

**Making Audiences Visible:
Gallery Education, Research and Recent Political Histories
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“Thus the encounter with a work of art is not ‘love at first sight’ as is generally supposed, and the act of empathy, ‘Einfuhlung’, which is the art-lover’s pleasure, presupposes an act of cognition, a decoding operation, which implies the implementation of a cognitive acquirement, a cultural code. (It will be seen that this internalized code called culture functions as cultural capital owing to the fact that, being unequally distributed, it secures profits of distinction.”)¹

The cultures that define the life settings of ‘the other people’ are characterized by those perched at the supra-cultural heights of ‘hybridity’ as staunch, obstinate and unassailable realities, self-enclosed, ‘binding’ and ‘fixing’ totalities; thus ‘hybrid culture’ is both programmatically and in practice ‘extra cultural’. As if in open defiance of Pierre Bourdieu’s thesis that social distinction rests its claims to superiority on a strictness of cultural taste and choice, ‘hybrid culture’ is manifestly omnivorous – noncommittal, un-choosy, unprejudiced, ready and eager to try everything on offer and to ingest and digest food from all cuisines.”²

The concepts of ambivalence, hybridity, interdependence, which, we have argued, began to disrupt and transgress the stability of the hierarchical binary ordering of the cultural field into high and low, do not destroy the force of the operation of the hierarchical principle in culture, any more, it may said, than the fact that ‘race’ is not a valid scientific category that ‘in any way undermines is symbolic and social effectuality’.³

1 Pierre Bourdieu. (1979) *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. Les Editions de Minuit. Paris. (2007). Routledge. London.

2 Zygmunt Bauman. (2008) ‘Identity for identity’s sake is a bit dodgy’. *Race, Identity and Belonging*. Eds Sally Davison and Jonathan Rutherford. Lawrence and Wishart. London

3 Stuart Hall. (1996) ‘For Allon White: metaphors of transformation’. In *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies*. Eds David Morley and Kuan Hsing Chen. London. Routledge.

Abstract

This paper is concerned with the complex relationships between the expressive and communicative practices of the visual arts, what might, in the expanded field of visual culture, be called media arts⁴ and forms of their educational engagement in gallery education and their potential use in practice-based research. The primary question is: in what ways do such practices contribute to the production of knowledge for the individuals who engage in them and for the institutions in which they are organized? An entailed question is how such knowledge engages subjectivity and agency, and how it might contribute to the creative freedom and social engagement of individuals and groups? However, to answer such questions in any thorough going way there is a prior need to set out the context and framework in which such questions arise. As a result, whilst the paper remains centrally concerned with practice as the production of knowledge in gallery education and research, it is taken up with the prior consideration of a need to articulate the discursive formation of such practices. The paper advances the view that the methods, pedagogies and approaches of contemporary gallery education and practice-based research are in part derived from a discourse of social transformation, most recently expressed in Britain in terms of radical practice.⁵ It is suggested that insofar as gallery education maintains, even in part, the implicit goals of transformative practice that it will necessarily have to meet with and counter certain regulatory and disciplinary functions performed by curatorial practices of collection and exhibition in the institutional reproduction of the museum *qua* museum. The paper considers how such engagements might be understood and acted upon within the professional educational field and the organization of the art museum.

How do we move from a paradigm of collection and connoisseurship to that of creative social agency?

European culture has historically privileged only the condition and visibility of singular creativity in the construction of the museum, thus bequeathing the late modern period the problem of how to make visible the creative conditions of social reception, i.e. how does one create the conditions of individual subjectivity and cultural identity? Essentially the art museum condensed the complex social relationships of the production and consumption of the artwork into that of collection, which is to say that, in one sense, only the

4 The distinction between expressive and communicate practice, is typically maintained on the basis of an institutional distinction between fine art and commerce, however, the position advanced here derives from the view that we should consider both art and media practice within one expanded cultural field of Visual Culture.

5 Radical practice is a term which has been used to denote a means by which the individual and by extension the social fraction with which their interests coincide, gain insight into and become more conscious of the conditions of their own making (and oppression) and thus gain a means of transforming themselves and the world Radical practice was also a concept of the Frankfurt School to conjoin critical sociological theory and emancipatory politics, associated with the work of Herbert Marcuse,

accumulative exchange value of the work of art mattered. This economic function of collection left exposed the exhibition value of the work of art, which rendered any other artistic values almost superfluous. As Benjamin foresaw:

*'In the same way today, by the absolute emphasis on its exhibition value the work of art becomes a creation with entirely new functions, amongst which the one we are conscious of, the artistic function, later may be recognised as incidental.'*⁶

If collection renders the creative agency of the museum visitor invisible, and absolute exhibition value, as Benjamin hinted, renders 'the artistic' incidental, one is left with a question: what fills the space of the construction of meaning, which the work of art is thought to mediate/embody in the process of active production and active reception? Traditionally this metaphorical space of meaning has been filled by the work of scholarship and criticism (the guarantors of 'correct' meaning). Such 'correct meanings' worked alongside the museum going practices of those sections of society who 'knew how' to read the work of art as valuable. The last three decades have seen not only a growing critique and problematisation of overarching canonical positions from sections within the academy but also a growing 'consumer' confidence on the part of the public in their participation in contemporary art as well as wider matters of culture and taste. However, by the light of the argument above, the success of new art museums in 'opening out' interest in art and attracting large visitor numbers, Tate Modern, being a case in point, does not, in and of itself, resolve the problem of the location(s) and transaction(s) of meaning. People might be present or not in larger numbers, as the case may be, but the real question remains: how is creative agency, understood as the self-sustaining work of identity(s), of this new audience made visible.

We need to be clear here about the terms in use – those of audience, visitor and spectator. In public museum discourse, the specific notion of audience(s) contains the wider conception of 'the people', whether as the personified citizens of the French republic or as subjects within the constitutional monarchy of Britain. The increasing practice of differentiating audience sectors in museum marketing coincides with other cultural shifts and has tended to reposition the conception of the museum audience from that of 'the people' to that of 'consumers'. In the discourse of the public realm, however, the visitor, or, even more specifically, a spectator, has to be held to be both a unique individual with a specific subjectivity and a representative, whether they acknowledge it or not, of a larger abstracted public of which they are a member. On the surface, the notion of the post-modern consumer seems to solve the problem of the condition of reception and spectatorial address of a now highly heterogeneous and increasingly globalised society. The art museum, it could be argued, need only embrace cultural hybridity, become more ambient and relax and everything will be all right. But this can not simply be the case because, firstly, the museum remains firmly part of the discourse of the public realm through funding and governance – this has particularly been the case since 1997, when the incoming New Labour government made it clear that it saw the museum playing

6 Walter Benjamin (originally published in 1936) 'The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction'. In Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (eds) (1999) *Visual Culture: the reader*. London. Sage/OU

a part in its educational and cultural strategies of social inclusion and renewal. Secondly, and more interestingly, one could argue against the need for the art museum to embrace cultural hybridity on the grounds that the appeal to the consumer contains precisely the problem of what exactly is being consumed in the art museum and how. The trail of the postmodern consumer leads straight back to the problematic of the construction of meaning. Such problems can be equated with the difficulty of identifying socially useful creativity, which, as has been argued above, is the condition of subjectivity and identity. In as much as the consumer in the art gallery does the same thing as the perpetual shopper in the mall, they are, as Baudrillard has pointed out, participating in a symbolic exchange where signs can be endlessly exchanged for other signs. Nevertheless, as Baudrillard goes on to elaborate, this system of symbolic exchange does not guarantee reality, let alone history, but its opposite – the simulacra. The subjectivity realised through the position of the ambient consumer might well be pleasurable for those who have the resources to take it up, but is ultimately a position of isolation⁷.

Gallery education has been directed, or has volunteered itself, to perform the feat of constituting the creative conditions of reception through acts and constructions of making audiences visible. In doing this, gallery education makes claims for overcoming the problems presented by the exchange value of the collection, as well as representing an alternative to monocultural modes of address. Gallery education aims to realise the creative agency of the conditions of art's reception, through a process of creating multifarious voices within a heterogeneous diversity. In this endeavour, it is possible, in practice, to distinguish the elements of gallery education and research practice that aim to transcend two important aspects of gallery experience: a) the 'passive' role of substitution (of the singular production and reproduction of creativity); and b) the 'active' role of regulation (of the control of intended or preferred meaning). Such transcending elements constitute themselves as new and relatively autonomous forms of production – producing meaning, which is to say producing identity. Within this aim, it is possible to discern, in gallery education, a set of contradictions between the drive for transformation, on the part of the individual alongside that of the museum and the division of specialist knowledge as well as practice in the production and consumption of the work of art. It is in the cauldron of these tensions and contradictions that we can discern the continuity of the discourse of radical practices.

How and why has the constitution of gallery education come to entail ideas and practices of 'transformation'?

The approach adopted here owes much to two sources: firstly, Foucault's strictures on the dangers of constructing teleological historical accounts; secondly that of critical reflexivity, drawn from a longer history of practice, as well as more recent definitions within social science method⁸. As Foucault enumerates⁹, the aim of historical enquiry requires an

7 Jean Baudrillard (1993) *Symbolic Exchange and Death*. London. Sage

8 Alvesson. Mats & Skoldberg. Kaj (2000) *Reflexive Methodologies: New Vistas for Qualitative research*. London. Sage

archaeology of what can and cannot be said within any period (the attempt to discover the outlines of discourse and linguistic structures of dominance). Historical enquiry also requires, according to Foucault, a genealogy of the conditions and struggles from which discourse arises. The idea, therefore, that the gallery education and research practices, under consideration in the present discussion, might share a common discursive formation¹⁰, arose from textual analysis – more ordinarily my reading in the field of study – together with a critically reflexive stance towards/within my experience of education and art and media practices in a variety of organisational contexts. The current rationales of gallery education, alongside museum education together with practice-based research, emerged towards the end of a period of British social activism most closely associated with the cultural politics and practices of the 1970s and 80s. The development of such rationales, therefore, significantly overlap and are continuous with my own generational experience. We can usefully start such an archaeology/genealogy in 1978.

In 1978 I had been working for the past three years in the Department of Cultural Studies at the ILEA Cockpit Arts Workshop. For the first two years I worked with Adrian Chappell, who had previously worked with Howard Romp to develop an approach to gallery education with young people, entitled *Tableaux Vivant*. This approach was based upon working with a selected painting and, using practical activities from drama workshops together with studio techniques, involved a 'restaging', or 'visual/spatial event' of the painting. In the art educational terms of the period this might more conventionally have been called a transcription of the work. We would typically take a secondary school art class to see a painting in a gallery and then work on the restaging back in the classroom. Using this approach, we collaborated with Simon Wilson at Tate Britain, using Roy Lichtenstein's *Whaam!*, and at the National Gallery, using Paolo Uccello's *Battle of San Romano*, amongst other paintings. I wish now that I had a photographic record of some of the results because they were visually spectacular and unlike anything carried on in the art classes of the day. Classrooms would be cleared and converted into large scale 'installations', or 'events'. The pedagogic approach was that of group-based production and aimed to 'bring the painting to life'. In 1977, the Department decided to stop working with galleries, in order to develop a wider approach to the emerging media teaching, which was starting to happen in some London schools. *The Schools Photography Project*¹¹, which ran for the next four years, developed the use of photography, as a means of exploring with young people their everyday culture. A selection of the project's work [of the project] was exhibited at the *Art for Society* Exhibition at the Whitechapel

9 Michel Foucault (French first edition 1975) (2002) *Archaeology of Knowledge*. London Routledge

10 This is an overburdened term, but in it's Foucauldian sense suggests that we need an archaeology of the knowledge formation. I am also using it in its Constructivist sense to indicate the need to identify a knowledge paradigm for practice.

11 Andrew Dewdney and Martin Lister (1986) *Youth Culture and Photography*. London. Macmillan.

Gallery¹².

In 1978, Nicholas Serota, who was director of the Whitechapel Gallery, wrote the preface to the catalogue for the *Art for Society* exhibition. In his preface, he asked the question: “How can the artist engage the interest and attention of a wide cross-section of the population?”¹³ This question has, of course, remained with us, which gives it a much longer history than its formulation in the 1970s. Three decades later, it is still centrally placed in the aims of gallery education. In answering his question, Serota went on to say: “I believe that some answers are suggested by this exhibition. They are to be found in the images of class and racial conflict; they are to be found in pictures of people at work and photographs of people facing the problems of contemporary urban life, such as the sense of isolation which often overwhelms the unemployed, the old, the single, the infirm and women with young families.”¹⁴ Far from being a minority, the social, cultural and political groups and communities, defined as on the margins of British culture in 1978, actually consisted of the social majority, and in retrospect, it is a shock to realise that what was accepted as ‘the mainstream’ then was in fact constituted by a minority culture. Serota gave his own, understanding of the political margins of the period, when he qualified his view of art and politics in the Whitechapel show: “By ‘political’ I mean something much wider than party politics. For, on most current social issues such as the place of women, minority groups and the nature of work, the sides no longer divide along traditional ‘party’ lines.”¹⁵ This reference, to the wider politics of sexuality, race and class, implicitly offers a description of a society based upon structural inequalities and social oppression. In the context of the relationship between art and politics, this also reflects a view of culture in which an elite minority defined a standard of significance, taste and judgment, against an excluded majority.

Bourdieu’s now classic work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*¹⁶, published in France in 1979, elaborated a theory, based upon a detailed empirical study of French cultural habits. He argued that social class was the primary determination for art appreciation and for the formation of taste. Bourdieu would have been working on the text at the same time as Richard Cork and Nicholas Serota were organizing the *Art for Society* exhibition at the Whitechapel. While Bourdieu’s *Distinction*, was not published in English until 1984, it would have provided a compelling context for the question of the way in

12 *Art for Society* (1978) catalogue. London. Whitechapel Gallery.

13 *Ibid.* preface

14 *Ibid.*, preface

15 *Ibid.*

16 Bourdieu. *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (First published in French in 1979), this edition. (2007) London. Routledge.

which artists can engage the interest and attention of a wide cross-section of society. For Bourdieu, the answer, at the time, would have been that an appreciation of art is a form of cultural capital, which is developed in order for the educated fractions of the upper and middle classes to socially distinguish themselves from the working class. Furthermore, he would have suggested that the working class has no material class interest, therefore, in acquiring such forms of cultural capital. Such lack of interest should not be separated from the structural impediments that the working class faced as regards the acquisition of capital. In such terms, Bourdieu would, therefore, have said that getting a wide cross-section of society to appreciate art is a contradiction in terms. He would also have said at the time, that should such a project be undertaken as an experiment in social engineering, it would require the working class to be re-educated in the cultural codes that circulate among those who appreciate art precisely in order to distinguish themselves. If such a social experiment could be imagined as 'successful', then, in the terms offered by Bourdieu, far from producing a reformed inclusive culture, based upon the continuity of a selective tradition of art, it would necessarily have had to transform the very social relations which give rise to cultural distinctions in the first place and upon which the production and reproduction of art is based.

In the social reproduction of taste, Bourdieu distinguishes between 'the aesthetic disposition', which mirrors the distancing embedded in the formal, autonomous rules of Modernist art practice, and 'a popular aesthetic', which is based upon an affirmation of the continuity between art and life. The precondition of 'aesthetic distancing' is for the viewer to be able to separate from the continuities of everyday life, in order to participate in formal codifying. The condition of the popular aesthetic, on the other hand, is to remain unseparated from the contingencies and ethics of content, or, as Bourdieu puts it, 'to refuse the refusal'.¹⁷ The aesthetic disposition is the predominant mode of appreciation for the dominant classes, for whom art and its institutions function within their world, or, more technically, as Bourdieu puts it, 'habitus'¹⁸. The popular aesthetic is the majority cultural mode of the lower middle and working classes. It is embedded and expressed in cultural communication continuous with the ethos and ethics of everyday life.

Bourdieu's modeling of culture and cultural taste corresponded to the wider intellectual and civic perception of the distinction between 'high and low' taste or 'elite and popular' forms of culture. Such perceptions, in turn, corresponded to many aspects of public and commercial cultural life, as experienced in metropolitan Paris in the 1970s and 1980s. In adopting Bourdieu, in the Anglophone world, we are assuming that British cultural life, particularly in London during the same period, would broadly reflect the same organization of social classes and cultural arrangements. Bourdieu, it has to be said,

17 .Bourdieu. *Distinction*. (2007. p33)

18 Bourdieu's use of habitus was a means to resolve the conflict between objectivism and subjectivism, such that habitus is the system of durable and transposable modes of seeing and being in the world, neither wholly autonomous, nor determined.

produced one of the most elaborated, detailed and unsurpassed accounts of cultural production and reproduction at a particular social and historical juncture. In enlisting his work here, one also has to ask whether culture and its relationship to the social world has substantially changed. If it has, and of course by most definitions the world does not stand still, then the corollary question arises: is Bourdieu's detailed model still applicable to the world in 2008? Specific questions, of course, remain. For example: how has culture and society changed? How have such changes impacted/reconfigured the problematic of the place of the art museum as part of the public and educational realm? The scale of such questions could threaten to overwhelm the capacity of this paper to sustain an answer. A more contained way of indicating the scale of social and cultural change over the last three decades needs, therefore to be enlisted.

A very concrete way of thinking about cultural change in Britain over this period, and one which is close to the interests of this paper, is to consider the opening of Tate Modern in the shell of the former Bankside Power Station in Southwark in 2000. How far has its development, as a major international art museum attracting over six million visitors a year, been understood as a larger sign of cultural change? The question of whether the social composition of the phenomenal number of visitors now achieves the original desire, on the part of gallery directors, to put art within the reach and interest of 'a wide cross section' of society, is somehow implicated in an understanding of what has happened within Tate. We might approach the question of how Tate's education programme has been framed in relationship to the development of 'wider', or 'non-traditional' audiences. Has this task been seen in terms of inducting a 'wider cross section of society' into the aesthetic codes that Bourdieu enumerated or have the contradictions involved in such an understanding led to forms of alternative practices? And to escape the binary limit of such a formulation, we can also ask whether the 'liquefying effects of late modernity'¹⁹ have dissolved such distinctions and brought about a new, inclusive reality of potentially equal responses.

The economic and social changes that brought Tate Modern into existence correspond to what Baumann has termed liquid modernity. His conceptual axis 'solid to liquid' refers to complex changes in the current stage of hyper-capitalism, which have created both the global economy and remote electronic communication. Liquidity identifies a condition of ambivalence and greater uncertainty experienced through the intense forms of living and working in contemporary globalised urban spaces. Baumann's sense of liquidity initially stands in marked contrast to the fixed social order of Bourdieu's account and suggests a greater degree of fluidity in the mingling of people and cultures. However, in this state of liquid late modernity Baumann draws a similar distinction to that of Bourdieu. The distinction lies between a knowledgeable, educating class, for whom hybridity is a form of extra-cultural mobility, and 'other people'. These 'other people' are defined from the vantage point of mobility. For them, culture must perform the role of giving security within a fixed and continuous world. Baumann sees cultural hybridity as a form of challenge to

19 Baumann. Zygmunt. (2000) *Liquid Modernity*. Cambridge. Polity Press. Bauman selects five basic concepts emancipation, individuality, time/space, work and community - and traces their successive incarnations and changes of meaning.

Bourdieu's claim that social distinction is based upon a strictness of cultural choice. Rather, cultural hybridity is omnivorous and hence does not make distinctions.

While Baumann gives us a reconfiguration of the modes of consumption of taste, he does not dissolve social distinction. Instead, he points to a central contradiction within cultural hybridity:

“Ostensibly hybridization is about mixing, but its latent and perhaps crucial function, and one which makes it such a praiseworthy and coveted mode of being-in-the-world is separation”. (Baumann p92)

Baumann's sense of the ultimate destination of cultural hybridity seems to suggest that he sees the fate of the individual in the hybridization of culture as inevitably one of separation, rather in the pessimistic mode of Baudrillard's 'satellisation of the real'²⁰. In this respect, he is also following Bourdieu, for whom the aesthetic disposition required formal abstraction and hence separation. What then of the other sense of hybridity expressed in the mixing and mingling of people? In the case of the art museum and its forms of education, we might ask whether the mobility implied by cultural hybridity represents an advance on the relatively fixed value of cultural capital in Bourdieu's model. Are there, somewhere within the 'new conditions' of late modernity, ways in which new subject positions and positive identities break across older social divisions and continuous modes of cultural life?

Now we might also ask how the intervening decades since the *Art for Society* exhibition in 1978 have reshaped the question of art's relationship to society. How does gallery education mediate this relationship, in a world where both British society and British art appear to have traveled a long way? One of the most noticeable changes has been that the general line of inclusion and exclusion, mainstream and margin, has been redrawn between heterogeneous national majorities and a structural globalised underclass, located transculturally. In this reformulation, the British working class have been assimilated or, more accurately, dissolved into the mainstream of consumer society. They have thereby been detached in loyalty and belonging from the localized, hard to reach pockets of the culturally and socially impoverished. The British 'underclass' is then be elided with other impoverished groups in other countries who are seen as not having the social and economic resources to help themselves – thus forming a world underclass.

In contemporary cultural and educational discourse, analytical reference to structurally reproduced forms of social and cultural inequality, on the basis of conflicting factional interests, (those of class, race and sexuality), has been largely superceded. More complex as well as more relative views of power have emerged, looking at how power is reproduced and inhabited locally, through the construction of subject identities, and

20 Baudrillard. Jean. (1983) 'Ecstasy of Communication'. Postmodern Culture. Foster.H. (Ed) London. Pluto. Baudrillard parallels Baumann in seeing Hyper-capitalism as creating the condition of Hyper-reality or, more remotely the Era of Simulation.

globally, through economic development. In what we now think of as the intellectual moment of post-structuralism and even post-modernity some important ideas and emphasizes about social agency have been lost, whilst the emphasis upon the subjectivity of the individual gained. We now rightfully demand more complex and detailed understandings about the reproduction of power and knowledge in any one given situation. At the same time, the agencies and agents of progressive social change are less clear. The configuration of representative social and political movements and institutions within the parliamentary democratic framework has been reformed.

As noted, Tate Modern has been hailed as the first great national success of the new millennium and has become something of an icon of a new cultural optimism, (New Labour have recently talked of a new Artistic Renaissance). It is reasonable, therefore, that we look at what is happening in Tate Modern, as more broadly representative of the current state of the relationship between art and society. In the visitor information accompanying Doris Salcedo's *Shibboleth*, the current work in the Unilever Series in the Tate Modern Turbine Hall, we are told that:

"Shibboleth asks questions about... the shaky ideological foundations on which Western notions of modernity are built", and that Salcedo is keen to remind us that, "Our own time, remains defined by the existence of a huge socially excluded underclass, in Western as well as post-colonial societies".

Three decades later than the *Art for Society* exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, it is possible to recognize, at Tate Modern, the invocation, or echo, of a political discourse of art alongside the art museum in the interpretive framing of *Shibboleth*. As it has already been noted, the political configuration of Britain in 2008 is significantly different from that of 1978 and so are the terms in which that difference is cast by the interpretations offered in the gallery.

In 1978, the Whitechapel Art Gallery brought together a contemporary collection of predominately representational works of art, which depicted an internally divided society. In 2008, in the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern a conceptual work 'plays' with the terms of art and its institution, through a visual and linguistic semiotics. In 1978, the lines of social exclusion articulated in the *Art for Society* catalogue and in the representational works of the exhibition were of women, workers and minority cultures, drawn within a nation state. In 2008, at Tate Modern, in the *Shibboleth* visitor notes and in the semiotic of the work itself, the line of exclusion is binary, drawn between society as a whole and a global underclass.

In one major quantitative sense, Tate Modern represents an answer to the question posed by Nicholas Serota in 1978 about how politically relevant contemporary art could reach a wide cross-section of society. The six million annual visitors to the Turbine Hall spectacularly exceeds the few thousand people who saw the *Art for Society* exhibition in Whitechapel. The success of Tate Modern is a wider indication of a culture which is much more at ease with and accepting of contemporary modernist/postmodernist art. *Shibboleth's* large audience can be seen to reflect, or, to be a construction of, the globalizing form of society and its new central fault lines, which the work points to and

from which an underclass is structurally excluded. In this sense the Turbine Hall can be understood as constructing a public space of inclusive invitation, a mirror to the desire for and a claim upon an open, democratic society. At the same time, the Turbine Hall constructs the absence, both real and metaphorical, of all those people who are both imagined and captured by the boundary between an inclusive society and an excluded underclass. In the degree to which this problematic is recognized conceptually and practically in the gallery space, there is a return to, as well as a continuity with, a politics of art and society.

In Britain, a strand of socially and politically engaged art emerged, unevenly, in the 1970s, rooted in a 60s generation, who embraced a politics of social change and international perspectives. Such politics were reflected in campaigns, protest movements and student politics.²¹ During the 1970s, progressive political energy was taken up with a series of direct practical challenges to: the irrelevance of parts of the curriculum and the stultifying effects of traditional pedagogies; how men were unaware of their own forms of power and their oppression of women; how racist and homophobic behaviour was a normalized part of everyday life; how media mythologised and misrepresented the world; and how contemporary Modernist art was based upon narrow patronage and largely regarded as irrelevant to most people. A whole series of new practices and politics developed outside of mainstream institutions, which shared the same sense of optimism that it was possible to take control of one's own life as well as to organize more productive, inclusive forms of communication and expression. New kinds of local, political, community, education and artistic organizations developed along democratic or collectivist lines, using workshop principles. The list of such organizations across the spectrum of activity around Britain would be very long, but just a few of the arts and media orientated organizations that emerged in London in the 1970s, who pioneered new and radical ways of working, will suffice to make the point. They included: *Blackfriars Settlement*, *Camerawork*, *Centreprise*, *Cockpit Arts Workshop*, *Poster Film Collective*, *Four Corners Films*, *Hackney Flashers*, *Paddington Printshop*, *Interaction*, *Turnaround* and *Women Artists Slide Library*, *Albany Theatre* and *Half Moon Theatre*. In addition, the period saw the flowering of radical independent publishing and distribution, with such titles as: *Spare Rib*, *Science for the People*, *Teaching London Kids*, *Radical Education*, *History Workshop Journal*, *Radical Philosophy*, *Schooling and Culture*. New critical academic journals, such as *Screen* and *Screen Education* together with the *Occasional Working Papers* from *The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies* provided broader theoretical explorations over the same period. It was from these organizations that a set of working methods developed which included: the significance of personal history and the need to reclaim hidden histories; the value of celebrating everyday culture; the importance of listening; dialogue and equality of voices; participatory practices and skill sharing; control over one's own representation and production; the need for self reflexivity and the importance of situated practices.

21 Walker, John. A (2002) *Left Shift: Radical Art in 1070s Britain*. London I. B. Tauris
Walker argues that left-wing politics, women's liberation and the gay movement were instrumental in the emergence of a politically engaged art including; Rashid Araeen, Conrad and Terry Atkinson, Joseph Beuys, Derek Boshier, Stuart Brisley, Victor Burgin, John Druggier, Gilbert and George, Margaret Harrison, Derek Jarman, John Latham, Mary Kelly, Bruce McLean, David Madalla, Jamie Reid, Jo Spence, John Stezaker and Stephen Willats

By the 1980s, this same positive political energy increasingly had to defend many of the institutions, in local government and education, of which the left had previously been critical. Such institutions were being defended from a government set on a course of privatization, anti trade union legislation, national control of the curriculum and the installation of an unfettered finance capital, driven as the means of reviving Britain's declining industrial economy. The discourse of progressive political change was therefore forced into forms of direct and hardened opposition to a state driven to dismantle and restructure in the name of world economic change. In such a situation, the playfulness, debate and subtle distinctions between older and newer forms of progressive change were reduced in the many attempts to form united fronts; the battle lines had been drawn and the organized left and progressive politics was in retreat.

The corollary to the political retreat of grassroots cultural activism was, in part, a corresponding rise in the legitimisation of radical practices within public sector voluntary funded organizations, as well as in Higher Education academic departments. In London, *The Greater London Council* (GLC) continued under a Labour administration until it was abolished by Margaret Thatcher's government in 1986. The GLC had taken the responsibility for supporting many grassroots cultural organizations, including some of those cited above. The Polytechnics were expanding into new subject areas within the Social Sciences, Photography, Film and Media, which created opportunities for radical cultural practitioners to teach and study. The Arts Council's Visual Art and Photography panel took up funding a number of new progressive independent arts organizations and practitioners outside of traditional galleries throughout the 1980s. *Autograph* and *INIVA* were both founded in 1988 and funded by the Arts Council. Such institutional development brought with it a legitimation of radical practices. Such practices formed part of the content of Higher Education courses, Women's Studies being a case in point. Radical practices were also adopted as models of networked organisations, educational and artistic practices. Jo Spence's work on self-representation²² is a good case in point here. Processes of legitimisation require that practices become institutionalized. Much of the autonomous decision making, loose affiliations and relative spontaneity were bound to be converted into institutionally reproduced forms of behaviour. Additionally, the process of professionalisation brought with it the systematization of the very 'unprofessional', i.e. oppositional and transgressive elements of radical cultural practices.

Practical progressive cultural politics between 1968 and 1978 was engaged in radicalizing itself and those around it. The role of ideology, in the maintenance of the dominant order, became a growing concern throughout the period. The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University, under the directorship of Stuart Hall from 1969, was a major intellectual focus for the study and theorization of British culture, producing a steady stream of working papers and collective research until its closure in 2002. In 1978 the major publication from the Centre was '*Policing the Crisis*', a study of law and order

22 Spence. J. (1986) *Putting Myself in the Picture*. London. Camden Press

campaigns that focused on moral panics²³. The major theoretical strand of the CCCS working group's analysis of culture, as well as the intellectual output of Stuart Hall, was focused upon the theoretical development of the concept of ideology as a means of understanding the immediate politics of the day. The importance of the concept of ideology, in cultural production and criticism, lay in its apparent explanatory power. Ideology articulated and offered an answer to the problem of how advanced liberal democracies managed and sustained the structural inequality necessary to the reproduction of the capitalist economic system. Workers were not forced into exploitative forms of labour 'at the barrel of a gun', by a repressive army, but largely consented to their own oppression and accepted the existing social organization as 'natural'²⁴. Over a period of his writings, Hall attempted to retain the analytical usefulness of the concept of ideology as a complex, nuanced determining system, which interpolates individuals into false consciousness and subject positions. The point of this, for cultural practitioners and radical educators, was to find counter ideological practices, which revealed the falseness of dominant ideology and brought about new avenues for the exploration of progressive change. It was in the struggle to counter the force of ideology that the practice of theory was taken up within a number of cultural practice contexts, including that of fine art. Evidence of this can be found again in the *Arts for Society* exhibition catalogue, in a short essay by Toni del Renzio,²⁵ who was head of the Art History department at Canterbury College of Art at the time. In discussing the problem of ideology, he made an important distinction between the knowledge of practice and the practice of knowledge, in which:

Art may show us the practice of ideology as a lived human experience, and so offer us a basis for understanding. It cannot give us the understanding. This knowledge may yield us with theoretical models, with its penetration of the mechanisms, social or otherwise, of its object. [...] I am introducing here the notion that knowledge is theoretical and that enquiry passes from one problematic to another, in which it is superseded, passing from the descriptive to the theoretical phase and becoming the production of a systematic conceptualization defining the object of investigation. It is the practice of theory²⁶.

This was a similar position to that adopted by Victor Burgin, who was teaching at the Polytechnic of Central London. Burgin argued for the necessity of both a theoretical

23 Hall, S, Critcher, C, Jefferson, T, Clarke, J, Robert, B. (1978) *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. London. Macmillan.

24 Stuart Hall saw much value in the argument of Louis Althusser in his essay *Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* (originally published in 1969) This edition Hall, S & Evans, J. eds. (1999) *Visual Culture: the reader*. London. Sage/OU

25 Antonino Romanov del Renzio dei Rossi di Castellone e Venosa (Toni del Renzio), painter, art historian and writer: born Tsarskoe Selo, Russia 15 April 1915; married 1943 Ithell Colquhoun (died 1988; marriage dissolved 1947), 1970 Doris Miller (two sons, two daughters); died Margate, Kent 7 January 2007.

26 by Toni del Renzio (1978) *Art for Society* catalogue. Whitechapel. London

practice and the practice of a media form, in his case photography²⁷, if ideology was to be penetrated. Burgin taught people like Jo Spence, a member of the *Hackney Flashers*, who chose to go back to college, to study at PCL in order to develop her theoretical knowledge²⁸. The relationship between theory and practice, or, as Toni del Renzio would more technically put it, between the practice of theory and theory constituted in practice, is complex and fraught. The former runs the continual risk of 'theoreticism' – the point at which theory forgets that its purpose is to be practically useful and illuminate immediate concrete circumstances. The latter runs the risk of 'practicism', which elevates practice into a fetish by the absolute refusal to acknowledge the implicitness of theory. For the purposes of the line of radical practice that this paper is trying to trace in relationship to gallery education and research as practice, radical theory also became institutionalized and 'de-radicalised'. Such 'de-radicalisation' took place from the point at which Art Schools and Polytechnics were assimilated into the university sector within which knowledge became a commodity.²⁹ However, it was this assimilation that also brought with it the possibility of practice-based research, as the funding of fine art and media based research was put onto the same footing as the sciences. The picture in what has become, over the period, Museum Studies, would require further study and review to ascertain how the strand of radical cultural practices discussed here informed museum education practices. It is certainly the case that the perspectives developed by Eileen Hooper-Greenhill at the University of Leicester³⁰, who was also a founder member of the Cultural Studies Department at the Cockpit Arts Workshop in the early 1970s, prior to going to work at the National Portrait Gallery, contain a strong critique of the dominant role of the museum. Her work also contains a programmatic educational alternative. Hooper-Greenhill recognized that the historical task facing the development of Museum Studies was the need to theorize its object of study. The theoretical models she used were those that allowed her to see the operation of 'ideology' or power/relations within the practice of the museum. Tony Bennett had also been a student at CCCS, and his later work on the politics and power of museums follows through the general critique.³¹

In their different ways, cultural critiques, forms and practices, derived from vanguard political models developed through the 60s and 70s, found their way into public funded institutions and cohered around the importance of (critical) theory and (submerged) 'lived

27 Burgin. V. (1982) *Thinking Photography*. London. Macmillan

28 Jo Spence enrolled at PCL in 1980

29 Lyotard. Jean Francois (1979) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Manchester University Press, (1984). Lyotard saw the authority of the university and its role in safeguarding knowledge as being undermined by technological developments and by the end of what he called Western philosophy's grand narratives.

30 Hooper-Greenhill, Eileen. (1989). *The Museum in a Disciplinary Society*. Museum Studies in Material Culture. S. Pearce. Leicester, Leicester University Press. Hooper-Greenhill. E. (1992). *Museums and the shaping of knowledge*. New York: Routledge.

31 Bennett. Tony (2000) *The Birth of the Museum* (1995). London. Routledge

culture' in educational practices in the 80s. Such a coupling of theory and practice sat awkwardly against the deeper, 'positivist', epistemological discourse of English culture. It was, however, a necessary response to the 'penetrating fog of ideology', on the one hand, and making visible all that was hidden and excluded on the other. This twin emphasis worked its way through many specific sites and projects and led to the development of practical forms of organization, pedagogies and methods from the 1980s up until the present day.

Creative Agency as the rationale for the elucidation of the condition of the reception of the work of art.

The nature of human creativity remains the subject of speculation within a number of disciplines. It encompasses both a universal explanation and a particularized view. Universally, it explains that creativity is the necessary self-actualising ability of all human beings, by and through which identity is maintained.³² The more particularized view explains that creativity is located within definite historical cultural practices and is expressed through the work of the artist, who manifests intense and exceptional insights. There is no necessary contradiction between these two strands of thinking about creativity but, in practice, British representative culture, through its national museums, has been taken up almost exclusively with the custodial conditions of the latter. In the former case, creativity is discussed in relation to its' contribution to human happiness and fulfillment. It is also widely referenced in terms of the human ability to problem solve. In a more utilitarian emphasis, creativity has been allied to 'industriousness', the line of which can be seen from the formation of the South Kensington Movement to the creative industries and creative diplomas promoted by the current government. For all of these reasons, art education in Britain has been preoccupied with establishing the conditions for nurturing the creativity of the individual for most of the twentieth century and beyond.³³ Gallery education has been, in large part, an adjunct to this discourse, adopting many of the precepts of Modernist art education.

As an adjunct to art education's continual drive to produce the many forms of socially useful creativity, gallery education has been located within the museum at the receiving end of cultural production – at the traditional site of contemplation and appreciation. Gallery education dedicated to the reception of art is therefore a form of (cultural) education about and, in its Modernist form, through art. As a broker for art's reception,

32 In British cultural theory this inclusive emphasis was made by Williams. R. (1971) *The Long Revolution*. p56. Pelican Books. London. Williams argued that we needed to develop an analysis of creativity, which connected the ordinary everyday processes of communication to the exceptional and intense forms of expression.

33 The work of Herbert Read, Roger Fry and Marion Richardson recognised the child's expressive work 'as art' and the teacher's role that of catalyst, rather than purveyor of aesthetic judgement.

gallery education is located at the intersection between two trajectories: the singular creativity of the artist, for whom the museum is a curatorial condition and guarantor; and the self-sustaining creativity of everyone else, whose condition, in relationship to the museum, is that of individual subjectivity and cultural identity. In gallery education, the idea that art can not be directly taught by the imposition of correct rules but, instead, has to be fostered through a direct encounter with the sensuous world is converted into the idea that there is no correct interpretation of a work of art according to established knowledge or rules. The viewer, (with no knowledge of art), therefore needs a sensuous engagement with the work in order to appreciate it. Such sensuous engagement is often provided by means of an intermediary practice. As such, the field of gallery education has borrowed and adapted not only practice models from the production of art, derived from studio practices of art schools and artists, but also selective pedagogies that emphasize the constructed and dialogic nature of meaning.

A simple and now traditional example might be that of a Gallery Education workshop: a group is involved in the activity of mixing paint and applying it with brushes to various types of paper. This is done as a means of engaging with and responding to the work(s) of an artist, possibly where colour is a foremost consideration in specific works. Alternatively, colour might work as a theme to examine a response to a group of art works. We could specify this example even more, by defining the exact medium of paint, surface and method of application to be used. In all likelihood, this practical activity will only form one of a number of activities in which the group will engage. These might include: looking at paintings in a gallery; talking; reading; listening and discussion. However, in considering the specific practice of mixing and applying paint, we can say that it is common to both the artists whose work is being 'studied' and the workshop group undertaking 'study'. The artist practices the application of paint in a studio according to rules and processes s/he has learnt and developed for making paintings, but why do the workshop group practice the application of paint? There is probably no one simple answer to this question because we would have to consider who the group in question were. If, for example, they were serious students of art, then they might be practicing their own proto-activity of painting, rather in the manner of atelier teaching and could be said to be engaged in the same order of practice as the artist. Here the word practice could be considered as synonymous with that of 'training', or 'apprenticeship' in its pre-Modernist form, since the students would be learning how to acquire a set of skills and understandings in order to potentially become practicing artists.

In most visits to Tate Britain's galleries, it is possible to see students, either individually or in organized - school/college groups, with sketch books and drawing materials, either copying or transcribing art works. But what of the groups whose relationship to the practice of painting or, more widely art, is not contextualized by a developed subject interest? Why might they mix and apply paints and what might they understand in and by it, in a workshop? There are a number of established answers to this question, which can be discerned within the historic rationales of art and gallery education. Such rationales relate to a central precept of 'learning by doing'. The fact that, in the example, the individuals making up the group may not be intending to become artists is not the point. The point is that to engage practically is considered to be a more stimulating and creative way in which learning about art takes place. Such would be the case, particularly, against

the background of a traditional art historical, or art appreciation pedagogy of listening to scholarly and expert explanation.

'Learning by doing' places the emphasis upon the learner's immediate phenomenological or heuristic experience, rather than on historical knowledge. In employing a 'learning by doing' pedagogy, gallery education is aligning itself with both progressive educational pedagogy, in general, and the Modernist tradition of British art education, in particular, rather than that of curatorial expertise and art historical modes of appreciation. In this way, Tate Britain's educational rationale is explained as: "the use of personal experience as a starting point to engage with art and to develop knowledge and understanding to inspire practical activities"³⁴. The Artist-Educator approaches developed at Tate Modern are more detailed in the articulation of a constructivist pedagogy³⁵.

In a parallel development in Higher Art and Media Education, in which art and media schools were integrated into the discourses of knowledge of established universities, it was argued that the creative practice of artists, photographers and filmmakers produced knowledge which was distinct from (scientific or historical) knowledge. Practice should, therefore, be regarded as a form of research. The articulation of something approaching a generic account of practice-based research methods is still in development within UK academies and remains a contested area within some disciplines and fields. The central argument within the fine arts and some areas of media and communication, film being one of them, revolves around whether artifact(s) that are produced as the result of creative and 'artistic' processes can ever be defined within a dominant scientific paradigm of research.

Now there seems a good case for examining in what ways art/media practice(s) are institutionally organized and how they entail subjectivity and agency – as production, as education and as research. The normal distinctions made between such practices are: a) that the practice of production produces the artist; b) that the practice of education produces the learner; and c) that practice as research produces the researcher. But such nominalism does not take us very far in understanding how such distinctions come about or what relationship they have to one another. It is necessary to look to the material social contexts of such practices to see their distinctions and the differing subjectivities that they produce. The art museum is currently an institution in which all three of these organizations of practice are at some time and in some places evident and connected.

The Tate organization has active interpretation and education programmes aimed at audience education, cultivation and development, running across its four museum sites. Within this, Tate Britain has a dedicated Department of Interpretation and Education that is currently participating in a three year research project within the AHRC Migration, Diaspora and Identities programme, entitled *Tate Encounters: Britishness and Visual Culture*, which will run until Spring of 2010. This brings about a temporary situation in

34 Tate website: accessed Jan 2008 <http://www.tate.org.uk/britain/eventseducation/schools/>

35 Helen Charman. (2005) Tate Research Papers. website: accessed Feb 2008

which Tate Britain has two distinct and different contexts for thinking about audience experience, its ongoing educational work and a dedicated research project.

As we have noted, gallery education employs practical art activity, as an element of organized visitor engagement with works of art. Practice-based research engages a medium of expression and communication, as an element of a research methodology. At the root of both of these contexts of practice lies a common argument that practice is a means of generating new knowledge and understanding. In both contexts of practice, individuals and groups will be inducted into projects, which require them to engage in material processes through a particular medium. Such inductions will result in the production of an artifact. Gallery education also employs a range of pedagogic methods of group participation based in directed discussion and dialogue related to the experience of participants. It does so, in addition to the organization of medium practices, which might be undertaken using any art or media form, such as: casting; printing; drawing and painting; construction; photography; video; etc. Such work may be directed or facilitated by an artist or gallery educator and involve the participation of other educational professionals. The specific configuration of such methods in a gallery project or programme constitutes what gallery education would define as practice-based learning and more generally as activity based learning.

In both gallery education and research, arguments are advanced for practice not only to be understood as a learning strategy but as the generation of new knowledge (about visitor and participant experience and response to works of art). Practice as knowledge production invites us to ask the following: who organizes such practices and for what purposes? Who engages in practice as a form of knowledge production and what status is accorded to the knowledge produced through practice? If we can discern, in outline at least, answers to these questions then it might also be possible to begin to articulate the discursive formation of these forms of practices. It might be possible to illuminate why such practices developed and to what end. One might effectively be able to define the problematic that such practices have addressed and what solutions they propose. A fully fledged comparison between gallery education practice and practice as research would involve sifting through available descriptive accounts of practice, as a precursor to the process of extracting a set of 'higher order' messages, which might form a theoretical paradigm. This is a much needed project but, as already indicated, beyond the scope of this paper, which is no exception to the position of a developing field and has therefore settled to the prior task of producing a conjectural elaboration of the historical and discursive framework within which gallery education practices and practice based research sit.

The Tate Encounters research project provides practical methods of engagement with its participants and is attempting to define such practice within a research framework. For practice-based research, the articulation of the rules of production of a practice discipline is in some way an articulation of methodology. How the methodologies of practices become practice-based research methodologies involves a number of further steps, which involve placing the practice process at the service of a set of aims outside of that of production itself, i.e. outside of the production process undertaken in order to produce the expected product. One way in which this has been conventionally articulated has been to

define a medium – photography for example – as a research tool. This has real merits, in regarding a medium as a means for producing evidence that can subsequently be scrutinized. In the case of photography, one gains a tool for observing and documenting events, places, objects and people.

An inherent danger with the formulation of the medium as a research tool, as demonstrated with photography in earlier types of anthropology, is that of constituting the medium as a neutral tool rather than recognising the value layer of both technical and cultural coding. Interestingly, enough critical reflexivity and post-structuralist versions of semiology have, to some extent, rescued visual anthropology from naive objectivity. Overcoming the problem of an objectifying use of media in research has entailed centring the subjectivity of the researcher and accorded them the status of maker within the research process itself. Artifacts are thus given the status of research material capable of being classified and archived for research purposes. In shifting the emphasis from the method of gathering data to the outcomes it produces has led to the classification of artifacts as research material – a move that slightly sidesteps the problems of how method is understood in the process of gathering material.

The Tate Encounter's discussion of practice as a research method has so far yielded three difference uses of practice, which at the present time are all manifest and to some extent in flux in most practice-based research work. These can be defined as: practice as a research tool, for observation and recording; practice as the production of research data for subsequent analysis; and practice as the research process and outcome. For the project, the way lies open for the potential of practice as both a method and subject of research, in a form of hybrid practice(s). From these initial uses of practice, within the research, a more abstract definition of what is meant by a practice-based methodology has been arrived at. A first stage of that definition suggests that cultural practices can take on the status of a research method when they are structured through the rules of production of a technical medium, which are subsequently engaged with critical reflection upon the contexts of uses. A further stage of this formulation includes the idea that practice-based research involves technical production processes are used for the purpose of making visible the construction of value formation of a given cultural form within particularised cultural context's.

What all of these cultural forms of applied practice have come to share is an increasing professionalisation of the role of enablers/facilitators/educators. Such figures take on the role of engaging the non-professional participants in forms of production for educational, expressive, therapeutic and communicative purposes. The rationales, frameworks and, to a lesser extent, theorisations of such practices are to be found in the different social and institutional contexts of their uses. While there is not the time here to rehearse how specific cultural forms came to be seen as having wider social purposes and applications, it is worth noting, in passing, that most of the formulations of their value, in wider contexts, has been persistently associated with social reform and change. Gallery education is no exception to this tendency, as is evidenced in the formulations of current aims:

We help you make Tate Britain a place where you are free to roam and free to think for yourself, to share in the many voices that make up freedom of expression”[.....]“ [.....

J“Tate Britain’s interpretation and education programmes enable people to participate in the life of the gallery: studying, playing, debating, learning, interacting and contributing³⁶ .

In the educational work of Tate Modern the case for the professionalisation of gallery education has also been made:

In particular, the movement from the museum primarily (but not solely) as a place of aesthetic contemplation and collection-centred expertise, to one of the museum primarily as communicator and partner to various audience constituencies, has resulted in the role of the education curator gathering greater agency, born out of policy directives and a cultural climate which questions the legitimacy of the museum’s authority

Gallery educators at Tate see the primary obstacle to the transformative potential of their cultural practices as rooted in the continued privileging of specialist knowledge of the historical provenance and production of artifacts. Such knowledge is seen as being held by traditional curators. It is awarded higher status than the specialist knowledge of the social and technical mediation held by educationalists. It might be thought that much progress has been made generally, in raising the status of gallery education within the museum. It might be understood that Tate represents a leading institution in its developmental approaches. It might therefore be considered that a new moment has been reached in which it is only a matter of time before gallery education becomes an equal partner in the shaping of the museum and its programmes. Tate does, indeed, court and engage with new notions of the museum in a recognised period of exceptional change and cultural uncertainty. This is evidenced, among many other things, in the work done by Toby Jackson in his epistemic reconstitution of art educators as curators. In 2006, Tate Britain’s Interpretation and Education Department appointed Mike Philips as the first Cross Cultural Curator, who began to develop a cultural diversity programme, which included a public discussion in May 2006 on Black British arts at which Stuart Hall spoke.

Stuart Hall has, over a long period of cultural activism as well as, writing and speaking, continued to situate himself between British social and cultural history and the twist and turns of its intellectual analysis. He has done this as a committed left intellectual and as a cultural practitioner, most recently in his involvement with Autograph and the project of Rivington Place. He is often turned to by progressive cultural practitioners as someone who can see things more clearly than others and who can articulate current dilemmas and threats and suggest productive avenues of work. In a public conversation with Mike Philips and Mark Sealey at Tate Britain in May 2006³⁷ he described the current moment in cultural politics as one of ‘ambivalent mainstreaming’, in which doors, previously obstinately closed to a certain radical (black) cultural politics have been opened. He described the space opened up as dangerous and tricky territory, for the Black Arts and cultural movements, because, he said, globalization was but a new version of a much

36 Allen. F. (2007) ‘Learning, Play and Interaction at Tate Britain’. London. Tate

37 Stuart Hall (2006) Tate website, webcast.

longer historical process in which the processes of capitalism have and continue to create inequality and lack of recognition and as much as he assented to the newer emphasis within late modernity in bringing people together to occupy the same space, he also saw the British response to this as assimilationist in intent. Without equality and recognition, he argued, the new agenda of social cohesion could only reinforce a set of exclusionary (White) British values. Such a view has serious implications for the cultural sphere of which this paper is interested, centrally because the best efforts of progressive cultural professionals will inevitably come up against the deeper inequalities within and between people's lives being structurally reproduced by the newer globalisation. How this is negotiated from within the mainstream will be largely struggled for around the issue of recognition, which in isolation from everything and everyone else, will turn recognition into tokenism. For Stuart Hall, recognition involves the process, his word is also that of struggle, of making the long, rich and complex history of the journey from the periphery to the centre visible.

The postmodern notion of the heterogeneous audience as consumer masks certain structural absences. Most obviously it conceals the absence of those who do not, as the sociological argument has it, have the cultural capital to exchange in the art museum, or put more critically, for whom the art museum is discontinuous with their forms of existing cultural capital. The current British museum demographic continues to show that in percentage terms migrant and diasporic groups, (black and ethnic minorities), who have over the period otherwise become part of the British cultural landscape, do not attend museums in proportion to their numbers in the population as a whole, and, as has been traditionally demonstrated nor do the less educated and poorer fractions of the indigenous working classes (Social classes C2DE)³⁸. The DCMS has set performance targets to increase the percentage of visitors to museums and monitors these against performance indicators. Such structural exclusions do not accord with the historic notion of the public museum as a demonstration of the collective wealth of the people, nor do such exclusions chime with the current government's renewed emphasis upon the role of culture in producing social cohesion. From the position of the British State, the people, it would seem, must be encouraged, and in the case of compulsory education, made, to go to the museum, or, much more cynically, must be seen to be attending the museum. But the problem of creative agency, as is emerging through this argument, is not merely one of physical absence of numerous and classified bodies. The missing peoples (whoever they are constituted to be), are considered to be absent because there are barriers to access, some of which are rooted in their continuous everyday worlds, their remote perceptions of museums and the organisation of their time, some in their supposed lack of developed 'codes' with which to see meaning, some in the absence of work in collection and exhibition which reflects or celebrates their life worlds and identities and some in the urban and architectural organization of space with which they are not familiar. Gallery education and indeed museum research projects identify such barriers and set about constructing strategies and practices through which absent peoples attending can be made welcome and develop a sense of conviviality, meaning and purpose. How

38 DCMS Annual Report (2006) page 77 Efficiency Review. www.culture.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/F1CE3B19-6D2D-4567-BD4E-

successful such strategies are in converting targeted groups into recurrent visitors or visitors who feel some kind of ownership it is impossible to say and in one important sense for this argument it misses the crucial issue that all visitors are in one important historical sense invisible in the face of the museum organized to legitimate the singular creativity of the production of art. This is because to be visible would entail an active form of participation in the production of their own subjectivity and identity both individually and as representative people. Of course the mode of producing subjectivity largely goes on people's heads, when confronted by a work of art, but the limit imposed by the museum historically has been one of inequality, since the distribution of cultural capital is unequal. In adopting the gallery educationalists constructivist and dialogic strategies of meaningful codes and interpretations, as the means to the production of new creative knowledge, the question urgently arises about how this knowledge becomes known and more widely shared, what forms does it take? The answer in abstract is something along the lines of the need for the museum to demonstrate that what is (coded) in people's heads has a direct and meaningful relationship to the forms and organization of exhibition. This essentially requires a new form of general communication about the value and uses of collection.

It can be argued, by degrees, that the status quo of museum organization constructs not only the categories of absence but the invisibility of attendance, which for certain cultural groups is therefore a double negative, they are both absent and invisible. On the basis of Newtonian mathematics this makes the absence of certain identified groups a positive and leaves the problematic of recognizing the agency of spectatorship firmly a problem of the museum's own making.

This returns the argument, finally, to the discourse from which it started, which is that if the Modernist art museum continues to privilege a singular artistic production within the autonomous aesthetic zone, at the expense of the development of new forms of general communication about continuous, popular human creative agency, then the audience will continue to remain largely invisible.

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