Artworld: changing gatekeepers?
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Context

The site of the examination itself has a number of contexts and sub contexts that it will be useful to illuminate at the outset. The first is the Antipodean setting-Downunder; at the opposite (latitudinal & longitudinal) ends of the earth from the site of this (Research into Practice) topical congregation; free of the monumental reminders of Classical, European, and American history but arguably more subject to the presence and echoes of prehistory. And, situated more specifically, in central and northern (tropical) Queensland, where cities are small (70,000-150,000 population - and quickly growing), and though each is sprawling, it is still typically 400 kilometres away from its nearest neighbour (half a day's drive with actually no significant settlement in-between).

Currently the author precariously maintains new media-oriented fine art practice contingent with public engagement obligation, research activity, academic publishing (Holmes 2006, 2006b, 2008) and, undergraduate and postgraduate learning and teaching roles in a regional university. The campus at which he is resident is so small that it would probably not exist except for the mix of regional cross-campus students, distance mode students and international campus students that contemporary information communication technologies enable him to reach.

By way of personal history, the author participated for two decades in commercial communication design practice after graduating with a fine arts degree-photography major- in 1981. It was after initially undertaking a Master of Design with a new media focus that he applied to upgrade to a PhD visual art specialising in studio practice. This was attained in 2005.

Major influence on his artistic practice has been an informal association with the Experimental Art Foundation since the days when its basement home was his Adelaide-Payneham-neighbourhood entertainment hotspot in the late 70s. The dominant philosophy, as espoused by co-founder Donald Brook and others was that "...art theory itself is not prior to art-making (and thus a guide to its production) but, on the contrary...

one makes things first, more or less blindly, and it isn't until afterwards that one stands a chance of recognising in what one has done an unintended new meaning and sense" (Brook nd).

Amazingly, for an 'underground' Australian avant garde outfit, when this organisation moved to new premises in 1992, Queen Elizabeth II officiated at the opening. This must surely be testament to its institutionalisation! Its mission statement has hardly changed over the years:

to encourage and facilitate the production and understanding of new and innovative art that is critical and questioning in relation to: contemporary thinking and imagining, social arrangements and institutions; to new possibilities of form and media, and to art practices and its assumptions (EAF n.d.).

Introduction

It seems that these days in the Australian cultural context any controversy worth a grain of salt to rub in a wound is played out on YouTube. One media report from Sky News pirated and uploaded by a person behind the username Ziccyvideos (2008) begins with the audiovisual text:

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has dismissed a backlash from the arts world [sic] over his comments labelling Bill Henson's photographs of naked children as "revolting". Dozens of delegates to Mr Rudd's '2020 Summit', including actress Cate Blanchett, accused Mr Rudd of damaging Australia's cultural reputation and stifling artistic freedom. He maintains the photos he saw are not art.

The foundational allegations of child pornography and the vociferous public debate about who can consent to the appropriation of images of minors for purposes questionably artistic were ultimately resolved in the legal system resulting in no charges being laid and in the return of Bill Henson's artworks by police to the gallery from where they were seized.

Sidestepping the obviously sensational arguments reflected in its remediated moment, in this academic paper I begin by deconstructing some of the underlying assumptions involved in the introduction to that news item. In particular: Who or what is the "arts world"? By what social mechanism is the Prime Minister of Australia publicly making an aesthetic judgement and declaring what is or is not art? To this end a review of what may be meant by the term 'arts world' is undertaken with reference to a number of authors who have contributed to the evolution of the definition of that notion since the 1960's (Danto 1964, 1992; Dickie 1974, 1997, 2001; Becker 1982; Bourdieu 1992). The contemporary relevance of an associated concept-the so-called 'Institutional Theory of Art'-is re-appraised. The existence of social processes for the determination of meaning and value with respect to artistic fields generally within institutional frameworks is reviewed, including the roles of 'gatekeepers'. Key potential gatekeeper typologies are identified. Then account is taken of the contemporary creative industries agenda and a potential threat with respect to policy agenda-setting at the expense of the arts as traditionally understood is exposed. I sketch out some hermeneutic conflicts I am experiencing with respect to professional practice and which I attribute to the changing institutional policy environment regarding the area where these fields overlap, now broadly labelled, the creative industries. Finally, it is suggested that a key defence against such incursion is for the artworker/researcher to maintain a vociferous interpretive role stressing ontological differences such as identified by Danto (1973: 17), Thomasson (2004) and Tonkinwise & Lorber-Kasunic (2006).

Mr Rudd's "arts world"

One promise that the Australian Labour Party took to the election in late 2007 was to convene an Australia 2020 summit at Parliament house, proposing to "bring together some of the best and brightest brains from across the country to tackle the long term challenges confronting Australia's future" (ALP 2008). It came to pass that around 1000 people gathered over a weekend in April 2008 to discuss ten areas deemed significant. Under rubric number eight, 100 or so people collaborated to produce a 25-page report entitled, "Towards a creative Australia: the future of the arts, film and design." In convening the summit the new Government wanted to be seen to be consulting with representatives of these fields. It is this group representing the 'arts world' that the news article cited above refers to as being critical of the Prime Minister (PM). It is obvious that the journalist is highlighting the irony that the PM has raised the ire of some members of that very group he only recently sought the expert opinions of. These people object to the PM passing aesthetic judgement on Bill Henson's photography. They especially object to his using the single word: 'revolting!' Such uninformed language might readily arise from any weak-link, Web 2.0 flaming interaction! The PM undoubtedly has broader political agendas to contend with.

Art worlds

It is relevant to my agenda here that with the journalist's use of it the term arts world, which was coined in a philosophical journal article forty plus years ago by Arthur Danto, appears to maintain currency in the popular vernacular. I flag the etymological changes with respect to how plurality is applied to the each of the distinct parts that make up the compound of 'art' and 'world'. I refer to the term here and ensuing in the text, and note that I will return to a fuller discussion of the use of the plural later. For now I wish to explore how the term 'art world' and related notions have been used to establish what constitutes art as practice, as theory, and as cultural institution and how interpretation is integral to this notion.

> To see something as art requires something the eye cannot decry-an atmosphere of artistic theory, a knowledge of the history of art: an artworld. (Danto 1964: 580)

This statement was somewhat revolutionary in its time and, on reflection, set a definition of art for the ensuing era because it signalled a move away from a discourse of aesthetics founded solely on visual principles including those of resemblance and expression, and on formal, technical preoccupations, and reflected a shift toward conceptual art and theory based on historical contexts and interpretation of those contexts.

This kind of thinking, particularly arising out of discourse on Modern art, prompted a theory that its inventor, George Dickie called the "Institutional Theory of Art." It was made up of two parts: a definition of the "work of art in the classificatory sense [as] 1/ an artifact [and], 2/ a set of the aspects which has had conferred upon it the status of candidature for appreciation by some person or persons acting on behalf of a certain social institution (the artworld)."

In response to the obvious question, who can confer the status for appreciation and thus ratify an artifact as art? Dickie answered that there is an essential core of "presenters" and "goers"... "artists ... producers, museum directors, museum goers, reporters for newspapers, critics from publications of all sorts, art historians, art theorists, philosophers of art, and others." This could not be claimed to be an elite group because Dickie added,

"every person who sees himself [sic] as a member of the artworld is ... a member." However, he insisted that the roles are "institutionalized and must be learned in one way or another by the participants" (1974: 34-36).

Although he maintained claim to be its intellectual source Danto subsequently came to distance himself from Dickie's theory, making out the distinction as follows:

I thought of the art world as the historically ordered world of artworks, enfranchised by theories which themselves are historically ordered. As such, I suppose, mine was a kind of institutional theory, in that the art world is itself institutionalized. But it was not the Institutional Theory of Art, which was bred of my work by George Dickie, who was less concerned with what makes a work of art like Warhol's possible than what makes it actual. And his notion of the art world was pretty much the body of experts who confer that status on something by way of fiat. (1992: 38)

It is not clear whether or not Danto was referring to the amended version of Dickie's theory which was published 1984. In that version, entitled The Art Circle, Dickie acknowledged the logical circularity, for which his original theory was so widely denounced. Indeed, he roundly pronounced that his observation unavoidably mirrored the inflected nature of the conditions of the practice of creating and consuming art which he insisted "must be circular." The outcome was an outline of what he called an essential, non-linear, framework from which the act of conferral had been excised but which involved the artist and the public in some kind of dialogue:
(I) An artist is a person who participates with understanding in the making of a work of art.
(II) A work of art is an artefact of a kind created to be presented to an artworld public.
(III) A public is a set of persons the members of which are prepared in some degree to understand an object which is presented to them.
(IV) The artworld is the totality of all artworld systems.
(V) An artworld system is a framework for the presentation of a work of art by an artist to an artworld public. (Dickie 1984: 79-111)

When Howard Becker published his sociological account, Art Worlds in 1982, he acknowledged the contributions of Danto and the earlier Dickie. He subtly modified the definition saying:

Art worlds consist of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art. (34)

Becker placed emphasis on the shared knowledge of the conventions current in a medium and the 'networked' nature of the intersecting groups who use this knowledge to create socially shared meaning (64). He cites Danto's salient observation about how art exists in an atmosphere of interpretation and thus may in itself be a vehicle of interpretation. Following is an excerpt from the relevant passage:

The moment something is considered an artwork, it becomes subject to an 'interpretation'. It owes its existence as an artwork to this, and when its claim to art is defeated, it loses its interpretation and becomes a mere thing. The interpretation is in some measure a function of the artistic context of the work: it means something different depending on its art-historical location, its antecedents and the like. (Danto, 1973: 15)

Pierre Bourdieu in The Rules of Art, basing his theory of the art world on his own historical and sociological studies of French literary and visual traditions of the avant garde, describes how the discourse that precedes, envelopes, and exists in art creates both its meaning and its value.

Artistic work in its new definition makes artists more than ever tributaries to the whole accompaniment of commentaries and commentators who contribute directly to the production of the work of art by their reflection on an art which often itself contains a reflection on art, and on artistic effort which always encompasses an artist's work on himself [or herself].

The appearance of this new definition of art and the role of the artist cannot be understood independently of the transformations in the artistic field of production. The constitution of an unprecedented ensemble of institutions for recording, conserving and analysing works (reproductions, catalogues, art magazines, museums acquiring the most recent works, etc.), the growth in personnel (full-time or part-time) dedicated to the 'celebration' of the work of art, the intensification of the circulation of works and of artists, with the great international exhibitions and the multiplication of galleries with many branches in various countries, etc. - everything combines to favour the establishment of an unprecedented relationship between interpreters and the work of art. The discourse on the work is not a simple side-effect, designed to encourage its apprehension and appreciation, but a moment which is part of the production of the work, of its meaning and its value (1992: 170).

Other accounts of the interpretative process and meaning-making function of art make more of the performative aspects of the reception of a work by its public. Umberto Eco, for example, theorised that a work of art is both closed in the sense that it is complete whilst at the same time as being "an open product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterated specificity" (1962 [2005]: 178).

By these and many other accounts then, the notion of an art world-or art worlds-or an arts world-involves the idea that there are artifacts, or otherwise acts of mediation which offer meanings that are not fixed and may be contested according to interpretation in heterogeneous contexts. Dickie has characterised them as cultural theories of art (2001: 10).

There is a need for art to be, by definition, non-prescriptive of what constitutes art in itself to enable its reflective and socially interpretative component to remain invigorated and renewable. There is also a sense that the creation of meaning and value is an informal collaboration between numerous diverse players. There is a central notion that there is place for naivety and place for sophistication. At the most extreme edges of the naive there are all-inclusive community arts where any notion of filtering is politically incorrect. At the sophisticated end some may see isomorphism with the idea of chains of translation arising from Callon and Latour's actor network theory (Callon, 1997; Latour 1991); that like the sciences, the arts call on specialists to speak on behalf of actants and actors. In speaking on their behalf these interpreters amplify any agency that the artifacts and acts of mediation may have the potential to contribute in actuality.

Most often the institutional aspects of art, or science or-as Bourdieu might call them-other universes can be seen to function as "coagulated virtual relations" (Lévi 1996: 96-97). To the extent that art is about identity, arguably indeed about ideology, we could employ

Althusser's coinage of the term 'interpellation' (1969) that is, the process by which ideology addresses the pre-ideological individual, to account for an individual's constitution in an art world. In this sense could Dickie's acknowledgement that his institutional definition of art is logically circular (1997: 82-83) or, as Becker points out, necessarily "tautological" (1982: x) also account for an art world member being always already situated with respect to any particular socio-culturally defined "Ideological State Apparatus" (ISA)? According to this theory, an ISA is an institution which generates meanings which we as individuals and groups act in accordance with. Examples of ISAs include schools, religions, the family, legal systems, politics, arts, sports and so on. Althusser says that through ISAs, relations to their conditions of existence are represented to people. This relation "...contains the 'cause' which has to explain the imaginary distortion of the ideological representation of the real world." Further, "...it is the imaginary nature of this relation which underlies all the imaginary distortion that we can observe (if we do not live in its truth) in all ideology" (152-155). Perhaps this notion is similar to Bourdieu's idea that the art world is an example of the illusio-a 'game' where the basis of meaning and value is allocated? (1992: 172-173)

Mr Rudd, the agenda-setter

'Gatekeeping' and 'agenda-setting' are related concepts arising from communications and media contexts. Gatekeeping refers to actions of persons who may be in position(s) of authority and who may make interpretive statements that have potential to influence socio-culturally acquired knowledge - that which I have elsewhere referred to as actuality (Holmes 2006; 2008). Agenda-setting refers to the power that some administrators and bureaucrats have to order and prioritise official discussion of matters that concern gatekeeping functions.

Further considerations arising from the events surrounding those that Sky News reported as cited above might be of concern not so much because Mr Rudd has joined the arts world and wishes to publically pronounce an aesthetic judgement. He is, after all, Prime Minister and as such may be expected to make pronouncements on all manner of subjects. As Becker pointed out, many participants in art worlds find institutional figureheads unacceptable arbiters because of their connections to the status quo (152). But the PM's powerful and influential position as an agenda-setter may be a cause for concern in some circles. Particularly as within days of the Bill Henson incident being played out in the media, there were reports of the Minister responsible for arts funding making pronouncements that new criteria will need to be satisfied prior to the allocation of public funding to artists and arts organisations. It was reported that the editor of Australia's Arts Monthly magazine, which ran a feature article including a cover image of a painting of a naked six-year-old girl in a bid to take up a theoretical position defending Bill Henson's artistic rights found himself threatened with withdrawal of significant public funding for future issues of the magazine (Chesterton 2008).

Pierre Bourdieu writes that the art world-what he calls "the artistic field"-is a "relatively autonomous universe." Even so, he says, it is "relatively dependent, notably with respect to the economic field and the political field" (1992: 141). He also refers to the inverse nature of the economies that service the logic of symbolic goods - "realities with two aspects, merchandise and signification, with the specifically symbolic values and the market values remaining relatively independent of each other." His point is that most "pure" art, by his definition, originates in a state of high symbolic value and low economic value. Following Bourdieu's line of thought I suggest that through the processes of interpretation and translation, as outlined above, including where applicable marketing and

promotion and indeed media controversy and scandal, appreciation in economic market value may take hold.

Agenda setting with respect to funding priorities is a serious issue when it comes to decisions about public support for origination practices in the pure, or fine arts as we know them because they may otherwise have little economic basis in their initial creative productive phases, where there is high symbolic value and little or no market value. Bourdieu's illusio may be visualised as a game, but the consequences of actions are not only actual they are also real!

The gatekeepers of creativity

In a much broader sense, as we have seen from the authors cited so far there is, in any variant of the institutional theory of art, a common notion of the interplay between artists, artifacts or acts of mediation, and publics, and that meaning and value become attributed through discourse.

It has been argued by a prominent Australian artist and art critic that much of the general population of Australia has little or no interest in contemporary art which, if true, would tend to render discussion about public access and understanding of it somewhat obsolete. However that same author acknowledges that the real "work of new artistic research is carried on in discourse and in the exhibition of art as well as in the studio... [in] face-to-face argument, lectures, art magazines, catalogues, reviews, in patronage, art museum collections, and in the performance and installation of art" (Green 2004: 7). Presumably this discourse is with specialist audiences who are informed and interested to take part.

The process of translation and interpretation from this narrow core is far from fair and egalitarian. Indeed there are some voices that may be heard louder than others and some that may be heard for longer and for a variety of reasons. And, because artworlds are indeed networks, factors attributable to growth of connectivity and value in networks, such as power law distribution (Barabási 2002: 70-72) can apply with respect to how well-known or how popular particular artists, artifacts, acts or publics can become.

There are particular roles and functions in society that may have greater influence in this process, often in particular contexts and for different reasons. Art critics, for example, can bring something to the attention of their audience and may influence its interpretation, social acceptance, popularity or notoriety. Then, as Bourdieu pointed out in a conversation with Hans Haacke, "There is a kind of censorship through silence. If, when one wants to transmit a message, there is no response in journalistic circles - if it doesn't interest journalists - then the message is not transmitted." Haacke speaks from a position of experience making artworks that, as Bourdieu said, are "symbolic machines that function like snares and make the public act." In a busy world with so much competition for attention one should not always interpret silence as conspiracy. In any case, such considerations only apply in communities and contexts where appropriate vehicles (newspapers, magazines, journals, blogs) and meaningful roles associated with them exist. Interestingly Haacke claims, "I think works that do not get much attention also leave a trace. All productions of the consciousness industry, no matter whether intended or not, influence the social climate and thereby the political climate as well" (Bourdieu & Haacke 1995: 19-23).

Gallery and museum directors and exhibition curators obviously play a significant role in deciding who and what to exhibit and in which contexts. In public institutions, they in turn

are likely to be influenced by a board or committee. Arts funding bodies invariably have policy guidelines to be interpreted and regulations to be applied. Associations and incorporated bodies have mission statements and objectives.

Teachers of all kinds are inevitably gatekeepers. Bourdieu encompasses the breadth of this field listing parents in his sweep of those who model consumer habits, including art appreciation: "...members of institutions which work towards the production of producers (schools of fine arts, etc.) and towards the production of consumers capable of recognizing the work of art as such, that is, as a value, starting with teachers and parents, in charge of initial inculcation of artistic dispositions" (1992: 229).

In Australia and elsewhere, as the flourishing of this Research into Practice forum since its establishment in 2000 is testament to, there has been a flow of graduates from Doctoral research programs in visual art, design and creative arts, some of which were established as early as 1993, but most more recently. Many of these programs have a dual focus on art practice and dissertation, rather than specifically on art theory or history that may previously been the focus of humanities-based doctorates relevant to the visual arts field. The artworker as researcher, in a role formalised through these programs may have the potential to subsume the traditionally separate roles of the artist practitioner, art critic and even curator within the institution of art. If this were to be so, where would this leave the artworker/researcher with respect to the art establishment? Alienated, most likely! To date there does not appear to be any research that would substantiate or dispel such outcomes.

The voices of practitioner theorists as gatekeepers cannot be ignored when published according to rules of academic engagement. After all, these are recognised elements in the chain of translation so integral to the interpretation of innovative ideas and their dissemination into actuality.

However, the authority of the fine arts broadly speaking is under threat, not only from the indifference of a contemporary public otherwise preoccupied with expressive and entertaining new media technologies and resources, but also from a new brand of experts who claim to speak the language of economic rationalism and who claim to stand for all creativity.

It is not my intention to rehearse a historical outline of the development of the concept of the creative industries or to spell out its current definitions as there are many authors who have achieved this better than I could hope to here (Hartley, 2005: 1-30; Hesmondhalg, 2007). I will note however that Australia has developed a particular genre of this field-a blend of the U.K. and the U.S. flavours. Its bastion is the first Australian Research Council centre for excellence to be established outside of the science, engineering and technology sectors-the ARC Centre of Excellence for Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI). 1 It is based on Queensland University of Technology's Kelvin Grove campus in Brisbane, sited in an extraordinary urban redevelopment that is intended, when complete, to cluster a mix of educational, business, residential and cultural interests in such a way as to embody the creative theories out of which that institution has arisen. Indeed, there are now three major government-funded and industry-supported research centres co-located within the Creative Industries Precinct: the previously mentioned CCI; the Australasian CRC for Interaction Design (ACID); and, an Institute for Creative Industries and Innovation (iCi). (QUT, 2009: 7) The influence this institutional presence enjoys over the academic, research and policy environments of the state, the country and beyond should not be underestimated. Faculties of smaller universities like my own scramble to imitate. 2

That slippery 's'

Before I look closer at the interpretive focus that relative newcomers may be bringing to gatekeeping and agenda-setting roles in the field, I wish to return to the matter of the plural in relation to art(s) and world(s). As Danto the critic conceived the notion there was no plural. The art world was a cohesive body of interpreters prepared to talk art on its own terms. As Becker the sociologist appropriated the term it referred to a number of worlds, each united by the "knowledge of the conventions current in a medium." Each art world was a subset arising from practice with its own conventions, aesthetics, and forms of presentation and distribution. He saw art worlds as webs of collaboration made up of audiences, producers and support personnel (67). As the Sky News journalist pronounced the phrase the arts world (op.cit), the implication is that there are currently many arts represented by one body. Given that she was possibly referring to a specific group who participated at the Australia 2020 Summit perhaps we should not read too much into the slippery 's'. However if one looks at the report of the arts, film and design group from the summit there is to be found one comment, possibly quite illuminating on this matter. On the whole the report is unremarkable with respect to its findings and suggestions but it can be observed that one subcommittee noted it was having difficulty "distinguishing the terms 'the arts', 'creativity' and 'innovation'" (270).

Creative impact

Are we in Australia witnessing not only a confusion of the discrete roles of the fine arts, the creative industries and, other fields involved in innovative processes, but also simultaneously, a conflation of them in terms of accountability - especially with respect to policy-making? Will the institutions of art ultimately include all of the diverse fields such as those being encompassed under the ever more broadly sweeping radar of the 'creative industries' currently being identified and defined by researchers (Florida, 2002; Bailey & Higgs, 2006; Higgs & Cunningham, 2008)? Or, might the impact of these industries lead to the diminution of the institutions of the arts?

It is evident that whenever the frame of reference 'industry' or 'enterprise' is applied to the fine arts as we have traditionally known them they become less visible. As creative industries evangelist, Stuart Cunningham says, "The 'price' to be paid for a creative economy is that the case for the arts and culture will become less about their special or exceptional difference, and become diffused into the need for creativity across the economy and society" (2006: 4).

In Queensland, State Government policy has championed the development of the creative industries subsequent to an unpublished 2003 strategy. In 2006 this resulted in a major initiative to position "creative industries at the forefront of entrepreneurial, cultural, and innovative developments ... driven by individuals with creative skills and business goals and served by technology" (State Development & Innovation 2004: 1).

In line with the strategic objective "to increase awareness and understanding of the current and potential contribution of creative industries to economic development" (ibid: 7) a number of regional studies were commissioned including one into the Mackay region. I found myself on the steering committee, an advisory group that oversaw the conduct of an audit of the number and types of creative businesses in the region, a survey of constituents and industry consultation, which culminated in a report comprising an

assessment of the current status of local creative industries and strategic directions for future development aimed at strengthening the sector (Root Projects 2007: 4-9).

It is noteworthy that the authors of this report struggled when it came to positioning the visual arts within the State policy framework which recognises six segments of the creative industries: music composition and production; film, television and entertainment software; performing arts; writing publishing and print media; advertising, graphic design and marketing; architecture, visual arts and design. According to their observations they found it more appropriate to account for the visual arts along with the performing arts (to form a sector which took in: music and theatre productions; creative arts; services to the arts, and performing arts venues). In line with this, they moved photography to fit in with architecture and design. This, they thought, also fitted evaluative and strategic imperative to distinguish creative services and cultural products (5, 11).

Whilst the visual art sector was included, albeit ambiguously, in the statistical analysis and surveys, it eventually became invisible in terms of the report's assessment and strategic recommendations. The report specifically excluded "all individuals and groups whose involvement in Mackay's creative industries is not economically motivated" and did not "address the concerns of creative artists and other members of the creative community who are not interested in developing a business" (4).

Not only are the activities of artists more readily accounted for as cultural as opposed to creative, in the innovative sense, but also in the regions they suffer from limited news coverage and lack of effective avenue for critical appraisal and review. Richards (2005) gives voice to an argument most relevant to understanding the regional context from which this paper arises. He says,

Creative industries theory is generally applied to cities and regions of high population density conducive to the creative milieu of clusters and networks that foster creativity. Both in the United Kingdom, where it has been applied in the context of regional regeneration, and in the United States, it deals with populations much greater than those of Queensland's regions.

Whilst many of the principles that the theory champions are useful - technological affordance for talent pooling, embracing diversity, and so on still apply, the small and dispersed regional populations "lack the critical mass to deliver Landry's urban buzz" (268).

As a result the regional artist may potentially miss out on valuable links in the chains of translation that urban counterparts take for granted. Certainly this has been my personal experience. The impact on one's professional advancement can be significant. I try to counteract this effect through writing articles for publication in appropriate journals that provide avenue for reflective art practice and interpretation, in addition to maintaining a regular public exhibition regime. The issue was highlighted for me during a recent University promotion justification. Without the support of my Dean, who at the time was a person under pressure to deliver a basket of creative industry policy based reforms that he himself had instigated; I faced an appeal committee made up of an assortment of professors mostly embedded in science and technology fields. I anticipated that my success would hinge on being able to interpret the value of my research and artistic practice in terms of contribution to knowledge and that they would be unmoved by my list of journal publications. Although refereed journal articles, the journals themselves had recently failed to achieve 'ranking' (according to a system which has since been

abandoned as flawed and is currently in the process of being re-defined). Exhibition catalogues, though colourful and interpretive in a broad public context in no way justify, on terms sensible to such panel members, contribution to knowledge. With these factors in mind I solicited a letter of support from the curator of a key exhibition in my profile. I presented this as expert evidence to corroborate my claims. Following is an extract:

...making an innovative contribution to software application development. This arises on the one hand from his endeavour to create original taxonomy which spans experiential and interpreted data. On the other hand he re-configures one's approach to this data through the deployment of an unorthodox interface via which the narrative and interactive streams of the content may be navigated. The hands-free technology he deploys demands of the exhibition viewer bodily engagement whilst also releasing them into social space. This complete break from the mouse and the keyboard may yet be realised as a viable norm for displaying interactive media in a public space. (Butler 2006b)

This supplemented the interpretation of the creative artistic values that Butler had provided in her catalogue essay (2006) with information that may have been out of context in the exhibition catalogue on account of being too prescriptive of how an audience might respond. While such contribution to knowledge as Butler outlines can indeed be interpreted to have arisen from the new media artistic practice that lead to the production and exhibition of the work, this was not the main intent or purpose; it was a by-product. 3

For me, this experience illustrates what other authors have said about interpretation in artistic research being fundamentally a matter of ontology, rather than epistemology (for example, Tonkinwise & Lorber-Kasunic 2006). In a paper called "The Ontology of Art" Thomasson (2004) says,

if one accepts that there are works of art at all the only appropriate method for determining their ontological status is to attempt to unearth and make explicit the assumptions about ontological status built in to the relevant practices and beliefs of those dealing with works of art, to systematise these, and put them into philosophical terms so that we may assess their place in an overall ontological scheme.

She says that we cannot simply select and appropriate available ontological categories but must return to "rethink some of the standard bifurcations in metaphysics." The artworker/researcher has opportunity (might one even say obligation?) as gatekeeper; to rise and accept the role that Danto sketched out when he proposed that art had transformed itself into philosophy (1973: 17).

Art and creative politics

When talking ideology, interpretation comes down to putting a particular slant on a topic. As we have seen, often it is a simple matter of semantics and of inclusion or exclusion through typology. European creative industries academic commentator Desmond Hesmondhalg when defining cultural industries employs similar terminology to that which Bourdieu has used to describe how symbolic value is distinct from and yet may contribute to accumulation of economic value. But whereas Bourdieu is making out a special socio-economic case for value with respect to the fine arts, Hesmondhalg uses the terminology to unapologetically render the fine arts invisible. Hesmondhalg says that he chooses to use the term "symbolic creativity" instead of the term 'art', which has "connotations of individual genius and a higher calling." Instead of the term 'artists', he uses the phrase "symbolic creators for those who make up, interpret or rework stories, songs, images and

so on" (2007: 5). The result is that Hesmondhalg specifically excludes the arts from his list of core cultural industries which include: broadcasting, film industries, Internet content industry, music industries, print and electronic publishing, video and computer games, advertising and marketing (12). Derision of elitism and the fetishism associated with art objects is explicit in these arguments, but it is not clear that the change in terminology will expunge the fetish motive from culture or the interpretation of its artifacts or acts of mediation in the contemporary consumer-oriented media environment. Surely the domination of celebrity culture which arises out of the film industry is evidence of this?

The inclusion/exclusion exercise is becoming a joke. Over here we have the exclusion of the traditional arts on account of the fact that they do not fit the economic criteria to be counted as industries. Over there we have creative industry research scholars scouring census data for evidence of creative roles in position descriptions of jobs in fields more and more remote from occupations usually considered creative, for the ultimate purpose of making a point on bean-counter terms-that everyone is creative...even the bean-counter! (Now everyone can have a warm and cosy, self-satisfied feeling). It seems to me that the position that 'everyone is creative' is readily arrived at in preparation for a foundational undergraduate aesthetics essay. But such a position takes account of neither ontological différance nor epistemological difference.

The late author of the oft-quoted phrase characterising Australia as the lucky country, Donald Horne, was an advocate of what he called cultural rights which included the right "to engage with new intellectual and artistic production." He was of the opinion that the arts are antipathetic to industrial analysis. With the wily wisdom of an octogenarian, he said in one address, "there is no arts industry. There is a publishing industry, yes; there's a music industry, yes; there's a television industry, a film industry, a theatre industry, a dance industry, a design industry, and so on, and some of what they produce is thought of as art, although most of it isn't" (2002). It occurs to me that there is an element of unqualified bias in his statement too.

In 2001 when George Dickie revisited his institutional theory of art he suggested "a work of art in the classificatory sense is an evaluable artifact of kind created to be presented to an artworld public" [my emphasis] (107). I believe he meant this qualitatively and not economically and so, this notion of value is quite different from Bourdieu's in Rules of Art. Dickie's reason was not to insist that evaluative judgements must be made as part of classificatory interpretation, but rather to account for aesthetic evaluation as it occurs in actuality. One criticism of the institutional theory had been that it ignored this value component (106). There may be a relationship between aesthetic quality and market value but the institutional theory maintains that this need not definitively be so.

Michael Richards, in his published study of Queensland arts organisations, visualised a pyramidal matrix to portray the classic politically determined oppositions of: art/culture; elite art/community art; professional art/amateur art; excellent/ordinary (2006: 18). In the PhD thesis (2005) on which his book is based he illuminates how these virtual poles are actualised in communities and social structures and organisations that influence broad arts funding decisions and specific initiatives. He also explains how the adoption of the term 'artworker' in the 1970s and 1980s by many in the sector was an explicit rejection of elitist notions of art and reflected the move toward community arts in the political sense (74-75). It should be noted that is in this non-elitist sense that I employ such terms in this paper. For me the practice of art making involves also the role of translation. Translation involves striving to forge a line of common understanding between the political polarities and metaphysical bifurcations. The level of interpretation delivered will vary according to

context and always, there will be some call on the public to participate in the making of meaning.

Conclusion

Broadly speaking, if interpretation under the old humanities-oriented, cultural studies could be said to have been characterised by critique, deconstruction and analysis of texts; and interpretation in the visual arts since the sixties has been characterised by reflexive historical and institutional contextualisation, then the Australian creative industries perspective on interpretation can, from observations to date, be said to be characterised by the project to transcode census statistics in an effort to bolster a reading of the prevalent economic theory with regard to maintaining production and consumption of diverse cultural artifacts in the post-industrial future.

The notion of theory in respect to artistic practice may have changed in the time between the establishment of the Experimental Art Foundation and now. Then it may have been easier to accept that theory could arise out of practice-that one could derive meaning out of the creative act, after the fact. Now, it seems, one need conceive the ontology that informs the practice which becomes a valid basis for interpretation. Theory grounds artistic existence in practical terms.

Discourses in the science and technology realm start out speaking the same language because the fundamental ontology is not contested. The role of art has often involved just such questions of ontology. It is difficult to see the practice of artworker/researcher, the scienceworker/researcher, or the cultureworker/researcher as different in any sense other than that of interpretation with respect to ontology.

Even though this paper has essentially argued that artworld gatekeeping may be under threat of appropriation by the cultureworker/researcher who speaks the language of the economic rationalist that the politician understands; the artworker/researcher should take heart on a number of counts arising out of contemporary contexts: 1/ in media convergence theory, old mediums don't die; they continue to thrive alongside, as well as-transformed- within the new media. 2/ we are told that in the age of the Internet, economies of scale operate according to network laws that accommodate the insignificant many along with the mighty few in a long-trailing tail. Thus connectivity affords niches-and not only on traditional market terms-for the obscure but philosophically relevant interpretation. And 3/ if you are not averse to a little gambling analogy; you can have two bob each way: put your hand up to be counted both as an innovative creator and as a cultural relic.

Endnotes

1 http://www.cci.edu.au/

2 Refer to Walker-Gibbs, 2006 for an example.

3 See Holmes 2006 for an explanation of how I see my experimental new media art practice as a hybrid of technology research and creative-production research.

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