is theoretically and technically able to exploit for the visitor musical and sonic experiences (COLLINS *et al* 2014). From my perspective, it thus seems rather odd that sound and music, which are now recognized as the most effective resources for achieving the aims of emotional, psychological and physical engagement within museums, still remain so broadly unexplored. Fortunately, there is an emerging trend valuing and openly pursuing the exhibition of sound in museums in keeping with the acknowledgement of its potentialities as an inductor and enhancer of meaningful interpretative experiences (BUBARIS 2014; COX 2015; FELD 2003).

The second domain of discussion, revising the ontological nature of the ‘music’ for representation in museums, traces its roots back to the crisis in positivistic perspectives, specifically those resting on claimed versions of the ‘truth’. This crisis has resulted in new conceptions in both music studies and museum studies. More specifically, it has resulted in a new pressure on Western museums to broaden the themes addressed by exhibitions so that people’s interests are duly reflected. From the conceptual point of view, museums are now expected to depict a plurality of meanings for a plurality of people. Rather than accepting the binary opposition of truth versus ‘fallacy’, this framework stipulates that museums critically analyse their claims and offer up unexpected possibilities for meaning (BAL 1996; GAROIAN 2001; JANES 2009; LORD 2006; MACDONALD 2011; MASON 2011; WELSH 2005). The longstanding distinction between high and low culture has begun to be theoretically discarded (MASON 2011, 17) with the result that themes from daily life and those approaches once deemed as peripheral and marginalised are now attracting increasing attention. The room for curators to manoeuvre has enlarged considerably and opened the way for the curation of themes from popular culture.

In music studies, these reconfigurations have created a new discursive space endorsing new perspectives on music shaped by the relationships between text and context, rather than by the traditional framework driven by the autonomous musical work. Due to the so-called ‘postmodern



turn', music studies have developed into a full range of disciplinary perspectives embracing pioneering theoretical approaches and thoroughly researched case studies from the 1970s onwards, which are simply not reflected in music museum narratives and practices. General musicology has shifted into a critically informed musicology with an expanded theoretical engagement and agenda (COOK - EVERIST 2001[1999]; HOOPER 2006; WILLIAMS 2001). Ethnomusicology has come to embrace fully a cultural approach to the study of music since, above all, Merriam's seminal *The Anthropology of Music* (1964), thus also ascribing equal significance and value to the totality of musical systems (NETTL 2005; NETTL 2010[1999]). Ever since, ethnomusicology has profoundly influenced all other music studies approaches to music studies. In the 1980s, British Cultural Studies spawned the musically homologous Popular Music Studies, which has, among many other outputs, undermined the longstanding dichotomy between erudite and popular music (HESMONDHALGH - NEGUS 2002). This has led to the acknowledgement of new objects of study along with new problematics of a sociological orientation, such as post-Marxism, the politics of race and class, feminism and so forth (BORN 2010, 207). Several researchers have examined the role of music in our lives and thus correspondingly provided valuable perspectives testifying to the significance of music as a resource for organising new types of social cohesion precisely by forging individual and cultural differences together with common humanity (FELD 1982; HESMONDHALGH 2013; TURINO 2008). As the twenty-first century progresses, popular music studies have had a major impact, to the extent of becoming routine. To put it succinctly, in conjunction, all these subject fields have notably expanded our knowledge of music whilst producing remarkable insights into how we practice and produce music, consume it, discuss it, and study it, that open up multifarious avenues of themes for music museums to address.

As regards the acknowledgement of exhibiting specifically popular music themes in museums, it is worth recalling their substantial role as a connective thread in contemporary societies. Popular music is so broadly present in everyone's everyday life that it must be enduringly flagged as a topic of interest within any contemporary museum claiming to serve as a stewardship institution for the social life of communities. Furthermore, with the adoption in 2008 of the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage, which encourages the understanding of music as intangible heritage, popular music has gained increasing recognition as heritage (BENNETT 2009, 2015), therefore fostering a greater institutional commitment to conducting celebratory initiatives interconnected with a broad range of styles. In addition, popular music studies have long been invited reflection on the multidimensionality of popular music, thus insightfully addressing the intertwining of its production and consumption processes. This aligns perfectly with the drive of the twenty-first century museum towards plural representations of themes.

As a result, popular music has recently become an innovative museum object for permanent and temporary museum exhibitions in the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden and Denmark, as well as in the United States. In Europe, we have witnessed the opening of the British Music Experience in London, The Beatles Story in Liverpool, the Abba Museum in Sweden, and also the Danish Rock Museum in Roskilde, Denmark, due to open in 2015. In the USA, there is the Rock and Roll House of Fame in Cleveland and the Experience Music Project in Seattle.

As for Portuguese museums of music, four institutions are exclusively focused on music—the Museu Nacional da Música, Museu da Música Portuguesa, Museu do Fado and Museu de Etnomúsica da Bairrada—even though there is no museum committed specifically to popular music in the sense addressed by this article.<sup>3</sup> Of this group, Museu do Fado stands apart in its approach, not primarily exhibiting musical instruments but rather a diverse reaching set of objects of material culture related to the Fado genre, with a great emphasis on the music itself. Nevertheless, the exhibition of paintings illustrating the story of the genre remains overwhelmingly predominant, thus reflecting its primacy over the space allocated to hearing music. The other three museums all follow the older approach of essentially exhibiting a collection of musical instruments, previously gathered by music experts, music lovers and collectors, with the exception of the Museu de Etnomúsica da Bairrada, whose instrument collection stemmed from a political initiative and the effort to build a collection on which to base such a museum.

From the set of popular music exhibitions placed on display between 2007 and 2013, only one has been organized by one of these acknowledged museums, that by Museu Nacional da Música. All others have gone on display in cultural institutions of a lesser profile on the Portuguese cultural scenario or in cultural institutions, whose domains of activity are not directly music related, such as Fundação de Serralves in Oporto and mainly committed to addressing contemporary art, architecture and environmental themes.

## The Study

The research focused on studying popular music exhibitions was held between 2007 and 2013 in the Portuguese museum sector. This was broken down into several tasks, the first of which involved surveying pop-rock music exhibitions as a qualitative sampling of popular music exhibitions in Portugal held between 2007 and 2013. The information was gathered from sites, blogs and Internet news sources, as well as, during the respective interviews. In the interest of rigour and exhaustiveness, numerous keyword combinations were applied in internet searches and a number of

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<sup>3</sup> One exception might be the Museu do Fado, which specifically addresses the popular music genre Fado.

cultural institutions were emailed with requests for information about their past programming. Nevertheless, I cannot guarantee that the entire universe of popular music exhibitions in Portugal was addressed by the survey. I also collected exhibition wall texts and other related materials such as photos, leaflets and videos. As the exhibitions took place between 2007 and 2013, none of them were visited *in loco*.

Nine original exhibitions were mapped. A few of them had gone on display at more than one venue in the time period through up to the end of 2013. In the table below, the 'date' column clearly conveys how Portugal staged only temporary exhibitions in this field. We may highlight three types of host institutions: the more prestigious museum sector, publicly funded institutions such as local city halls and galleries, and small private cultural institutions.

| No.                                  | TITLE  | 1 <sup>ST</sup> EXHIBITION DATE       | 1 <sup>ST</sup> VENUE LOCATION           | CURATION                               |
|--------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>MUSEUM SECTOR</b>                 |  |                                       |  |  |
| 1                                    | <i>No Tempo do Gira-Discos: um Percurso pela Produção Fonográfica Portuguesa 1960-1980</i> | From 9 May to 23 June, 2007           | Museu Nacional da Música, Lisbon         | António Tilly and João Carlos Callixto |
| 2                                    | <i>Vinil - Gravações e Capas de Discos de Artista</i>                                      | From 10 May to 13 June, 2008          | Museu de Arte Contemporânea de Serralves | Guy Schraenen                          |
| 3                                    | <i>Nova Música_ Música Nova_Novos Músicos</i>  | From 17 September to 31 October, 2009 | Museu Nacional da Música, Lisbon         | Vera Marmelo                           |
| <b>PUBLIC CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS</b>  |  |                                       |  |  |
| 4                                    | <i>Ritmos! O Rock em Portugal 1955/ 1974</i>   | From 20 October to 20 December, 2007  | Galeria Municipal do Barreiro            | Edgar Raposo and Luís Futre            |
| 5                                    | <i>Nova Vaga - O Rock em Portugal 1955-1974</i>  | From 25 April to 31 August, 2008      | Museu Municipal do Montijo               | Edgar Raposo and Luís Futre            |
| 6                                    | <i>A Magia do Vinil, a Música que Mudou a Sociedade</i>                                    | From 11 to 31 October, 2008           | Oficina da Cultura, Almada               | José António Correia dos Santos        |
| 7                                    | <i>Ritmos! O Rock em Portugal 1955/ 1974</i>   | January 2009                          | Centro Cultural do Cartaxo               | António José Portela                   |
| <b>PRIVATE CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS</b> |  |                                       |  |  |
| 8                                    | <i>Espelho Meu - História do Rock Português</i>  | March 2008                            | Santiago Alquimista, Lisboa              | Sardine and Tobleroni                  |
| 9                                    | <i>We Love 77</i>  | From 8 to 29 October, 2011            | Círculo de Artes Plásticas de Coimbra    | Sardine and Tobleroni                  |

**Table 1.** Survey of original 'popular music' exhibitions from 2007 to 2013

The second task entailed the full analysis of two particular exhibitions examined as case studies and focusing specifically on their textual narratives through methods of discourse analysis, namely *No tempo do gira-discos: Um percurso pela produção fonográfica portuguesa 1960-1980* [In the Era of the Record Player: A Journey through Portuguese Phonographic Production 1960-1980], and *A magia do vinil* [The Magic of Vinyl]. This was intertwined with analysis of their visual and sonic narratives by using multimodal analysis and with data gathered from ethnographic interviews. The

bulk of these conclusions resulted in the forthcoming publications *Reflections on the Challenges of Exhibiting Popular Music at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century through a Case Exhibition* (CORTEZ 2017) and *Curating Popular Music: Reasoning on Making Museum Studies and Music Studies Know Each Other* (CORTEZ 2016).

The third task involved carrying out and analysing semi-structured interviews with exhibition curators and other museum professionals, thus fulfilling the challenge of building up a more general interpretation of the Portuguese scene, an objective of this present article. In my analytical process, I attempted to set out the convergent data while also considering the divergent data. Nevertheless, the results should not be taken as either definitive or comprehensive but rather as a reasonable interpretation of the representational framework underlying the exhibition of popular music in Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

### **Framing Popular Music Museums in Portugal: Eight Concepts**

‘Framing popular music in museums in Portugal’ seeks to expand on the conclusions of my analysis. Mieke BAL (2002) referred to the concept of ‘framing’ as something that allows not only curators but also visitors to produce meaning. A contemporary frame in museum studies is one that enables visitors to negotiate their positions, and so to adopt a more dynamic stance rather than remaining subordinate to the narrative and its dictated meaning. The concepts by which curators represent popular music constitute frameworks of entrance for visitors to build their own explicit or implicit mental constructions about popular music. However, mostly these frameworks are not quite as obvious. The more they remain covert to visitors’ interpretations, the broader and stronger their power proves. This factor increased my interest and eagerness to reveal the agenda behind the popular music frameworks for the current practices under analysis. Ultimately, the intellectual excitement of research lies in the opportunities we find to overcome such challenges.

My research has encountered eight prominent frameworks portraying the exhibition of popular music in Portugal. These will be outlined through eight corresponding concepts; those of tribute/celebration, place, art, statistics, industry, chronology, material culture, and curator subjectivity, all underlying both the forms of narrative and displaying the arrangements adopted and, in a broader sense, an ontological conceptualisation of popular music in Portugal. Despite the fact that these topics might seem interesting and peculiar for a music museum seeking to build a narrative that thereby suggests the burgeoning of a shift in the approaches taken, on closer analysis, one actually finds that the approach determining exhibit practices is conventional rather than innovative, as I shall discuss below.

The set of international studies carried out with the agenda of promoting the museological representation of pop culture, particularly that of pop-rock music, have in some ways expanded on a set of concepts underlying the popular music narratives mapped in their respective countries (CATEFORIS 2009; COHEN – LES ROBERTS 2014; EDGE 2000; JUCHARTZ - RISHOI 2006; THORNTON 1990; LEONARD 2007, 2010, 2014; LEONARD - KNIFTON 2015). Of particular note for its specificity and synthetic capability is the work of LEONARD (2007), who argues in favour of the practice of some canonical narratives grounded in concepts and purposes such as ‘locality’, ‘art’, ‘sales figures’, and ‘biographical interest’ in UK museums. To a considerable extent, this framework matches that of the Portuguese museum sector. Nevertheless, some divergences must be mentioned and need additional interpretation, while other particular concepts and specificities have also emerged and need setting out.

### *Concept One: Tribute/Celebration*

The Portuguese museum sector displays an elemental purpose in paying tribute to popular music musicians mostly of Portuguese nationality (exhibitions 1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, although with different specific focuses and emphases). The idea of the ‘great musician’ of popular music typically represents a legacy from nineteenth-century rationales of art music, and approached differently across the different exhibitions although tending to assign elevated importance to the personalities in question within the respective narratives.

Both LEONARD (2007) and THORNTON (1990) consider this approach problematic in that it usually draws on critical acclaim, thereby moving away from the more intimate and everyday uses of popular music. Nevertheless, that was not necessarily the case with the exhibitions surveyed, in which the curator interviews revealed a commitment to crediting and paying tribute specifically to little-known musicians, whether from the 1950s to the 1980s (exhibitions 1, 4, 5 and 7), or from more recent decades (exhibition 3, 8 and 9).

[...] because what is of interest to me, is the why, [...] I ended up having a relationship with the people who were involved in the Portuguese rock of that period, [...] they are people who are now advanced in age and they thanked me and some made a point of meeting me because they said: they forgot about us forty years ago, you did not exist at this time and still remembered us. And it's nice, it's good to be with people [...] my idea is to pay homage, to raise the profile and, knowing that they

are all going to be happy, they're kind of old and nobody remembers, and now remembering them is itself important and that's good (Curator 1—exhibition 4 and 5—25 November 2015).<sup>4</sup>

According to LEONARD and KNIFTON (2015), tribute initiatives documenting career breakthroughs encourage nostalgic engagement that these authors identify as a key motivation for visitors viewing the exhibitions. Although nostalgia has been regarded as manipulative when intertwined with messages, Leonard and Knifton consider this a fundamental tool by which visitors interpret meaning (LEONARD - KNIFTON 2015, 169).

Another common purpose identified by the analysis is that of foregrounding and celebrating the cultural significance of popular music. This sometimes assumes the form of a stronger commitment, and extending into ideological dimension suggesting a curator's attempt to ascribe the significance and seriousness of art music to popular music.

[...] *Espelho Meu* [My Reflection] as a tribute, in a certain way, to Portuguese rock, to rock in Portugal (Curator 2—exhibitions 8 and 9—25 June 2014).<sup>5</sup>

The premise was to show the magic of the music from 1955 to 1975 that changed society; this is an extremely important body of cultural work of the twentieth century that is greatly underrated by many people who are connected, to art music here [...] (Curator 3 —19 June 2014).<sup>6</sup>

This narrative choice aligns with the fact that the majority of the curators are dedicated record collectors, music lovers and enthusiasts, artists, and only occasionally music scholars, and correspondingly suggesting a charged relationship between curators and popular music. This has also resulted in curators building their narratives around sets of musicians and/or specific periods of style and time.

As for the situation in Portugal, my long conversations with curators and producers also pointed to a deliberate intention to challenge the ordinary and conventional narrative, that pop-rock music started in Portugal with the musician Rui Veloso in the 1980s. From their perspective, this

<sup>4</sup> '[...] porque o que me interessa a mim, é porque, [...] acabei por ter uma relação com as pessoas que estavam envolvidas no rock português naquele período, [...] são pessoas que são idosas que me agradeceram e algumas fizeram questão em me conhecer porque disseram: esqueceram-se de nós há 40 anos, vocês não existiam nesta altura e lembraram-se de nós e, e é bonito, é bonito estar com as pessoas [...] a minha ideia é fazer uma homenagem, é divulgar, saber que, eles ficam todos contentes, são uns velhotes e ninguém se lembra, e agora lembrarem-se deles é importante, é bom' (Curator 1—exhibitions 4 and 5, 25 November 2015).

<sup>5</sup> '[...] *Espelho Meu* como um tributo, de certa forma, ao rock Português, ao rock de Portugal [...]' (Curator 2—exhibitions 8 and 9—25 June 2014).

<sup>6</sup> 'O pressuposto era mostrar nos anos 55 a 75, a magia da música que mudou a sociedade, que é um corpo cultural muito importante do século XX que é muito menosprezado por muita gente ligada aqui à música erudita [...]' (Curator 3—exhibition 6—19 June 2014).

narrative is mendacious and constructed by the record industry sector with the overall purpose of increasing sales figures. What is more, this completely conceals, or even worse, erases a huge amount of music and musicians whose work the curators consider both remarkable and worthy of celebration.

It was an attempt to deal with the twenty years before what most people normally think was almost the beginning of Portuguese music. [...] [we don't deny the importance of the "Portuguese rock boom" [...], but Portuguese music was not born then. (Curator 4—exhibition 1—18 February 2014).<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, it was at about that time that I began to discover that the media really did have the need to sell a product when the boom in Portuguese rock took place and that story about Rui Veloso was just a fraud, [there were] behind that a lot of, really a lot of things but these were not even one or two isolated things, [there were] actually many of them (Curator 1—exhibitions 4 and 5—25 November 2013).<sup>8</sup>

### *Concept Two: Place*

Another significant concept is that of place, sometimes intertwined with a specific period of time. Indeed, more than half of the initiatives (exhibitions 1, 4, 5, 7 and 8) reflected a particular concern over disclosing, highlighting and acknowledging the diversity and quantity of Portuguese popular music published in the vinyl record format, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, by Portuguese musicians, whom the curators see as ground breaking and unfortunately insufficiently recognized. Some of these exhibition narratives were framed so as to highlight the links between popular music and place by showcasing the work of Portuguese musicians.

Well, there was also the aim of making this moment of emergence known [...]. Our idea was to show the diversity of music made in Portugal as well as the diversity in the phonographic industry (Curator 5—exhibition 1—13 November 2014).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> 'Foi tentar tocar nos 20 anos anteriores àquilo que muitas pessoas normalmente pensam que é quase o início da música portuguesa [...] mas a música portuguesa não nasceu aí' (Curator 4—exhibition 1—18 February 2014).

<sup>8</sup> 'E então nessa altura comecei a descobrir que realmente os *media* tiveram necessidade de vender um produto quando foi o *boom* do rock português, e que era uma fraude aquela história do Rui Veloso, [havia] para trás muita, muita coisa, mas não era uma coisa nem duas isoladas, [eram] muitas mesmo' (Curator 1—exhibitions 4 and 5—25 November 2013).

<sup>9</sup> 'Bom, também havia o objectivo de divulgar este momento de emergência [...]. A nossa ideia foi mostrar também a diversidade da música feita em Portugal, a diversidade da indústria fonográfica' (Curator 5, 13 November 2014).

This aligns with the approach identified by LEONARD (2007) within the UK museum sector, namely that of popular music framed as a product of social and local history. According to Leonard, this typology emerges out of the desire of museums to convey a historical background to populations. Conceptually speaking, they try to link music to local social history. This approach favours the acknowledged discourse about the past and plays down any historical discontinuities, even while the stories themselves hold scientific legitimacy, as they do not consider features of everyday life. In her study, Leonard defends the need for contemporary museums to question mythological and univocal constructions and favour multiple narratives susceptible to capturing the complexity of the phenomena in question.

### *Concept Three: Art*

Another structuring concept is that of art. Indeed, the concept of art was brought to bear on music across all of the exhibitions, either more explicitly, by giving way to the more established and conventional practice of exhibiting photos and paintings of a selection of musicians that the curators considered remarkable (exhibitions 3, 8 and 9), or more indirectly bound up with the approach of exhibiting record sleeves by remarkable designers and artists, or now rendered exceptional due to present difficulty in locating them (exhibitions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7).

The fact that all the exhibitions are structured upon the concept of ‘a collection’ also deserves due attention. Indeed, museums are traditionally conceived of primarily in terms of the astonishing collections they house with the art objects on display becoming the end point of interpretation. As to the above-mentioned exhibitions, they all emerged not so much from a policy guideline or particular endeavour encouraging museums either to reflect on popular music practices, or to make them part of heritage, but rather as a confluence of circumstances in which the prior existence of a collection certainly constituted the greatest determinant. In fact, the majority of these exhibitions have been brought about by a collection of vinyl records with either a collection of photos or paintings assisting the narrative in some cases. This clearly suggests that their museological approach instinctively followed a conventional trend inherited from art discourses. LEONARD’S (2007) research findings also reveal this course of action in the UK, with the author criticising and highlighting the fact that these exhibitions, rather than presenting critical discourses about music, tend instead to place music in the service of art.

On the other hand, this also points to the fact that the museum representation of an ephemeral and immaterial phenomenon such as music clearly opens up challenges regarding exhibiting music itself, that have long plagued the work of music curators and thus led to the very tempting practice of presenting music through the materiality of objects, be that through the exhibition of musical



instruments, singular and remarkable record covers or exhibiting a set of photos or paintings of popular musicians.

#### *Concept Four: Statistics*

In some cases, the analysis also testifies to the practice of basing narratives on sales figures or critical acclaim (mainly exhibitions 2, 8, and 9) in an approach that LEONARD (2007) also reports as present in the UK. For this author, these narratives, based on a rationale of quantification that adopts sales figures and critical appreciation as points of reference, mostly address the biographical details of well-known musicians through recourse to iconic exhibits. These narratives are clearly shaped by the objective of displaying attractive exhibits, in order to increase audience numbers and therefore justify the museum's cultural and financial management. Nevertheless, I believe that the motives supporting this approach in Portugal clearly diverge from those reported by Leonard. In a matter of fact, whilst it might be true that, hand in hand with the international situation, Portuguese museums are increasingly pushed to commercialize their exhibitions, seeking to achieve prominence and sustainability in the 'city's symbolic economy' (PRIOR 2011, 513), I did not find that these museums expressly engaged with the production of exhibitions on music themes so as to boost their visitor numbers. In fact, most of the exhibitions surveyed came about rather as a matter of circumstance within a context of financial constraints. The analysis also made clear the fact that these museums having received no significant support and/or income has made it simply impossible for them to follow more recent strategies. Instead, at a time when a dramatic slump in turnover was consistently constraining the cultural sector, the museums attempted to take advantage of proposals from outside their own boundaries and welcomed projects covering a range of topics on music.

These things happened on account of a series of circumstances, people we got to know and projects we were developing. There was never any strategy beforehand because at one time the museum used to make a plan of activities, and organized or conceived of a large exhibition dedicated to a great composer [...], but there were budgetary limits. After a certain point, even if we tried to make a plan of activities including a small exhibition, they were rarely approved, and so we had to turn elsewhere, and began to set up small exhibitions, more often than not with no funding [...] (Museum director 1, 28 March 2014).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>10</sup> 'São coisas que aconteceram por um conjunto de circunstâncias, pessoas que fomos conhecendo e projetos que estávamos a desenvolver. Nunca houve uma estratégia prévia porque até determinada altura o museu fazia um plano de atividades e organizava ou pensava uma grande exposição dedicada a um grande compositor [...], mas havia de facto orçamento. A partir de certa altura mesmo que tentássemos fazer um plano de atividades tendo em conta uma pequena exposição, raramente eram aprovados, portanto, tivemos que nos virar para outras coisas e daí começarmos a fazer exposições pequenas e a maior parte das vezes sem orçamento nenhum' (Museum director 1, 28 March 2014).

*Concept Five: Industry*

Also worth mentioning in the case of Portugal is the curatorial objective of revealing the close relationships between popular music and vinyl records and/or the industry (exhibitions 1, 2, 4, 6 and 7), as may be directly grasped from some exhibition titles: *Vinil—Gravações e capas de artista* [Vinyl—Records and Covers by Artists], *No tempo do gira-discos: Um percurso pela produção fonográfica portuguesa 1960-1980* [In the Era of the Record Player: A Journey through Portuguese Phonographic Production 1960-1980], and *A magia do vinil a música que mudou a sociedade* [The Magic of Vinyl, the Music that Changed Society]. Nevertheless, I did not find this explicit in the exhibition text panels but rather came across this facet during interviews.

Although acknowledgement of the role of technology might be expected for exhibition 1, as it is the only exhibition with one of its two curators holding an academic background, it did surprise me that some of the other exhibitions had actually also tackled this dimension. As such, notwithstanding exhibition 1, it occurred to me that the other curators had come up against the current dependence of popular music on the industry's dynamics through their specific activities as music collectors and therefore through their contacts with music publishers.

The historical approach of some of the exhibitions also resembled that of media history in how they attempted to combine social and cultural forces with the technological developments of the first half of the twentieth-century although, once again, this was mostly not particularly explicit in the texts but rather in the oral testimonies of their curators.

If we look at the way society developed and how the vinyl record came into people's houses, all of a sudden we were able to have music at home [...]; the vinyl record greatly changed both society and the way our lives were organised. It's a cult object (Curator 3—exhibition 6—19 June 2014).<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, I encountered no refreshing interpretations in the exhibition panel texts emphasizing either the significance that musical technologies had on people's lives in this period, or offering insights into how cultural and social processes have crystallized around these mechanisms. More specifically, I found no willingness to convey the way in which musical technologies had been developing and acknowledged this was no matter of chance. Mention is not made, for example, of the dimension that what saved music technologies from failure was the significance people found in buying and owning phonograms, as simultaneously articulating their private and public identities (STERNE 2003).

<sup>11</sup> 'Se olharmos para a forma como a sociedade se desenvolveu e o disco de vinil entrou nas casas das pessoas, de repente podíamos ter a música em casa [...] o vinil transformou tanto a sociedade e a forma como as nossas vidas se organizaram, é um objecto de culto' (Curator 3—exhibition 6—19 June 2014).

*Concept Six: Chronological Rationales*

The majority of the narratives broke down into a chronological sequence, thereby giving way to historic rationales with a particular focus on ideas of disturbing revolutionary shifts. This resembles the more conventional approach drawing on the concept of history as a receptacle for storing knowledge as invented in the nineteenth-century by the nation-state (NERONE 2010, 3), which has more recently received severe criticism (HUTCHEON 1988). Nevertheless, the processes of historical categorization were explored differently across several exhibitions, ranging from a mix of those with musical genres supported by different musical practices to the more conventional processes of everyday historical categorization by the placing of musicians within a specific hierarchy.

*Concept Seven: Material Culture*

In terms of issues of exhibitability, prominence was attributed to objects of material culture. Although the majority of the exhibitions continuously displayed music within the opening times of the exhibitions, their narratives actually seized upon popular music artifacts within the scope of which existing collections of records clearly stand out. Other artifacts were similarly valued, such as posters, tickets, books, promotional materials, lyric sheets, photos, costumes, musical instruments, radios and turntables. All this points to directly importing practices of representing popular music from the conventional museum, which I believe will soon correspond to a kind of a first stage in the organising of exhibitions of such a remit. Indeed, although these private material collections demonstrate how the curators value such material artefacts, the prominent value remains attributed to the music itself and to the large spectrum of subjective affordances this generates for both individuals and communities. Furthermore, discussions around the advantages of fostering a more sensorial sonic and musical experience, and understanding of the world in conjunction with debates as to how music can best be staged in museums are becoming increasingly commonplace (ARNOTT - ALAIN 2014; BIJSTERVELD *et al* 2013; BUBARIS 2014; CLUETT 2014; COX 2015; LEONARD 2014; MORTENSEN - VESTERGAARD 2013; SCHULZE 2013; VOEGELIN 2014).

*Concept Eight: The Curator's Subjectivity*

In my attempt to chart appropriately general conclusions representative of the popular music exhibition practices in Portugal at the beginning of the twenty-first century, one prominent feature arose and deserves greater attention: the trend for popular music to be framed globally so as to endow the curator's voice. In terms of the exhibition corpus, the findings convey how almost all of the exhibitions surveyed, in one way or another, were in the end some form of expressing curatorial

subjectivity or identity. Furthermore, when asked about what drove the selection of musicians presented, every curator mentioned the underlying purpose of addressing the ‘most representative’ musicians. What is striking is that they revealed a wide range of distinct personal principles guiding what ‘most representative’ means: the musicians that fit into the broadest range of genres and that introduced several kinds of rock music into Portugal; those that received the greatest critical acclaim; those selected by the magazine *Mojo* as the most representative within the international context; those the curator knows personally and/or whose work is broadly represented in his collection; those musicians whose record sleeves were the work of renowned designers; and the most important musicians within the boundaries of the curator’s personal collection. What is at stake here is how each curator deploys his/her own set of popular music representatives to inform their own exhibitions and influence visitor processes of making meaning through drawing on the respective museum’s credibility, all of which raises sensitive debates about just who holds the skills and the right to define what popular music heritage actually is.

From the beginning, popular music has been employed by people as an immensely significant identity marker. This breeds individual and collective subjectivities, and so leads to a strong sense of ownership that becomes deeply involved in competing identities and class interests. Music brings back highly praised and cherished memories and this leads to a tendency to reinterpret the past in the light of each person’s own subjective experiences and based on some collective past for their own particular generation. What happens is that this fosters an interpretation of popular music made out of a distinction between ‘mine’ and ‘yours’, between ‘ours’ and ‘yours’, in other words, a binary opposition between my social group and that of others (BOLHMAN 2001[1999]). Ultimately, this encodes the ideology where meanings are generated through contrasts between two positions deemed diametrically opposed (HARTLEY 2011; MIKULA 2008), with the result that exhibitions following this implicit rationale become enactments of self identity rather than genuine occasions for the communities the museums serve.<sup>12</sup>

At the very least, this question of the curators themselves somehow becoming an object of exhibition would not prove such an issue were the curators clearly to reveal their voices by applying techniques such as the usage of the first person in panel texts, which stands out as the single most effective means of achieving such a purpose (BAL 2011). Indeed, all of the exhibition texts mapped were written in the third person. This recourse to the third person withholds the figure of the curator, which is not in line with more recent trends in museum studies that advocate texts explicitly displaying evidence of the curator’s voice in the meaning-making process to guarantee more

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<sup>12</sup> Further developments of this thesis can be found in the forthcoming author’s article *Reflections on the Challenges of Exhibiting Popular Music at the Beginning of the Twenty-First Century through a Case Exhibition* (to be published in 2017).

responsive interactions with visitors. Mieke BAL (1996, 2011) clearly addresses this approach and attributes the term ‘authoritative’ to describe an exhibition that makes use of the grammatical third person: should the text not allow for visitors explicitly to perceive the figure of the curator and so endow them with the opportunity and scope for disagreement, the exhibition then adopts a ‘dictatorial monological structure’ (BAL 2011, 530). We may correspondingly point to two examples of this trend: firstly, the Portuguese museum sector is fostering and establishing only a partial understanding of popular music in that host institutions are assuming the curator’s personal voices and group identity; secondly, visitors may easily become excluded rather than included. Ultimately, any visitor that does not share the curator’s understanding is automatically excluded, and therefore encounters little effective motivation. This clearly suggests a more conventional museum narrative consisting of visitor segmentation.

The ideal of a ‘clean narrative’ stands out as one of the most emblematic in contemporary museum studies. In fact, there is growing concern as to the ideal of producing clean narratives, for example, narratives that are not politically charged. Mieke Bal, who was once nominated as the most difficult but at the same time the most remarkable author in the field of museum studies (MACDONALD 2011, 9), stated that what is best when it comes to visitors interpreting an exhibition is when the curator has disappeared. In saying this, she calls for the object to be truly integral to the production of the meaning (BAL 2002, 9) and for the curator’s self to be removed from curatorial gestures.<sup>13</sup> In fact, museums attain a particular influence over the legitimacy of the ideas and concepts around knowledge and so visitors thus take for granted what curators provide. As regular visitors are usually unprotected in terms of the knowledge addressed by museum narratives, where curators serve them up only partial versions of reality, they will accept them. This introduces the quest for the ‘representational critique’ within museum settings, the principal aim of which is to pursue and guarantee the representation of knowledge without any political charges. Although both the theory and in some cases the practices of museums have never been slow in their attempts to accomplish this objective, it would seem that effectively overcoming this problem currently represents the most sensitive challenge and significant commitment for the new museum studies to undertake. Ultimately, however, I do not entirely believe in the pursuit of the ‘clean narrative’. Instead, I believe this idea must be adopted as a principle according to which curators and museum professionals are able to manage their curatorial reflections and gestures rather than as an end in itself.

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<sup>13</sup> *Framing gesture* is a term coined by Mieke BAL (2002, 146), which I have here turned into ‘curatorial gesture’.

Globally, this framework of curatorial concepts, when put into perspective alongside the most recent knowledge from music studies, suggests a conventional and partial conceptualization of popular music that continues to reinforce archetypal myths about music in general and museum practices shaped by those of their predecessors. Of course, the fact that the purpose of some exhibitions involves raising awareness about a set of otherwise unknown musicians is both remarkable and innovative but the ensuing dimensions of the narratives and the exhibitive options then remain attached to the old principles. Evidently, this behaviour is not intentional but inherited, and this obliges us to take time to reflect, so that we can act effectively in future curatorial initiatives.

Music studies have now brought the study of popular music a long way forward. As such, its official representations now hold the opportunity to put forward understandings of popular music as a cultural and urban practice that must be understood within its specific intersection of cultural, social, technological, emotional and aesthetic environments (SHUKER 2001; TSCHMUK 2006). Theoretical issues and debates on contemporary popular music abound (STRINATI, 2004 [1995]). Toynbee identifies two divergent understandings of popular music: one working as identity, representation and the resistance of groups excluded from the *status quo*, such as gays, black people, youth cultures and women; while another embodies the mainstream and the certainty of belonging as this represents everyone (TOYNBEE 2000, xix). Meanwhile, HESMONDHALGH (2013) describes the aesthetic and emotional experience as fundamental to adding value to human wellbeing. He applies this to stress the importance of musical practices across four domains: the individual self, in our intimate relations with others, in experiences of sociability and community, and in experiences of solidarity, commonality and publicness. Moreover, TURINO (2008) points to the importance of musical participation and experience for personal and social integration, ultimately that which makes us a whole. The pleasure of popular music as a text that is in some way beautiful, meaningful, gratifying, exciting, and moving, and which carries cultural capital is also often mentioned (SHUKER 2001, 12). In addition, technologies are essential to the production and consumption process, and today constitute an unprecedented means of providing remembrance (BIJSTERVELD – VAN DIJCK 2009).

At the same time, contemporary museum studies push exhibition narratives towards adapting to plural publics, to their interests and emotional abilities to broaden their knowledge. Consequently, for popular music narratives to attain success within museum settings, they need to be based on prior visitor experiences, interests and knowledge. In addition to the fundamental role of the narratives in this process, exploring the potential of exhibiting musical sound proves an equal priority. Indeed, this establishes a sense of belonging and community, conveys emotion, evokes memory and promotes democratized relationships in which visitors are guided not only by cultural

conventions but also by personal stories. Accordingly, I propose that both museum studies and music studies open a path for museums to celebrate musical sound as heritage in museums and thus also shift from an exclusively visual paradigm to a simultaneously visual and aural paradigm.

This is not to say that one exhibition alone ought to focus on all the aforementioned dimensions, but that, in striving for the day when mapping museum outputs on the exhibition of popular music in Portugal, researchers may easily grasp a picture conveying such issues of representativeness and exhibitability.

## Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that although popular music curators are showcasing unconventional themes and somehow striking objects for a museum to exhibit, these seem to encapsulate some of the same age-old assumptions and practices, and suggest that curators have digested previous practices in their entirety. In the light of contemporary music studies, this means that early twenty-first century music museum representations of popular music in Portugal only partially convey their complexity. I have thus argued that the issues of representativeness and exhibitability of these narratives mainly stem from concepts such as tribute, place, art, statistics, industry, chronological rationales, and material culture. Furthermore, I have identified and discussed the underlying trend for popular music to be framed globally, so as to enable the curator's identity to be particularly evident.

Popular music is deeply embedded in the dynamics of the contemporary world by means of its very capacity to engender modes of privacy and publicness, to communicate emotion, and to enable us to create connections, and thus to work as a whole. Music studies has produced fascinating and insightful ideas about these dimensions of popular music that are impatiently awaiting their telling to the general public. Accordingly, there is the need for music studies to engage actively with museum studies to meet the challenges of effectively 'museumizing' popular music. In other words, a first step still needs to be taken in Portugal: to place this museological representation effectively on the scientific and cultural agendas, not only of popular music, but also of music in general. I hope that my work will open up trajectories for new prospects in music studies and museum studies to be reflected productively in music exhibitions.

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