

Week 2 – The Early Formation of a Non-Linear Viewing Structure

Category: Uncategorized

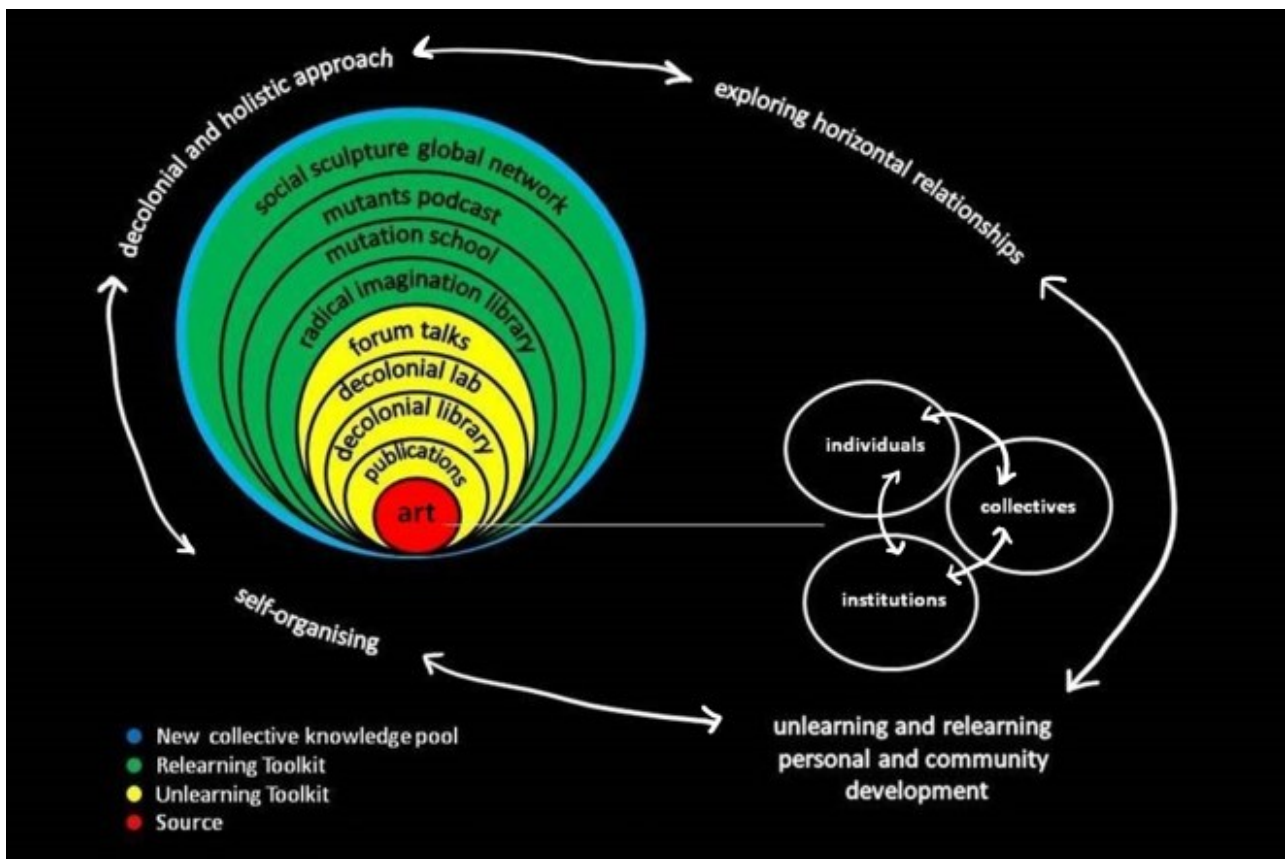
written by s2814160 | 26 January 2026



This week, I began to rethink the meaning of curating. For me, curating is no longer simply the act of placing artworks into a space. Instead, it is a practice of reshaping narrative and actively organizing how audiences understand what they encounter. Concepts discussed in class, such as dematerialization, contemporaneity, decoloniality, and intersectionality, encouraged me to think about curating from a different angle. They made me realize that curating always takes place in a reality shaped by inequality, so it cannot pretend to be neutral or fully objective.

Counterspace was the case that pushed my thinking forward most strongly this week. What attracted me was its attempt to create a structure of ongoing interaction, resource exchange, and shared production between individuals, collectives, and institutions. This provided an important example for me to understand curating as a continuous process of relationship-building. At the same time, it also made me notice a structural problem: once a critical curatorial method enters a large institutional framework, how can it avoid being weakened by the institution, or even repackaged as a consumable form of “difference”? In this respect, documenta fifteen revealed this contradiction very clearly. It led me to ask whether critical

curating, once it enters an institution, can still maintain its ability to challenge systems of power and control.

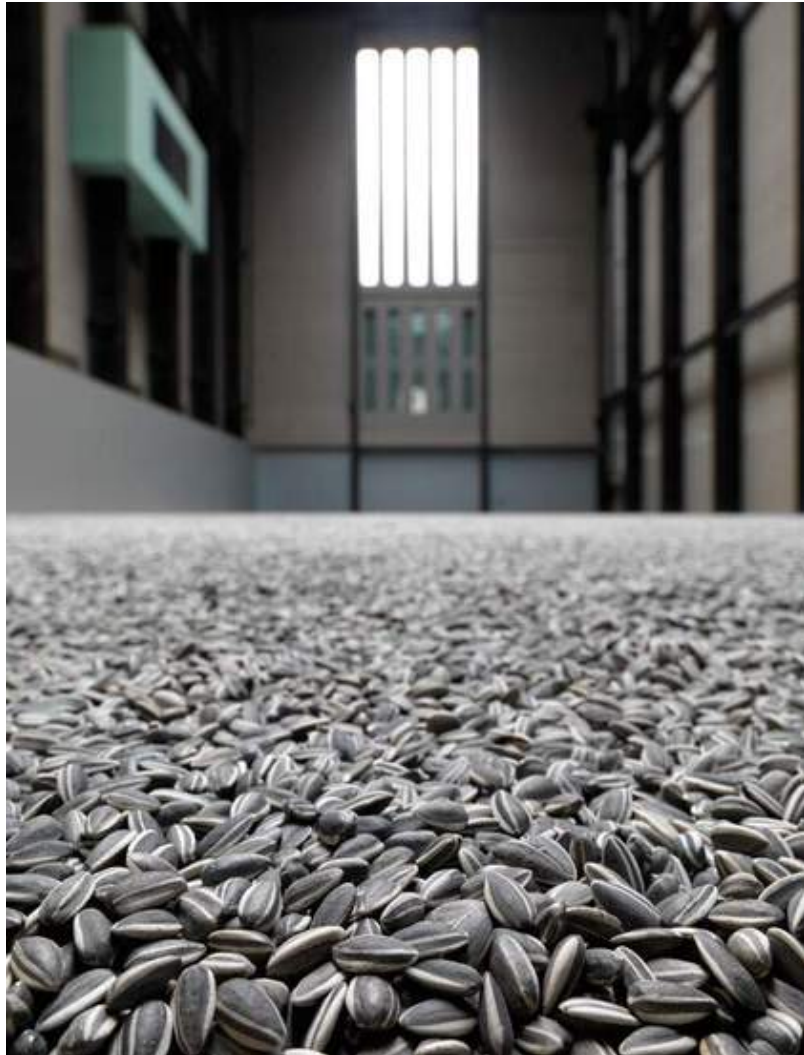


Counterspace diagram, Cultural Strategy, London, 2021. Commissioned by Cristina Morales. Source: Counterspace website.

This contradiction also influenced my own curatorial project. I began to ask whether modes of viewing can themselves be arranged in advance by institutional logic. Institutional power affects space and organization, but it also shapes the order in which audiences encounter works and the way they interpret them. Because of this, I became more certain that route design should be treated as part of how narrative authority is distributed. In collective discussions, I also talked about this confusion with my tutor and group members. For me, an increasingly important question became: how do audiences move through an exhibition, and can this movement itself become part of the exhibition structure?

My early idea was to use a map to connect several outdoor sites, so that audiences could either follow suggested routes or choose their own paths. For me, what really matters is whether this kind of route design can change the way viewers enter a work. If a fixed route often implies a relatively fixed logic of interpretation, then multiple routes and audience choice may offer a greater degree of participation, agency, and space for judgment. I therefore became interested in a non-linear viewing structure, one that does not require viewers to follow a single order of interpretation, but instead allows the process of viewing itself to become part of the exhibition narrative.

Ai Weiwei's *Sunflower Seeds* further strengthened my understanding of this issue. The way the curator placed the individual and the collective, labour and power, repetitive material, and institutional space into one shared environment made me realize that exhibition form is not simply a passive container for content. How audiences enter a space, how they keep distance from the work, and how they physically encounter it are not secondary details. They are part of the political effect of the work itself. For my own project, this was especially important because it made me realize that curating is not only about what audiences see, but also about how they are brought into a problem.



Installation view of Ai Weiwei, *Sunflower Seeds*, The Unilever Series, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 2010. Source: Tate website.

References

Ai Weiwei. *Sunflower Seeds*. Installation view, *The Unilever Series*, Turbine Hall, Tate Modern, London, 2010. Tate website. <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/unilever-series/unilever-series-ai-weiwei-sunflower-seeds>.

Counterspace. *Cultural Strategy*. London, 2021. Commissioned by Cristina Morales. Counterspace website. <https://counterspace.zone/about/>.

documenta fifteen. "lumbung." documenta fifteen website.
<https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung/>.