

# New Flow

A better future for artists, citizens and the state

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# Prelude

This book's key message is that artists have an important contribution to make to our society and economy. It is not being properly or fully realised. The task is to release artists' potential to the full and achieve the most profound and far-reaching impact possible.

This book is part arrival, part new departure. It proposes a way forward and invites you to be involved in the next steps. Written in the tradition of political pamphlets, it makes specific, practical proposals. The point is not just to make sense of today's hash of trying to connect artists and citizens but get on and change it for the better. How significant a proposal 'New Flow' is will be decided by you and others. We live in an age which blends fast change in some aspects of our lives with inertia and timidity in others. All that can be said with confidence is that this pamphlet makes a proposal far less preposterous than Jonathan Swift's 'A Modest Proposal' of 1729 which recommended tackling food shortages and stemming population growth by eating babies.

Nearly three hundred years on, we have the Web and use it for sharing information and ideas, collaboration and social networks. This book follows the Web examples of writers Charles Leadbeater and Lawrence Lessig who have published initial versions of books on the web, inviting contributions and challenges.

So this is New Flow Version 1. It is definitely an arrival – the completion of six months' exhilarating work. It is also the start of a new search. It has been published here at [www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk](http://www.missionmodelsmoney.org.uk) with the intention of benefiting from your ideas and comments. Just go to the site and do please feed in whatever you wish – disagreements, mistakes you think I've made, points, references or important projects that are missing, or suggestions, changes in emphasis or points of agreement which might be developed further. The aim is to publish the you-improved New Flow Version 2 in 2009.

Who am I? Why write New Flow? I speak as a passionate lover of the arts in all their richness and with the thrill and advantage of 25 years' working in the arts professionally: as a young composer, assistant to a Mozart biographer, office junior, dance development worker, regional music funder, orchestral manager, international music festival artistic director, literature and architecture festival founder, and arts umbrella body chairman. I am now director of a private foundation with a bigger canvas, engaging with arts, education, health and social issues. This has made me both insider and outsider – a privileged position.

New Flow came out of a mix of love of the arts, frustration shared with many about the arts politics impasse we have reached, and a determination to find a way through. I hope you enjoy it, are stimulated by it and are provoked to contribute to Version 2.

# Acknowledgements

My special thank yous are to Vivienne Parry and Clare Cooper. Vivienne Parry, my partner, tuned in and spurred me on to write this book. She has cast her sharp, journalist's eye over drafts and sparked ideas between her world of science and mine of the arts. I have striven for crisp prose, wherever possible free of jargon. Whether I have succeeded is my responsibility. Vivienne's help was nevertheless invaluable.

Clare Cooper co-founded Mission Models Money. It is an action research programme and campaign for change. She and the MMM programme have opened up the space for this book's arguments and ideas to breathe and expand. That space is home now to many people. They are looking for new ways to link artists and citizens, and challenging old ways of thinking and doing. Clare's role was crucial. I wanted to get on with New Flow, get it out there on the web and not be held back by traditional publishing timetables. Sharing the book's outline with Clare led to MMM being the publisher of New Flow version 1, and I am immensely grateful for that.

New Flow has benefited from many, many conversations. The list would be too long to set out here. My thanks go to everyone who helped stimulate the ideas and shape them.

# Introduction

What you need to know right at the start is that this is not another book making the case for the arts. It does offer practical ideas on making a better case, but enough has been said and written for us to get on to more pressing, trickier questions. Top of the list are these. What unique contributions can artists make to society and how can we make these as open and effective as possible? What ways are there, old and new, to connect artists and citizens? What and who drives change in the world of artists and the ways artists and citizens connect? What is the right role of the state and what changes are needed for it to fulfil that role? And how do we get out of today's complicated mess?

Before we plunge into those less familiar waters, it is worth getting into training. John Tusa is the former Managing Director of London's Barbican Centre, one of the world's great arts centres. Tusa writes fine paeans for the arts. Here is his best: 'The arts matter because they are universal; because they are non-material; because they deal with daily experience in a transforming way; because they question the way we look at the world; because they offer different explanations of that world; because they link us to our past and open the door to the future; because they work beyond and outside routine categories; because they take us out of ourselves; because they make order out of disorder and stir up the stagnant; because they offer a shared experience rather than an isolated one; because they encourage the imagination, and attempt the pointless; because they offer beauty and confront us with the fact of ugliness; because they suggest explanations but no solutions; because they present a vision of integration rather than disintegration; because they force us to think about the difference between the good and the bad, the false and the true. The arts matter because they embrace, express and define the soul of a civilisation. A nation without arts would be a nation that had stopped talking to itself, stopped dreaming, and had lost interest in the past and lacked curiosity about the future.'<sup>1</sup>

That is quite a list and, as Tusa himself admits, some had reservations about it<sup>2</sup> including a local authority politician who thought none of this applied to him or what his local authority did.<sup>3</sup> Other writers would suggest that Tusa has still missed something. Richard Eyre sees art as 'passionate, ambiguous, complex, mysterious and thrilling.'<sup>4</sup> Others would miss the arts' powerful role in devotion, emotion, human dynamics, mystery, romance, sensuality and the telling of stories.

Yet others remind us that making art is an individual and collective struggle. Making a case for the arts is just the start of it. Battles are fought with victory far from guaranteed. Here is Toni Morrison, in her 1993 Nobel Lecture, on language and what literature is not. 'The systematic looting of language can be recognized by the tendency of its users to forgo its nuanced, complex, mid-wifery properties for menace and subjugation. Oppressive language does more than represent violence; it is violence; does more than represent the limits of knowledge; it limits knowledge. Whether it is obscuring state language or the faux-language

of mindless media; whether it is the proud but calcified language of the academy or the commodity driven language of science; whether it is the malign language of law-without-ethics, or language designed for the estrangement of minorities, hiding its racist plunder in its literary cheek – it must be rejected, altered and exposed. It is the language that drinks blood, laps vulnerabilities, tucks its fascist boots under crinolines of respectability and patriotism as it moves relentlessly toward the bottom line and the bottomed-out mind. Sexist language, racist language, theistic language – all are typical of the policing languages of mastery, and cannot, do not permit new knowledge or encourage the mutual exchange of ideas.’<sup>5</sup>

No doubt, you will have your ideas about the powers and struggles of art. You will also have your own definition of the arts, so can we just agree for the moment not to get hung up on definition? Let’s simply embrace all the arts as they are talked about in everyday conversation – all music, all literature, all dance and so on. Tusa would insist on omitting the ‘massed, commercialised arts’.<sup>6</sup> Here Tusa and I diverge. Isn’t flamenco in the UK commercialised but not massed? Aren’t there other artforms which have not had the privilege of public subsidy and have had to settle for less enriching, stunted growth in the commercial sector? Examples include romantic fiction and brass band music. Others are powered by the commercial sector and shimmer with audacious technical quality. Software programmes and video games, for example, have absorbing storylines. They are a form of interactive narrative. The quality of the graphics becomes ever more naturalistic and imaginative. These are newer artforms.

Is there really an artform which is inherently commercial? Do we really want to push a wedge between literary fiction and science fiction and split Iain (M) Banks in two? Where do blockbuster films stop and art films start? Does Annie Proulx’s short story ‘Brokeback Mountain’ belong to the arts while Ang Lee’s acclaimed and financially successful film version find itself excluded?

Can we also agree to use the phrase ‘civil society organisations’ to describe that vast array of non profit distributing bodies which are not part of government nor in the private sector? They include charities, community interest companies, trade unions, universities and voluntary organisations. The National Council of Voluntary Organisations estimates in their Civil Society Almanac 2008 that there are over 865,000 such civil society organisations with an annual turnover of £109 billion.<sup>7</sup> There are alternative phrases such as ‘Third Sector’ and ‘voluntary and community organisations’ and arguments continue about what phrase best captures all this activity and who is in and who is out. We will need to talk more about this sector which is neither public nor private, neither governmental nor for-profit.

Any more debates about definition would see this book’s audience gradually disappear into the night. In the meantime, there is much to celebrate. The importance of the arts and artistic creativity is now widely recognised even if undermined by a rumbling, redundant argument about the benefits of the arts which we will pull apart later. Since the 1980s, the case for the arts’ economic importance has been made by London, Glasgow, Tyneside and

others, and some excellent supporting evidence of regeneration has been carefully assembled and documented, especially in Glasgow.<sup>8</sup> The February 2008 report 'Creative Britain' is understandably upbeat: 'the creative industries are now a central engine of our economy, driving innovation, and they contribute above their weight to the vital task of growing the economy.'<sup>9</sup> Over the last ten years, there has been a massive increase in government resources for the arts through the Treasury and making the arts a beneficiary of the National Lottery. London and the UK's artistic position in the world is high. One can go further. The UK was once dismissed as a land without music. As will be explored and elaborated later, today it is truly a nation of music and many artforms.

'New Flow' opens with a description of what is up-river, the great changes in the second half of the 20th century: the need for a canon as Britain rebuilt itself after World War II; non-live arts experiences overtaking the live; the aestheticisation of a nation; society's need for artists but its poor treatment of most of them; and artists' and arts organisations' engaging with wider social and economic life from community development and economic regeneration to work in hospitals and with young offenders. We will see that this engagement has been undermined by a false polarity between intrinsic and instrumental benefits and confused by the part-useful and part-problematic concepts of 'creative industries' and 'creative economy'. And we have a spectrum of works of art from slow burn to quick hit with profound art to be found in any artform.

We then pan out to look at the swirl of now, wider forces in the UK today which have implications for artists, arts organisations and how the state supports the arts. The monopoly of power enjoyed by professionals and politicians is being broken and new settlements are being fashioned with citizens, consumers and communities. The UK is super-diverse. There is confusion and crisis about multiculturalism, identity and Britishness. Social segregation is growing and we have fewer safe places for public deliberation. There is work to be done to build bonds within communities, bridges between communities and links into the state and corporate world. The commercial and voluntary sectors are converging and this is now irreversible. National and local government increasingly looks to the voluntary sector for the delivery of public services. As the boundaries blur, entrepreneurial skills will become more important. Parallels with science are explored. Just as there is the long-established scientific method, there is an artistic method too. Science's approaches to public engagement, research, evidence, innovation, commercial exploitation, accountability and ethics offer inspiration. We live in a less trusting, more accountable, evidence-based society which has to fight harder to hold its competitive position in the world. Science is better prepared. And local government is still in a mess and unclear how it should relate to the arts. All this change suggests ways forward for arts organisations and the state. The need for artists is certainly still there: the arts are part of our collective memory and living artists help us make sense of today's changing world.

Short tales in Chapter 3 tell of the effect these tides of change are having and how some are responding. Dance United releases the unexpected power of dance, convincing the youth justice system and achieving Full Cost Recovery. The 40-year-old London Sinfonietta



finds profound art outside classical music and co-produces with young audience members but neglects the non-live. Three major multicultural arts centres have emphasised separateness, constructing divides between cultures, and they have foundered. The success of contemporary visual art in the UK is more due to sophisticated visual art players than public subsidy. The 'Mission Models Money' programme began as a solitary voice and is now a popular hub of research and new ideas about linking artists and citizens. Artists' uneasy relationship with universities may be starting to improve. 'Flashmob: The Opera', viral marketing and a project which creates on-screen landscapes as you walk are examples of how the mobile phone is transforming the relationship between artists and everyone else.

The next three chapters look at the artist, the arts accessibility industry and the state's support of the arts. Chapter 4 calls for better understanding of artists and greater space for freedom of expression, and it analyses what is holding artists back. Chapter 5 shows how arts organisations are atomised and behind the game, and it urges a move from accessibility to a carefully defined two-way conversation between artists and their work and audiences and participants – 'public engagement'. Chapter 6 critiques a creaking system bedevilled by 'incremental inertia'. It has bred 'inhibited dependency' in arts organisations and the sixty year marriage between quality and accessibility is over.

The final two chapters paint a better picture. In the future, the arts are defined not by the state but as they are out there. The messy sack of today's state arts bodies has been thrown out. Artists' research and development has its own dedicated state-funded body at arm's length from government. Selected works of art are championed by a second body not at arm's length but integrated with the rest of government. Charged with 'public engagement', it is creative, entrepreneurial and engaged with the rest of society. Together, the two organisations have prepared the arts for a permanent seat at the top table. We can look to a time of greater freedom and respect for artists and when it will be possible to name any area of life and any department of government, produce robust evidence of the arts' power and relevance there, and present viable plans for artists to contribute.

## NOTES

1. Tusa, *Engaged with the arts*, I.B. Tauris 2007
2. *Ibid.* p9
3. *Ibid.* p9
4. Sir Richard Eyre, *Who Needs Art?*, Ditchley Foundation Lecture XXXVI, July 1999
5. Toni Morrison,  
[http://nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html](http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1993/morrison-lecture.html)
6. Tusa, *Engaged with the arts*, I.B. Tauris 2007 p160
7. NCVO, *Civil Society Almanac* 2008
8. See, for example, the work of the Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Research  
Department for Culture, Media & Sport, *Creative Britain – New Talents for the New Economy*, 2008, p39

## Chapter 1

# UP-RIVER – CHANGES SINCE THE CREATION OF THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREAT BRITAIN IN 1946

## How things have changed

Let's put ideas about how the state defines the 'arts' to one side for a moment. Later we will travel around the chaotic web of state involvement in the arts: the Advisory Committee on the Government Art Collection, Arts Council England, Arts & Humanities Research Council, Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS), Museums, Libraries and Archives, Arts Council of Wales and the rest. Relative to what we need to discuss, that is a simple journey. The last sixty years hold a more extraordinary story of fashions, fevers, continuity, perseverance and ingenuity: of flux, fierce undercurrents, the overtaking and resurgence of the live experience, artists breaking out of an imposed hermetic world and, yes, lurking somewhere in all of this, the state.

## Artform flux

Artforms change. Some expand while others contract. Their status rises and falls. New combinations of sight, sound and motion are created. Lobbies come and go. Occasionally, a new movement emerges, it sparks an explosion of excitement and outrage, and that artform has changed forever.

The Young British Artists blew new vitality into contemporary visual art in the late 1980s. It began small, with influential teachers at Goldsmiths College in London and a single exhibition, 'Freeze', curated by a student called Hirst. Soon, preserved dead animals, found objects crushed by a steamroller and an unmade bed could be presented as art. Just below the surface of this shock art, old arguments about video and photography being inferior artforms melted into history. The traditional separation between them and the more established artforms of drawing and printmaking was abolished. All these media were liberated to be used in any conceivable way, and the status of the installation – a multi-part work in a single space – rose from dismissable to essential. A new, exciting and distinctive era opened out with the YBA label a powerful brand and marketing tool. 20 years on, contemporary art is the 21st century's tulip fever, Damien Hirst is number 397 in the 2008 Sunday Times Rich List and London's East End rivals the frantic productivity of early 16th century Venetian studios with over 120 galleries within the square mile around the Whitechapel Art Gallery.

Dance is fizzing now. For so long it was this country's Cinderella artform. Ballet was opera's younger sister still to be weaned off the Tchaikovsky diet of 'Nutcracker', 'Sleeping Beauty' and 'Swan Lake'. Contemporary dance's few champions slaved in London and cried in the wildernesses of Bracknell, Cheshire, Newcastle and Swindon, and popular forms from ballroom to clog-dancing were sniggered at. Today dance is the umbrella word for a heady mix of styles for watching and taking part in: African, ballroom, bellydancing, Bharatha Natyam, body popping, breakdancing, ballet, contact improvisation, contemporary, flamenco, folk, historical/period, Irish, Kalari, Kathak, jazz, jive, Latin American, line dancing, Raqs Sharqi, salsa, square dancing, street dance, tango and tap. Choreographers ride across these styles and reach out beyond dance. Rafael Bonachela and Wayne McGregor are two leading figures. Bonachela draws inspiration from contemporary visual art, film and popular culture. He can engage with the avant-garde and choreograph for Kylie Minogue and Primal Scream. Wayne Macgregor creates pieces for ballet companies, television and for his own company Random. He has done site-specific installations at the Hayward Gallery, Canary Wharf and the Pompidou Centre in Paris and internet dance projects. His work extends to youth schemes and a research study with the Neuroscience Department of Cambridge University. London has Sadlers Wells, a flagship devoted to dance and at ease presenting all styles. Over 200 dance companies exist now and the dance economy employs around 30,000 people. 'Billy Elliot' and 'Strictly Come Dancing' has picked up on this and taken dance watching and dance doing to a mass audience.

Popular music has been the great overturner, the artform which has gone furthest in challenging officialdom. During World War II, British and Allied forces, through a vast international operation run by the official Entertainment National Service Association, were entertained by Gracie Fields and George Formby and other safe popular music stars of the day. With the advent of Elvis Presley and the African American popular tradition in the mid 1950s, music turned over taboos of sex and how to walk, how to talk and how to make music. Since then, pop's economic, social and cultural challenges have kept on coming: the illegal broadcasting of Radio Caroline, the sound and look of the electric guitar and Pete Townshend's on-stage bouts of destruction, the sound and release of anger in punk, the sexist and violent lyrics of reggae and rap ... and so it continued through from the eighties into the noughties.

## Artform undercurrents

Novelist Linda Grant wrote that we 'can't have depths without surfaces'. The wild richness of contemporary artforms is the delicious reality. Reflected beneath are truths about all artforms and currents propelling us from past to future.

Surfaces need not be superficial. Experiencing that delicious reality can of course be an exciting sugar rush. The occasional hit is a thrill but you are quickly sated. First experiences can also be the start of a slow release. Enough of the surface beguiles at the first encounter for you to want to return. Then you return, again and again, finding something new and more satisfying each time. This spectrum of satisfaction from immediacy to slow burn is genuine. It is recognised, for example, by BBC television drama which distinguishes the popular (*Eastenders*, *Holby City* and *Casualty*) from what BBC TV executives consider 'thought-provoking and challenging fiction'. And this is important as the BBC decides how to distribute the total drama budget of £288 million.

The spectrum holds a danger for some generalisers, though: those who have fallen for a simplistic division. So ballet, classical music and literary fiction are the slow burns and flamenco, pop music and crime fiction are forever candyfloss. This division along the increasingly phoney line between high art and popular art is of course ludicrous. The ballet, 'Pineapple Poll', to the music of Arthur Sullivan spins a large bag of sugar. Repeated listening to certain Johann Strauss waltzes provokes queasiness, as does too much of Evelyn Waugh's artful depictions of aristocratic decadence. Flamenco on the other hand can reveal the depths of love and death; the music and lyrics of Bob Dylan and Radiohead reward repeated listening; and the best of crime fiction has a large cast of complex and intriguing sleuths offering insights into the extremes of human character.

This leads to two straightforward conclusions which we can pot now. Firstly, the spectrum from slow burn to quick hit is real and useful. Secondly, profound art can be found in any style in any artform.

Generalisers use another unsuitable shorthand. Profound art must automatically be art to be contemplated, while art that involves the body as well as the mind is somehow inferior. This is mirrored in religion: monastic contemplation is presumed superior to the whirling of Sufi dervishes and the Christian tradition of 'happy clappy' gospel music and dancing. Recent discoveries in neuroscience, however, show that mind and body act as one and are indivisible.

Art that is important to a nation is another matter. Back in 1946 as a depleted, rationed Britain picked itself up and dusted itself down, one live project was the construction, maintenance and promotion of a canon of important art around which the nation could rally. Authoritative experts filtered individual artworks and whole artistic styles, deciding which belonged and which should be cast out. One leader was F R Leavis, one of the most influential figures in twentieth-century English literary criticism. He argued for the project to

have an informed and discriminating, highly-trained intellectual elite and, in 1948, his book 'The Great Tradition' constructed a tradition which, Leavis believed, ran through Jane Austen, George Eliot, Henry James to Joseph Conrad. Bizarrely he excluded major authors such as Thomas Hardy. He stayed undecided about Dickens until 1970 when he published 'Dickens the Novelist'.

Even more influential was John Maynard Keynes, the brilliant economist. Lord Keynes was the first chairman of the Council for the Encouragement for Music and the Arts (later the Arts Council of Great Britain). He extended the making of the canon across all the arts. Keynes' project was to establish the supremacy of professional art designed for contemplation and the demotion of participating in amateur and community arts activities. The elevation and fostering of opera and ballet was helped by his simultaneously being the chairman of the Royal Opera House Covent Garden and the Arts Council. Crossing swords with another Council member, the composer Ralph Vaughan Williams, he succeeded after two years in excluding English folk song and dance and later prevailed in his wish to abandon the Music Travellers scheme which encouraged local participation in music. So it is not surprising that the Arts Council's Royal Charter included in its three objects 'to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public'. Being given increased accessibility implies that access is or can be controlled, and even denied.

Constructing the canon was not limited to the pure arts. In architecture, Nikolaus Pevsner, a near contemporary of F R Leavis, is best known for his 46-volume series of county-by-county guides, 'The Buildings of England' (1951-74). This was a remarkable, sustained piece of readable scholarship.

Where is the canon now? So much has changed. To pick one emblematic example along the path from 1946 to today, the Beatles transformed the musical taste of a generation. The music and lyrics absorbed not only fans but also university musicologists and literary critics, notably Professor Wilfred Mellers who wrote a detailed study 'Twilight of the Gods', published in 1973. The Beatles, however, received their MBEs for services to the export industry and not to the arts. Looking across the sweep of sixty years, professional arbiters of taste have lost much of their power as public trust in them has waned. One reason is the powerful and largely successful charges of exclusion of female, black and minority ethnic artists and those working outside the high arts. It is also impossible now to conceive of the public as a homogeneous mass to whom the arts are to be made accessible.

The most far-reaching change has occurred outside the realm of the canon altogether. It is the growth of interest in the artistic dimension of everyday objects and living: the architecture of schools, the visual flair of computer games and television advertising, laying out a beautiful garden, designer fashion (real or fake) reaching the high street and eBay, IKEA's success in championing furniture design, and the pleasure handling an iPod or iPhone. All these have a functional as well as aesthetic dimension and so fall outside what we would normally consider art. The Roman architect Vitruvius saw this clearly. In the third book of his Ten Books on Architecture he made the case for three dimensions: 'commodity,

firmness and delight' or, to use today's clichés, is it fit for purpose, will it break and do we like it? A revolution in the UK's everyday engagement with 'delight' has been under way. There has been a powerful aestheticisation of the nation.

To cope with this revolution new phrases have been invented – inadequate phrases, unfortunately, which have an interest not in commodity, firmness or delight, but in money. One of the sloppiest is 'creative industries'. The DCMS defines these as 'those industries that are based on individual creativity, skill and talent. They are also those that have the potential to create wealth and jobs through developing intellectual property.'<sup>1</sup> It goes on to list 13 sectors which make up the creative industries: advertising, architecture, art and antiques markets, computer and video games, crafts, design, designer fashion, film and video, music, performing arts, publishing, software, and television and radio.

DCMS also uses the phrase 'cultural industries' but a closer look reveals that 'creative industries' and 'cultural industries' are used interchangeably. The phrase 'cultural sectors' is also used. Now, this must be different because the major 2008 report 'Creative Britain – New Talents for the New Economy' refers to 'barriers between the cultural sectors and the creative industries'.

Three points may help cut through this mess. Firstly, the New Labour government has wished to help the economy grow, creating jobs and raising people's standards of living. Realising the economic potential of creativity and culture is a reasonable aspiration and the arts, as components of both creativity and culture, can sometimes contribute to this. The danger is that the economic dimension is emphasised so much that it stifles other important, even critical benefits of the arts – for everything from individual enrichment to fostering an open, democratic society.

Secondly, creativity and culture are different. Creativity is a mind-set. It is the process and effort that finds solutions to problems. Artistic creativity is just one kind. To deny the creativity of Brunel, Ada Lovelace (writer of the first computer programme in 1842), inventors of medicines, Andrew Wiles' mathematical creations to solve Fermat's Last Theorem and so many others is artistic arrogance. The word 'culture' has evolved out of the intellectual and artistic development of individuals who can then be considered 'cultivated' or 'cultured'. Added to this is a more contemporary meaning: a group's or society's belief system, customs, attitudes and expressions – including its works of art. So creativity in the arts generates works of art. A work starts as the expression of an artist but, for it to come alive, it must communicate something and be taken up, listened to, watched, experienced and be meaningful to others. At that point, it becomes part of a culture. More generally, creativity generates knowledge which becomes part of a culture.

Lastly, you can, if you wish, look at creativity and culture through the particular prism of economic development. The creative industries, whether in the narrow DCMS sense or more generally, develop economic value out of the products of creativity. The narrow

definition talks about a sector. The UK government has now gone further: by talking of the 'creative economy' and the even broader 'knowledge economy', it is tilting the whole economic system towards creativity and knowledge. It is too early to feel easy about such grand manoeuvres. Some comments from the 'Staying Ahead' report are helpful here. 'The UK has the largest creative sector in the EU, and relative to GDP probably the largest in the world. ... They account for 7.3 per cent of the economy comparable in size to the financial and relative to services industry. They employ 1 million people themselves, while GDP probably another 800,000 work in creative occupations.'<sup>2</sup> However, '... more rigorous analysis is needed of what drives the creative industries and the mechanisms through which its creativity spills over into the wider economy and society.'<sup>3</sup>

## Overtaking the live

Back in 1946, the only form of recording moving images was the film. Television was just ten years old. Shellac 78 rpm records continued to be mass produced and the LP had yet to be launched. That year, cinema attendance reached above 1,500 million with many people going three or four times a week.<sup>4</sup> This puts in context the rise from 54 million in 1984 to 157 million in 2006.<sup>5</sup> The list of subsequent inventions for communicating the arts is vast. You know it very well. You also know about the rise and fall of arts broadcasting: both works of art conceived for broadcasting as well as broadcast media interest and presentation of extant arts work. You will have seen print and new media interest change. We now have a far richer range of publications and coverage. It is coloured, even spoilt by wider cultural preoccupations with celebrity and reality television. Nevertheless one cannot but celebrate the availability of the Saturday Guardian Books section, Observer Music Monthly and Sunday Times Culture section; specialist publications from arts fanzines to the London Review of Books; arts organisations' newsletters and reports; and the best of online magazines and blogs.

## These changes have four crucial consequences

The first is that the involvement in the non-live is outstripping the live more and more. Every day, experiencing a work of art becomes freer of constraints of time and place. This peeling off continues as ever better means of reproduction and transmission arrive. We can now view films on mobile phones and high definition television. Soon you will be able to store your entire collection of books as well as CDs on a handheld device. Evidence from the United States shows that, even in high art areas with their particular emphasis on the live, non-live involvement exceeds attendance at live events which in turn exceeds participation in the arts.<sup>6</sup> Corresponding statistics for the UK exist but are patchy. For example, the Arts in England survey 2001 revealed that 16% of the population had listened to opera via media (radio, television, CD, DVD and so on) in the previous four weeks compared with 6% who had attended an opera performance in the last twelve months.



The second consequence is that the majority of our arts experiences are now non-live. The centre of excellence is no longer the prestigious arts venue. It is the home with its television, arts collection stored in books, DVDs, CDs and computer hard drives, and reproductions of paintings on the wall. It is increasingly the mobile.

The third is that the direct links between artist and audience are multiplying. Novelists still receive letters via their publishers but many now have their own websites and these are becoming more interactive. Stephen King published his horror thriller 'The Plant' from his own website at \$1 an instalment. Granted, it failed but others from literary bloggers to full-blown novelists have made a success of the idea. In March 2008 Charles Leadbeater's book 'We-Think' was published. His website trailed it like this: 'More people than ever can participate in culture, contributing their ideas, views, information. The web allows them not just to publish but to share and connect, to collaborate and when the conditions are right, to create, together, at scale. That is why the web is a platform for mass creativity and innovation. You can download the first three chapters, comment on the book and link to the YouTube video.'<sup>7</sup> So far, the growth area has been writing. With increasing speeds and file sizes, nothing will stop this idea extending to sound and vision. This isn't just reproduction of the work of art. It offers the prospect of widely available, mass co-creation.

The final consequence is that, across the whole history of mankind, we now have the best access to the arts of the past. It is a staggering, disorganised collective memory and we have a complex relationship with it. Retro music and retro fashion is just one kind of response. Playing with time is another. We can be overawed or inspired by this past. A new kind of arts wiki will surely be created so that artists individually and collectively can draw on this massive resource. Can we look to the not-for-profit tradition of archiving and libraries to preserve this resource? We must surely hope so.

## The live is special

A chance meeting with the group Madness in Athens airport: they had performed in the city's arena the previous night and, apart from the rioting anarchists which is another story, it was a great success. Part of this success was financial. These artists understand the music business so much better than first time around in the 70s and 80s and are alive to the money-making wiles of publishers, promoters and everyone else between them and their audiences.

Live concerts have changed. For so long, the records made the money and the tours were loss-makers to promote the records. Now the tours make money. The advent of cavernous arenas has helped make this possible. In 1946 few UK concert halls or theatres held more than 2,000 people. Today the UK has many new and restored concert halls and theatres and there is a circuit of over ten arenas each able to hold over 10,000 people. The MEN arena in the centre of Manchester has a capacity of 21,000.

Venues for the arts have had to improve. Their unfriendly drabness would otherwise have driven audiences away. The live experience offered at clubs, arenas, multiplexes and Disneyworld was a challenge. The state knew that something had to be done and the Lottery provided the way forward.

Most successful has been the boost to visual arts presentation. The Tate team made the most of this opportunity, riding and even making the wave of the visual allure of today's consumerism, the renaissance of film, the Young British Artists and the vibrancy of contemporary architecture. Liverpool, London and St Ives are richer for it. The seeds of success are in creating special live experiences. Architecture plays a part but, as is sadly proved by the failing Baltic in Gateshead and the failed 'ugly, tacky design hell' that was the Centre for the Visual Arts in Cardiff<sup>8</sup>, achieving success is complex and not assured. Curatorial integrity and flair, market research, a passion to engage audiences, an astute business sense and imaginative use of ICT (information and communications technology): all these play a part.

The live has become a special experience. It has had to. The peeling off of live experience's elements and the freeing from the constraints of time and place has made this inevitable. It is the latest twist in centuries of change. The first perhaps was storytelling yielding to wax codices and much later the book; face-to-face conversation now sits alongside the letter, email, telephone conversation and voicemail; the visual arts competed with and then absorbed the lithograph, print, photograph, film and internet page; the performing arts event still competes with the recording, broadcast and internet stream. Residual elements make the live event, at its best, unique, intense and memorable: the unique moment in one's life and in a special place; sharing the experience with friends and with others we do not know but who have, like us, chosen to be there; and, until we have the telecommunication of smell and taste, the involvement of all five senses. A research field of live studies will have to be created.

## Arts for art's and all other sakes

Dave Pope, a member of Bradford's Youth Offending Team, is talking to camera on a Dance United DVD. He says 'I've seen offenders working on building sites, I've seen offenders joining in team sports, I've seen offenders doing behaviour courses, I've seen offenders doing anger management courses. Contemporary dance, much to my surprise, has turned out to be the one thing where I've seen people make the most progress over the shortest period of time.'

Dave Pope does not go on to say why contemporary dance has this particular power, but we might guess. Picture the process and how different it must be from a young offender's ordinary experience. The offenders have to work together and support each other physically and emotionally. Their creative ideas are needed and taken seriously. They select ideas according to criteria that they relate to such as beauty, daring, imagination and split-second timing. Dancing is more physically exhilarating the better you get at it. All this leads to a

performance in front of friends, family and strangers. The offenders are applauded and celebrated.

A public debate grinds on about the value of the arts to society. It has set up a misleading polarity between the arts' intrinsic and instrumental benefits. People are drawn to the arts because they

provide enriching experiences, meaning, pleasure, emotional stimulation and so on. These effects are called 'intrinsic'. 'Instrumental' benefits, on the other hand, are those which accrue when the arts are used as a means to achieve goals that have nothing to do with art per se – prisoners' reduced reoffending, economic regeneration and better GCSE results, for example.

Put more frequently and starkly, art for art's sake is challenged by the commandeering of the arts for economic and social engineering. The debate discolours decisions about arts funding and it serves citizens, artists and society badly. The problem is that we are seduced into a false dilemma: choose between the intrinsic and the instrumental and, ultimately, between the arts and society.

There is a way through. We must look at it from the personal and social angles. From the personal point of view, we listen to, watch and participate in art for all sorts of reasons – the intrinsic reasons. We describe them in non-artistic terms, talking about how we are affected. For arts consumers, there is no such thing as art for art's sake. Evidence of this was found during Arts Council England's 2006 arts debate, its first ever public inquiry: 'In particular, it may have been expected that a debate about the value of the arts would be dominated by arguments for and against funding the arts 'for art's sake' and funding the arts in order to deliver some tangible social and economic outcomes. ... in reality these simplistic divides are not recognised by, or relevant to, the majority of people.'<sup>9</sup>

The frustrating problem, though, is that guiding principles and a descriptive language are largely missing. Research in the United States which has been brought together in a report called 'Gifts of the Muse – reframing the debate about the benefits of the arts'<sup>10</sup> has made a vital contribution, introducing a spectrum of intrinsic benefits from the private to the public: from captivation, pleasure, expanded capacity for empathy and cognitive growth through to the creation of social bonds and the expression of communal meaning.<sup>11</sup> It concludes 'The intrinsic benefits we have set out here, taken together, form the unique contributions of the arts to individual lives and collective experience. Far from being isolated from ordinary experience, the arts, through their communicative power, enhance individual engagement with the world in ways that have both personal and public benefits.'<sup>12</sup>

For the artist it is different. The artist needs freedom to create and 'art for art's sake' claims that freedom. It reminds us that artists need space and time to make work. Artistic expression and creativity are precious. But the word has a downside. It can be precious in the other sense: artists making work which is created just with peers in mind, instead of

work which communicates to and resonates with wider society and is, at best, somehow universal.

At the level of society and politics, the intrinsic and the instrumental are far from incompatible. Intrinsic benefits arise directly from the artistic experience. Instrumental benefits are those desired by others who seek personal or social development in those experiencing the art – teachers, doctors, community workers, planners, prison governors and, at one remove, politicians and policy makers. The benefits arise indirectly from the experience. It's obvious: unless intrinsic benefits arise, instrumental benefits are unachievable. From an arts funding standpoint, the success of arts organisations and arts programmes in intrinsic terms is an essential precondition for instrumental success. Dave Pope of Bradford Youth Offending Team is right but only because he and the offenders he works with have experienced dance projects of a high artistic standard and the artists involved have been far from precious: they have the skills and experience to work effectively with a challenging group of young people.

Quite apart from the battle of ideas over this false polarity, empirical research on instrumental benefits suffers from a number of limitations. Many studies make links between arts involvement and its effects on people but evidence of a causal link is missing. Detail is missing too on how benefits are achieved, with exactly which arts experiences, under what circumstances and for whom they are most likely to happen. That the benefits can often be produced by other means, more effectively, is ignored.

If the earth moves for you, 'how far' is not the first question which pops into your head. But, if the power of works of art and artists is to be understood at the level of society and politics, intuitive resistance must give way to thorough research. The arts are too important for this research work not to be done and done well.

The 'Art for art's sake' clarion call has been immensely influential and some in the arts cling to it. The unfortunate consequence has been that, in resisting the use of the arts for social benefit, the arts have come to be seen precious and removed from life.

## Arts for new sakes

Intrinsic and instrumental benefits have an instructive post-1946 history. As state funding for the arts grew, artists and civil society grew frustrated at the narrowness of the funding vision. Surely there was more to the arts than providing access to art of quality patronised by the state?

In the 1950s, Arthur Koestler campaigned for the abolition of capital punishment and, when hanging ended in 1965, turned his attention to 'an imaginative and exciting way to stimulate as far as possible and in many cases as possible the mind and spirit of the prisoner'. Annual awards were created to celebrate 'creative work in the fields of literature,

the arts or sciences by those physically confined'. They continue today alongside over 100 other arts organisations working in prisons and young offender institutions.

The grassroots radicalism of the 1960s gave birth to the community arts movement which championed and demonstrated the special power of the arts in community development, particularly in working class areas.

Peter Senior's founding of the Manchester Hospitals Arts Project in 1974 was one of the first programmes designed to demonstrate the special role the arts could play in healthcare. By 2007 Arts Council England and the Department of Health could publish 'A prospectus for arts and health' based on 300 arts and health programmes.

The appointment in 1984 of Gillian Moore as education officer at the London Sinfonietta was the first of its kind by an orchestra. Now all professional orchestras do this work and have dedicated staff and, across the arts, Creative Partnerships runs a nationwide creative learning programme taking artists and other creative professionals into schools in disadvantaged areas.

Margaret Thatcher's focus on the market and economic development also provoked a response from the arts world. In 1988, the Policy Studies Institute published John Myerscough's highly influential research on the economic importance of the arts. Arts-led urban regeneration gained a powerful case study in Glasgow. The Burrell Collection opened in 1983. The same year Glasgow launched its Miles Better Campaign designed to shed the city's negative image as a dirty, dangerous place with razor gangs and football violence and instead to build a tourist industry and attract inward investment. 1985 saw the opening of The Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre and the Royal Concert Hall in 1990. Showcase events contributed too: the Glasgow Garden Festival of 1988 and European City of Culture in 1990.

In the late 1990s the intrinsic/instrumental schism began. By 2004, Tessa Jowell, then Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport, felt the need to say that 'Too often politicians have been forced to debate culture in terms only of its instrumental benefits to other agendas, education, the reduction of crime, improvements in wellbeing, explaining, or in some instances almost apologising for, our investment in culture only in terms of something else. In political and public discourse in this country we have avoided the more difficult approach of investigating, questioning and celebrating what culture actually does in and of itself.' It was politicians who forced artists and arts organisations to debate culture in this way! It was done to argue for greater state funding of the arts.

But we must be careful. Otherwise we will give further credibility to the false polarity. What went wrong was not fifty years of arts work in prisons, community development, healthcare, schools and regeneration. That demonstrated the arts' far-reaching ability to be a special part of social and economic life – making 'arts and culture part of our core script', to quote

Tony Blair's phrase. What went wrong was that the power of the arts was being constrained again, and this time in two ways. Firstly, politicians were only interested in a short list of non-arts outcomes. The list is in fact infinite. Secondly, crude, fussy and often irrelevant performance indicators were introduced. A bureaucracy of box-ticking and targets developed which sold the arts short by using dodgy methodologies and by disregarding unexpected outcomes.

The work to heal the schism is well under way. Underpinning political rhetoric now are studies such as Thomas Wolf's 'The Search for Shining Eyes – Audiences, Leadership and Change in the Symphony Orchestra Field' of 2006 and Alan S Brown & Jennifer L Novak's 'Assessing the intrinsic impacts of a live performance' of 2007. The latter introduces a helpful analysis of the live experience. It sees 'Readiness to receive' based on 'context' ('how much experience and knowledge the respondent has about the performance and the performers'), 'relevance' ('the respondent's comfort level with the performance experience – the extent to which they are in a familiar situation, socially or culturally') and 'anticipation' ('the respondent's psychological state immediately prior to the performance along continua from distracted to focused and from low expectations to high expectations'). It comments that 'Satisfaction measurement has become pervasive in almost every business sector, and many businesses have designed continuous feedback loops into their customer relationships. In the arts industry, however, most consumer research is limited to enumerating the demographic, behavioral and attitudinal characteristics of audiences, while very little effort has been made to gauge audience reactions to, and satisfaction with, the experience itself. ... A larger issue in some arts organizations is a lack of interest in impact assessment, or an outright hostility

towards holding art accountable to measurable outcomes.' The study goes on to give detailed statistical data on what are seen as six key intrinsic impacts, all carefully defined: captivation, intellectual stimulation, emotional resonance, spiritual value, aesthetic growth and social bonding.<sup>13</sup>

All this change reveals new possibilities. Some artists relish it. Others fear that it drags them into compromise and a loss of freedom. The debate has some distance to run and, while it does, we must never forget that artists bring works of art into existence, some special and precious. The effect of those works can be extraordinary.

The way artists make work can change. Arts organisations and the rest of the arts world can change. New contributions can be made by state agendas and state-funded services. What do not change are the personal outcomes because they are infinite, ranging from the light and everyday of being entertained to learning, becoming more confident and so on, right through to the ecstatic, life-transforming and transcendent. In 2007, the former Director of the Edinburgh International Festival, Brian McMaster, was commissioned by the DCMS to write a report on developing the arts and public support for them. He sets the scene by saying that the report 'is founded on the belief that excellent culture goes to the root of living and is therefore relevant to every single one of us.'<sup>14</sup> He might have added, citing the anthropologist, Clifford Geertz: 'Without men, no culture; but equally, and more significantly,

without culture, no men. We are, in sum, incomplete or unfinished animals who complete or finish ourselves through culture – and not through culture in general but through highly particular forms of it...’<sup>15</sup>

## Back to the artist and the state

We are back with the artist. The arts start with the artist. Everything flows from the artist’s creativity and making. In science, in a similar way, everything flows from the scientist and in their case the hypothesis and the testing of the hypothesis.

The artist has not fared well since 1946. Some 75% of British authors earn under £20,000, from all sources. 86.5% of authors have to supplement their income from writing with other jobs.<sup>16</sup> This data relates to the professional writer, and not those of the population who just think they have a novel in them (reportedly 87% in the United States). Actors’ weekly pay in subsidised repertory theatres is £350. This figure has been negotiated between the actors’ union Equity and the Theatre Managers’ Association for the year starting 31 March 2008. An Assistant Stage Manager gets less - £322.<sup>17</sup> Of course, some artists are fêted, in charge, rich and not in need of the state. In 2005, the Artistic Director of the state-funded Royal Opera House was revealed as the highest paid charity worker at £415,000.<sup>18</sup> What can be said about all artists over the last sixty years is that they have been inadequately understood and inconsistently consulted.

## Some early conclusions

Earlier in this chapter, two conclusions were presented: that the spectrum within the arts from slow burn to quick hit is real and useful, and that profound art can be found in any style in any artform. We can also say with some confidence that there has been enormous change since 1946 and that the arts, using a more generous and evidence-based definition of them, are more important and pervasive. We would be more confident if there were better research of what is really happening across the full range of the arts – ‘live studies’ for example.

State definitions are pathetically inadequate and self-referential. Too often the ‘arts’ are those artforms funded by Arts Councils and the relative importance of individual artforms is defined by the relative levels of expenditure and attention given to them.

If we are clear about the spectrum from slow burn to quick hit, do we need a canon now in our aestheticised nation? Wasn’t the Leavis and Keynes filtering project a symptom of post-war insecurity and part of 1940s and 1950s reconstruction?

What is quite apparent is that the state has a template of the arts which simply does not fit. Its ‘creative industries’ and ‘creative economy’ concepts overemphasise the arts’ economic dimension. Its use of the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental benefits is confusing. It cannot embrace all of dance and it has long dismissed much of what has been happening

in music. The transformation of the live and the relationship between the live and the non-live are insufficiently understood, as is artists' contribution to society.

This chapter ends with a suspicion, at least. It would be remarkable if, against the backdrop of such momentous change, state arts organisations created long ago were still relevant: the UK Film Council in 1933, the Arts Council of Great Britain in 1946, the Crafts Council in 1980 and the Arts and Humanities Research Board in 1998. They would have had to change radically to stay relevant – with new visions, new missions and new royal charters.



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## Chapter 2

# THE SWIRL OF NOW – WIDER FORCES IN SOCIETY WHICH TOUCH THE ARTS

## Farewell to old truths

This chapter surveys those wider changes in society with implications for the arts. So much has changed. The professional seems to have lost out to the individual consumer. The UK is super-diverse and is having great difficulty making sense of this. The commercial and voluntary sectors are converging, while the public sector is looking increasingly to the voluntary sector for the delivery of public services. Climate change could overtake all other endeavours. We live in a less trusting, more accountable, evidence-based society which has to fight harder to hold its competitive position in the world. Science may hold more of the answers than the arts. And still local government is in a mess.

## New settlements between citizen and expert

Powerful arbiters of taste like Leavis, Keynes and Pevsner are no more. Across doctors, lawyers, teachers, politicians and other professional groups, we see a general decline in their power and the rise of the individual consumer. The rapid growth of peer mentoring reflects this trend. It puts the professional in a support role and can exclude the professional altogether. You will find peer mentoring now between students, young people outside education, asylum seekers and refugees, prisoners, homeless people and social entrepreneurs.

A widespread fear haunts the professions: that they will see all their power drowned in a tide of consumer power and individualism. This is unfounded. The expert is needed. It is a matter of a new settlement between citizen and expert, and we are living through negotiations of new settlements across society.

The public, private and voluntary sectors focus more on the consumer and the citizen because of professionals' past, patronising assumptions of need, a loss of trust amongst citizens and because of advances in information and communications technology (ICT). An early sign was the foundation of the Consumers' Association in 1957 to provide independent, reliable advice on consumer goods.

Personalisation began as a consumer matter: the tailoring of consumer products based on personal details or requirements. The web helped this take off. Amazon is a familiar example, offering recommendations by combining your past choices with the buying

patterns of similar customers: 'you liked that, you will like this'. Now, it extends well beyond the web. Arts consumers want flexibility in their consumption. They like to choose what, when and how they consume. The rise of Tate and other gallery attendances relative to performing arts attendances reflects this.<sup>1</sup> You are not obliged to turn up at a particular time, as with a concert. You can explore the galleries in whatever sequence and at whatever pace you wish.

Customisation takes consumer choice a stage further. Here customers can, within limits, create and choose a product to certain specifications. A delicious example is Unto This Last, a furniture designer who works with customers to create bespoke pieces of furniture. As the website tells you, 'Our products are made on a computer-controlled machine on display at the back of the shop. The process we have developed allows us to manufacture your order to measure, within a week, at the price of mass production.' Some pieces are pre-assembled. Some are flatpack – and the new owner may still spend hours puzzling how to put it together.<sup>2</sup>

The Work Foundation's Staying Ahead report refers to a study which found that 'between the late 1970s and late 1990s, the number of customised consumer goods jumped from 5,000 to over 25,000.'<sup>3</sup> It goes on to quote Lawrence Lessig, the Stanford law professor noted for his understanding of the internet and his advocacy of reduced legal restrictions on copyright. Talking of children, he says they 'increasingly understand culture as something they make, or something they remake and remix and remake, something that they get and through the tools of this technology, recreate. Culture for them is not delivered in final form.'<sup>4</sup>

Today, personalisation has extended to services provided by the state: personalised healthcare, personalised learning and personalised social services. 'Joined up' public services are being 'joined up' to put the patient, student and citizen at the centre. Again, technology aids independent living and has hastened the change with, for example, telemonitoring for those with chronic disease, using body-worn sensors, and the move towards every school pupil having their own laptop.

The word 'personalisation' is used so often now that it is in danger of being devalued. Going back is not an option, though. Once participation has been invited, it is immensely difficult to take it away. We now live in a society which emphasises personal choice and requires service organisations of all kinds to permit, welcome and act upon user feedback. The focus has been turned around, putting the client at the centre. One starts with the client and sees the service from the point of view of the client's experience. As Atticus Finch says in 'To Kill a Mockingbird', 'You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view ... until you climb into his skin and walk around in it'.

In the commercial and voluntary sectors, marketing and public relations have grown into substantial disciplines precisely because they emphasise the design, production and

dissemination of products and services to meet target markets' needs and desires. Before even making a start on design, there must be a well researched understanding of needs and desires. This calls for a sophisticated understanding of citizens – as markets, clients, customers, supporters and stakeholders. J B Priestley astutely satirised this change of perspective from the professional's to the citizen's in 'The Image Men' of 1968. Ironically, the arts which offer the most personal of experiences have been behind the game.

## The crumbling settlement between citizen and democracy

More widely, frustration with the democratic process continues to grow. The silent majority used to be assumed to agree with the drift of general opinion. Now, stayaways from polling stations are often in the majority. Assuming that that implies tacit support would be foolish and dangerous. This ominous decline is exacerbated by the lack of safe spaces for public deliberation and for discussion of different perspectives and opinions, and the marginalisation of dissent. Citizens are demanding and have come to expect involvement in the design of services. We are on a path towards a different kind of democracy.

Some more enlightened politicians and professionals have recognised this. They have argued for greater public consultation, involvement and 'user-focused' services. The rest are not giving up power lightly. Their riposte has often been to use what some commentators have called the deficit model. It is the public's fault that it is not engaging with the democratic process, with science, the arts and other bodies of professional knowledge. When Tony Blair was Prime Minister, Rory Bremner quipped that Blair had decided that the electorate was not up to the job and he would be getting another. The deficit model echoes this. Before any effective dialogue of real substance can take place between the public and the professionals, the professionals expect the public to catch up and acquire basic understanding of the discipline.

Instead, citizens are biting back. Social network sites on the internet are platforms for citizens to be online reviewers and broadcasters. Once, you would have told a few friends about a bad experience as a customer. Now, as happened to BT, a company faces pyramid complaining. One customer posts a complaint on YouTube and it is viewed by 10,000 others who in turn post their video complaints. TripAdvisor.co.uk does the same for holidays, hotels, flights and attractions including arts venues. It now has over 17,000,000 reviews posted by customers and offers the chance to add photos and videos.

New settlements between professionals and citizens are inevitable.

## Multiculturalism, identity and Britishness

Parallel settlements are slowly and violently being negotiated between the individual and their identities on the one hand and national values and the state on the other. Forces pull in opposite directions. Language struggles to keep pace as it tries to make useful

distinctions while words' meanings slither around. Multiculturalism was good and now it is not. Integration is confused with assimilation. There is anxiety and mistrust.

What are the underlying forces? Personalisation places greater power in the individual's hands. We have been told to expect and now believe that public services should be joined-up and dancing the Dashing White Sargeant around us. We customise our purchases and so, more and more, we are what we buy. All this helps form our identity. But the interplay of personal choice and identity takes us much further, asserting or indulging personal choice more generally. We can pick and mix the groups we identify with: belonging to a local community or not bothering even to get to know our neighbours; emphasising our ethnicity to the point of proud exclusiveness or stressing other aspects or even wanting to suppress it and assimilate. We identify ourselves and with others who share our taste in music, how we dress, our sexuality, our religion and so on.

These identifiers tell what kind of person we are. We do this implicitly as we present ourselves to the world and get on with our lives, choosing what we wear, working, shopping, playing, praying and attending arts events. If only making this personal, everyday culture were so unproblematic. It sounds reassuringly liberal but it is naïve of course. We can also draw on these identifiers to comment on our place in society and make a case for it to be improved. We join special interest groups around a shared concern and campaign for change: all sorts from the Deaf Arts movement, to Somali refugees in Haringey, or parents of children with Epidermolysis Bullosa. So a communal culture is built on a particular shared aspect of personal identity. 'Culture' is the right word here because any special interest group will evolve its own bonds and mutual support, its own language and its own ways of doing things.

What if a person experiences prejudice or injustice, feels they are in a threatened minority, or is grossly abused? What if all attempts at speaking truth to power, to use the wonderful Quaker phrase, result in failure? Sometimes, a special interest group is not enough. The imbalance of power and sense of powerlessness tips over from the communal into the tribal. All aspects of identity save one are suppressed in order to put all effort behind the one that might bring about change. A 30-year old father, son of Pakistani immigrants, living in Leeds, with a business studies degree and working as a primary school teaching assistant and youth worker strips all this away from his identity to concentrate on his version of violent jihadist Muslim culture and detonate explosives near Edgware Road station at 09:17 on 7 July 2005.

The Carnegie UK Trust's current research programme on the future of civil society reveals growing social segregation.<sup>5</sup> Bonds within communities are weak, the bridges between diverse communities are inadequate, and communities' links into the formal power structures of the state and corporate sector are not strong. The challenge is compounded by a growth not only in the uptake of naturalisation and the consequent increase in the UK's super-diversity but also in the numbers of people who are either not eligible or not interested in taking up naturalisation.

The Carnegie project also highlights the lack of safe spaces for public deliberation: where citizens from different backgrounds with differing views can come together not just for tea and samozas and Imams playing cricket but for really understanding of each others' perspectives and negotiating a mutual understanding, respect and accommodation. Against this background of undernourished debate, tribal responses focussed around faith, ethnicity or the extreme poverty of asylum seekers are more likely. The state's engagement has been slow and heavy handed. The violence of the 2001 Northern city clashes and the 7/7 bombings provoked a response but it has been far too 'top down' and general. That includes Gordon Brown's January 2006 idea of finding aspects of Britishness to bind society together and Tony Blair's plan later in the year of 'championing the role that culture can play in our national identity'. In extremis, surveillance can help with outbreaks of tribal conflict but will do nothing to build bonds within communities, bridges between communities or links into the state and corporate world.

## Capitalism 2.0

Speaking at the 2008 World Economic Forum in Davos, Bill Gates said that capitalism only worked for those who could pay. Companies had to find out 'how the power of the marketplace can help the poor. ... We need a creative capitalism where business and non-governmental organisations work together to create a market system that eases the world's inequities'.<sup>6</sup> Henry Ford made a similar proposal in 1916 but was defeated in court by shareholders.

The opposite view has prevailed for a long time: that the only responsibility of business is to increase profits and this is endorsed by shareholders. Change is now irreversible for at least six reasons. Firstly, climate change has brought it home to much of the corporate sector that there are global issues which will only be solved through the public, commercial and NGO sectors working together. Secondly, companies' licence to operate and their reputation depend on high standards and they are being scrutinised ever more closely by the media and campaigns run by Greenpeace, Oxfam, the World Wildlife Fund and others. Thirdly, Bill Gates is just one of a host of global company chief executives who are committed to this wider perspective and are driving change within their companies, their supply chains and their customers. Fourthly, new machinery is being put in place: new language has had to be created – corporate citizenship, corporate responsibility and ESG (environment, social and governance) screening; tools for measuring and auditing environmental and social impact; carrots and sticks in the hands of governments, the United Nations and other international bodies; new financial products are being created – 11% of all United States assets under management (a total of \$25.1 trillion) now use socially responsible investment funds.<sup>7</sup> Fifthly, customers are demanding products that show a commitment to sustainability and public welfare – Fairtrade, for example. Finally, younger generation employees increasingly expect it of their employers.

While the corporate world is engaging more with social and environmental issues, the not-for-profit world is becoming more commercial. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations publish an annual survey, now called the Civil Society Almanac. The 2008 edition revealed that 'For the first time more than half of charities' income was earned. This highlights the increasing importance of entrepreneurship in driving the expansion of the sector.'<sup>8</sup>

Another sign is the successful campaign for 'full cost recovery'. Charities and other civil society organisations are increasingly contracted to run services once provided directly by national or local government or public bodies such as the NHS. These include caring for older people, drug rehabilitation and running playgroups. In the early days, civil society organisations were so used to under-funding, and having to fundraise to fill the gap, that they undercharged. Between 2003 and 2005, over 500 were forced to close down services due to financial insecurities caused by this under-funding.<sup>9</sup> 'Full cost recovery' was created to stop the public sector's interest ruining the sector. The need to calculate the full cost and charge a realistic fee for a contract is now well understood – although not in the arts.

As the boundaries continue to blur between the private sector and the charitable sector, entrepreneurial activity will become more important to survive increasing competition. To give one example, Oxfam now has more shops on the high street than anyone else.

Evidence is proliferating to reinforce the NCVO's view of a convergence of the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors: the rise of social enterprises championed by the Social Enterprise Coalition; a new legal entity called a community interest company for people who want to conduct a business or other activity for community benefit, and not purely for private advantage; the advent of Charity Bank, Triodos Bank, Venturesome and Futurebuilders to offer financial support other than grants to civil society organisations; plans for the creation of a Social Investment Bank using unclaimed assets which had been sitting in banks for at least 15 years; the exchange of concepts such as 'taking to scale' and 'triple bottom line' and 'joint ventures' across the divide between the commercial and civil society organisations. A stirring example is Nobel laureate Muhammed Yunus's marriage of Danone and his Grameen Bank – Yunus talks about this on YouTube.<sup>10</sup>

These changes are exciting but must be treated with care. Many important activities needed by society – work with the most marginalised and poorest in society, for example – will never function commercially within Capitalism 2.0. The dispossessed lack the resources to be sufficiently economic active to be of interest to even the most enlightened and socially responsible enterprise.

Capitalism 2.0 is a mature, responsible development but its concerns remain foremost about economic value. Economic value is different from social and cultural value and, as Capitalism 2.0 continues to evolve, the temptation to conflate must be rigorously resisted. Michael Edwards in his 2008 polemic 'Just another emperor: the myths and realities of

philanthrocapitalism' gives a forceful reminder. 'The two worlds are often completely different'. Business principles can lead to civil society groups being too focused on meeting short-term targets. Also, 'seeing business as a repository of good practice and accountability is a strange thing, given the current market turmoil, which is the result of highly unaccountable behaviour by some companies'.<sup>11</sup>

What does seem likely, as the Performing Arts in a New Era report comments, is that 'Instead of a sharp demarcation between a nonprofit sector producing the live high arts and a for-profit sector producing mass entertainment, major divisions in the future will be along the lines of big versus small arts organizations, or firms that cater to broad versus niche markets.'<sup>12</sup>

## Science and the ghost of C P Snow

In June 2007 David Lammy, the then Minister for Culture, gave a speech at the Natural History Museum. In it he said: 'culture and science are often seen as polar opposites: one creative, spontaneous and expressive; the other rational, dispassionate and evidence-based. ... science is a tremendously important part of our cultural heritage and a vital part of our shared future – and something that doesn't receive as much public attention as it should. Across the range of challenges that we face as both a country and as an international community, the role and the importance of science is fundamental.'<sup>13</sup> Lammy spoke as the son of a taxidermist (a member of a profession where science meets art) and as an inheritor of C P Snow's famous two cultures, trying to bridge the divide. Snow called his 1959 lecture 'The Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution'. Literary intellectuals were 'natural Luddites' while scientists had 'the future in their bones'. F R Leavis wrote a fierce rebuttal and the waves of attack have continued. Some in the arts camp have accused science of destroying the arts: the dramatic advances and further potential of science reduce the arts to contemporary art market excess, other glossy enhancements of material wealth and a reservoir of Disney and other diversions. The arts are no longer an exploration of our humanity. We are, as T S Eliot put it in his 'Four Quartets', 'distracted from distraction by distraction.'

What a gloomy and limited perspective! Entertainment and diversion have always been facets of the arts. Today it is a global business. However, to limit the arts to entertainment is blinkered and denies the arts' permanent and profound relevance. More illuminating are the parallels rather than the polarity between science and the arts.

Let us kick off with something fundamental: the scientific method. A scientist observes, asks questions, formulates a hypothesis, derives predictions, tests the predictions by designing and conducting tests, analyses the results, and evaluates the outcome. The predictions are either proved correct in which case a piece of scientific knowledge has been reconfirmed or discovered, or they are proved incorrect, the hypothesis fails and the scientist returns to observation and questioning. Scientific understanding holds no permanent truths. The scientific method can never absolutely verify; it can only falsify. Nevertheless, on the



foundation of proven predictions, today's wealth of scientific knowledge, products and services has been created and distributed: arts and entertainment in the home on television and radio, access to light and heat at the flick of a switch, life-saving medicine based on new understanding of genes, and computers.

A corresponding artistic method has never been laid out and universally accepted. Would it be so different? Artists observe the world and ask questions too, and they create something. After that, though, the scientist and the artist go in diametrically opposite directions. In science the result is a generalised perspective on the world which can be checked by anyone. In the arts the result is a unique vision. At the next stage the two methods reunite. The sum of scientific knowledge corresponds to the sum of artistic creation. Products and services flow from both – inventions, works of art, gadgets, Matisse poster reproductions, online banking and RnB ringtones. And they stay together when science and the arts walk out into the public arena: public access and engagement, government policy and funding, and ethics.

How the arts work and fare in the public arena will be discussed later. For now, it is the intriguing resonances between the arts and science and science's lessons which deserve attention.

The 1985 Bodmer Report on 'Public Understanding of Science' marked the birth of the public engagement movement in the UK. Then the deficit model prevailed: if only the public had science explained to them, they would surely support its use. This simply didn't work. The model was replaced by two-way communication. The science community took its responsibility seriously. It wanted to understand public attitudes and realised that it had to engage people in dialogue. This did not mean that scientists were to be formally directed by public opinion. Rather the scientific community was open to a discussion of values and purposes throughout the process of research and development.

Over twenty years of new ideas, experiments and innovation have generated imaginative approaches to public engagement. The Science Museum communicates a passion for public engagement both at the physical museum in South Kensington and online. Science books such as Bill Bryson's 'A Short History of Nearly Everything' and 'Fermat's Last Theorem' by Simon Singh communicate difficult scientific concepts yet top bestseller lists. The new phenomenon of the science festival has spread across the country and examples now flourish in Cambridge, Cheltenham, Edinburgh and Newcastle. Their flair helps immerse a growing public in science and the issues surrounding it. Launched in January 2008, the Beacons for Public Engagement Initiative is a network of university-based centres helping to support, recognise, reward and build capacity for public engagement work. Longer established is the Science Media Centre which promotes the voices, stories and views of the scientific community to the national news media when science is in the headlines. It helps the news media when it needs an interview with a scientist, has a question about a major science story or needs a background briefing on a scientific topic. It means more informed journalists and better journalism.

We surely need an arts media centre.

Taking ideas to market is another kind of public engagement. In science, the Technology Strategy Board leads on this. The Board is charged with ensuring the UK is a global leader in the development of new technologies to drive economic growth. Scientific research leads to products and services which could transform our lives, our society and the world: drinkable vaccines to replace painful needles, car bodies which biodegrade at the end of their lives, anti-cancer agents drawn from the sea and pacemakers with batteries powered by walking. Academic partners bring forward innovations with market potential and business partners with their understanding of markets can judge that potential. The Technology Strategy Board has over £200 million to make a success of this. It looks across all sectors of the economy to identify priority areas for investment and what stands in the way of the public benefiting from new technologies. A feedback loop exists too. The Board runs Innovation Platforms which bring business and the government closer together to generate innovative solutions to major challenges. 24 sector-specific Knowledge Transfer Networks covering everything from food processing to cyber security help business encourage new technologies and the sharing of information. One for the creative industries was added in May 2008.

With public engagement comes public accountability. Specific public concerns will always crop up. A list for today would include GM foods, nanotechnology and stem cell research. The science community has responded. Public accountability is fed in from the very start of research. Sir David King, when Government Chief Scientific Adviser, initiated the Universal Ethical Code for Scientists: seven principles aimed at building trust between scientists and society. It is a scientist's equivalent of the Hippocratic oath and helps separate researchers from charlatans.

The research councils are changing too. Two in particular, the Engineering & Physical Sciences and Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Councils, are working hard to inject ethical and societal issues at every point where they might deserve to have an influence.

Are all these changes to public engagement and public accountability succeeding? A firm answer will have to wait but the energy and rigour behind this work is now being extended to techniques and programmes of evaluation. The Wellcome Trust in particular is playing a leading role.

So, what of C P Snow's two cultures now? Collaborations between science and the arts abound. In fact, it is more basic than that. The arts have benefited greatly from advances in science. Sound technology has revolutionised music. Neuroscience and psychology have revealed detail of our responses to works of art. Traffic in the opposite direction includes the growth of music, art, drama and other arts therapies which have given us a scientific basis for using the arts in clinical medicine.

## Innovation and the evidence society

Early in 2008 the Secretary of State for Innovation, Universities and Skills, John Denham, gave a speech in which he pointed to a challenge 'to ensure that we make the most of the talents of all our people so that Britain can compete in this globalised world of the future. Such a fast pace has the potential to have the harshest impact on those least well-equipped to respond. We must ensure that everyone is able to share in the increasing prosperity and the opportunities that scientific progress brings, and that nobody gets left behind.'<sup>14</sup>

Will the arts be part of this process or will they be seen as a drain of public finances with little to offer and left behind? Back in 1963, when Harold Wilson spoke of the 'white heat' of a scientific and technological revolution, he was not thinking of the arts. Until May 2008, not one of the then 22 Knowledge Transfer Networks addressed the arts. The nearest were electronics and the modern built environment.

The arts suffer from a crucial weakness in this drive for innovation and economic growth. Artists and arts organisation chief executives can use all arts of communication to claim and keep a place at the top table. However, until they provide evidence that the arts deserve a place, they and their rhetorical blagging will be rebuffed. We live in an evidence-based society. An expression of belief in the power of the arts is simply not enough.

What is so saddening is that this power of the arts is demonstrable and the evidence could have been assembled years ago. Collecting robust evidence should have become as habitual as writing Arts Council applications and standard Regularly Funded Organisation annual returns. Instead we still rely far too much on arts leaders' stirring speeches and thank you letters from grateful beneficiaries.

Arts organisations and their funders make matters worse by having a crude and ultimately debilitating understanding of evidence. This is not about externally imposed targets which are either met or not with no nuance in between. Nor is it about micro-management. Evidence in the arts must be an intelligent mix of the qualitative, quantitative and anecdotal. Apart from a handful of fine exceptions such as the National Theatre, the level of understanding let alone gathering of rich evidence is depressingly poor.

The arts world has to change and change fast. To catch up, it will also have to become more savvy. In other parts of civil society and in science and other disciplines, the makers of the case have learnt two crucial lessons. Firstly, they need an intelligent approach to what evidence to gather. The arts world must be capable of answering the question 'What hypotheses are we testing?' Is it the relationship between the arts, innovation and economic growth? Or is it the ability of the arts to forge greater understanding of the self and others? The answer is likely to be a mix of hypotheses sensitive to different contexts. It's no good trying to produce evidence retrospectively to engage with the latest social or economic policy agenda. From the start, arts organisations and funders need to be clearer and more

confident about the value they seek to create, and then evaluate rigorously and passionately.

The second lesson is that producing the evidence is not enough. Once evidence has been gathered, they must make doubly sure that it can stand up to intelligent scrutiny from peer reviewers and antagonistic challengers. They must move on to advocacy and make sure that the evidence is used, put in front of ministers, taken up by the media, inserted into policy-making and so pushed up the public agenda. As John Maynard Keynes knew, this is essential work: 'There is nothing a government hates more than to be well-informed; for it makes the process of arriving at decisions much more complicated and difficult.'

The arts have an advantage which must be exploited: their powers of communication and persuasion are generally stronger than those of scientists, business people and civil society.

## The mess of local government

In 1979 the Gulbenkian Foundation published a report by Lord Redcliffe-Maud called 'Support for the Arts in England and Wales'. With apologies to Scotland and Northern Ireland, this was a report which could have lifted the arts on to a level comparable with education, libraries and social services. Redcliffe-Maud proposed a simple change to achieve this. The arts should become a service that every local authority had to provide. In bureaucracy speak, this would elevate culture from a non-statutory function to a statutory one.

This has never happened. Instead, local government has lurched from one crisis of legitimacy to the next. Its heavy dependence on central government for resources has made it both a poodle of central government policy and a victim of central government buck-passing. On the small matter of the arts (2004 research revealed arts expenditure to be less than 0.4% of total local government expenditure)<sup>15</sup>, local government has had to be convinced again and again about the value of the arts. Without sturdy evidence presented in a language that local government understands, this has been a struggle. The Redcliffe-Maud report pushed the arts up local authorities' agendas. The 1980s were a good time for local authority attention, boosted by the arts world's engagement with education, community development and regeneration.

Some battles have certainly been won and this continues. Take the example of Local Strategic Partnerships. They are non-statutory, multi-agency partnerships which bring together public, private and civil society organisations and produce plans called Local Area Agreements. They have a welter of government-set national indicators (NIs) to choose from and must select up to 35 from the long list of 198. For 2008, over 25% of them have chosen NI11 'Engagement in the arts' as one of their indicators. For a non-statutory function, this isn't at all bad. However, wading through the detail, one is left wondering whether the arts

have been sucked down into a bureaucratic bog rather than elevated into New Labour's core script.

Scanning the horizon of local government in the UK today, the war to achieve statutory status for the arts is being lost. Only in Wales is there the faintest of hopes. The post-2007 coalition Welsh Assembly Government has pledged to make arts and culture a statutory responsibility for local government.

## More early conclusions

There is nevertheless reason to strike several notes of optimism. Anxiety is a natural response to complex change and the arts world's current anxiety is palpable. This chapter's survey shows where the problems are, where energy can be drawn from and where new or stronger alliances can be made. There is no doubt: the expert artist has a unique and important role to play in so many facets of society. This survey also suggests several practical steps forward: closer engagement with citizens and the rest of society; closer engagement with Capitalism 2.0, greater entrepreneurialism and exploiting the blurring between the voluntary and commercial sectors; engaging more fully with the UK's diversity and contributing as artists to concerns about multiculturalism and Britishness; opening up spaces for safe public deliberation; drawing inspiration from the world of science; an improved evidence base for the arts which can then be built into strong advocacy in the public arena; and it would even be worth another go at winning statutory function status for the arts in local government.

Meanwhile, the suspicion at the end of the first chapter grows stronger. It would be very remarkable if, against the backdrop of such change not only within the arts but also outside the arts, state arts organisations created long ago and largely unchanged were still relevant.

## NOTES

1. The Target Group Index survey estimates that attendance at galleries increased by 43% between 1994/95 and 2005/06 (from 21% to 30% of the population). Attendance at plays over the same period grew by 24% (this was from a higher 1994/95 base of 25% of the population). See [www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/projects/phpCUMmH.doc](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/documents/projects/phpCUMmH.doc).
2. [www.untothelast.co.uk](http://www.untothelast.co.uk)
3. Work Foundation, Staying ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries, DCMS 2007, p73
4. Ibid. p75
5. Inquiry into the future of civil society in the UK and Ireland, [democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil\\_society](http://democracy.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/civil_society), consulted June 2008
6. [www.microsoft.com/Presspass/exec/billg/speeches/2008/01-24WEFDavos.msp](http://www.microsoft.com/Presspass/exec/billg/speeches/2008/01-24WEFDavos.msp), consulted June 2008 \_
7. See Social Investment Forum [www.socialinvest.org/news/releases/pressrelease.cfm?id=108](http://www.socialinvest.org/news/releases/pressrelease.cfm?id=108), consulted June 2008
8. Civil Society Almanac executive summary, NCVO 2008 p6
9. See the Full Cost Recovery part of the FAQ section of the ACEVO website [www.acevo.org.uk](http://www.acevo.org.uk) consulted June 2008
10. See [www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_xlYHm\\_BEs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_xlYHm_BEs).
11. Michael Edwards, 'Just another emperor: the myths and realities of philanthrocapitalism', Demos and the Young Foundation, 2008
12. Kevin F. McCarthy, Arthur Brooks, Julia Lowell & Laura Zakaras, Performing Arts in a New Era, RAND 2001 pxxii
13. [www.culture.gov.uk/reference\\_library/minister\\_speeches/2043.aspx](http://www.culture.gov.uk/reference_library/minister_speeches/2043.aspx), consulted June 2008 \_
14. John Denham speech to the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce on 'Science and Society', 16 January 2008 p4
15. [www.cipfa.org.uk/publicfinance/newsdigest\\_details.cfm?News\\_id=20024](http://www.cipfa.org.uk/publicfinance/newsdigest_details.cfm?News_id=20024) for local authority expenditure, consulted May 2008

## Chapter 3

# POOH-STICKS OVER RAPIDS – SIGNS OF CHANGE INSIDE THE ARTS

## Poohsticks and rapids

Turbulence assails the arts world. Large organisations are better able to weather this but most artists are sole traders and most arts organisations have turnovers of less than £1 million. So the image of Christopher Robin dropping a stick into seething white water seems rather fitting.

The way arts organisations tend to lag behind innovation elsewhere in civil society and the economy, and even within government, makes the challenge greater. Futurologists often quote a phrase attributed to the science fiction writer, William Gibson: ‘The future is already here; it’s just not evenly distributed’.<sup>1</sup> This resonates with the arts. William Gibson might say that the arts are surrounded by their own future. The previous chapter explored several powerful forces at work outside the arts. These currents swirl around and will surely pick up the arts at some point. We do not know which parts of the arts scene, when and how, but change is so close that it seems inevitable.

What follows is a sequence of short tales of arts activities which are defying or denying the turbulence. Some are engaging with the future out there and some are making a future for themselves from within. For all of them, success has not been straightforward and at any moment they could be sucked under, perhaps bobbing to the surface some distance downstream or quite possibly never seen again.

The stories connect to the Up-river artistic changes of Chapter 1 and the broader Swirl-of-now forces of Chapter 2. Those chapters paint the context and lay out the challenges. What we are looking for in artists and arts organisations are the right skills for the future – or the lack of them – and what in the river might set an arts activity speeding across the water or might drag it to the bottom. Some of these skills will be widely applicable and they include what Thomas Homer Dixon calls the prospective mind – proactive, anticipatory, comfortable with change, and not surprised by surprise. But, as we shall see, these general skills will not be enough.

## Dance United and the unexpected power of dance

We have already met Dave Pope of Bradford Youth Offending Team and his surprise at the power of contemporary dance. Bradford YOT tells the story of Duncan (not his real name). Three years ago Duncan was a heavy drug user always in trouble. He almost never left the house, had long, greasy hair, never made eye contact and barely spoke. When Dance United first met Duncan he was tagged and moody. With Dance United he has had to learn self-control, patience and understanding, and he has achieved all this not through talking about it but by actively applying himself to the discipline of dance.

Dance United actively sets out to surprise and convince, and has long-term partnerships with the country's Dave Popes. It works with young people like Duncan on Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programmes. These are community sentences for persistent offenders between 15 and 18 years old who would otherwise serve a custodial sentence. These young people are given a chance to train in contemporary dance and to experience the special thrill of performing in public, with the aim of having a dramatic effect on their approach to life.

Dance United's flagship programme is 'The Academy'. Based in Bradford at the organisation's United Studios, it is a rolling intensive 12-week accredited programme for young offenders and those at risk. It also trains the teachers needed for such a programme: high calibre dance artists and youth justice professionals.

Here is Tara Herbert, Dance United's Artistic Director: 'Invariably, invited audiences have been unable to decide who are the dancers and who are the prisoners. Dance is an art form that operates largely on a non-spoken level. It's also a discipline that demands teamwork, technical ability, problem solving, reflection, creativity, emotional experience, trust and even kindness. ... We've found this to be a particularly powerful tool in our criminal justice work where so much remedial activity is normally undertaken at the conscious, spoken level. ... [The Academy course] extends beyond conventional dance training to encompass a range of dance-related subjects including nutrition for dancers, drumming, cooking, dance photography, capoeira, choreography and, of course, dance technique. This training programme has been validated by Trinity College. ... Our pressing priority is to create a large enough pool of strong dance artists to deliver and roll out the work. ... But this may not be as straightforward as it sounds. When we held the initial interviews we found that, although there were some very good teachers, there was a general lack of care for individuals.'

For the Home Office and the youth justice system, stories are not enough. Hard evidence is needed to argue for resources and prevail over scepticism and challenges. So Dance United commissions thorough evaluation of its programmes using criteria and formats which the youth justice system is familiar with. This generates the kind of evidence which can be used to advocate the transformative power of dance and hence argue for further



resources to achieve wider impact across the dance and youth justice worlds. The stories are still relevant because they bring the evidence to life. Dance United is fortunate in having a Chief Executive who was an independent television producer. People do not have to see a live event to become acquainted with Dance United as they can view several excellent documentaries on DVD.

Dance United is proving remarkably adept at ensuring that this work is sustainable in youth justice settings. So often arts programmes in non-arts settings fail to take root. While sometimes this is the fault of the arts organisation, it is a sad truth that the criminal justice system is unstable – some say it is in crisis. The National Offender Management Service, the result of a merger of the prison and probation services, has been an ambitious but failed attempt to cut reoffending rates by providing ‘end-to-end offender management’ for the 300,000 people sentenced each year to probation or prison.

Dance United rides all of this, working carefully with Youth Offender Institutions, the probation service and other relevant providers. It is moving away from talk of subsidy and the image of arts organisation as supplicant. Full cost recovery is understood and achieved. But it goes even further. Dance United has decided to adopt the social franchising model. Instead of rolling itself out nationally and just getting bigger and bigger, it will help independent franchises into existence. Like commercial franchises, the central operation will have responsibility for training and quality. More than the commercial model, it will develop franchises which are highly sensitive to each local context.

Dance United will fly across the water. It embraces all dance forms and understands what the best of each can contribute. It challenges the old assumption that profound art needs an immobile body. It offers new ways for artists to relate directly to citizens, and it challenges artists to rethink their place in society and their role as artistic experts: they can make contributions well beyond the dance studio and venue. It understands and practises the marriage of dance’s intrinsic and instrumental benefits, proving that young people like Duncan can experience the intrinsic wonders of dance and use dance to turn their lives around. It wants the young people to contribute fully to creating dance works – this runs ahead of personalisation and customisation to co-creation with professional artists. It reduces exclusion and segregation and creates safe spaces for personal journeys and working with others. By using an approach which joins full cost recovery to social franchising, Dance United can respond and grow as demand grows. Lastly, its innovations are independently evaluated, building up a respected body of evidence.

## Love of the live and the London Sinfonietta

In the 1960s, London’s concert life was invigorated by a new breed of specialist contemporary and early music ensembles. They had a fresh approach, they explored unfamiliar repertoires and they drew in curious, adventurous audiences.

The London Sinfonietta was one of these. Founded in 1968, it championed modernist concert music. Unlike the Scratch Orchestra (founded one year later), it was neither socially radical nor musically experimental. Nor was it the vehicle for a particular composer, like the Philip Glass Ensemble or Michael Nyman Band. Instead, the Sinfonietta concentrated on establishing and presenting the best of modernist British and later international repertoire. It did not question the concert as a format but over the years has injected new ideas into how to make the live event special: programme structure, use of lighting, platform choreography and dress code. Similar ensembles now exist around the world including the Schoenberg Ensemble in Holland, Klangforum in Austria, Ensemble Modern in Germany and BIT 20 in Norway. While the pile of defunct British contemporary music ensembles is high, the Sinfonietta is a survivor.

How has the Sinfonietta done this? By throwing itself into today's broad yet fast musical flow. The modernist repertoire has certainly been maintained but how programmes are put together has changed. A surprise to many has been the particular success scored with single composer concerts focusing on fiercely modernist composers such as Nono, Stockhausen and Xenakis. Alongside this, the Sinfonietta has connected with wider contemporary culture. Invitations to take part in the South Bank Centre's 'Ether' art and technology festival led to collaborating with Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood. A partnership with the electronica dance label, Warp Records, created 'Warp Works/20th-Century Masters' concerts. Capacity Royal Festival Hall audiences of over 2,500 listened to Ligeti's Chamber Concerto and works by 20<sup>th</sup> century innovators, Nancarrow and Ives, interspersed with Warp musicians Aphex Twin, Mira Calix and Squarepusher. Musical logic as well as audience development logic has driven this. Many more adventurous musicians working in popular genres have been inspired by the soundworlds created by the most avant garde composers. Beyond music altogether, the Sinfonietta has created and hosted collaborations with architecture (Daniel Libeskind), dance (Akram Khan), film (Peter Greenaway), literature (Hanif Kureishi) and sculpture (Anish Kapoor).

One reason for success is a passionate commitment to quality and adventure. Sinfonietta repertoire is usually complex. It is profound and often requires a slow burn before the music's treasures are revealed. An underlying belief is that artworks offering the least resistance prove the least satisfying.

At the artistic heart of any ensemble are the players and artistic director. Here the two most radical signs of change are to be found. The first is that the Sinfonietta's principal players now include two sound technology experts: virtuosi contributing to the ensemble's high performance standards and scientists with a sophisticated understanding of technology. The impetus for this first came from composers. Stockhausen experimented with music technology in the 1950s. The BBC had its Radiophonic Workshop that created the Dr Who signature tune. Boulez founded IRCAM in Paris in the 1970s to bring composers and computer scientists together. Creative musicians across all genres are fascinated by the potential for creating and manipulating new sounds. This connects the arts and science and it frees the composer, if they wish, from any reliance on live musicians.

The second is that the artistic direction and decision-making, for so long an experts-only affair, is being opened up to audiences and communities. The best example is 'Connectors', a group of recent graduates brought together following the success of the ensemble's concerts with Warp Records in 2003 and 2004. Introduced to the music of selected concerts, the group helped design, write and distribute publicity in order to reach their friends and peers. This led the organisation to change the way it worked on marketing, concert planning and presentation.

The next generation of composers have been nurtured with schemes called 'Blue Touch Paper' and 'State of the Nation', and they have had the chance to scan these broader horizons of contemporary culture and technology. Radiohead's Jonny Greenwood was stimulated to the point of joining the 'Blue Touch Paper' scheme.

Where the Sinfonietta has made surprisingly little progress is in distribution. The key piece in its first programme in 1968 was John Tavener's multi-media work, 'The Whale'. At John Lennon's prompting, it was put out on the Beatles' Apple label in 1970. Today, like other orchestras, the ensemble has an interactive website and its own record label. But live performance still absorbs over 95% of the annual budget. Broadcasts on UK radio are rare and on television non-existent. So audiences who cannot get to live performances have little chance to experience and get to know the ensemble. Nor is there much scope on the website to reflect on and debate performances, recordings, education and community projects, emerging composers and wider developments in contemporary culture. Comparison with web forums for football is disappointing, even depressing.

Survival has greatly depended on Arts Council support – about a third of the budget each year. One might ask whether the Sinfonietta meets one of the Arts Council's main priorities: for the arts to 'reflect the full range and diversity of contemporary society'.<sup>2</sup> Somehow, the Sinfonietta, like opera and ballet companies and other 'high art' institutions, has not only survived but received ever greater investment. As a result, no new business model for Capitalism 2.0 has had to be devised. As Creative Britain mentions, 'EMI and the Sinfonietta still have their differences. Many creative businesses would never dream of seeking subsidy; many theatres, opera companies and orchestras depend on it.'<sup>3</sup>

The Sinfonietta is artistically buoyant and has engaged intelligently with the last sixty years' artform flux. It understands the musical slow burn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's and today's composers. It has, in recent years, branched out from the 'high art' world, programming serious popular music and connecting with other artforms. It has been a leader in offering chances to participate and not just listen to extraordinary soundworlds, especially for young people. It has begun a move from monopolising programming decisions to involving informed audiences who, when it comes to electronica, sometimes know more than the Sinfonietta itself. It has a long, committed record of doing artistic R&D even though current resources are modest. In all this, the orchestra has remained ahead of the typical symphony orchestra.

Where it is like the symphony orchestra is in its approach to the live experience. This remains central to what the Sinfonietta offers and it has adapted to keep the live special. But it has not kept up as the non-live has outstripped the live in everyone's engagement with music. Nor has it kept pace as direct links between artist and audience have proliferated. That said, it is at an interesting stage with its participation work. A move to King's Place close to King's Cross station, a wonderful new centre and the orchestra's first true home, means that the Sinfonietta will be contributing to schools programmes and community development in that area. It will need to develop services in close partnership with local schools, communities and government. It could have an important role to play in tackling exclusion and increasing community cohesion. It will certainly need to build up an evidence base of what works, how and for what investment.

The orchestra remains vulnerable economically. It relies heavily on one source, Arts Council England. It lacks non-live products to sell. It has yet to realise fully the economic potential of creativity and culture.

## The problems and disappointment of multicultural arts

A debate about inequalities and community cohesion is boiling in civil society and government. Should funders focus on supporting disadvantaged geographical, religious or ethnic communities – what is called 'single group funding' – or should they face up to society's growing fragmentation and concentrate on funding bridge building within and across communities and at the regional and national levels? In tabloid terms, the question is this. Should the focus be on multiculturalism (what sets us apart) or integration (what unites us)? Of course, the answer is both/and and not either/or but resources are finite and some choices cannot be ducked. Liberal multiculturalism is seen as having failed by accentuating difference and not drawing out, underlining and celebrating the nation's common culture (and, anyway, that is a slippery, changing thing). Funders apart, change is already happening in real communities across the country. Britain has become so diverse that 'single group funding' for every group is impossible. To pick the super-diverse example of Birmingham, the idea of a community centre for each of the 150 ethnic groups in Birmingham is simply impossible. Ethnic groups, religious groups and different cultures working together is the only way forward.

As the following three vignettes show, the multicultural arts movement has been caught up in these questions and problems.

The NIA Cultural Centre was a flagship project of the Arts Council in the North West. It was launched in 1990 with the main aim of 'advancing the education of the public in the appreciation and understanding of the arts of Africa and the Caribbean'. It would do this by establishing a 'cultural centre' in Hulme close to Manchester City Centre. The centre duly opened but it was wound up in 2002.<sup>4</sup>

In its own words, The Drum is 'the national centre for Black British arts and culture' and 'is dedicated to developing and promoting contemporary art and culture of British African, Asian and Caribbean communities.' Its 2007 annual report reveals a small organisation having to borrow against its building (largely paid for by the Lottery), whose commercial activities were trading at a loss and which, across the whole year, sold tickets worth £87,816 (the equivalent of a capacity audience for one average Prom). It has made an overall loss in five out of the last seven years.<sup>5</sup>

The Rich Mix is an arts centre in London's East End. This vast former clothes factory now houses a three-screen cinema, exhibition and event spaces, café and a broadcasting centre for BBC London. The opening of recording and music training studios, a 200-seater performance venue, and education and workspaces are promised soon. Rich Mix's objects are cultural and social: 'a) to advance the education of the public in the history of cultural diversity of migrant communities and their contributions to economic and cultural life particularly by establishing the Rich Mix centre as a home for exhibitions and by collecting preserving and exhibiting items of educational value; b) to advance education of the public in art and culture of all types; c) to work towards the elimination of racial discrimination and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups particularly by promoting events and activities to foster intercultural understanding, inclusiveness and tolerance and to promote the value of cultural activity.' Lord Alli and Oona King are on the board of trustees. On the Rich Mix website, the former Minister of Culture, David Lammy, endorses the centre as 'One of the most exciting projects I've ever come across.'<sup>6</sup> The minutes of the Arts Council England Council meeting held on 30 January 2007 devote a whole section to Rich Mix. It is acknowledged that 'the route to securing the future of this vital organisation was as yet not 100 per cent clear.' A cashflow crisis seemed to be looming because the Arts Council concluded by agreeing cashflow support of £150,000.<sup>7</sup> The building's launch was delayed many times. The doors finally opened in 2006 but, by the end of 2007, refurbishment was required.

These are three of the country's most important multicultural arts centres for experiencing and participating in live culture. Their brief stories are told not to point at any possible operational failure but to suggest that something more fundamental must be wrong. The Drum is right to develop and promote contemporary art and culture of British African, Asian and Caribbean communities. The UK would be the richer for it. The Rich Mix's objects are spot on. Ignoring the cultural contribution of Black, Asian and other migrant communities would be a terrible mistake – a missed opportunity and an insult. Drawing on it can achieve enormous social benefits.

Yet the problem remains. These three organisations emphasise separateness – the arts of Africa and the Caribbean, Black British arts and culture, and the culture of migrant communities. All these cultures have made a crucial, irreversible contribution to British culture and, just as it is impossible and counter-productive to distinguish between commercial and non-commercial arts, drawing a line between what is African, Caribbean, Black British and migrant culture and what is not is ultimately futile.

The debate about supporting single groups versus bridge-building clearly suggests the future. In broad terms, greater emphasis will be placed on bridging. This is not to deny the clear, sometimes grotesque inequalities in this country and the need, therefore, for the inequalities to be addressed before bridging can begin. Nor does this mean excluding single groups from leading on bridging; they are often best placed to start the process as they have the trust of one side of the bridge. The message is a different one. It is that, even amongst the UK's most disadvantaged communities and groups, bridging is better than the politics of competition.

How are the African, Caribbean, Black British and migrant culture organisations going to fare? As conceived up until now, centres such as the NIA, Drum and Rich Mix have seen their principal role as giving a platform for the arts of migrant communities. These arts organisations are not unique in giving much more attention to the supply side (artists, artworks and programmes) than to the demand side (understanding existing and potential audiences and tuning into their desires and expectations of the arts).

The Carnegie UK Trust's work on the future of civil society has pointed to the need for safe spaces for public deliberation. As many arts projects in Northern Ireland have shown, the arts can help people explore the different dimensions of their identities, they can create safe spaces, they can enlarge sympathies and build mutual respect and understanding, and ultimately they can contribute to the healing of social divisions. But it has not been happening enough. While in principle, artists and arts organisations are capable of the most inspiring and long-lasting bridge-building, the practice lags far behind. The 2001 riots in Northern towns and cities and the 7/7 bombings of 2005 revealed profound divisions and mutual incomprehension. In January 2008, the South Asian Development Partnership hosted a meeting with MPs, peers, faith community leaders and charity representatives. Via video link, they heard from sixth formers in Leeds that 'another 7/7 is inevitable; nobody is listening and the original issues have not been resolved'. Young people need these safe places where they can express themselves freely and be heard. They feel that 'the government only listens to drastic actions'.<sup>8</sup>

Where are the arts organisations doing work of quality to provide safe spaces and heal divisions? In our super-diverse society, arts for bridge-building's sake will be in ever greater demand. We need a body of work which can lead the way. We need independent research to build understanding of what works and what doesn't, and how it works, sometimes on its own and sometimes in collaboration for non-arts approaches.

Only then will we begin to make sense of people's individual multi-dimensional identities. Only then will all Britons feel secure in their Britishness. And only then we will make progress along the road away from segregation towards cohesion.

## Why has contemporary visual art in England been so successful?

Public subsidy can claim little of the credit for the phenomenon that is contemporary visual art. Credit belongs to higher education, dealers, auction houses, art fairs, collectors, artists and the media.

Chapter 1's example of Damien Hirst and Goldsmiths College in the 1980s is part of something bigger. There was certainly a Goldsmiths' effect and this is often explained through the inspiring and liberating teaching of Michael Craig-Martin. The list of graduates is starry. As well as Damien Hirst it includes Anthony Gormley, Sam Taylor-Wood, Sarah Lucas, Mark Wallinger and Gillian Wearing. More generally, Britain's art schools put students' creativity first.<sup>9</sup> They are tolerant, safe places for experiment, deliberation and taboo-breaking. Crucially, through a mixture of student art shows, a conscious engagement with the contemporary art market, invitations from Charles Saatchi and sophisticated careers advice, art schools offer a robust bridge which extends well into the world of professional contemporary art. Dance and drama schools and music conservatoires please note. The creation of original work is valued much more highly than re-creation: while the playwright is eclipsed by the actor and the composer by the performer, the visual artist is let off all leashes and is challenged, critiqued and then spurred on to more creative work.

Visual art grants from Arts Council England and DCMS are dwarfed by the contemporary art market. In 2007/08, those grants were no more than £120 million.<sup>10</sup> As the Financial Times reported in January 2008, Sotheby's and Christie's, the two main art auction houses, together sold a record \$12.5 billion (£6.25 billion) of artworks in 2007.<sup>11</sup> While these houses are global companies, London continues to grow as a major centre. 66% for Christies' sales were in London: £2.04 billion.<sup>12</sup> Frieze, Britain's leading art fair and one of the world's four major fairs, takes place in Regents Park in London every October. In one weekend in 2006 it had sales of £33 million.<sup>13</sup> In 2005/06 the National Gallery's year-round turnover was £32,182,000.<sup>14</sup>

It would be wrong to view this market as a crude money-making machine. Like hedge funds, private equity, the music business and other niches of capitalism, contemporary art has its own complex dynamic and its own ingenious ways of keeping the market growing and of making money. Few understand this complexity. Fewer understand the impact of public subsidy on this market: the nature and size of effects of intervening at different points of the supply chain from the education and later development of artists, through grants to public galleries and on to subsidised purchases of artworks or tickets. And this particular niche is now global with new influences such as the spread of the Guggenheim brand to Bilbao, Berlin, the Saadiyat district of Abu Dhabi, Rio de Janeiro, Guadalajara and Taiwan, and growing interest in Chinese contemporary artists.

Money complicates every aspect of life. It complicates contemporary art, confusing buyers' ideas of value and price. The auction hammer fuses the two, and if the price is high, even if

it doesn't reach the £50 million of Damien Hirst's diamond encrusted skull, 'For the love of God', it shouts for and gets much public attention. Price gives an expensive work greater meaning.

Sotheby's and Christie's are building a duopoly. The power concentrated within auction houses has expanded greatly. Their non-auction sales departments, called 'private treaty' departments, have directly and successfully eaten into dealers' business. The health of the whole market is judged by Sotheby's and Christie's twice yearly evening sales, not by the performance of dealers. Art critics have virtually no influence at all. The major art fairs have strong brands – the big four are in London (Frieze), Basel, Maastricht and Miami – and, through these fairs, dealers have found a way to regain some lost ground. They are hectic, noisy, social, glamorous, exhilarating places, far from the hushed discretion of an auction house.<sup>15</sup> All this has bred a belief – many would say a mistaken belief – in contemporary art as a viable investment asset class. So now, wealth and investment advisers, brokers, managers and lawyers are involved. Deutsche Bank, UBS and Fine Art Wealth Management will be happy to advise.

Meanwhile, supporting the heady world of auction houses where a Klimt painting can sell for over £65 million, of White Cube and other dealers with strong brands and reputations, and the frantic hustle of Frieze, there is lower down the pyramid a wide base supporting artists and small galleries. London's East End has grown into a powerful magnet. Within just one square mile you will find over 120 galleries.

You will also find ACME, a well established, successful organisation which since 1972 has rented studio space to fine artists unable to afford workspace on the open market. The rent for an ACME studio is on average one third of the commercial rate. Today ACME manages 370 individual non-residential studio units across 10 sites, nine in East London and one in Cornwall. The majority are self-contained with an average size of 400 square feet. Former ACME tenants include Turner Prize winners, Rachel Whiteread and Richard Deacon. Over 750 artists are on ACME's waiting list.

A fascinating link exists between artists' studios, the local authority planning system and house prices. The Galleria in Peckham opened in 2006. This new studio block designed and built by Barratt Homes with ACME as partner has 50 self-contained studios spread over five floors. The studios are part of a mixed-use development with private and affordable housing. Capital funding coming from Arts Council England helped make this happen but the main contributor was Barratt using what is called 'planning gain'. The basic principle is simple. A local authority, by granting planning permission, can increase the land's value. Local people should share in this gain rather than it all going to the developer. Section 106 of the 1990 Town and Country and Planning Act sets the groundrules for 'planning gain' agreements between local authorities and developers. So Southwark Borough Council, already a convert to ACME's work, introduced Barratt to ACME. Initial scepticism yielded to a powerful business case. The council's granting of planning permission increased the land's value and Barratt agreed to use some of its 'planning gain'



to work with ACME and create artists' studios. And there has been a further benefit. The presence of artists is appreciated by residents and this has translated into an extra £10,000 being added to the value of each flat.<sup>16</sup>

Here we have an artform working as a piece of sophisticated economics. It extends from the high finance of Sotheby's and Christie's to the world of local regeneration, business start-ups and sole trading artists. Contemporary art is not unique amongst artforms in this respect. For example, music cannot be understood without an appreciation of the forces which drive the recording industry and the broadcasting of music from MTV to BBC Radio 3. Literature cannot be separated from the empire of publishing and literary agents.

Contemporary art is well placed to achieve ever greater success. Its vulnerability is the volatility of the capitalist market but it has a sufficiently sophisticated understanding of that market to weather financial storms and thrive in the long-term. It has adapted to the changing expectations of audiences – in the flexibility of its opening times and the audience-focused curation of exhibitions, for example. It has grasped the opportunities of new technology – just think of major galleries' websites and the access they offer to collections including personalised posters.

Far from being precious about artform flux, it has absorbed dirty, unmade beds, heads of frozen blood and a cross-dressing ceramicist. And this openness has also meant a looseness about where the fine art ends and the applied art – design, architecture, design and fashion, for example – begins. Contemporary art, ahead of most other artforms, has been one of the most forceful agents for aestheticisation of the nation. It has also evolved an elaborate language for discussing the art. Some may despair of its pretentiousness but it has been sufficiently rigorous to run ahead of all other artforms in a fruitful engagement with the world of academe and research councils. It is thoroughly caught up in realising the economic potential of creativity and culture.

## MMM and capitalism 2.0

The 'Mission Models Money' programme is publisher of Version 1 of this book. For MMM it is part of a larger programme designed to prepare not-for-profit arts organisations for profound and necessary change.

It began back in 2003. Clare Cooper, then Director of Policy and Communications at Arts & Business, and Roanne Dods, Director of the Jerwood Charitable Foundation, saw weaknesses across these organisations. It was time to face up to them. Their belief was that answers would emerge from within, not through policies determined and pushed through by others. So they got trustees and senior executives talking – not just the usual conversations of drama people talking to drama people or festival directors talking festival directors but, and this is still a rarity, ranging across all disciplines. This caused a buzz. Cooper and Dods were hosts for a new kind of party. They chose the venues and set the tone and the agenda: frank conversations about weaknesses, learning from each other,

openness about sharing problems, mutual problem solving and no possessiveness about ideas and possible solutions.

So, what were these weaknesses? The starting point was a concern that not-for-profit arts organisations were not matching up their mission, their business models, and their capital and revenue resources. This led to a fear: with so much change, yesterday's and today's approaches will be obsolete tomorrow. It released a welter of questions. How would the arts get to a point where they understood what the changes were and how to ride them? What would tomorrow's organisations look like? How could they sustain audiences or build new ones, and could you really do both? Were mergers or looser kinds of alliance needed? And then, down to the next level, what would tomorrow's organisations' business models look like and how would enough money flow through and settle within them? How would they be governed? What kind of person would run them, where would they come from and how would they be trained?

Down further to practical progress, MMM has kept the conversations and ideas flowing and, during its third phase from 2005 to 2007, it road-tested new approaches with front-line arts organisations which could be taken up more widely. Some were relatively modest: a drive to expand payroll-giving and membership schemes to create a long-term source of unrestricted funds; and a long-term alliance between a chamber orchestra and music conservatoire. Others challenged all three Ms in the MMM title. Most radical and risky was the work with LIFT (formerly London International Festival of Theatre): a new, dramatic mobile structure. Called the LIFT New Parliament and later just 'the LIFT', it would tour the country and wherever it settled it would be introduced and used as a safe place for public deliberation. This took LIFT right back to why it existed at all. The old business model had to be thrown out and new skills in public engagement were needed.

Meanwhile South East Dance decided to take on a fundamental weakness in the sector. Arts managers are often more interested in the creation and presentation of work than its distribution. When they do talk about distribution they usually think no further than live events. South East Dance has particular expertise in dance and the moving image – from films documenting live performances to interesting collaborations between choreographers and film directors. The MMM programme has helped South East Dance research a new business model which can keep pace with changing and new distribution channels: DVDs, downloads, internet television and so on.

At the same time, MMM has delved further into several sector-wide issues. So, on governance, MMM tackled questions such as how trustees could support artistic risk? How can artistic and financial priorities be brought into balance when artists, curators and programmers don't want to be worrying about money all the time? What makes for a strong balance sheet when funders often prefer to support those with weak balance sheets?

Finally, and this is what MMM has gone on to give special attention to, what other forms of finance beside the usual ones of fundraising and ticket sales might be useful to build a more sustainable arts sector? This is what MMM calls 'new and alternative financial instruments'. What it has in mind are subtle varieties of loan and share issue. These could be useful to fund growth, and that is important. On the negative side, stories of disastrous lottery-funded building projects are scattered across the arts sector. For lack of regular income, they did not deliver on their promise or they even folded. On the positive side, the arts' untapped potential is enormous and grants are not always the best way to drive growth.

Too often, arts organisations are running flat out to keep going. Disastrously, some boards are reduced to talking just about money and staying afloat. Returning to or redefining the mission and finding an alternative business model might be such boards' salvation but they continue to be sucked back into the old mission and the old business model as they grapple with the latest financial crisis.

The worlds of the arts and of social enterprise rarely overlap. Social franchising is scarcely discussed. Means of realising the economic potential of creativity and culture are too rarely researched. As our example of Dance United has revealed, well researched, high quality arts activity in community settings is financially viable. Instead, a narrow preoccupation with loss-making, live activities persists.

## Artists' uneasy relationship with universities

In Chapter 2, we compared the established scientific method with a suggested description of the artist's method. They were not so different. The scientist and the artist observe the world, ask questions and create something – a testable hypothesis or a unique vision. From scientific knowledge and artistic creation flow inventions, works of art, gadgets, posters and so on. Like the scientist, the artist does research: playing around with ideas, reflecting, developing new techniques, sketching. But is this academic research? In the case of the scientist working in a university, the answer would be a clear 'yes'. But the artist in a studio?

The different professional languages of the arts and academe make for another problem. The Staying Ahead report comments on the risk of policy makers under-estimating this challenge. 'Silicon Valley has worked in part because of the commonality of the language. The Crucible, the Cambridge network for research in interdisciplinary design and the Collaborative Arts Unit of the Arts Council have explored the strategies that might be employed to minimise misunderstandings between academia, the creative industries and the rest of the economy.'<sup>17</sup>

For eight universities in London, these issues needed attention and in 2004 they set up the London Centre for Arts and Cultural Enterprise (LCACE). The desired goal was more links and exchange of knowledge between universities and London's arts and cultural sectors. They wanted dialogue, debate, good examples of practical collaboration, and a new climate

in which the two worlds understood each other and felt it natural to work together. LCACE is the marriage broker.

One LCACE union has involved the Materials Library. The idea of Dr Mark Miodownik at King's College London Engineering Division, the Materials Library is two things. It is a physical archive of new and advanced materials collected from research labs around the world. One extraordinary exhibit is a chunk of aerogel created in NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and used to collect space dust. At 99.8% air, this is the world's lightest solid. Exhibits are gathered together not only for scientific interest but also for their ability to fire the imagination, reconnect secondifiers and the screenbound to the physicality of the world, and push forward how we conceive the world. The second thing the Materials Library does is get materials scientists, artists, designers and architects working together. LCACE helped with a series of events at Tate Modern. The Materials Library team brought materials along. Silly putty echoed Francis Bacon's metamorphosis of skin and flesh. Playing with the putty transforms how you look at the painting – honest! Helium balloons helped explain how Jeff Koons' basketballs float in a tank. Bronze as a cold material was contrasted with the organic fluidity of a Henry Moore bronze. The events were turned into a podcast, the most popular arts podcast in May 2007 according to iTunes.

What of the exploitation of arts innovation? As you would expect, parallel links between science and the commercial world were forged long ago and Chapter 2 described what is happening now with the Technology Strategy Board and the Knowledge Transfer Network. But LCACE and others working at the intersection between the arts and academe are concerned. They see a danger that the ways of doing scientific knowledge transfer will be forced on to the arts.

There are at least four important differences. We have already touched on the first one – a potential Catch 22. The arts are outside existing definitions of R&D and innovation. Those existing definitions have spawned ways of measuring R&D and innovation which are not sensitive to the unique qualities of the arts. So, when the arts ask to be included, they are measured against inappropriate criteria, do not fit and are found wanting.

The second is that the language of knowledge transfer is largely economic. It is about raising productivity, creating jobs and building an enterprise society. Apply that to the arts and it means a focus on commercial activities either within areas which are largely commercial such as architecture, designer fashion and publishing or not-for-profit arts organisations' income-generating sidelines such as bookshops and cafés. You can see how this approach would skew the application of knowledge transfer to the whole arts sector, commercial and non-commercial. Things are made worse by it being easier to measure economic value and patent filings than cultural or social value. That said, the Arts & Humanities Research Council has adopted a broad definition of knowledge transfer: 'To exploit fully the new knowledge and learning that are generated in higher education institutions, they have to be applied to areas of life where they can make a difference.' The AHRC's Knowledge Transfer Plan acknowledges 'conventional models of knowledge

transfer [are] hard to apply to the creative industries: the character of research and the structure of businesses require new models to be developed'. However, the Plan unfortunately goes on to talk almost exclusively about museums rather than the arts.<sup>18</sup> All the same, this general approach allows space for creating public, cultural and social value as well as economic value. So does the March 2008 White Paper 'Innovation Nation' which recognises the often long and uncertain path to market.<sup>19</sup> Also, the research councils' umbrella body Research Councils UK sees knowledge transfer falling under four broad headings: 'co-operation in education and training at masters and doctoral level; people and knowledge flow; collaborative research with users; commercialisation including Intellectual Property exploitation and entrepreneurial activities'.

The third difference is that artists tend to be sole traders and that the majority of businesses in the arts have only a small number of employees. 94 per cent of organisations in the creative industries in the UK employ fewer than ten people and 85 per cent employ fewer than five. Some 19 per cent of people working in the sector operate as freelancers.<sup>20</sup> Scientists commonly work in universities and large companies and the freelance scientist is rare. Add to this the fact that the science and technology sector acknowledges that small and medium enterprises are the most difficult to engage with and we have a real problem. For artists and arts organisations, engagement with the research community is also a practical nightmare. There is inconsistency towards the different artforms. In music, you can submit a composition portfolio for an MA or PhD. No text is needed. It is called a postgraduate degree 'by practice' and has been accepted for many years. In visual art, there has to be a written component. Suppose later you want to apply for research funding. You must forge a partnership with a Higher Education Institution and then use Research Councils UK software to present and upload your application. Artists and all but a few arts organisations are not prepared for the welter of science-based bureaucracy which will face them. Nor can it be said that there is the necessary mutual respect between artists and academics researching the arts to even start the process. It is a relief to know that these issues are now beginning to be addressed through a research programme called 'Beyond Text'.<sup>21</sup>

Lastly, there is the question of what knowledge transfer is in the arts. Geoffrey Crossick has a good answer in his essay 'Knowledge transfer without widgets'. In it he says that 'what is needed is not a system to transfer from one party to another some knowledge that has already been produced, to transfer something that has already happened. But, rather the need is for a system to create spaces in which something can happen. In the creative industries, much of the time, once it has happened, it has already been transferred. That is the compelling difference.'<sup>22</sup>

Before we get depressed by these high level issues and by academe's particular brand of bureaucracy, here is another instance of LCACE's marriage broking.<sup>23</sup> 'Performing Medicine' has researched the use of the arts in the medical curriculum. Practical programmes and debates have followed. 'Performing Medicine' links the theatre and performance company, the Clod Ensemble, with Barts, the London School of Medicine and

Dentistry and the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London. The starting point is that we are all, to some extent, performers in our lives. Health workers are helped to improve their presence and performance: how they can move, speak, look, interpret and communicate as good, responsive, inspiring and approachable health workers. Sessions include 'Non-Verbal Communication Skills' and 'Experiential Anatomy'. Artists and scientists and medics work together, looking to improving health care. Photographer Deborah Padfield explores perceptions of pain. Performance artist Bobby Baker offers new ideas on how to live, with the help of one frozen pea. Architecture expert Susan Francis reveals the effect of good building design on staff, patients and management. The cultural and ethical issues surrounding this work are also discussed. Using work from Caravaggio and Rembrandt to medical photography and contemporary art (Franko B, for example), issues relevant to medicine are explored: sexuality, ownership, control, gender, cloning, the medical gaze, detachment and dissection.<sup>24</sup>

LCACE, the 'Beyond Text' programme and the addition of a Knowledge Transfer Network for the creative industries are important indicators. They point to faster change as more connections are made between the arts and higher education. The worry is that the direction of flow will not be sufficiently sensitive to how art is made and how the arts are currently organised. Will higher education connect fully with change in artforms and arts practice? Will the research councils adapt to particularities of the arts world? Will there be champions of the arts and their social and cultural benefits to challenge the largely economic language of knowledge transfer? Will artists and arts organisations themselves adapt and do they have the right skills to do so?

Alongside the worries are plenty of opportunities. Universities have a tradition of engaging with the arts' complexities and profundities. Free of commercial demands, they do not play safe artistically. The universality of universities means that the arts sit with many other disciplines and subject specialists that they can spark off. If the earlier idea of 'live studies' – looking at the special qualities of the live and the relationship between the live and the non-live – is to take off, it will be in universities. If a new rigour is to be injected into our understanding of the arts' intrinsic and instrumental benefits, it will depend on contributions from universities. And wider issues need universities' help to enrich our understanding: new settlements between the citizen and the expert and democracy, multiculturalism, identity and Britishness, the convergence of the private and civil society sectors, the relationship between the arts and science, and what society needs artists for.

## Mob rule?

The mobile phone is a gigantic pooh-stick and part of the dizzy flow. It is transforming the relationship between artists and arts organisations and the rest of society. Failure to engage with its potential is at best a missed opportunity and at worst it spells disaster.

In 2005, 'Flashmob: The Opera', a London flashmob involving BBC 3 television, took place on Paddington Station. For those not familiar with this term, flashmobs are large meetings

of individuals, who arrive, appear and disappear inexplicably. For those who do, they are spontaneous gatherings, organised secretly by email or text message and subject to meticulous timing. Flashmobs have demonstrated the power of the mobile phone to bring large groups of people together.

The cameras in mobiles have made us all instant creators, producers and distributors of images. The quality may not be brilliant now but that will change.

Texting is changing the English language. This is part of a wider evolution of a language which has enjoyed global success and is now spoken by over a billion people. There are over 500 million mobile users in China alone.<sup>25</sup> In the UK there are 52 million mobile phone users who send about 2.3 billion text messages a year. It is already having an influence on literature.<sup>26</sup>

Arts marketers will tell you that word of mouth is the most effective – and, of course, the cheapest – form of marketing. Texting and mobile calls have multiplied word of mouth communications, shrinking distance and time.

The mobile can also be an essential artistic tool as with the project 'Ere Be Dragons. The experience of 'Ere Be Dragons is this. To begin, the citizen wears a heart-rate monitor and keys their age into a Pocket PC. An optimal heart-rate is then calculated and off you go. While walking, an on-screen landscape is built. If you do well, exercising your heart enough, the landscape flourishes. Insufficient exertion impoverishes the landscape. Over-exertion creates a scary forest. Feedback includes sound, so you do not need to look at the screen all the time. Get it right and the landscape is a delight. New sessions offer new journeys. Better heart-rate performance generates more beautiful landscapes.<sup>27</sup>

These examples signal a momentous switch. The old paradigm is that the artist has creative ideas which then develop into works of art. The works of art are put into production and then distributed to consumers. The switch makes the citizen a co-producer and co-consumer. The citizen accumulates culture. That culture is the sum of their experience of songs, books, television programmes, images and the influence all this has on the way they view and live in the world. The citizen customises these experiences. Seeking a sense of personal authenticity, the citizen uses their personal accumulation of culture to construct and refine a unique personal identity which continues to be worked on as they go through life. This is self-creation. It is actualisation. However, this is only true up to a point. It cannot be pushed as far as saying that all artists will soon be redundant. What and where that point is deserves debating. It links with the earlier idea of a new settlement between the citizen and the expert.

Too often the arts lag behind technological developments. Engagement with mobile technology will be crucial. We must understand the mobile's potential as a means of shrinking distance and time. We must understand how arts audiences and participants use

the technology and how they might be encouraged to use it in the future. Arts organisations must keep abreast of how artists want to use mobile technology and how artforms and the relationship between the live and non-live may be changing as a result. They must be alive to the economic potential and work hard to understand the possible paths of commercial development. The mobile is a factor in creating new settlements between citizen and expert, in how our democracy is going to evolve, and in how we will tackle social segregation and the lack of safe spaces for public deliberation.

## How poohsticks ride the rapids

What might be the qualities of artists and arts organisations which successfully defy the turbulence? There are no ready answers. It must surely be a mix.

It includes people – the people involved, the expertise they have and the level of discipline that they bring to bear. There are challenges here. Recent research reveals that mental problems and burn out are particularly acute in the arts and cultural sector and the creative economy. So, for example, those US regions scoring highest on Richard Florida's Global Creativity Index also display the highest incidence of mental distress and psychological disorder.<sup>28</sup> Add to this the William Gibson echo of the arts being surrounded by their future and we have a growing not declining problem.

It includes the organisation – the legal form, overall governance, organisational culture and, what is perhaps most important, the right kind of flexible, collaborative space available for artists, passion and creativity. And it includes the context, where and how the organisation emerges and where it then decides to place itself.

What is encouraging is how our more successful poohsticks are finding a way under the bridge and on down-river. They are not alone. Alongside these examples are others either with real progress behind them or bristling with an energetic spirit for debate and experiment. Watershed in Bristol is now a group of companies including iShed, which brokers organisations, knowledge and research across the media, arts and technology sectors. Serious, like the music they produce (jazz, world and contemporary including classical), have long occupied the space between charity and commerce, adopting a unique constitution to give themselves maximum room to manoeuvre. Many believe that opera can reach further and more powerfully than current repertoire and marketing allows. Scottish Opera is doing something about this through the Five:15 programme: five new fifteen-minute operas by leading Scottish composers and writers who are new to the artform including crime novelist Ian Rankin and Craig Armstrong, composer of the 'Love Actually' score. Phelim McDermott of another theatre and performance company, Improbable Theatre, has turned activist, creating 'Devoted and Disgruntled', an annual open space for working on how to make things better in theatre and the theatre community.



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## Chapter 4

# TODAY'S ARTS FLOTILLA – ARTISTS

## All flows from the artist

Talk of the arts and the state rarely starts with the artist. If we hear an artist speaking on the subject, it is unlikely to be about their own relationship with the state arts apparatus. It will be about a theatre threatened by a funding cut, the poor working conditions of dancers, the decline of music in schools or publishers' exploitation of writers.

A more common starting point is the arts organisation. We hear arts managers or the artistic directors talking about management issues and frustrations about state funding. Bureaucracies prefer to talk to other bureaucracies.

But we need artists. The arts are a collective memory. In the hands of a great re-creative artist – a musician, an actor, a director – or a brave and imaginative curator, the arts connect us to the spirit, feelings and ideas of the past in ways that resonate with the present.

Living artists are needed in times of change and complexity such as the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Their works of art help individuals make intellectual, emotional and spiritual sense of their changing world. They can turn anxiety into composure. They can refresh and recharge, turning composure into resilience, determination and optimism.

We need to hear more from artists themselves. The individual artist is a single voice, just one citizen, often a sole trader, driven by an inner desire to create or re-create. Like any individual, they start in a position of weakness with the state and commercial sectors. For many, it remains that way and the threat of resumed weakness is always present. We must therefore understand the artist's fragile yet vital perspective. It includes their perception of politics, the state, democracy, ethics and the market; the artist's working life; what support they want and what they can get and who from; and where this leaves them as contributors to society. And we mustn't forget that the essential relationship is between the artist on the one hand and the public and the individual citizen on the other. The arts business and the state stand in between, sometimes bridges, sometimes blockages and, sadly, often with something more pressing on their agenda.

Vaclav Havel delivered this fine, apposite statement for Arts Advocacy Day in 1990: 'There are those around the world, indeed even those in democracies with the longest tradition of free speech and expression, who would attempt to limit the artists to what is acceptable, conventional, comfortable. They are unwilling to take the risks that real creativity entails.'

But an artist must challenge, must controvert the established order. To limit that creative spirit in the name of public sensibility is to deny society one of its most significant resources.<sup>1</sup> Caroline Levine, author of 'Provoking Democracy – why we need the arts' published in 2007, adds that 'both standardised and fragmented societies are confining because they prevent us from encountering new and challenging people and perspectives. ... lively, energetic dissent should be integrated into the mainstream of public life. ... because it offers alternative images of what is and what could be.'<sup>2</sup> This points to artists needing a measure of economic independence and a healthy, democratic society needing a diversity of ideas.

An artist created the DCMS logo.<sup>3</sup> He knows about the relationship between the artist and the state. A regular white square with the initials dcms sitting inside it is superimposed upon, but cannot contain dark, beautiful, precise, chaotic swirls of smoke. Quite rightly, it suggests that the state can never fully comprehend let alone control an artist's vision. It also hints at how far a foursquare state department must transform itself to be able to work with the artist. Indeed, would it ever be feasible?

At the heart of the state stand politicians supported and circumnavigated by civil servants. Philip Roth has caught the essence of the contradiction between the artist and the politician. 'Politics is the great generaliser and literature the great particulariser, and not only are they in inverse relation to each other — they are in an antagonistic relationship. To politics, literature is decadent, soft, irrelevant, boring, wrongheaded, dull, something that makes no sense and really oughtn't to be. Why? Because of the particularising influence of literature. How can you be an artist and renounce the nuance? How can you be a politician and allow the nuance? As an artist the nuance is your task. Your task is not to simplify ... Allow for the chaos, let it in. You must let it in. Otherwise you produce propaganda, if not for a political party ... then stupid propoganda for life itself— for life as it might be preferred to be publicised.'<sup>4</sup>

This is not to say that some have drawn energy from living the contradiction. Paderewski was both virtuoso pianist and composer and Prime Minister of Poland. Think of Vaclav Havel's plays, Disraeli's novels, Winston Churchill's paintings. More pertinently, politics can be raw material for art, and artists' works can take on political meaning and provoke social change.

In the arts, all flows from the artist. As William Blake said: 'Let it no more be said that States encourage Arts, for it is the Arts that encourage States'.<sup>5</sup> Ibsen would agree but with a vivid sense of the arts' often difficult fight to 'encourage states'. His play, *An Enemy of the People*, tells of such a struggle. Dr. Stockmann is a new spa's medical director who discovers that the spa will be contaminated by waste from the nearby tannery. Stockmann's lone speaking of an unacceptable truth leads to his brother, the mayor, telling him that he should 'acquiesce in subordinating himself to the community'. Stockmann refuses and holds a public meeting to convince everyone of the need to close the spa. The town turns against him, denouncing him as an enemy of the people. Stockmann stands firm saying that 'the

strongest man in the world is the man who stands most alone.’ A couple of months before Ibsen began work on the play, he wrote to the Danish critic George Brandes about ‘the minority which forges ahead in territory which the majority has not yet reached. I believe he is right who is most closely attuned to the future’.<sup>6</sup> The artist needs freedom to forge ahead into new territory.

If artists, then, are diametrical opposites of politicians, are they perhaps moral forces in society, encouraging us to be better people? At first reading, George Eliot might be thought to have answered ‘yes’ when she wrote to her friend Charles Bray, ‘if art does not enlarge men’s sympathies, it does nothing morally’.<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that artists are moral improvers. They don’t set out to be. They are not preachers. They are driven by the different impulse to make something so far unimagined. Instead, it is audiences who judge whether an artist’s work has a moral or ethical content. Nevertheless, artists are often at their most potent and socially resonant when they probe ethical and political issues.

If an issue is raised often enough and provokes enough public concern, then there may be a law about it – for instance, blasphemy, indecency and incitement of racial hatred. Laws are powerful instruments, yet sometimes clumsy and always expensive. As they can be successfully campaigned against and repealed (as happened in 1968 with the end of the Lord Chamberlain’s censorship of theatre), they are also all provisional. Laws touch only a handful of issues. In liberal democracies, they leave spaces, although with limits, for artists to test social comments and tackle taboos. Do not expect of the state a vigorous defence of free speech but the spaces for free speech are real. So Mark Ravenhill in his play, ‘Shopping and Fucking’, can delve into addictions, identity and the consumerism and escapism of British culture, and ‘Jerry Springer the Opera’ can resist protests and go out on the road. However the state did not defend ‘Bezhti’ despite there never being any serious suggestion of law-breaking. To satisfy a mob ‘Bezhti’ closed before the end of its run. Few of the protesters claimed to have attended a performance or even read the script. Many flaunted their ignorance. To use the charge levelled at Sir John Drummond and made the title of his autobiography, the mob was not ‘tainted by experience’.<sup>8</sup>

Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti, the author of ‘Bezhti’, might have expected support from a government committed to the UN Declaration for Human Rights. Article 19 states that ‘Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.’<sup>9</sup> This notion of cultural expression as a fundamental aspect of human freedom also underpins the UN Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions which received British Government support in October 2005.<sup>10</sup> In countries with less developed democratic systems or none at all, these UN declarations are likely to be little more than vacuous rhetoric. In today’s Britain, Bhatti and all other artists deserve more than supine silence. McMaster agrees: ‘I recommend that funding bodies and arts organisations act as the guardians of artists’

freedom of expression, and provide the appropriate support to deal with what can be a hostile reaction to their work.’<sup>11</sup> This must be acted upon.

## Artists and economics – a relationship like no other

So the artist has an unequal and unreliable relationship with the state, politicians, democracy and society’s morals. What of the market? Artists see the market as an unreliable prism through which their work is projected. The authenticity of the artistic impulse to create and communicate can shine through but it has to prevail over the refractions of all those between the artist and the public: agents, dealers, venues, recording companies, broadcasters, critics and the rest. An artist’s face-to-face contact – an artist making a present of a painting to a friend or giving a private performance – can dismiss the prism. Otherwise, it is unavoidable and, in fact, needed. This machinery of production, marketing and distribution enables the artist to reach people they have never met and enables audiences to experience works of art which otherwise would be beyond their grasp. It is the refractions that cause concern. They can distort the artist’s work and, as Catherine Levine observes, ‘Successful concentration of the popular media in the hands of a tiny number of powerful corporations has meant a severe limitation on democratic dialogue, innovation, and dissent.’<sup>12</sup>

Listen to crude critics of capitalism and you would believe that this prism works in exactly the same way whether you live in Britain, France, Japan or the United States and whether the products are arts or peanuts. Will Hutton’s ‘The State We’re in’<sup>13</sup> carefully constructed a truer, more nuanced picture.

Some make a good case that the creative industries have a management character all of their own. One such is Dr Chris Bilton, director of the MA in Creative and Media Enterprises at the University of Warwick’s Centre for Cultural Policy Studies.<sup>14</sup> Arts managers have certainly been buffeted over the last 20 years. Demands to adapt began with Richard Luce, one of Margaret Thatcher’s arts ministers, when he complained in 1987 that there were ‘still too many in the arts world yet to be weaned from the welfare state mentality—the attitude that the taxpayer owes them a living’.<sup>15</sup> Fast forward a decade and arts organisations were being treated like providers of commissioned public services and bullied to deliver targets. Fast forward again and today they are being exhorted to be entrepreneurial and part of the creative economy.

One reason for this buffeting is that the state needs a rationale for investing public money in the arts. It needs to be able to answer tricky questions. What do the arts do which is valued by the public? How is this value created? And where, in a complex modern economy, should public investment be made to have optimum impact and hence best value to the taxpayer? At the level of principles, the citizen and democratic accountability demand answers. In practical terms, no answers mean no basis for funders to make reasoned decisions. The lack of adequate answers has plagued arts and cultural policy makers for as long as the state has been asked to invest in the arts. We are back with the false polarity of

the arts' intrinsic and instrumental benefits and the problem of the arts world trying to produce evidence retrospectively to engage with the latest social or economic policy agenda. The answer is greater clarity and confidence about what value the arts can and seek to create followed by rigorous evaluation of whether the value has indeed been created.

Whether commercial or not-for-profit, most arts organisations are small, especially at the production stage. The big boys concentrate on distribution, making profits from exploiting the intellectual property developed by others. Distinctions familiar in other industry sectors melt in the arts and wider creative industries: between the commercial and non-commercial; between the static, long-term organisation and collaborative networks and temporary alliances for specific projects; between economic and social benefit. No wonder arts councils and film councils have struggled to relate to this swirl of activity.

An essential point is that the arts are 'experience goods'. Quality and price are difficult to pin down before the consumer buys them. Even then, the consumer hardly behaves rationally because arts experiences are so highly personal; and the more one tries some arts experiences, the more one gets out of them – the slow burns.

A study of Britain's arts machinery would echo Hutton. The arts has copyright and science has patents – two very different forms of intellectual property. British literary agents work differently from American agents. Business sponsorship of the arts has a different place in Britain's arts machinery from America's and mainland Europe's. The arts funding model in mainland Europe involves large scale investment which would find a parallel in the British education system, not Britain's system for supporting the arts. In France the markets for fireworks and creative lighting design are larger, in part because they are considered worthy of state investment.

The UK has constructed its own idiosyncratic, mixed economy of the arts. Does it serve the artist well? Does the system distinguish newly imagined little gems never from dross? Does it pick them up and pass them through the prism and, to use the language of venture capital and venture philanthropy, release their fullest potential by 'taking them to scale'? Does it generate unintended consequences and, if so, are they good or bad? Is the system effective in making up for market failure? Do we have as open, rich and diverse arts scene as we could have? Such questions should spur us on to do better for the artist.

## Portrait of the artist day to day

Artists need time alone. For some, it is solo work through the whole creative process. A writer might be blessed with research support but for most it is intense, solitary work. Annie Proulx says 'During the actual writing, I'm at work 16 hours a day seven days a week until it's done. I'm quite single-minded about the writing. It's work.' She needs the 'long, wonderful, empty silence'.<sup>16</sup> Some painters are the same, working alone in a studio and emerging eventually with a finished canvas. Other visual artists, the financially successful

ones, are like heads of a Venetian Renaissance studio. Damien Hirst's shark installations and spot and butterfly paintings are produced by a team of assistants. He says 'I like the idea of a factory to produce work, which separates the work from the ideas, but I wouldn't like a factory to produce the ideas'.<sup>17</sup> It is similar with Jeff Koons, the American artist noted for his use of kitsch imagery in his paintings and sculptures. His works are created by technicians under his supervision. He explains that 'I'm basically the idea person. I'm not physically involved in the production. I don't have the necessary abilities, so I go to the top people, whether I'm working with my foundry – Tallix – or in physics.'<sup>18</sup>

It is more of a team effort in the performing arts and film. The playwright needs actors. Film director Milos Forman talks of his team like this: 'My scriptwriter writes better scripts than me, my cameraman composes better images than me; my editor knows how to build a sequence better than me. Yet without me, the film wouldn't exist.'<sup>19</sup> Choreographers have a particular need for dancers as they rely on live interaction to make work. So David Bintley, now Artistic Director of Birmingham Royal Ballet, can say: 'Leticia Muller for instance has a miraculous ports de bras [movement of the arms to different positions] and use of the upper back so I scarcely choreograph for that area because she does it for me.'<sup>20</sup> Composers can work solo, sketching and creating without musicians. They do this using a software programme – Finale, Mozart or Sibelius. Architects can do the same with CAD (computer aided design). The great American choreographer Merce Cunningham developed a software programme called Life Forms as a means of sketching without dancers but he is a noted exception and Life Forms has hardly been taken up by other choreographers.<sup>21</sup>

Artistic work involves the collaboration of a whole range of people. Only some of them fit the conventional description of artist. Milos Forman certainly needed his scriptwriter, cameraman and editor. He also needed that long list of technicians, administrators, stuntmen and best boys that scrolls by at the end of his films. It is the same with all artists once you look beyond the kernel of creativity. The sociologist Peter Martin is right, up to a point, that the mixing of artists and those non-artists essential for producing and disseminating art 'dissolves the distinction between the "art world" and its social context'.<sup>22</sup> We mustn't run ahead, though, and think that just because artists work with technicians their close working relationships and friendships are with technicians. Writers mix with writers, musicians with musicians. The world of each artform is remarkably closed.

Artists want solitude but not all the time. To create something new and personal which offers a different view of the world, they of course need to know the world and how others view it. Picture it like four circles of knowledge. At the centre is the artist's chosen artistic language. This could be poetry, tango, sculpture, reggae or video art. It fits into a second circle, the wider artform which in turn fits into a third which contains all artforms. The fourth is the whole world of the arts plus all outside the arts: everyday life, emotions, the natural world, social issues and so on. Artists need to know and roam freely within all these circles, playing with new ideas, creating new visions and making new work. So, to give one small example, choreographer Wayne MacGregor, immerses himself in digital technology and



ends up talking about 'digital' movement 'that 'seems to blip through the body, is almost sampled, very rapid fire'.<sup>23</sup>

To help them judge their work, artists also want to connect with audiences and witness and feel their response. Choreographer Peter Badejo gives one reason which is more important as our societies become more diverse and fragmented: 'The act of composing African dance outside of Africa has impacted on the way I create movement and structure my dances. For instance, I have to take into consideration the audience here [in the UK] and what their understanding might be of the symbolic gesture and metaphor that I might wish to use in the piece.'<sup>24</sup>

Artists are self-driven but they also need the companionship, stimulus, nourishment and feedback of fellow artists. That relies on there being a critical mass of artists which, in turn, depends on whether a society has the political will and economic means to generate that critical mass.

All these factors – collaboration and solitude, audience contact, and the political and economic contact – influence the artist's unique, personal language and what they make.

## Support for artists

The scientist tends to work in large private or public organisations. You will find blue skies research going on in the Hewlett Packard Labs in Bristol. You will find applied research at the government's Defence Science and Technology Laboratory at Porton Down near Salisbury. The National Health Service employs 50,000 scientists. University scientists receive dedicated funding to their universities from the Higher Education Funding Council for England and through Research Assessment Exercises – in 1992, 1996, 2001 and 2008. Various research councils for science also fund research including the Engineering & Physical Sciences Research Council, Medical Research Council and Natural Environment Research Council. So scientists have strong networks of support and they can look to their institutions for a salary, good working conditions, training at any stage of their career, even time out for secondments or sabbaticals. The freelance scientist is a rarity.

The freelance artist is the norm. Large organisations such as the BBC, publishing houses and music industry giants do employ artists but, the further along you are on the continuum from applied artist to blue skies artist, the more likely you are to be outsourced. You may work for a small production company whose existence depends on contracts from big media companies. You may work for a design studio, designer fashion house or architecture practice which can look to a wider range of clients. At the continuum's far end, you are a solo piece worker creating, often on the off chance, your film script, novel, composition or painting. And forget about the benefits received by your opposite number in science. The Staying Ahead report has a chilling if slightly garbled point to add: 'One upside from the business perspective (although it attracts complaints of exploitation) is that their [artists'] 'reservation' wages – the lowest they are prepared to work for – are lower than the

marginal value of what they produce, making labour particularly cheap.<sup>25</sup> Artists will work for less than what business can make out of them, and this stays the same however much the artist produces.

What makes matters worse is that, although empirical research is lacking, there seems to be a growing polarization in earnings. A few artists earn huge rewards while most earn very little. The report, *The Performing Arts in a New Era*, suggests two possible reasons. 'First, technological advances in reproduction and distribution have dramatically expanded the market for successful artists and have also made it possible to know the field and discern subtle differences in artistic ability. Secondly, and perhaps more important, marketing efforts to build star power have become ever more pervasive because the potential rewards of market success are so great.'<sup>26</sup>

The state, trusts and foundations, and wealthy individuals have recognised that artists lack the necessary support for them to realise their potential. Whatever contribution is offered is immensely appreciated. Relative to the need, both for the artists themselves and for what artists can do to offer fresh perspectives and inspire and expand the openness of society, the response is meagre.

Arts Council England's direct support for artists is minimal. Its priorities for 2006 to 2008 are 'Taking part in the arts, Children and young people, The creative economy, Vibrant communities, Internationalism and Celebrating diversity'. Only in 'Taking part in the arts' and 'Vibrant communities' does the Arts Council commit itself to do anything with artists directly. In the first it 'will encourage artists to examine how their work is distributed, to engage with marketing and audience development opportunities and to become more entrepreneurial in outlook'. In the other it 'will make both artists and planners aware of mutual opportunities for joint working'. Not much scope there.

A reasonable response from the Arts Council might be that it is the arts organisations it funds which can and should do this work. For a moment that seems to make sense. However, as the Arts Council's priorities give such little space for artists' research and development, this sets the tone of the Arts Council's expectations of arts organisations. This leaves scant resources for artistic blue skies research.

The National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts used to run fellowships. They even ran a programme called Dreamtime which demanded no pre-planned results. No more. A handful of foundations have seen a gap. Free of commercial, political and productivity imperatives, they can offer the means without encumbering the artist with unnecessary demands. Even a small grant can release a good chunk of free time. Some inspiration can be drawn from Ireland and its Arts Council which runs a Bursary Award whose primary purpose 'is to support professional artists in developing their arts practice. Specifically, it can be used to 'buy time' and provide artists with the space, equipment,

facilities and freedom to concentrate on their practice, particularly through releasing them from other commitments.<sup>127</sup>

Then there are subsidised spaces where artists can work. As described in Chapter 3, ACME provides subsidised studios for long-term rent. Then there is the model of the retreat, such as artists' colonies in America. A few UK examples exist. Hawthornden Castle in Midlothian invites five published writers at a time to work without disturbance. No financial assistance is given but, once at Hawthornden, the writer is a guest. Cove Park, also in rural Scotland, offers something similar for artists working in all artforms. Each is provided with self-catering accommodation in a 'Pod' or 'Cube' plus studio or working space. There are nine studios on site.

These are structured well-resourced examples with a focus on artists being given time out, away from familiar surroundings and everyday demands. Artists are under no pressure to develop or produce. Yet the very absence of demands usually makes for a nourishing and ultimately highly productive experience.

Informal clustering of artists happens too – for example, today's concentration of visual artists in East London and the density of writers in and around Bath (the greatest outside London). But here time out is not given the same resources and attention; it has to be grabbed as and when. In between are more results-orientated opportunities. Still relatively open are Aldeburgh Music's opera writing fellowships. Here composers and their collaborators receive tailor-made support for writing a new opera. Residencies in new surroundings can stimulate creativity without being overdemanding. In 2007, Gwyneth Lewis was poet-in-residence at Cardiff astronomy department and spent time at CERN to understand sub-atomic science and the people behind the world's largest particle collider. Less open, but still offering a degree of scope for research and development is the commission. This request for a work can range from very loose conditions to very tight ones. At the loose end is Charles Saatchi paying retainers to young visual artists in return for his being guaranteed a place at the front of any queue of buyers. At the other extreme are the Poet Laureate required to mark royal occasions and a composer fitting music to a film within margins of less than a tenth of a second.

## What's holding progress back

Productivity is not the problem. We are awash in songs of pop music hopefuls, work by visual artists wanting a slice of today's buoyant contemporary art market, and people who think they have a novel in them and have gone ahead and written it.

At least five factors are holding artists back from making their fullest contribution to society.

The first we have been exploring in this chapter. There is insufficient space for freedom of expression. Artists lack time and space for blue skies work, whether into subject matter or

into refining or developing new artistic techniques. The state has a poor record in standing up for, and safeguarding the artist's right to free expression. The arts system has not yet devised the means to invest properly in artists' research and development in the way science has. This is debilitating and frustrating for artists and it is bad for society.

The second is that too much power rests with the intermediaries between the artist and the public. The next chapter looks at this arts accessibility industry but for now it is the artist's fragile position and the lack of initiatives to strengthen that position which is of concern. Artists want closer contact with their audiences, hence their experiments in self-publishing and self-promotion.

The third is the lack of a culture and habit of self-assessment and peer criticism amongst artists. Compared with architecture which has a long-established tradition of honest peer criticism called 'crits', the arts seems more a world of luvvies and behind-your-back bitching. Arts programmers do not gather to critique each others' past programmes and future programme ideas. It is similar with arts marketeers and fundraisers and their campaigns. Sadly, artists are part of the same culture.

The fourth is that there is excessive pressure on artists to roll out experiments. This is a different point from our being awash in unsolicited demo CDs and manuscripts. It is about the commissioning of work. In Hollywood, for every script that is made into a film, there are as many as a hundred which never leave the page; and that's every commissioned script, not the slush pile of unsolicited ones. However, in a UK theatre or dance company or orchestra, the way things are done means that almost everything that is commissioned is put into production. And yet, the cost of putting something into production, presenting and touring it, is usually much greater than the cost of commissioning alone. It takes courage to call a halt.

The last is perhaps the most important. Artists aren't being given sufficient chances to engage fully with society. Let's take the example of the choreographer. Amongst many senior dance figures, there is great disappointment at how little choreographers look out to the world. They are too caught up in making steps and their insularity leads to their not making meaningful steps.

Of course artists need mutual support and need to discuss the stuff of making work with peers. However, if they do not engage with society and what is going on in the changing world, they have little to communicate with audiences. This point reinforces Brian McMaster's about relevance and innovation. 'Excellent culture takes and combines complex meanings, gives us new insights and new understandings of the world around us and is relevant to every single one of us. It is why culture is so important to societies that flourish.<sup>28</sup> ... It has been argued that culture does not always need to innovate to be excellent, but if it is to be truly relevant to our society, it absolutely must.'<sup>29</sup>

Society is always in flux. New breakthroughs and challenges demand new responses. As this paragraph is written, an email arrives from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation announcing results of research into today's social evils. 'People feel a deep sense of unease about some of the changes shaping British society, according to our consultation on modern-day social evils. Individualism, greed, a decline of community and a decline of values were among the social evils that worried participants most. In addition, people also identified: drugs and alcohol; poverty and inequality; decline of the family; immigration and responses to immigration; crime and violence; young people as victims or perpetrators.' All and much more is material for an artist. All is relevant in the broad sense intended here and used by McMaster. This is not about topicality. Rather, artistic innovation is needed either to respond to these issues or to engage us with entirely new ones.

At their best, artists are bridge-builders. Like Yehudi Menuhin playing his violin in a liberated Belsen, they can reconnect people with their humanity. Like Zadie Smith in 'White Teeth', they can help people understand others very different from themselves. Like Daniel Barenboim and his West East Divan Orchestra, they can help overcome antagonism and mistrust. Like Joan Littlewood at the Theatre Royal Stratford East, they can give a voice to people at the margins of society. All four have lived not just as artists but also as engaged human beings.

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## Chapter 5

# TODAY'S ARTS FLOTILLA – THE ACCESSIBILITY INDUSTRY

## The artist and the accessibility industry

We now have a better feel for the lives, desires and routines of artists. We grasp why a society and its artists need each other. Honour the importance of the artist and freedom of expression, and a society thrives. Forget it or worse, persecute artists in the name of the common good, and a society rots.

Between artists and citizens stand arts organisations and the wider accessibility industry: Amazon, bookshops, cultural tour operators, dance development agencies, early music promoters, festivals and so on. They all play a part in artists' access to citizens and vice versa.

## Caught up in the daily rush

A visit to an arts organisation is invariably a chance to meet dedicated people who really believe in their work. They want to do their best for the artists they work with. They are committed to building audiences: more audiences from a wider social spectrum, having ever richer experiences of the arts. They understand some of the power of the arts whether for people on the margins of society or as a driver of economic and social regeneration. They also understand that they are nurturing creative talent, giving people skills which are relevant in the arts and beyond.

The atmosphere is often frenetic. Workloads are crazy. Times when a chief executive or artistic director can fly up in that metaphorical helicopter and see the big picture are too infrequent. But they need to. They need times to disconnect, look down on their organisation and see it in its totality and where it fits in the wider context. Whole teams should do this too.

There is a culture of organisations over-extending themselves and this is not just about everyone signing away their rights under the European Working Time Directive. MMM's hypothesis was set out in 2004: '... too many organisations trying to do more things than they can possibly do well, with both human and financial resources too thinly spread. Lacking liquidity or reserves, cash strapped and thinly spread between ever more diverse, fragmented pools of funding, arts organisations find it easier to secure the marginal costs of marginal activities than the core costs of core activities. The result is a hyperactive sector'.<sup>1</sup>

Arts organisations are under-extending themselves too. Their people are vital for the organisations' success and yet the commitment to training and professional development is low. It comes from the top. The Association of Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations did a Pay Review and found this. 'Amongst chief executives, average training budgets range from £500 per annum for smaller organisations to £2,500 for large ones. The most common number of days of chief executive training is reported as 5 days. Most chief executives fail to use their training budget ... The main barriers to undertaking training and professional development are reported as lack of time (52.4%), lack of money (20.5%) and lack of suitable courses (11.1%).'<sup>2</sup> Research and development budgets are low. When so much is changing around them, arts organisations' lack of R&D in artistic development and public engagement is alarming.

Looking closely at these problems and seeing them recur in one organisation after another, scary questions come into your head. Are today's arts organisations just getting in the way? Is this accessibility industry truly fit for building bridges between artists and the public? Are grant-making institutions the best way of developing the arts sector? Are there better alternatives, perhaps? Once you allow yourself to ask such fundamental questions, the brake is off. Yes, there is a long list of big worries.

Can it honestly be said that arts organisations respect the needs of artists and the works they create? Arts organisations have become so familiar with the power they have over artists. The supply of artists and their works far exceeds programmers', curators', editors', agents' and other intermediaries' demands. While stars will always be magnets, commanding high fees, any artist lower in the firmament is in a buyer's market. Backed by government funding or commercial success, the intermediaries come to believe that they are the creative ones, moulding artists, shaping programmes, turning raw works of art into consumables. Of course, a general charge of lack of artistic authenticity and integrity is far too crude. But isn't that a look of recognition and guilt flashing across the intermediary's face?

They may be intermediaries but they are insular. Keeping afloat, getting everything done – this is full-on, full-time work. Hyper-activity is all within an organisation's bubble. Outside are other bubbles, unconnected even though some of them are doing closely parallel work. It is curious how little theatre companies see each other's work, how few occasions there are when organisations working in different artforms come together, and how ideas and lessons from non-arts civil society organisations pass the bubbles by. The accessibility industry is not integrated. It is not outward-looking. It is atomised.

One symptom of this is the failure to merge. In the commercial sector, mergers, acquisitions, joint ventures and de-mergers are common milestones in the development of a company. Mergers and acquisitions are signs of the sector's dynamism, conceived or forced as responses to successful growth, over-diversification, under-performance, changes in consumer demand and in wider society. A whole industry exists to encourage and advise on these changes: to name a few names, JP Morgan Cazenoves makes the



deals, the investment banking is by Merrill Lynch, Brunswick handles the public relations, Clifford Chance the legal aspects, and so on. And the business media comment. Amongst civil society organisations, mergers, joint ventures and shared back office facilities are becoming more accepted. The NCVO had a substantial work programme on this.<sup>3</sup> Just at this moment the two largest older people's charities, Age Concern and Help the Aged are merging.

In the arts, mergers and acquisitions are atypical and the pool of experience is small and uncharted. With insularity goes suspicion. Arts organisations view others as funding competitors or commercial companies with suspect motives.

## Accessibility and public engagement

And isn't there something passive about the word 'accessibility'? Three and sometimes four aspects of accessibility are usually mentioned: physical, psychological, financial and occasionally linguistic. Accessibility to the arts has certainly increased. The influence of the 1986 Attenborough Report on Arts and Disabled People can be found in the Disability Discrimination Act 2005, BSL signed performances and new, attractive, welcoming, Lottery-funded arts venues designed with disabled people in mind. More broadly, we have free entrance to publicly-funded art galleries, publicity appearing in different languages and occasionally audience members being invited to influence programming. But underneath all these ideas is a habitual portrayal of the public as passive.

It is as if arts organisations are saying this to the public: we have lowered all the barriers to the arts; we have made it clear how easy it is to get over the barriers. So, when the public doesn't come, it is the public's fault. The fault is not the arts organisation's, and the public has something wrong with them. The arts organisation stays where it is – and that still too often means London. It is up to the public to make the effort to come to the arts organisation. We are back with science's deficit model: if only the public had the arts explained to them, they would surely support them. We know that this is not enough.

'Accessibility' and 'public engagement' are often used interchangeably. We should refine our language and make the following distinction. 'Accessibility' is the easing of barriers to static arts activity. 'Public engagement' creates a two-way conversation between the arts and audiences and participants. This is a distinction which Arts Council England does not recognise. In its 'Public Engagement in the Arts – Arts Council England's Role 2008-11' it defines public engagement as nothing more than attending arts events or participating in arts activities. A definition far more inclusive of citizens is being proposed here. (Recalling our earlier discussion of the importance of the non-live arts in people's lives, it is disappointing but not surprising to read a few paragraphs later: 'It should be noted that only live activity is counted in targets related to either the Arts Council's funding agreement with DCMS and for Local Strategic Partnerships who select increasing Arts Engagement (NI11) as a target.')

Accessibility is the obverse of public engagement. Accessibility means easing the physical, psychological, financial and linguistic barriers to arts organisations. Public engagement goes out to, engages with and works tirelessly to understand the public and where they are physically, psychologically, financially and linguistically.

We need more public engagement. The arts community must take more seriously its responsibility to understand public attitudes and engage people in true two-way communication. This does not mean that the accessibility industry is to be directed by I-know-what-I-like public opinion. Rather it must be more open. It must be less insular. It must understand what the public considers the arts to be: which artforms and what exactly they recognise as music, literature, dance or film. It must research where the arts fit into people's lives and, yes, that includes the arts on YouTube and on television, that centre of variable excellence you watch in your home. It must research the most effective ways of influencing and developing public attitudes. It must reflect on all of this and act sensitively.

For commercial arts organisations, survival depends on this. You engage with current and potential customers or die. For the public and an effective state committed to developing the arts, excellent public engagement is what they should demand and must expect. It needs to be a condition of public investment, and the state should create incentives and initiatives for arts organisations to get better and better at it.

Of course, outreach work and truly interactive websites are part of public engagement as defined here. We are not starting from zero but the arts are definitely lagging behind. Brian McMaster is concerned, for example, about the arts being behind the game on technology. 'Why is it that we see cultural organisations, with some notable exceptions, following behind the demand for technological advances rather than driving it?'<sup>5</sup> Set this against what is happening in the rest of the creative industries and you see serious cause for concern. As the Work Foundation's Staying Ahead report comments, 'The industry has reacted to consumer desires for greater interaction by diverting users to legitimate music distribution sites, creating easier ways to pay for downloads, using mobile phones as a means to access and consume music (revenues from 'realtone' ringtones reached \$100 million in 2006), and gaining access to back catalogues: EMI Group and Apple recently announced that they would abandon usage restriction in online sales of their archives.'<sup>6</sup>

The development of young audiences is another worry. Research into classical music in the United States has concluded that the 'problems of orchestras stem not from the music they play but from the delivery systems they employ. ... Free programming and outreach do not turn people into ticket buyers. They simply turn them into consumers of free programming. Traditional audience education efforts – targeted to the uninitiated – generally end up serving those who are most knowledgeable and most involved with orchestras. There is growing evidence that participatory music education – primarily instrumental lessons, ensemble and choral programs – will turn people into ticket buyers later in life. There is no evidence that exposure programs for children – especially the large concert format offerings for school children – will turn them into ticket buyers as adults.'<sup>7</sup>

This goes against much of received thinking in the UK. It might have emerged here if we were used to rigorous evaluation programmes which gathered and measured quantitative and qualitative evidence and stories. Instead, old, ineffective programmes lumber on as part of today's arts organisations' work with young people. Many resist introducing rigorous evaluation. Quantitative analysis is thought too brutal to capture anything of value to the arts sector. Focus groups are preferred. Few appreciate the different roles that quantitative and qualitative research can play in building a comprehensive picture.

This blindness and reluctance fails the young people and fails society. Our rich culture offers so many opportunities. Young people can elect not to opt in but imaginative, energetic public engagement can encourage them to choose to opt in. The arts 'encourage critical reflection, imagination and empathy – and they in turn are conducive to tolerance, freedom and fairness. To the extent that society wants these values to be embedded within it, there is a greater chance if it can expose its younger members to cultural experiences.'<sup>8</sup>

Arts organisations' outreach, education, participation and community programmes have become commonplace – in both senses. The strongest push came in the 1970s and 1980s as a response to the radicalism of the community arts movement and the passionate advocacy of a Secretary General of the Arts Council (then of Great Britain) with a background in adult education. An inspiring and influential 1982 Gulbenkian Foundation report, 'The Arts in Schools', gave impetus and an intellectual depth to this new movement. We are inheritors of that push. However, the models created 25 years ago are still relied on and many are now stale. It is surprising how little the methodology has changed. In contrast, outside the arts, a massive reorientation has taken place. Talking specifically of young people for a moment, the starting point now is the child and not either the teacher or the skills and bodies of knowledge which education aims to pass on. This explains the change of language from 'education' to 'learning'; from outputs (what is taught by the teacher) to outcomes (what is learnt by the child); from local education authorities to children's services; from a department for Education & Skills to one for Children, Schools & Families. This is another example of the new settlements being negotiated between citizen and expert which were discussed in Chapter 2.

Meanwhile, back in the arts, some people believe that we have gone backwards. In the early days, a clear aim, even a rule, was that education should not be lumped with marketing. This is now regularly broken. Others are ambitious for a new chapter which integrates professional performance with participation, giving professional productions and participatory projects equal status and the two feeding off each other. The Scottish theatre company, Visible Fictions, is a good example. It has chosen to work with young people. Its professional productions explore young people's experiences and views of the world. Its participation programme involves young people in the writing, production, performance and marketing of projects.

The implications of this change need more discussion. For example, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation hosts the PAEback Group, 'trustees of major performing arts organisations with an interest in the role and responsibilities of boards in educational activities. ... They also believe that artists and art forms, and in particular those within the classical traditions with which they are associated, need constantly to redefine themselves in terms of their relevance to an increasingly diverse population. ... When PAEback Group members began meeting, they realised that, as Board members, they had little comparative or benchmarking information. They also shared a concern that, for many Boards, monitoring educational activities may be unfamiliar territory: education is something that Boards broadly support, but it's likely that many Board members feel they lack the expertise and the interest to engage with the work in the same way as they might with, say, financial management, fundraising, or commissioning a new building. The PAEback Group wanted to stimulate debate and the sharing of experience about what the proper role of a Board might be in this area'.<sup>9</sup>

While these important concerns will be debated and will surely in due course be addressed, we need more public engagement in another sense. To arrive at a proper understanding of the public means, for many, a similar kind of reorientation as has happened in education. Professor Ian Bruce, founder Head of the Centre for Charity Effectiveness at the Cass Business School, calls it 'meeting need through customer focus'. He is an expert in charities and has appreciation and sympathy for organisations driven by social and cultural values as well as commercial ones. Nevertheless, his view is that 'So much of voluntary sector activity development takes place in what the commercial world would call a product- or production-orientated way. ... the risk in this rapidly changing world is that the product or process becomes increasingly less relevant or appropriate to what customers or clients need and want.'<sup>10</sup> The Staying Ahead report gives a creative industries response from beyond the arts. 'Apple's iPod; video on demand; internet shopping; the personalised car; designer clothing; experience-intensive holidays; online banking; and many other forms of economic activity are supply responses to articulate, discerning, better educated, richer and more demanding consumers and citizen users. All are acts of innovative and creative origination anticipating, responding to or shaping demand from this new class of consumers.'<sup>11</sup>

What is a relevant or appropriate product in the arts? Well, it depends on the artist and the work of art on the one hand and the member of the public on the other. Live performances and live participatory projects may be relevant and appropriate. But, if the artwork is Sir Harrison Birtwistle's new opera 'The Minotaur' and the member of the public lives in Hartlepool then the live experience is over 250 miles away in London. No commercial DVD has been produced of any Birtwistle opera. BBC2 did broadcast it and Radio 3 did an audio relay. The Royal Opera House's website gives just basic information and a five minute rather specialised interview with the librettist, David Harsent.<sup>12</sup> And yet, put informed, creative communicators with an understanding of Birtwistle and opera together with the dizzying development of ICT and surely there are ways of connecting the Hartlepool inhabitant with Birtwistle and 'The Minotaur'. With creative product development, marketing, business development and investment, this extraordinary work could be discovered by

audiences many times larger than those attending the six 2008 performances, watching BBC2 or listening to Radio 3.

Contemporary dance in its live form is arguably healthier now in Britain than it has ever been, but fewer than 7% of people in England attended a contemporary dance performance in the previous 12 months.<sup>13</sup> In 2005 some research was done on dance film – everything from recordings of live performances to imaginative collaborations between choreographers and film directors. It found that Britain enjoys a high international reputation for dance film and, yet, ask for DVDs or downloads of this work and there is hardly anything. BBC and Channel 4 archives include wonderful but inaccessible material. These are missed opportunities. All of them will need investment of some kind. Some may have commercial potential and in time bring a financial return. Others will not but their social and cultural returns could justify investment.

We need today's public engagers to carry on the tradition of Kenneth Clark, Jacob Bronowski and Nikolaus Pevsner. Nearly 40 years on, the social, economic, cultural and technological context has changed and so a straightforward transplant of 'Civilisation' (1969), 'The Ascent of Man' (1973) or 'The Buildings of England' (1951-74) would be quite inappropriate. Nevertheless, such is their power that these gigantic achievements still resonate today. 'Civilisation' and 'The Ascent of Man' are available on DVD and a new Pevsner series is well under way and successful.

## Artists and the prism of the accessibility industry

Artists and arts organisations have a shared interest in delivering the best public engagement initiatives possible. They should pull together.

That's rather a bland statement, but it implies enormous change. Take the example of literature. Between the public and novelists, short story writers and poets is a complex supply chain of intermediaries. Some are commercial: literary agents, specialist public relations consultancies (Coleman Getty, for example) and bookshops. Some receive public investment: literature and storytelling development agencies, residencies by writers in settings such as prisons, translation of important foreign work and a few individuals. Some are supported by the private sector: the Man Booker and Orange Prizes, for instance. Literature festivals tend to be publicly and privately funded. We think of publishers as commercial but public funding is used to help cover the 'cost of publishing works of literary/cultural merit that represent some financial risk'<sup>14</sup> and to subsidise some literary magazines and a few publishing houses such as Bloodaxe, Carcanet and Peepal Tree Press.

Is everyone in the supply chain committed to the best public engagement initiatives possible? Does everyone pull together on this? The answers are no and no. If public engagement is to work, a commitment to it must be present throughout the supply chain.

## A source of refreshment

The desired culture and habit of self-assessment and constructive peer criticism amongst artists has already been discussed. As McMaster highlighted, the need is more widespread and he identifies four elements that best support talented practitioners – artists and those working in arts organisations: mentoring, networking with others and seeing their work, R&D and the funding system actively seeking out and supporting individual artists and producers.<sup>15</sup> There needs to be more and it needs to be thorough and far-reaching.

To counteract the entrenched atomisation of the arts, all McMaster's proposed opportunities must extend beyond the confines of practitioners' artforms and beyond the arts altogether, finding help and drawing inspiration from commerce, government and civil society in the UK and abroad: recruiting mentors from the wider creative industries and civil society organisations, networking with those involved in public engagement with science, seeing how professional sport is planned, presented and administered, and R&D into how technology would create new bridges between artists and the public. This could be so enriching. It could apply to all the functions of an arts organisation: policy, planning, programming, marketing, dissemination, human resources, finance, technology and so on. It would also help reveal new common ground and refresh our appreciation of why the arts are special.

McMaster has no recommendations on critics or the media. Critics and other journalists writing about the arts may have a lonely, unloved role and be dismissed as tawdry old hacks but robust, disinterested, serious journalism based on informed scrutiny and judgement is a fine calling. It develops critical awareness independent of the arts' own puff, it faces up to charges of elitism and being out of touch with audiences, it knows the difference between artistic and financial success, and it helps build an evidence base of artistic achievement.

Such rigour would also be enhanced by picking up on lessons in performance measurement, evidence and accountability. Non-arts civil society organisations are much better at this. They are also better than the commercial sector. The tools for assessing charities developed by New Philanthropy Capital, the Big Lottery's work on outcomes and work in Holland by the Noaber and Dob Foundations on social return on investment are just three examples of excellent and highly relevant work. Currently, arts organisations have limited understanding of outcomes, a poor record of building up a body of evidence of the effects of the arts and hence a vulnerability when it comes to accountability. The UK public has only 'moderate' trust in charities and 'do not appreciate the full range of benefits that they receive from charities'.<sup>16</sup> Arts charities are part of this.

## Conclusion

Paradoxically, arts organisations are both over-extended and under-extended. Sometimes, instead of connecting artists and citizens, they can get in the way. They are behind the game. Brian McMaster cited the example of technology. He could also have pointed to business models, marketing, pricing and charging, modes of dissemination, independently produced and peer reviewed evidence, working with the media or public engagement (in the specific sense proposed here).

Before we get too depressed, all of this is solvable. It would be very difficult for a single arts organisation to do it on its own especially in an industry which is so atomised. As we have discovered, the problems are endemic. And yet, many artists and arts organisations know that change is essential and they are feeling their way to new types of practice. So is the state. But the breakthrough has not arrived.

The state is an immensely powerful player. We have already asked ourselves whether arts organisations sit awkwardly between artists and the public. The state's influence is of a different magnitude. The state can cause multiple blockages or create the context for exhilarating progress. The next chapter looks at what the UK state is doing.

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## Chapter 6

# THAT SINKING FEELING – THE PATHOLOGY OF TODAY’S STATE ARTS BODIES

## End of a golden era

With a chapter title like that, you may be expecting a wholesale condemnation and dismantling of what has been achieved in the last sixty years. The state system is certainly creaking.<sup>1</sup> Radical transformation is called for. People are looking for better ways of thinking and doing, new governmental institutions and new kinds of investment. We can, though, build on much of the post World War 2 legacy. The state has proved that it has a role to play in developing the arts and creating a more fertile context for the arts to flourish. It has widened accessibility to the arts. The arm’s length principle remains crucial for artistic freedom, our democracy and the openness of our society.

The arts are afloat. Before his ten year tenure, Tony Blair said that he would make the arts and culture part of his government’s core script. At the end of his decade, he could fairly claim that ‘Government funding has doubled since 1997 [well, 73% in real terms] and is now done on a more stable 3-year basis’. The ‘Cool Britannia’ campaign may be a bad and thankfully faded memory but the ‘Creative Britain’ label seems to be sticking. Britons seem happy with a commitment both to the country’s artistic heritage and its creative artistic progress. A buoyant Christopher Frayling, Chairman of Arts Council England, said: ‘People keep saying that the golden age for the arts was the 1950s, but I say that it is right here, right now.’ Blair was happy to concur.

Money is essential but the concern and the malaise are not primarily about money. They are about more important things: giving space to the artist, patient suspension of disbelief in what the artist then produces, the arts embracing the live/non-live divide, spanning the for-profit/not-for-profit divide, new energy behind public engagement, the marriage of the arts and democracy, and the rewards to society of granting artistic freedom of expression. As the MMM programme has it, the mission comes first and the models are then devised to accomplish the mission. Only then is money discussed.

Nor is the malaise primarily about state arts bodies’ operational failures. The latest Arts Council England cull at the end of 2007 and beginning of 2008 was wrong – wrongly conceived and wrongly executed. This has been analysed by Baroness Mackintosh and responded to by the still relatively new Chief Executive, Alan Davey.<sup>2, 3</sup> However, that and other failures are symptoms of something more profound.

The problem is not even limited to the internal structures of state arts bodies. Reducing bureaucracy and streamlining is familiar talk. It is being used, for example, to justify the merging of Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council into Creative Scotland. No – state arts bodies are facing challenges more of the order of John Reid’s now famous declaration that the entire Home Office was ‘fit for purpose when I left it in 1997’ but by May 2006 he had changed his view, using words such as ‘dysfunctional’ and ‘wholesale transformation’.

## The creak of timbers

The greatest challenge to the state is not the applied or functional artist working in a predominantly commercial arena. John Galliano may create the most bizarre confection, incomprehensible to politicians and civil servants, but if it is showered with designer magazine accolades, if it sells and if it inspires fresh ideas for the high street, the dress passes the test of designer fashion. Recalling Vitruvius’ test for good architecture, if it has commodity (it can be worn), firmness (it doesn’t fall apart at the seams) and delight (it causes a stir), it works as a dress. For the state, that is enough. It can disregard the expressive and symbolic aspects of what Galliano has made.

With pure art it is not so straightforward. Commodity and firmness remain relevant but they are in the background. If bits fall off the tiger shark in Damien Hirst’s ‘The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living’ or if the formaldehyde goes cloudy, the making of the work can be criticised, but the work’s expressive and symbolic qualities remain untouched and in the foreground. Criticise the craft and expect an askance look. You are missing the point.

After World War 2, the British government was looking to foster artistic expression within the high arts. It had the less complicated aim of giving more people access to the high arts. Venturing too deep into the unpredictable waters of artistic expression would have been foolish. The political gains would never be large and the losses could release nightmares in the House, at the ballot box and in the popular press. The state wanted a way to deflect discussion away from the expressive and symbolic. Cue the arm’s length principle: pass decision-making to a quasi-autonomous body.

So today we have quasi-autonomous arts councils and film councils. The key requirements in their Royal Charters have barely changed in sixty years. There are just two: quality and accessibility. Here, as an example, are the phrases from Arts Council England’s Royal Charter: ‘to develop and improve the knowledge, understanding and practice of the arts’ and ‘to increase the accessibility of the arts to the public’. The objects in the British Film Institute’s Royal Charter are ‘to encourage the development of the arts of film, television and the moving image throughout Our United Kingdom, to promote their use as a record of contemporary life and manners, to promote education about film, television and the moving image generally, and their impact on society, to promote access to and appreciation of the widest possible range of British and world cinema and to establish, care for and develop collections reflecting the moving image history and heritage of Our United Kingdom.’

## Incremental inertia

In 1946 when CEMA became the Arts Council of Great Britain, the quality-plus-accessibility concept was simpler. 'Quality' meant the high arts at their best and 'accessibility' meant, to quote the 1945 Labour Party manifesto, 'By the provision of concert halls, modern libraries, theatres and suitable civic centres, we desire to assure to our people full access to the great heritage of culture in this nation.'

Today, the picture is a great deal more complex. The authoritative cultural leadership of 1945 has yielded to something more exciting and with the potential for a more fruitful marriage of democracy and culture.

The arts council model cannot cope with this complexity. Changes have of course been made but they have too often been piecemeal and inadequate. They have failed to grasp the full import of the large cultural forces swirling around elsewhere in society. A former Director of Culture at Manchester City Council had a fine phrase for this: 'incremental inertia'.

The arts and film council model has failed to alter significantly the social character of audiences for the arts activities it subsidises. Those audiences are still skewed strongly to white, middle class and university educated people. In April 2007, Arts Council England failed to meet DCMS targets for reaching adults from disabled, socially excluded and Black and Minority Ethnic groups. It was found that there had been no significant change in either attendance or participation over the previous five years.<sup>4</sup>

It has failed more generally on accessibility. To quote an Arts Council England report of April 2008, 'even if we were able to eliminate the inequalities in arts attendance associated with education, social status, ethnicity, poor health and so on, a large proportion of the population would still choose not to engage in the arts. Should arts policy makers be concerned about this? Insofar as non-engagement with the arts is a matter of lifestyle choice, or "self-exclusion", should the state still intervene?'<sup>5</sup> 'Self-exclusion'? Pardon? This takes the passivity of accessibility work to a new low. After sixty years of this work, not only is it the public's fault if they do not attend or participate in live arts events subsidised by an arts council. We now have a name for the condition they are suffering from.<sup>6</sup>

The model has stayed heavily committed to subsidising the live arts while, around it, the recording industry, broadcasting, distribution on the web, and megastores for books, CDs and DVDs have mushroomed. In terms of economics and public take-up, the work of arts council-funded organisations was overtaken many years ago. It is not surprising then that most people's experience of the arts is non-live. They can gain so much from the non-live, and this is valuable in itself and as a background to the live experience. Arts councils have failed to understand and respond.

They have also been disingenuous about the relative importance of the present and the past. Much of the policy talk is about the new, the contemporary and the innovative. However, in practice, the organisations which receive the largest slices of public funding are the old and established. The arts may be an essential part of our collective memory – of course they are – but no state institution charged with supporting the arts will hold on to public trust if policy and practice pull in different directions.

The tradition of skewing investment towards attendance and away from participation persists. Arts councils are still tied to old policies which see attendance at professional arts activity as superior to participation in amateur and community activity. Modest changes took place in response to the vigorous community arts movement of the 1970s. By the 1990s, the government was becoming increasingly convinced of participation in the arts – as a contributor to education, creativity, active citizenship and community cohesion. Arts councils failed to respond adequately – more incremental inertia. Instead, special initiatives by government were necessary. A separate Lottery-funded body, Youth Music, was created to ‘support music-making activities for some of the UK’s most disadvantaged children and young people’. Creative Partnerships had to be added as a ‘creative learning programme, designed to develop the skills of young people across England, raising their aspirations and achievements, and opening up more opportunities for their futures.’ The arts councils should have been the natural, trusted home for such initiatives. Setting up and running new institutions and schemes is an expensive way to move forward and it creates unnecessary complexity.

The incremental inertia continues. Recommendations in the government’s Creative Britain report of February 2008 include a ‘£0.5 million pilot scheme to provide young musicians in deprived areas with opportunities to practise and perform live, starting with at least 10 new rehearsal spaces equipped to professional standards’.<sup>7</sup> This is being rolled out but not administered by arts councils. Their philosophy and practices would jar with such an initiative.

## Why?

Firstly, arts councils have great difficulty with popular culture. The roots of this lie in the 1940s. The canon of ‘great’ art was a minority taste. CEMA was for ‘great’ art while another war-time organisation, ENSA, toured popular culture to the troops and those doing war work. It may have been jokingly known as Every Night Something Awful (its formal title was the Entertainments National Service Association) but it was a vast worldwide operation which dwarfed CEMA. By the autumn of 1943 the number of ENSA performances in the UK alone had risen to 3,750 per week.<sup>8</sup> From September 1939 to March 1946, the grand total of ENSA performances given to HM Forces and the various branches of industry was 2,656,565.<sup>9</sup> That represents a delivery rate of over 400,000 events per year.

We might wonder how differently the state’s relationship with the arts might have been if the ENSA approach of working with popular culture had continued in peacetime. Today’s

creative industries might have a place in very different, more diverse arts councils. After all, shouldn't the state's involvement in culture take as its starting point all forms of artistic expression and not a restricted range? This is not to say that globalised pop, with its terror of difference and causing offence, deserves state investment. The many facets of popular culture, from the profound slow burns to quick hits we talked about earlier, all contribute to today's arts and to ignore them is bizarre.

Secondly, arts councils largely support not-for-profit organisations, usually constituted as companies limited by guarantee with charitable status, and the support is in the form of grants. Arts councils therefore are limited in the range of organisations they invest in and limited in the forms of finance they offer. If Creative Britain's pilot scheme is best delivered by a commercial organisation, then why rule that organisation out? If the best way to finance the pilot scheme is not a grant but a loan then why get hung up on using a grant? MMM research has highlighted that grant-making, while arts councils' investment of choice, omits a wide range of effective financial instruments with varying degrees of risk and financial return on investment. This is everyday work for private equity, regional development agencies and BERR (formerly the Department of Trade & Industry). Here are some examples: loans – short or medium term, interest free or low interest; patient recoverable capital – this is risk capital, usually in the form of loans that have very patient terms; underwriting – not even paying the money over but providing the 'comfort' that may be needed to enable a charity to risk some resources; an equity stake.<sup>10</sup> When used in the right context for the right reasons, such investments can be the best way of helping an arts organisation and, from the investor's point of view, some or all of the money can be recycled.

A consequence of arts councils' support for not-for-profit organisations is that they can drive out commercial services because they appear to be over-priced, even though those commercial services might be of higher quality. For example, arts councils have subsidised arts marketing and audience development organisations who, amongst other things, sell audience research services. Successful commercial companies provide high quality audience research services. Because of arts council subsidy, the subsidised organisations can undercut the commercial providers. The market is skewed and for no good reason.

## Arts councils and wider society

One conclusion of the Work Foundation's report 'Staying Ahead' is this: 'Today there is growing recognition of the subtle but important linkages between the vitality of the creative core, the creative industries beyond and creativity in the wider economy – although uncovering their exact extent is made very difficult because of a paucity of evidence and data.'<sup>11</sup> Later it underlines the importance of the creative core: 'The necessary if insufficient precondition for creative industry success is a flourishing core. Without a supply of high quality creative content and the wider structures that nurture and incubate there would be no indigenous content to commercialise.'<sup>12</sup>

We must therefore pan out and see arts councils in the wider context of our changing society. But the picture is fuzzy. Economic evidence and data is patchy. It adds a bit of clarity but neglects the many artistic and wider cultural and social aspects. Understanding all the effects of artists, works of art, arts organisations and arts councils – a blend of a science and an art – is still underdeveloped. It is made more difficult because many of the concepts are outmoded. And that includes the big ones, ‘the arts’ and ‘accessibility’.

Others are being used with more familiarity and confidence in government and elsewhere in civil society than within the arts. The inputs-outputs-outcomes-impact distinction is one of the most important.<sup>13</sup> New methodologies are needed which draw together hard quantitative data, qualitative data and true-life stories. The hard data on its own is not enough. As Albert Einstein said, ‘not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.’ Current metrics are inadequate and, once we have them, they need to be used with skill – how the data is assembled and how it is presented to the unconvinced. We may then bring into focus the power and impact of the arts and the outcomes and impact achieved by arts councils.

Without good evidence, it is difficult to do good R&D. If, as we found in the previous chapter, there are not the strong networks and routines for sharing experiences and lessons, it is doubly difficult.

Improvements and innovations are badly needed. McMaster’s concern about technology is one of many. We can do better and many want to. The changing economic, social and cultural context throws up new challenges, problems and demands for improvement and innovation. Without evidence, and shared experiences and lessons, arts councils’ responses will be insufficient and, quite possibly, wrongly directed.

Where, for example, is arts councils’ contribution to the difficult debate about multiculturalism, identity and Britishness? Many initiatives are aimed at helping individual communities develop but too little is done to connect different communities. The pillars of bridges are often there and more are being built but the spans are missing. The largest project in recent years was a £5 million programme called ‘decibel’. Its aims were ‘increasing respect and recognition for work by artists and organisations from the African, Asian and Caribbean sector; helping to empower British-based African, Asian and Caribbean artists and companies; promoting the acceptance of many voices’.<sup>14</sup> A focus on pillars more than spans continues in a debate begun by an Arts Council England-commissioned report of July 2008 called ‘Speaking Truth to Power – a diversity of voices in theatre and the arts in England’.<sup>15</sup> This brings attention to diversity in Britain but offers no answer to the widespread evidence of social fragmentation and concerns about shared Britishness.

We know that the arts have a role here. Many artists have proved it, moving ahead from what Anish Kapoor rightly criticises as the ‘cheap and trivial’ blending of cultures, the

magpie picking of exotic titbits.<sup>16</sup> But where are the initiatives, except in Northern Ireland, which help people explore the different aspects of their identities, create safe spaces for deliberation, build mutual respect and understanding, and ultimately heal this dangerous segregation?

Tony Blair wanted the arts to be part of his government's core script but one wonders whether arts councils are up to the task. Any funder has to decide how much they are going to respond to applications and how much they are going to take their own initiatives. These are not mutually exclusive approaches. Funding, at its best, sets up a virtuous circle between the two. Applications help a funder assemble a picture of issues, problems and opportunities, and each applicant explains how they are part of the solution. Intelligence accumulates and this can embolden a funder to take initiatives of its own. Before going too far, further research may be needed to complement what has been gleaned from applicants. A thought through initiative then goes ahead and its lessons can be fed back to past and potential applicants.

The advantage of this method is that attention is properly given to the arts' and society's issues and problems and not just to the financial need of a particular organisation. Its success depends on the right research and plenty of communication. Artists, arts organisations and arts councils are not good at either. Arts councils are still too caught up in responsive grant-making to be capable of engaging properly with wider artistic and social challenges.

One of the greatest challenges is constructing new settlements between citizen and expert. It affects politics, education, healthcare and other public services, private companies' ability to operate, and even now how civil society organisations function. We are moving to a world of customisation, personalisation and individualism and the authoritative expert with reduced authority. This is particularly stark in politics with falling figures for engagement in active politics, voting in elections, and interest in parliament, councils and the European Union. It is the expert – the artist, teacher, doctor, lawyer, politician – who faces a crisis of public legitimacy. Experts' monopolising decision-making is no longer acceptable. This explains, in politics, the advent of citizens' panels. Citizens will be involved more in decisions on local government expenditure; the Department of Communities & Local Government is encouraging all local authorities to use what it calls 'participatory budgeting'. There is a growing trend for the transfer of community assets from councils to not-for-profit bodies outside the representative democratic system.<sup>17</sup> The distinction we have drawn between accessibility and public engagement is useful here too. Accessibility is about making voting as easy as possible. Public engagement is about breaking the monopoly on political power, involving citizens in the development and delivery of public services, and giving them joint control with representative democratic bodies over more and more aspects of their lives.

Artistic directors, arts organisation chief executives, programmers and curators cannot cocoon themselves from this change. They are authority figures and must now share their

monopoly on artistic decision-making with audiences and participants. Nor can state arts bodies deny the trend and try to block it any longer. Instead, they must help smooth the transition. Admittedly, this is not easy. New ideas, experiments and innovation are essential. Looking across at politics, ideas such as citizens' panels are not fully elaborated and, in practice, they are still clunky. They are nevertheless a genuine attempt to break politicians' monopoly on politics.

Perhaps this may turn out to be the salvation of local government's disappointing relationship with the arts. The arts have been condemned to be what is called a 'discretionary function' of local government. A local authority is not obliged to spend anything on the arts. In 1948, the ceiling was removed and local authorities could spend as much as they liked. It had little effect. Some, of course, have made connections between the arts and economic regeneration, the wellbeing of citizens and education, and have decided to invest large sums. A few such as Birmingham, Glasgow and Gateshead have enjoyed massive economic, social and cultural returns on their investment. Once we have robust evidence for the arts' contribution to these and other areas of local life, it will be time to resume the campaign for the arts to be a 'statutory function'.

Artistic innovation should engage more with this wider context. It will happen. As the missing evidence and data is assembled, as state arts bodies become more outward-facing, as arts professionals search for new ways to engage the public, the nature of artistic innovation will change. New ways of making work will continue to be devised and tested. Alongside them will be new ideas, models and practices for arts professionals to connect with the world outside the arts, share knowledge, build viable businesses and much more. In our complex mixed economy and with the lack of capital behind the arts, state arts bodies have a vital role.

## The ballad of inhibited dependency

What effect do state arts bodies as they are now have on the arts? It can be summarised quite simply. Echoing the Brecht/Weill ballad in 'The Threepenny Opera', they breed a culture of dependency – not sexual in this case but, rather, inhibited dependency.

Artforms and arts organisations are confined in so many ways. They sing the funders' song of restricted definitions of the arts: popular culture, even the most challenging and with the slowest burn, has low status; artforms which are low in the funding firmament – literature, for example – stay there. Participation is marginalised. The non-live is marginalised.

The funders' emphasis is mainly on the supply side: opera companies, orchestras, galleries, theatres; productions, exhibitions, performances. The demand side is neglected: the citizen, audience member and arts participant are not taken as seriously as they should be. Their voices are not listened to properly, and their attitudes are inadequately researched and understood. Commercial organisations and social enterprises working in the arts are given little attention. Linked to this, the form of investment is mainly the grant.



Links with science, other humanities and sport are neglected, parallels are denied in favour of special pleading for the arts, and insularity prevails over engagement.

The supply/demand imbalance has been a similar problem in the United States. An excellent 2001 report from the US, 'The Performing Arts in a New Era', has been mentioned a couple of times already. It offers this helpful perspective on the supply/demand imbalance. 'Until recently, the policy debate has been too narrowly focused on supporting the production and performance of the arts—"supply" strategies—rather than stimulating public involvement in the arts—"demand" strategies. A new framework that puts the public benefits of the arts at the center of the discussion will require approaches designed to increase individual exposure, knowledge, and access to the arts. Future research should examine how individual tastes for the arts are formed and how the public and private benefits of the arts can be identified and measured, so that policymakers can explore more diversified and innovative approaches to promoting the arts in American society.'<sup>18</sup>

All this confinement stifles business growth. Popular culture may have low status amongst state arts funders but it is by definition more bankable. CDs, DVDs, books, arts-related merchandise and other non-live commodities can be produced and be delivered to your door. Non-live streaming, narrowcasts and broadcasts can come right into your home. If the demand is there, supply can in theory expand to meet it. A live event is limited by a venue's finite capacity, artists' finite diaries, and audiences' finite means to buy tickets and travel. Arts organisations have a poor understanding of business development opportunities let alone an understanding of the complex economic drivers of the arts and how artistic creativity ripples out into the wider economy and society.

An example of this is the arts' near universal failure to charge properly for work in schools, hospitals, prisons and other community settings. The commercial sector supplies services to the public sector – from waste disposal to education software to management consultancy. These are for-profit services sold commercially. It is unthinkable that a pharmaceutical company would seek funding to bridge a gap between the price of medicines and what the NHS is prepared to pay – at least in the developed world. Similarly, civil society organisations have been energetic in advocating 'Full Cost Recovery'. Fundraising is a way of life for the sector and the public sector has exploited this, looking to get services at below cost with the difference made up with fundraising. No longer. Full Cost Recovery may be only a few years old but already it is well established. It has helped civil society organisations understand and allocate core costs, and it is backed up by a framework called the Compact (launched in 1998) and by individual agreements called Compacts between civil society and public sector organisations. From 2007, there has been a Commissioner for the Compact to oversee the relationship between the third and public sectors. Fundraising is reserved for R&D and programmes not directed at the public sector as well as policy development, advocacy and campaigning.

Full Cost Recovery has led to the massive growth of civil society organisations bidding for, getting and delivering public sector contracts. Take the example of Addaction, a drug and

alcohol treatment charity. Its annual income has grown from £7 million in 2000/01 to £29.5 million in 2006/07. This has largely been due to Full Cost Recovery contracts from primary care trusts and drug action teams.

Unlike Addaction, arts organisations are not providing statutory services. Nevertheless, they deliver services to the public sector and they claim that these services are powerful contributors to education, health, prisoner rehabilitation and so on. The Full Cost Recovery approach should apply. Backed up by independent research proving the efficacy of arts programmes in various social settings, the approach should work. Instead of arts organisations looking to state arts funders and trusts and foundations, they should look to the clients to cover the cost. Demand may be tighter now because of the tough 2007 Comprehensive Spending Review but that change is small relative to the decade's large real-terms growth in public expenditure on education, health and other public services.

More of this public money should have found its way into the bank accounts of arts organisations. However, too often, one hears the feeble excuse that the school, local authority children's service, NHS hospital, primary care trust or other public sector client does not have the money. This is ridiculous. The truth is that many arts organisations have committed themselves to delivering in education, health and other public services. However, a mix of poor research evidence of the arts' benefits plus poor negotiation skills plus a culture of grant dependency leaves arts organisations, like the old civil society sector, spending precious time fundraising rather than growing their businesses. Not seeking Full Cost Recovery means that scaling up is never possible. This is a long way from the 'core script'.

State arts bodies are complicit in this. By subsidising the supplier, they condemn arts organisations to life in a market which will never take off and reach its full potential. Public purchasers do not know the full cost (nor is it usual for the arts organisations to have calculated it), they are not asked to pay it and they have not developed the habit of paying it. Perhaps, lurking behind this is a fear amongst state arts bodies and arts organisations that their product is not as saleable and valuable as they would like the rest of society to believe and judge. If the research and data were more substantial, available and widely accepted, then the value of the arts in all these settings would be stated as fact and not, as still so often happens, as belief. There would be a rich, dynamic relationship between arts organisations and their public sector clients. Instead arts organisations are sucked into a safe but ultimately debilitating relationship not with the people they want to benefit but with state arts bodies.

The route down the cul-de-sac runs like this. Arts organisations first receive 'project grants' – one-off investments for particular initiatives with no promise of future investment. Later, if they are willing to adopt the inhibited vision of state funders, they can receive general support, guaranteed for three years. Arts Council England calls its dependent brood of nearly 1,000 organisations 'RFOs' – regularly funded organisations. The Scottish Arts Council calls them Foundation Organisations. These commitments clog the funding system

up. As their number and the size of grants increase, arts councils' manoeuvrability drops and the power of funded arts organisations to entrench themselves and resist change rises. We are back to incremental inertia and the occasional harsh cull, most dramatically in the 'Glory of the Garden' pruning of 1984 and in 2007/08. And, in all of this, there is minimal accountability to the client, whether public service, audiences, participants or citizens. All this inhibits growth and breeds dependency.

How different it might have been if arts councils had given more emphasis to economic development when deciding what to support and at what level. And arts organisations stay inhibited and dependent because the building up of spare resources is discouraged. The excuse given is that this ensures that public money goes to those most in need. How strange! The idea that public money should go to anyone other than those best placed to achieve valuable public outcomes is ludicrous.

Many arts organisations bump along with rickety balance sheets. In his 'The Art of Dying' article for MMM, John Knell surveys 'too many undercapitalised arts organisations, operating at near breaking point organisationally and financially, whose main preoccupation is survival diverting their energies from the central mission of cultural creativity'.<sup>19</sup> To avoid this, spare resources are crucial and they can be of various kinds. There is money for a rainy day or a bad season, of course. There is money for grabbing a thrilling opportunity that comes along and needs a swift response. There is money for investing in sustained research and development. Arts organisations should have all three kinds of reserve.

## The rocky marriage of quality and accessibility

As we discuss these issues, we could get depressed. But, if we open our eyes to the whole artistic universe, it widens, assumes new shapes and is ever more richly coloured. We can sense the possibilities as we see the limitations of the current system and realise that it could be done differently. The arts in the UK are complex. Artforms are rich in their diversity. Ways of linking artists and the public are proliferating. And the universe continues to expand.

Inhibition and dependency are drags.

When you embrace this Big Bang universe, the idea of marrying quality and accessibility in some simple 1946 way becomes ludicrous. If we were building a system today for state support of the arts, we surely wouldn't lump the two together.

Artistic quality arises unexpectedly out of hours of exploration and experimentation. A new work may then spring whole into the mind and be realised quickly. It often happened for Mozart like that. Brahms, on the other hand, was daunted about writing his first symphony and took over 20 years to complete it. Artists are their own severe critics. They swing between exhilaration at creating something special and gloom at producing rubbish.

Measuring artistic quality is immensely difficult. The nearest one can get is to gather the views of other artists, trainers of artists and critics and set this alongside the views of selected members of the public (a kind of citizen's panel, perhaps). As with triangulation in the drawing of maps, get a good number of different people to look at the work of art from a good number of different standpoints and a consensus tends to emerge.

Public engagement is a more objective process. Good attitude research and market research rely on disciplines within social science and statistics. Imagination is certainly needed to find effective ways to connect artists' work with the public but their results can be measured. Attendance figures, questionnaires on the experience and outcomes of arts participation, financial return and so on: an objective picture can be assembled.

Artistic quality and public engagement do converge eventually. That moment when someone reads a poem, watches a DVD at home, attends a street arts festival or takes part in a dance class is the moment of contact. The danger lies in forcing an early marriage. Public engagement is quick and standard, not responsive to the individual artwork. Audiences and participants are presented with work they are ill-prepared for. Free artistic expression is compromised, and the more challenging the work of art the greater the compromise. A precious spirit of adventure is lost in a retreat to I-know-what-I-like familiarity.

It doesn't help if you leave artists out of the picture. Arts councils have been long-term ditherers about involving artists in decision-making. The era of Gerry Robinson as Arts Council England Chairman opened with a renewed commitment to have artists on the overall Council. Eminent artists including Deborah Bull, Anthony Gormley and Anish Kapoor joined up. Immediately before, not a single artist sat on the Council. After Robinson, the pendulum swung away from artists so that, currently, artists form only 21% of the Council. Brian McMaster does not address this but, usefully, he recommends: 'the board of every publicly funded organisation must include at least two artists or practitioners'.<sup>20</sup>

## Chopped off at the elbow?

Where on earth are we with the arm's length principle? The struggle over it is as old as arts councils, and still fundamental disagreements can flare up.

Back in a February 2005 speech, Christopher Frayling, Arts Council England Chairman, complained 'The distance between the Arts Council and government is narrowing ... The DCMS is becoming more "hands on"... and commitment to the benefits of the arm's length principle may be slowly ebbing away... the length of the arm has become very short indeed – almost Venus de Milo length.'<sup>21</sup> What he did not say is that, for years, an odd mix of galleries in England from the largest to the Wallace Collection is directly funded by the state. Nor incidentally did he admit that the Venus de Milo is in the Louvre, not at arm's length from the French state but directly funded. In 2006/07 Scotland's five 'national companies' (National Theatre of Scotland, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Scottish

Ballet, Scottish Chamber Orchestra and Scottish Opera) were funded by the Scottish Arts Council. In April 2007, the principle was ditched completely and the national companies moved to a direct funding relationship with the Scottish Government. In March 2008 Geraint Talfan Davies, Chairman of the Arts Council of Wales until 2006, published 'At Arm's Length' which includes the story of a messy but successful battle to keep the arm's length principle in Welsh arts funding.

The principle's history in the UK is one of woolly thinking, clashes of beliefs, accusations of dishonour, posturing and politicking. Most recently, in March 2008, there was a skirmish about an email obtained under freedom of information legislation with Jeremy Hunt, the Shadow Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport, claiming that the DCMS were just 'paying lip service to the arm's length principle'.<sup>22</sup>

A cooler, sharper analysis is needed.

The usual case for the principle was put by Scottish Arts Council Chief Executive, Graham Berry, when direct government funding of the five national companies was proposed: 'The arm's-length principle is a valuable protection for freedom of expression, allowing the presentation of ideas which are challenging, controversial or critical, without undue influence or interference from investors. ... we believe [it] supports a healthy, transparent and equitable distribution of responsibility for developing the arts in Scotland.'<sup>23</sup>

Abandonment of the principle carries great risks. One is that arts funding becomes politicised, with politicians' and even civil servants' prejudices governing artistic choices and determining awards. A second is that arts councils become too closely associated with a particular set of public policies and a particular group of politicians and then lose out when policies and politicians change. The third risk is that policymakers may lose sight of what is uniquely valuable about the arts, judging arts activities only on their contributions to outcomes such as job creation or raising school scores. The arts may then be eclipsed by other programmes promising better returns.

The case against has several facets. Firstly, the principle removes arts councils from the loop between ordinary citizens and their elected representatives. Public value is typically achieved through a process that takes into account not only the views of arts organisations and artists but also those of the broader public and their elected representatives. The arm's length principle omits elected representatives from this process. Arts Councils therefore create a problem of public legitimacy for themselves. Secondly, given the power of the arts claimed by arts councils, the arts should surely be integral to national, regional and local policy making and the strategies and implementation that flow from policies. They are not, though, because the arm's length principle keeps arts councils at a distance from this work. Thirdly, the principle fails artists. By claiming that their decisions should not be discussed in the Houses of Parliament, arts councils are preventing democratic debate about artists and their work. A mature democracy should be able to have such debates. What an artist

makes and says deserves to be discussed within democracy's highest forum. Preventing it neuters the artist. Lastly, there is a sufficient check in arts councils because they are constituted as independent of the state. They are governed by boards made up of volunteers, whose careers and incomes do not depend on their board positions, who cannot easily be removed and the results of whose decision-making are publicly available.<sup>24</sup>

It is time for structural change to break through the nonsense about the arts wishing to be at the top table with government and wanting to hold on to the arm's length principle. You cannot simultaneously be at the top table and at arm's length from it.

## Progress to a new golden era

It's a mess. Even with the fair winds of greater public investment and an invitation to the top table, it's a mess. Incremental inertia is everywhere. Arts organisations are locked into inhibited dependency with their public funders. Quality and accessibility are wrongly coupled. The arm's length principle is misunderstood. And the citizen is too often left out of the loop.

But within all this mess are the seeds of a rewarding new chapter for artists and the public and the building of bridges between them.

## NOTES

1. I am far from alone in this view. See, for example, Charlie Tims and Shelagh Wright, *So, What Do You Do? – A new question for policy in the creative age*, Demos 2007
2. Genista McIntosh, *A review of Arts Council England's regularly funded organisations investment strategy 2007/08*, June 2008
3. Alan Davey, *Review of Arts Council England's regularly funded organisations investment strategy 2007-08 – Lessons learned*, Arts Council England, July 2008
4. Arts Council England, *Final report on PSA target 2 on the take-up of cultural opportunities by people aged 20 and over from priority groups*, April 2007, p2
5. Catherine Bunting, Tak Wing Chan, John Goldthorpe, Emily Keaney, Anni Oskala, *From indifference to enthusiasm: patterns of arts attendance in England*, Arts Council England April 2008, pp 67, 68
6. Against the background of the now familiar phrase 'social exclusion', sociologists' use of 'self-exclusion' jars. By 'self-exclusion' sociologists mean that, even if the public had perfect information about available live arts events, they would still choose not to attend them because what is on offer is not relevant or meaningful. 'Self-exclusion' is a pro-active choice to reject something because it does not appeal, as opposed to 'social exclusion' where people are prevented from engaging because of social or economic barriers.
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8. Basil Dean, *The Theatre at War*, Harrap 1956 p374
9. *Ibid.* p541
10. David Carrington's website, [www.davidcarrington.net](http://www.davidcarrington.net), explores these ideas in more detail
11. Work Foundation, *Staying ahead: the economic performance of the UK's creative industries*, DCMS 2007, p16
12. *Ibid.* p106
13. For more on inputs, outputs, outcomes and impact, see amongst many Charity Evaluation Services ([www.ces-vol.org.uk](http://www.ces-vol.org.uk)), National Council for Voluntary Organisations ([www.ncvo-vol.org.uk](http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk)) and the Big Lottery ([www.biglotteryfund.org.uk](http://www.biglotteryfund.org.uk))
14. ACE decibel evaluation, p2
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22. Reported in the Guardian, 10 March 2008
23. Letter to James Boyle, Chair of the Cultural Commission, and Patricia Ferguson, Minister for Tourism, Culture & Sport, quoted in The Sunday Herald, 19 June 2005
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## Chapter 7

# NEW FLOW – NEW ORGANISATIONS

## Flow

Mihaly Csikszentmihályi (pronounced 'chicks sent me high' according to the man himself) wrote his classic work 'Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience' in 1990.

Csikszentmihályi's theory is that people are most happy when they are in a state of complete absorption in what they are doing – in a state of 'flow'. Csikszentmihályi described this state as 'being completely involved in an activity for its own sake. The ego falls away. Time flies. Every action, movement, and thought follows inevitably from the previous one, like playing jazz. Your whole being is involved, and you're using your skills to the utmost.' Flow is that point of convergence where your attention and motivation and the situation you are in meet. It is dynamic harmony with constant feedback propelling it forward.

This is not just conjecture or belief. This is not another unsubstantiated assertion of someone working for an arts organisation. Csikszentmihályi has amassed empirical data, surveying people at particular moments about what they were doing and the way they were feeling (along several dimensions). He used a watch which beeped at random times and made his subjects immediately complete a standard survey. For many subjects he followed them for one week a year for several years. The research has been undertaken and confirmed in several countries. Over 250,000 surveys have been done.

Artists know flow. They become absorbed in the act of making. They lose a sense of time and surroundings and any sense of self-consciousness. They narrow down on to the artistic activity. They are driven, intuitively knowing not only where they are heading and when they are on the right course, but also when they have taken a wrong turning and often miraculously, even if it takes a while, how to get back on course. They may swing from strong self-belief to despair but they have a sense of personal control over their creativity. They are impelled to work and they find it rewarding, so there is an effortlessness about it. Strangely, working feels neither too easy nor too difficult – just essential, with moments when you fly and times of big problems that you eventually crack, or discard and move on to something else.

All this chimes well with what Csikszentmihályi has identified as accompanying an experience of flow: clear goals, concentrating and focusing, no self-consciousness, a distorted sense of time, absorption, direct and immediate feedback, the activity being neither too easy nor too difficult, a sense of personal control, and the activity being intrinsically rewarding.<sup>1</sup>

Csikszentmihályi has written about the arts and creativity and much on work. 'It does not seem to be true that work necessarily needs to be unpleasant. It may always have to be hard, or at least harder than doing nothing at all. But there is ample evidence that work can be enjoyable and that, indeed, it is often the most enjoyable part of life.'

Flow is clearly important to artists. It captures the way they work. Csikszentmihályi's is a general theory, though. It sheds light on those between artists and the public: the state arts funders, A&R people, programmers and curators, arts managers and administrators, and the rest. Remembering the daily rush of those in the arts accessibility industry, there is nothing static about it. The long hours are frenetic and the commitment and dedication is palpable. But is it flow?

Are there clear goals? – no, and time isn't found to step back like an artist and play with new ideas, and experiment and sketch before making a full-blown work. Concentrating and focusing? – difficult if the goals are not clear. No self-consciousness? – yes, but not all the time. A distorted sense of time? – possibly. Absorption? – possibly. Direct and immediate feedback? – this may happen within the individual but the arts lack a developed culture of peer review. The activity is neither too easy nor too difficult and a sense of personal control? – again, this is difficult if the goals are not clear. The activity is intrinsically rewarding? – yes, generally speaking.

As earlier chapters have described and as this quick analysis reinforces, we are a long way from flow. Everyone would like to experience flow in their work. It is a useful and important guiding principle as we look to connect artists and citizens in ways that have minimum drag and maximum impulse.

Also, if we get it right for activities which are at the artistic core (dance, drama, film, literature, music and visual arts), then it will create the right spirit for activities which have artistic, expressive or aesthetic aspects (advertising, architecture, crafts, design, designer fashion, software and so on). We will have flow.

## Recasting state support of the arts

In one sense, changes in state support of the arts happen every year. In 2002, Creative Partnerships began its work. In 2003, the Regional Arts Boards were abolished and absorbed into Arts Council England. Much of the work on the BBC's Charter Review took place in 2004, leading to a new charter in 2006. In 2005, the Arts and Humanities Research Board became a research council, rising to equal status with the other research councils. In 2007 the 'transition project' began for merging Scottish Screen and the Scottish Arts Council into a new body, Creative Scotland. The Creative Scotland Bill was presented to the Scottish Parliament on 13 March 2008.

In another sense, there has been no fundamental recasting of state support for culture since 1946. And yet, the arts have changed beyond recognition. Society, with its powerful moulding influence on the arts, is quite different. Artists have been marginalised. The accessibility industry is behind the game. State arts bodies have bred inhibited dependency amongst arts organisations and have underperformed. And, while the quality and accessibility marriage has somehow lasted sixty years, it is now on the rocks.

To get us out of this creaking, clunky, dysfunctional way of doing things, it is time to do four big things.

## Big thing no. 1 – Arts as they are out there

It is time to abandon state arts bodies' narrow definitions of the arts and embrace what is actually happening: the full, delicious cacophony of artistic, expressive and aesthetic activity and what artists and citizens believe the arts to be. We don't know exactly what is out there because of the partial perspectives and the patchy traditions of research of artistic activity within DCMS, arts councils and film councils. What we do know is that people take a broad and imaginative approach to defining 'art'. They have problems defining the more specialist term, 'the arts'. It is not a phrase that they commonly use and, if they are asked to, they incline to 'visual or fine art'.<sup>2</sup> They are much more at home with the names of individual artforms.

This is another instance where a new settlement is needed between the citizen and the expert. State arts body experts have a very particular view of the arts and neither citizen nor artist has been adequately involved in framing understanding of the arts or research into them.

The terrain of all the artforms is complex. There is the spectrum from the slow burn to the quick hit. Profound art can be found in any style in any artform. Some art is commercially viable, although rarely in the early stages of an artist's career. Some art has great social, cultural or educational value but is not commercially viable. Some work has the artistic, expressive or aesthetic aspect to the fore – what would generally be understood as within the artforms. Other work is outside this creative core but still has strong artistic, expressive or aesthetic aspects – work in the list mentioned earlier of advertising, architecture, crafts, design, designer fashion, software and so on.

Who should undertake this recasting work? Candidates include DCMS, who have done some good work researching into the 13 types of creative industry a few years ago. There are the national experts, the Office of National Statistics, whose Omnibus survey is a relevant programme. The Arts and Humanities Research Council does not do this work but might in due course. The lack of an obvious body should not be surprising.

Whatever state arts bodies are considered most appropriate, a consistent approach to all artforms is essential. Equitability, consistency and unity of purpose all demand that the

anomalies are faced up to. At present, the visual arts (remembering that several galleries are funded direct by DCMS), film (through the UK Film Council) and other artforms are treated differently.

## Big thing no. 2 – ARDA

Having reunited artforms under the arts banner, it is time to release artistic quality from its shotgun marriage to accessibility. The two very different activities of origination and dissemination both deserve their own space, distinct, natural philosophy and investment. With origination, this gives us the chance to focus properly on artistic freedom, research, expression and creation. It removes the pressure, often premature and sometimes misplaced, to roll out experiments, go into production, take to the market and put in front of audiences.

Drawing inspiration from science and its six scientific research councils with a combined budget of over £2.8 billion<sup>3</sup>, artists, the arts and wider society need their own arts research and development agency – ARDA, for short.

Its Royal Charter objects might be these:

- (1) To encourage the development of the arts of dance, drama, film (including television and the moving image), literature, music, visual arts, existing and new combinations thereof, and new artforms which may in due course emerge.
- (2) To encourage the development of new and established artists, new talent, skills, and creative and technological innovation in the arts in the UK.
- (3) To assist new and established artists to produce successful and distinctive British works of art.
- (4) To promote and support by any suitable means high-quality basic, strategic and applied research into the artistic life of different parts of the nation.
- (5) To contribute to the advancement of knowledge and understanding of the arts (including promoting and supporting the exploitation of results arising from artistic research and development and research into the artistic life of different parts of the nation).
- (6) To provide for the development of those capable of contributing to public engagement with the arts, including engagement with achieving economic competitiveness, social development of the nation, effectiveness of public services and policy, the enhancement of the nation's quality of life, or improved creative output more generally.

For the nation, ARDA would pick up where formal education leaves off. It would understand the needs of artists and the conditions of creation. Its research would give us an up-to-date picture of the arts and individual artforms, artistic development and production. This research would also build an evidence base of how the arts can contribute to the quality of life and what outcomes and impact they have achieved in education, health, community development and other parts of society. It would release the definition of the arts from the monopolising tendencies of state arts bodies and engage with what is really happening: the live and the non-live, the commercial and the non-commercial, contemporary work and the artistic heritage, the popular and the specialised, how people engage with the arts, and attendance and participation. It would make an informed case for the artist as a vital contributor to the health and success of society.

For the artist, ARDA would provide information and guidance on how they can continue to develop after leaving formal education: where and how to develop further skills; outlets for their work including arts centres, publishers, theatre producers, commercial and subsidised art galleries, and the mainstream and independent television production companies; and sectors of society with work opportunities from art therapy to computer games companies. It would redress the power imbalance between artists and those intermediaries who stand between artist and public. The fragile position of the artist would be better understood and ARDA would devise initiatives to strengthen that position, including the kind of financial independence granted to research scientists. Artists would be put in closer contact with their audiences. Remembering the example of architecture and 'crits' given in Chapter 4, ARDA would create safe contexts in which artists and all others who make artistic decisions could critique each other's work. ARDA could draw inspiration from a service of CABE, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment. CABE's 'design review' is a free advice service, offering expert independent assessments of schemes at an early stage – from tall buildings in city centres and major masterplans for large areas to smaller proposals for public buildings such as arts venues and schools. The aim is to help avoid common mistakes and make good design as intrinsic as possible to every scheme. Applied more widely across all artforms, this would help reduce the excessive pressure on artists to roll out experiments. Only works which really justified it would be put into production. Savings would be made on production, presentation, marketing, sales and touring. Yes, it takes courage to call a halt but it is better for all concerned.

For the nation and the artist, ARDA would open up a larger space for freedom of expression. It would have the resources to expand the time and space for the artistic equivalent of science's blue skies research. It would be a champion of the artist's right to free expression. We must never forget that some of the world's most important artistic expressions and innovations were derided, even persecuted, when first presented. This will be a challenge. For the sake of an open society, whatever challenges arise, they must be faced and overcome again and again. There will be times when the government, politicians, sectors of society and lobby groups will put enormous pressure on ARDA to stifle the voice of artists, restrict their experimentation and risk-taking, and even ban them. As long as artists are working within the law, ARDA must be there to defend them. Just as we have an independent judiciary, the Freedom of Information Act and a strongly independent

Information Commissioner, we need an ARDA which is truly at arm's length from government and prepared to face down the government and others when necessary. Equally, the emerging field of arts ethics would find a ready home in ARDA, setting artists' rights next to artists' responsibilities.

The artist and the nation would also benefit by ARDA giving artists many more chances to engage fully with society. That problem of how little choreographers look out to the world, how they are too caught up in making steps and how their insularity leads to their not making meaningful steps – it is not limited to dance. It is an inevitable consequence of most artists' fragility and low incomes. ARDA would develop mutual support amongst artists and the chance to discuss the stuff of making work.

With this role, ARDA would receive and, over time, become expert in judging proposals from artists of all kinds, creative and re-creative. Peer assessment would be a vital component but, as the scientific research councils are now doing, the perspective of the citizen must be factored in. On top of this, it would assemble a broad picture of artists working across the country and this would make ARDA well placed to see how things could be done better. It would be expected not simply to analyse what was going on but also propose, consult on, champion and, in some cases, directly deliver improvements and new developments.

A reasonable question arises. Is it really necessary to create a new research organisation for the arts when the Arts and Humanities Research Council already exists? In the long-term, a case may emerge for ARDA to be subsumed within the AHRC. However, for now and for some years ahead, there are three strong reasons for distinguishing between ARDA and the AHRC. Firstly, artists' research is different from what the AHRC does which is fund academic research and postgraduate awards. The AHRC belongs to a world where science is extraordinarily powerful. Here it spreads out to mean knowledge in the physical, biological, medical, natural and social disciplines, including the arts and humanities. So the arts are included but, as this generous definition admits, the scientific method is all-powerful.

Secondly, until as recently as 2006, only staff working at the UK's Higher Education Institutions were eligible to apply for AHRC research funding. In 2006 the AHRC sniffed the outside air, giving what it calls 'academic analogue' status to the National Portrait Gallery and the Tate. What this means is that these two institutions are treated as though they were higher education institutions and so they could apply for academic research grants.<sup>4</sup> This is an early step towards engaging with the wider world of the arts. Another recent step is work on knowledge transfer. The AHRC's aim here is based on the premise that 'To exploit fully the new knowledge and learning that are generated in higher education institutions, they have to be applied to areas of life where they can make a difference.'<sup>5</sup> Such steps are really heartening but this limited experience is still a long way from embracing artists' research.

Thirdly, the research council world stresses economic impact and much current work focuses on this. Capitalism 2.0 and the arts offer a different vision: commerce shot through with humanity and the value of the arts in public services and civil society. Philip Esler, Chief Executive of the Arts and Humanities Research Council, is the Government's knowledge transfer champion for all seven research councils. Much of his time is taken up with economic impact and there is certainly important work to be done here. As he wrote in January 2008: 'The role of arts and humanities research in the creative economy is of major, though still largely uncharted, significance. While it is easy to assert that arts and humanities research in our higher education institutions provides an important foundation for the creative economy ... an empirical case needs to be made for it.'<sup>6</sup> If ARDA were subsumed now, so much of what the arts specifically offer would be low priority and hence marginalised.

Finally, the AHRC is very small compared with other research councils. At £75 million, it receives less than 3% of what science gets. It has a large and complex agenda to cope with inside the higher education web of the Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills, universities, the Higher Education Funding Council of England, research councils and others. It is simply neither reasonable nor realistic to expect it to take on a new agenda and work with artists and arts organisations. The AHRC is used to working with large bureaucracies, not with sole traders, charities and small and medium enterprises.

Should ARDA be at arm's length from government? The answer is an unhesitating 'yes'. The main reason is the familiar one of safeguarding freedom of expression and, in fact, the earlier arguments for 'no' have no power with ARDA, unlike arts and film councils. ARDA would champion artistic expression. A democracy needs more freedom of expression – many voices from every quarter of society – not more silence. That gives ARDA a straightforward public legitimacy. If ARDA were not at arm's length, it would and should be drawn into national, regional and local policy making, but drawing in artistic expression before it has gone into production is premature. This does, however, leave the challenge of how to have democratic debate about artists and their work. This can and should be done but this must not come down to judgements about individual artists and their work. Otherwise, freedom of expression would be eroded.

The space ARDA would open up is to be cherished. The proposal is not for it to be isolated, divorced from citizens, communities or public engagement. Timing is the issue. Before artworks can work magic in society, they and their creators need time for exploration, invention and gestation. Society needs to grant that freedom to artists and, if it does, greater art of greater power is the likely reward. Of course, the value of the arts ultimately lies in the interaction between a work of art and its audience but the making needs unencumbered, unaccountable time. As the Scots say, 'fools and bairns shouldna see things half done'.

Once the artwork is made, then it's time for public engagement. Each work is forged in an artist's studio but, for it to be a true work of art, it must communicate, be experienced and be meaningful to others.

## Big thing no. 3 – COPEA

ARDA would develop artists' work. In some cases it would just be a script, a maquette for a large piece of public art such as the new Ebbsfleet Landmark sculpture, or a musical score, and it would be taken no further. In others the script would become a film or produced play, a choreographer's proposal would be a fully rehearsed piece ready for public performance, an album would be recorded.

At this point we move from research and development to public engagement. 'Public engagement' has been defined quite specifically, and as a confident step forward from the relative passivity of 'accessibility'. While accessibility eases the barriers to arts organisations, public engagement creates a two-way conversation between the arts and audiences and participants. Public engagement goes out to, engages with and works hard to understand the public and where they are. It takes care to understand public attitudes to artistic activity as best as possible and it reorientates arts professionals' view from being artwork-focused to being citizen- and customer-focused. It goes on to engage people in true dialogue. As we saw, a start has been made with outreach work and interactive websites but it is only a start.

Alongside ARDA, we need an imaginative, creative, sleeves-rolled-up, businesslike, tuned-into-today organisation which will champion public engagement and fund programmes which deliver real change in the public's engagement with the arts: a Commission for Public Engagement with the Arts.

Its Royal Charter objects might be these:

- (1) To improve, develop and deepen the widest possible engagement of the public with the widest possible range of the arts.
- (2) To promote and support by any means high-quality basic, strategic and applied research into the public's involvement in the different arts of the nation.
- (3) To support the creation and growth of sustainable for-profit and not-for-profit businesses in the arts sector, providing access to finance and helping the UK arts industry compete successfully in the domestic and global marketplace.
- (4) To promote public engagement throughout the arts and related supply chains.



(5) To promote the arts across wider society and within, but not exclusively in education, health, local communities and prisons.

(6) To promote the use of the arts as a record of contemporary life.

So accessibility will be upped to public engagement. Responsibility would be on organisations to work with artists and find more effective ways of engaging the public. There would be a focus on business growth based on those artworks which ARDA and others would have judged worth investing in. COPEA would help with and back commissioning (new works for broadcast, particular public spaces and events), roll-out (filmed documentaries, book production, touring, festivals, exhibitions and new formats) and taking to scale (helping for-profit and not-for-profit businesses grow and realise their full potential). The emphasis would be on achieving greater public engagement while being true to artists and their work.

Old supply-side preoccupations would give way to a strong emphasis on understanding the demand side. Where investment is best pin-pointed would be judged against the criterion of excellent and effective public engagement. The recipient might be in the public, private or civil society sector. They could be on the supply or demand side. The over-riding concern would be public engagement.

In recent years the arts world has been preoccupied with finding the next generation of leaders. COPEA would move on to finding the next generation of public engagers – tomorrow's Kenneth Clarks, Robert Hughes and Melvyn Bragg. Public engagement is taking off in science and the arts and sciences can learn from each other. Kathy Sykes is a good example: Professor of Sciences and Society at the University of Bristol, she is committed and active making 'engaging with the public a valued part of what it is to be a scientist'. Brian McMaster believes 'The best person to communicate about their art is the artist'.<sup>7</sup> It is certainly true that artists can be or can be trained or provoked to take on this role. The way writers in the last dozen years have become more willing and capable speakers at literature festivals proves the point. There are some, though, who could never do it. Except on very rare occasions, the great Russian pianist, Sviatoslav Richter, refused to give interviews, talk at concerts or be filmed. Nevertheless, all artists and not just writers can be helped to develop public engagement skills and, as writers who take it up seriously have found, it is an extra source of income.

There is a danger here, though, that must be faced. Some in the subsidised arts world tend to be dismissive of public engagers, especially artists. Just as scientists can be snooty about Lord Winston and his public profile and quick opinions, so can the arts world be about Lesley Garrett, Rolf Harris and Myleene Klass. There are two dimensions here: the qualities of the artist and the qualities of the public engager. Neither Garrett, Harris nor Klass would claim to be the world's absolutely top artists but they are brilliant public engagers. They really do reach audiences that other artists do not.

COPEA would also work to improve the quality of businesses working in the arts. The Creative Britain report found that ‘Many creative industry firms have no business plan (39%), no training plan (64%) or no training budget (70%).’<sup>8</sup> We might once have expected this of not-for-profit arts organisations but here is alarming data which includes for-profit companies. Artists and citizens are badly served by such inadequacies. COPEA will have to address this as well as challenge the tired popular connotations of artistic creativity as just doing things naturally and intuitively, without planning, enterprise or thoroughness. In his recent book, *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett reports that, ‘by one commonly used measure, about 10,000 hours of experience are needed to produce a master carpenter or musician.’<sup>9</sup> And that is just to the starting point of a life’s professional artistic activity.

COPEA’s understanding of financial instruments suited to the arts would need to grow. An armoury of grants, loans, patient recoverable capital, underwriting and equity would be required and COPEA would have to become adept at judging what to use, in what combination and in what way. It would work with many partners including banks, private equity, government departments (BERR, DIUS and the Treasury as well as DCMS) and regional development agencies. Governments’ aversion to hypothecation notwithstanding, it could argue for recycling finance within the arts industry: droit de suite, perhaps, which is a European Union levy on visual art sales paid to the artist or their estate; a contemporary version of the Eady levy, perhaps, which ran from 1957 to 1985 as a UK tax on cinema box office receipts designed to support the British film industry. It could take a lead on improved intellectual property exploitation revenues and make sure that they too are recycled, rather than just being gobbled by DIUS or the Treasury.

This approach would reflect and respect the arts’ mixed economy. As Capitalism 2.0 takes hold, it would be catastrophic if the arts were driven back into a crude, unaccountable, socially irresponsible, environmentally callous, commercial market while all around a new capitalism was being created, forged by climate change, higher standards of business practice, CEOs themselves and their businesses’ corporate responsibility programmes, the demands of customers, the expectations of employees, the rise of social enterprises, and increased entrepreneurship and commercialism in civil society organisations.

To spell it out, COPEA would be agnostic about an organisation’s exact form of incorporation. Charity, community interest company, social enterprise, or plc – it would not matter. Nor would it be a question of where in the arts or wider cultural or educational supply chains an organisation stood. Any of these might make a potent contribution – Artangel, Channel 4, Classic FM, Greenwich Dance Agency, Ministry of Sound, the MOBO Awards, Penguin Books, Somerset County Council, Teachers’ TV, the theatre on the island of Mull or Virgin Media. The test for COPEA is to devote its energies and resources to programmes which would genuinely expand public engagement.

COPEA could liberate much of the pent-up energy in the arts world. We would have a system of support which was not over our heads and bearing down upon us, but under our feet serving as launchpad. COPEA would have ARDA to draw on for reliable information on

artists and the artistic life of the nation. Its own research programme would accumulate an appreciation of the public's engagement with the arts. Its tight public engagement brief would make it a practical body, mixing response to others' projects with pro-active joint ventures and so setting up a re-active/pro-active virtuous circle.

Should COPEA be at arm's length from government? The answer is 'no' and the reason leads us on to the final, fundamental change.

Before moving to this final proposal, a couple of comments should be made on creating new organisations like ARDA and COPEA. Organisations, new and old, are sterile shells without people. For the best flow, you have the right organisations with the right mission, business model and governance, and the right people working for them. History is littered with big restructures which have been poor substitutes for wise leadership backed by clear thinking on mission, business model and governance. New structures cost. They need profound attention to the fundamentals of what is to be achieved, careful preparation and planning, and sophisticated project management when the time for implementation has arrived. They can devour money, time and many people's energies and goodwill.

ARDA and COPEA are not proposed casually. They are needed because of the deep flaws in the state's current support for artists and their connection with citizens. They have the advantage of being sufficient to embrace all arts support roles of the state. Today's messy profusion must go and can. The advent of ARDA and COPEA would give the state a chance to clarify its role in the arts, review the mission and effectiveness of every confusing element of today's infrastructure, and create something which is 'fit for purpose'.

## Big thing no. 4 – A deserved place at the top table

Together, ARDA and COPEA would prepare the arts for a permanent seat at the top table. They would truly be on their way to being part of the core script of government. The names of government departments change regularly – most recently when Gordon Brown became Prime Minister. Name a current department of government and such is the power and relevance of the arts that they could have a role to play there. Today the natural home is DCMS but the arts must not be compartmentalised.

As 'Creative Britain' underlines, 'Britain is a creative country and our creative industries are increasingly vital to the UK. Two million people are employed in creative jobs and the sector contributes £60 billion a year – 7.3 per cent – to the British economy. Over the past decade, the creative sector has grown at twice the rate of the economy as a whole and is well placed for continued growth as demand for creative content – particularly in English – grows'.<sup>10</sup> That more than justifies the attention of two departments – Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform and Innovation, Universities & Skills.

The case for the arts in health is at last being pulled together and backed up by thorough, independent research and evidence of good practice and health outcomes. The Department of Health Arts & Health Working Group reported in 2006 and its conclusions included 'arts and health are, and should be firmly recognised as being, integral to health, healthcare provision and healthcare environments, including supporting staff' and 'arts and health initiatives are delivering real and measurable benefits across a wide range of priority areas for health, and can enable the Department and NHS to contribute to key wider Government initiatives'.<sup>11</sup>

The Ministry of Justice might seem remote from the arts but high level issues such as freedom of expression, intellectual property and arts ethics have an important legal dimension. As ARDA progresses, these will need to be fleshed out and maybe we can anticipate a time when the confusions of obscenity trials ('Lady Chatterley's Lover' in the UK in 1960 and of 2 Live Crew in the US in the early 1990s<sup>12</sup>) will be overtaken by more intelligent discussions of arts and the law, and by no repetitions of 'Bezhti'.

And so we could go on: cultural diplomacy with Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs and International Development; the obvious case for DCSF and the interesting one for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs; the arts' contribution to prisons with the Home Office; and the arts (ideally as a statutory function) in community regeneration with Communities & Local Government.

Of course, it would not stop there. The arts can be part of the core script of civil society and commerce.

With this degree of involvement, it would be counterproductive to insist on the arm's length principle for COPEA. The argument for the principle for ARDA is clear. The Commission's work, on the other hand, would be close to government and the principle would be an impediment. This is the arts' chance to be at the top table rather than using a long spoon to sup with a supposed devil.

## NOTES

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## Chapter 8

# NEW FLOW – FIVE YEARS OF TRAVELLING DOWN-RIVER

## What if?

Could the ideas of ARDA and COPEA rise to the surface of public debate and gain momentum and force? Who would give the initial impetus? Who would drive them on? Would they be strong enough to make a permanent impression on the relationship between artists, citizens, arts organisations, civil society, the private sector and the state? Would it be enough to give the arts a fully justified, long-term seat at the top table? Would this be achieved for the arts in their narrow state-determined definition or for all the arts as we find them out there in society?

## The advent of ARDA

It began with friends around a dinner table in north London. A professional guitarist, a film composer and a pianist with clout in the Incorporated Society of Musicians agreed that it was time for artists to make something of the ARDA idea. Within six weeks there was a large meeting. Around the table were all kinds of artist, some unaffiliated and others from the Actors' Centre, Dance UK, Equity, International Visual Arts Society, Performing Rights Society and Society of Authors.

By the end of 2008, three committees were at work. One focused on arts ethics. Starting with freedom of expression and human rights, the artists began sketching out a list of artists' rights and responsibilities. They considered safeguards for freedom of expression and against exploitation by arts organisations whether commercial or subsidised. They underlined artists' need to work within the law. They delved into how to improve mutual respect between artists and academics researching the arts.

Another committee grappled with the tricky questions of what government funding would be needed, how the chosen level could be justified and how ARDA's performance could be measured. They realised that artistic research rarely required anything like the resources of scientific research. They pitched ARDA's financial need in the early years at £55 million reasoning that academic arts research received 50% of the Arts & Humanities Research Council's and the AHRC 2009/10 budget was £104.4 million. £55 million would mean that artists' research would receive roughly the same as academics researching the arts. It was crude but a start.

But how to measure ARDA's performance? What would success or failure look like and could it be measured? The committee returned to ARDA's objects and took heart. It saw that just two top level metrics might be enough. The first would correlate the size of the arts

economy across the public, private and civil society sectors with investment in artistic R&D. The natural assumption was that increases in R&D would improve and grow the arts economy, and this would have to be tested. It would all need refining. The second metric would take a sufficiently significant sample of individual artists and study the national and international success they achieved, using economic indicators plus critical response and non-economic demand. With these two metrics, government could assess whether ARDA made a difference. It could also project how much more of a difference ARDA would make if it had, say, 50% more funding.

A third committee looked at how to bring ARDA into being. Plans and arguments were carefully drawn up, answering the many questions. Some appraised ARDA against a background of arts and film councils continuing to exist. How would responsibility for artistic R&D be uncoupled from arts and film councils? Was it really necessary to create a new organisation? Others embraced the full vision of 'New Flow'. How would the demise of existing state arts institutions and the transition be handled, especially from the point of view of artists and arts organisations already reliant on the existing funding system?

By the summer of 2009, an application for government funding of a detailed feasibility study was ready. But by this same time the arts and film councils were getting jittery. Arts Council England had commissioned an internal report reviewing what emerged to be its dismal direct support for artists. It was leaked and the press made mischief and some telling hits.

Meanwhile, the political parties had been pulling their manifestos together, making sure they were prepared for whenever the Prime Minister called a general election. ARDA's championing of freedom of expression and artists' contributions to the openness of society were attractive. The Liberal Democrats warmed to it. New Labour liked the prospect of substantial economic and social returns. The Conservatives feared bonkers arts creations which would be ridiculed in the popular press. The creation of yet another new arts funding body also caused concern until it was made clear that ARDA would be one of just two new organisations which together would do away with many quangos, non-departmental public bodies and standing committees. The rationalisation appealed.

What had begun as a trio in north London had turned into an orchestra of thousands. Strong forces had come on board – eminent artists in the UK and internationally, art school and conservatoire principals, champions in the House of Lords, civil society organisations committed to improving democracy and freedom of speech, and many others.

ARDA was formally incorporated early in 2011. It made its first grants that summer, some direct to artists and others to host organisations – a mix of commercial and subsidised arts businesses, civil society organisations and universities.

# The birth of COPEA

COPEA's early story was at once simpler and more complex.

COPEA had precedents. Despite a setback in the summer of 2008 Scotland had re-unified and streamlined the arts sector, amalgamating centuries-old artforms and the relative baby, film. First came the creation of the Cultural Commission by the Scottish Executive in 2004, then its final report in 2005. The report offered three options of which a development agency, Culture Scotland (later Creative Scotland), was favoured by the Scottish Executive. In November 2007 the Joint Board of Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen created the Transition Project Taskforce to shape and plan for the new organisation and the transition. The Scottish Executive introduced the Creative Scotland Bill to Parliament in March 2008, with the hope that it would secure Royal Assent by the end of the year, leading to the new body being up and running in early 2009. However the Bill fell on 18 June 2008 – not because of the Creative Scotland concept but because of concerns about the financial implications. The Bill was delayed for almost a year. Creative Scotland at last opened its doors in March 2010.

Another relevant precedent was the transformation of the Royal Fine Art Commission into CABA, the Commission for Architecture & the Built Environment. The RFAC had been around since 1924. CABA arrived in 1999 with a closer link to government, a wider brief and greater resources. By 2008 it was looking at almost every significant development across the country giving expert advice and opinion, backed up with detailed research into how the built environment could best be designed and managed. It had an evidence base that demonstrated the impact of good design on commercial productivity, public service delivery and how people feel about their quality of life. CABA had become involved in public engagement, campaigning, publishing guides for the public and building professions, and running projects which involved citizens in everything from public spaces to healthcare buildings, schools to homes. While its funding role was limited, its research, expert assessment, policy, advocacy and campaigning roles influenced the shaping of COPEA.

The advent of both Creative Scotland and CABA depended on the leadership of governments. Such ideas for change emerge, ignite and ultimately coalesce through a blend of conversations with trusted leaders in the cultural sector and the great and good, bright ideas from the No.10 Downing Street Policy Unit and elsewhere across the civil service, lobbying from many outside the Westminster village and negotiations in the corridors of power – and all with a careful eye on the media and a readiness to make temporary common cause with it for the sake of winning arguments and maximising impact.

The unstoppable pressure for creating COPEA came from many quarters. There was no simple cause and effect. It bubbled up.

Far from the Westminster village, the Anne Peaker Centre for Arts in Criminal Justice had been cut by Arts Council England in the Council's major cull of early 2008. A new Alliance



for the Arts in Criminal Justice was established, led by Lord Ramsbotham, the former Chief Inspector of Prisons. Talk of COPEA started ripples across all the work where the arts linked with community settings: arts in health, arts in schools, arts in community regeneration, cultural diplomacy, arts helping tackle drug abuse, and so on. Fed up with the nonsense of setting intrinsic against instrumental benefits, this vast, disparate group achieved impressive cohesion, using public engagement as a rallying point. Their arguments were made stronger by the discovery that, hidden in hard drives across the UK, were pockets of hard evidence of the arts achieving all kinds of social, educational and cultural outcomes. The Voices Foundation had done this in schools, Synergy Theatre Project had done it in prisons and the data on arts in healthcare was larger than previously thought.

The initial responses of Arts Council England and the UK Film Council were naturally resistant. The Secretary of State for Culture, Media & Sport was having none of this. Here was a chance to ride the wave of widespread frustration amongst artists, arts organisations and the media with an Arts Council damaged by its 2008 cull and with poor credibility. The UK Film Council had a low public and media profile and could not build this up sufficiently in the short time available. Its protestations were easily pushed aside.

Picking up on Scotland's example, the Secretary of State announced an Arts Commission in early 2009. In its brief, the Commission was charged with devising a streamlined, modernised system of state support and development. The appointment of commissioners sent several signals. The chair came from civil society rather than the arts. Other commissioners included social entrepreneurs, practising artists from outside the high arts, broadcasters and the NHS. It was time for the arts world to accelerate its catch-up with the rest of civil society, a more citizen-focused public sector, science's approach to research, evidence and public engagement, and a growing sense of social and environmental responsibility in the private sector.

The Arts Commission needed a full year to work through the detail. Its 2010 report was whirled around in the storm of that year's general election. But it survived. The Commission had worked hard to achieve all party support and it had broadly succeeded. What also helped was that, as usual, the general election was fought over concerns lower down Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

So the new government took office and the new Secretary of State for Culture (yes, Culture) had the Arts Commission's report close to the top of the pile on her desk.

The Olympics helped COPEA's progress. You couldn't get away from talk of public engagement. People of all ages and backgrounds were being exhorted to participate in sports and hence the arts. Messages swirled around about improving health, worries about the continuing rise in obesity, scientific evidence of the link between participation and wellbeing, community cohesion and active citizenship. The balance shifted away from just

spectating and the arts were caught up in a strong current encouraging everyone to participate. Dance couldn't believe its luck and the participation dynamo drew in all other artforms.

Like Creative Scotland and its backing from the Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Screen, the creation of COPEA ended up being endorsed by arts councils and the UK Film Council even though these state bodies and others were facing the end of their existence. The transition was complex but, with ARDA already up and running, the R&D aspect was more easily handled than it might have been. Subsidised arts organisations needed help in adapting to the changes and, with training sessions touring the country, extensive debate in the media and in conferences and a central role for Mission Models Money (its time had come), this worked well and proved enormously liberating.

In 2013, after the Olympics and five years of transition, the arts had discovered a new kind of flow.

# POSTLUDE

Can you feel the vast potential? The previous chapter began with the question 'What if?' but that was just about new state structures. I feel that would just be the beginning.

We started with the artist, and I come back to the artist. With the right structures, with the right people and organisations connecting artists and citizens (when it's not artists themselves), with the right forms of state involvement, such latent power would be released and we would have Csikszentmihályi's flow.

What if as much were spent on arts and humanities research as is spent on science? Remember the current ratio is 3%:97%. How much else would have changed in society if we achieved parity?

What if the arts became a statutory function of local authorities?

What if everyone in arts supply chains signed up to public engagement?

'New Flow' is sent out into the world as a call for a radical rethink on how we can all support artists to make their unique and valuable contribution to our humanity and our lives. It is a call sent to individuals from the Prime Minister to the occasional reader of novels, to communities, to regions and to the nations of the UK. And it is call not just for a debate and no more incremental inertia. It is a call for real change.

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While at the foundation, he has co-founded and was first chair of the British Council for School Environments, now the leading independent champion of excellent design and architecture of schools. He created fellowships for society's 'bridge-builders'. The first wave, for choreographers, is co-funded by Arts Council England and administered by Dance UK. In 2007 the Foundation won two Third Sector Excellence Awards (for Innovation in Grant-making and Best Website).

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