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By Anthony Davies

Four years ago Mute published Anthony Davies and Simon Ford's influential article 'Culture Clubs' (Mute18), a piece which surveyed the landscape of partnerships and alliances between business, art and politics that was shaping the late '90s culture of convergence. Today, in the wake of the dotcom crash, September 11th, the 'War on Terror', and Enron, we have seen the (re)emergence of some less euphoric, more risk-averse tendencies. Here, Anthony Davies presents an audit of an era of retrenchment and explores the pre-history of some of the conservative trends shaping the present. If nothing else, this period of renewed 'core values' allows us to see more clearly the durability and depth of reactionary currents in every sector of life capital's basic instincts laid bare

[IMAGE] > Former WorldCom CEO Bernard Ebbers in handcuffs on his way to court for his arraignment on federal charges of conspiracy to commit securities fraud and making false statements to the S.E.C. in connection with the collapse of WorldCom. New York, March 3, 2004. Photo ©2004 Allan Tannenbaum

'Two situations, both critical and insoluble. One is the total worthlessness of contemporary art. The other is the impotence of the political class in front of Le Pen. The two situations are exchangeable, and their solutions are transferable. Indeed, the inability to offer any political alternative to Le Pen is displaced to the cultural terrain, to the domain where a Holy Cultural Alliance prevails. Conversely, the problematisation of contemporary art can only come from a reactionary, irrational, or even fascist mode of thinking.' Jean Baudrillard, 'La Conjuración des Imbeciles', Libération, May 7, 1997

When the director of the Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA) in London, Philip Dodd, announced his resignation in July 2004 claiming that the UK had become 'curiously insular', the only surprise was that no one questioned his diagnosis. It was seemingly a given that Dodd, architect of one of Britain's most emblematic 'outward-looking' cultural nodes of the last decade, could call time on London's claim to be the world's most culturally exciting city. The 21st century, he announced, belonged to China.[1]

Partnerships, alliances, and networks and the interdependencies they created may have worked their magic during the 1990s, symbolising British culture's global connectedness, but contraction in the same landscape in the period 2000-2004 make the UK's particular brand of insularity far from curious. Since the heyday of the Creative Industries, Cool Britannia, the Third Way and New Economy, when the financially inspired 'surge to merge' blurred the boundaries between business and art (among others), a series of post-millennial crises have given way to risk-aversion, the reinstatement of boundaries and increasing retrenchment.

Four years ago, 'Culture Clubs' attempted to question the ways in which public and private were being reconfigured under the sway of the powerful new rhetoric of convergence. Where culture's zones of 'creativity' came, then, to be instrumentalised in the form of networking hubs and incubators for the power brokers of the new economy, in the intervening period their function has subtly altered to comply with the needs of a radically altered, introspective environment. Art now seeks to de-link itself from the broader Creative Industries and is infused with the imperative to set standards of quality, articulate vocabularies of expertise, and cater reliably to the diverse markets spanning both subsidised and 'commercial' art worlds. This shift, whose return to core values and competencies some have called paradigmatic, can be traced across other sectors too albeit with important differentiations. The aim of this interim audit is to register some of the protectionist and conservative tropes that crystallised within activism, business, and art in the wake of the 1990s boom. The presentation of three

adjacent narratives demands for clearer positioning in sections of the activist community, retrenchment and return to default settings in business, and a valorisation of specialist discourses and new markets in art is intended to indicate points of confluence whilst maintaining the specific contours of each debate.

Nearly a decade after *Libération* published Baudrillard's critique of political complacency, the Anglo-American and much of the European left routinely turns to the ascendancy of US neo-conservatism and Colin Powell's 'fucking crazies' to explain the more conspicuously reactionary tendencies that have taken hold over the past few years. But the ubiquitous mediatisation, attractive simplicity and global resonance of stories associated with the 'Project for the New American Century' are such that the rise of other populist and New Right formations in EU/US politics are being obscured. In the early 1990s, when the 'Forty Intellectuals', including Pierre Bourdieu, Jacques Derrida, and Paul Virilio, issued an appeal to vigilance regarding the threat to democracy from a burgeoning far right presence in the French mainstream media,[2] hitherto hidden concentrations of power were arguably made visible by dramatic structural changes in capitalism (the fallout from the first Gulf War, the 'cost' of German reunification, successive European exchange rate crises, Western industrial restructuring, the collapse of consumer confidence, etc.). The period 2000-4 has seen a comparable economic 'readjustment' which promises, again, to help yield an understanding of some of the more deeply embedded political undercurrents which may have been overshadowed during the boom.

[IMAGE] > ImClone, Martha Stewart, Merrill Lynch, Enron, Arthur Anderson, Global Crossing, Tyco, WorldCom, Adelphia, et al., diagram (detail) by Mark Poyser, Wall Street Follies website, 2002

A NEW SYNTHESIS?

In the late 1990s, as the narrative of convergence hit its peak, two members of Dutch anti-fascist organisation De Fabel van de Illegaal highlighted some of the risks associated with networked forms of organisation in a series of texts directed at the fledgling protest movement.[3] Developing debates already underway in Germany, where left-right cooperation and anti-semitism were being discussed by antinationalist and 'Anti-German' commentators (see Tadzio Müller's article, page 26), activists Eric Krebbers and Merijn Schoenmaker argued that the terms in which anti-globalisation struggles had at least initially been framed may have dovetailed with agendas associated with the right. The weak spots, they contended, lay in the fixation on the most visible edifice of global capitalism (agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organisation and World Bank plus, of course, the Transnational Corporations), and its instruments (trade agreements like the Multilateral Agreement on Investment), at the expense of constitutive issues like racism, sexism, and homophobia which had been constructed as secondary. The absence of clear declarations had, according to this emergent critique, inadvertently created the conditions for left/right coalitions and opened up pathways for the right at the very heart of the campaigns against corporate led globalisation. As early as 1998, this had led De Fabel to amend their terminology and positioning, taking on a pro-globalisation position: 'Left wing activists should not protest against a globalisation of solidarity or a global exchange of cultures and ideas. And certainly not against progress. The real struggle is about the direction in which we are going to progress and most important: who is going to decide about that.' [4] De Fabel van de Illegaal departed from the campaigns against the MAI and WTO in June 1999.

Later in 2000, an author writing under the name of 'Mark S' further highlighted some of the risks associated with alliances and networked forms of organisation. In 'The Progressive Left's Dirty Little Secret: Public Citizen, IFG and the Far Right', he raises a series of question marks over the alliances, funding and strategic planning behind the now mythical Seattle protests of November 1999. By drawing attention to the manner in which singularly focused opposition to transnational corporations helped forge an alliance between left and right which sidelined the latter's racism, sexism and

nationalism in favour of the ultimately vague target of globalisation, he argues organisations like Public Citizen and the International Forum on Globalisation (IFG) stretched 'the movement's' mood of alliance-oriented pragmatism to breaking point, and created dangerous precedents for far right influence over 'progressive' discourse and activism.[5] Through malleable strategic objectives like the 'transcendence of partisan party politics' or the desired defeat of the 'fast-track' authority of the WTO and IMF, justifications were made for getting into bed with the racist conservative, business nationalist right of Pat Buchanan et al.[6] Mark S concludes that, by dint of Public Citizen's funding saturating 'virtually every layer of activism in Seattle', the tactical decisions of this consumer advocacy NGO came to influence those of the protest as a whole: 'We were all working with this coalition and we will all feel the effects of a world with expanded far-right influence and power.'

Far right infiltration of 'progressive' movements is neither a novel phenomenon nor one restricted to the US: the international anti-Gulf War and Ecology movements have long provided a foil for anti-immigrant, anti-semitic and even fascist sentiment.[7] After this particular scare however some organisations made clear moves to address the problem. The PGA for example amended its manifesto to explicitly reject alliances with the right. Not so other leading lights of the antiglobalisation movement: the IFG's Susan George instead reasserted the ultimate effectivity and hence value of the alliance model by stating, 'the anti-NAFTA and anti-WTO forces defeated fast track authority ... only with the help of the far right. It was still a good thing to defeat fast-track.'[8]

In December 2001, and back in a European context, representatives from the anti-fascist Never Again Association, editors of the national trade union weekly *Nowy Tygodnik Popularny* and 'left-wing intellectual' review *Lewa Noga* raised concerns regarding an alleged right wing infiltration of the Polish branch of the antiglobalisation group ATTAC. In a text published in the UK anti-fascist magazine *Searchlight* in July 2002, Rafal Pankowski built a compelling case not only against Polish ATTAC but also the manner in which sections of the left had generally been wrong-footed by a quiet reconfiguration of the right.[9] In this case, by moving into some of the blurred 'professional' and social interstices of Polish political culture of the 1990s to expose one of the organisation's founders as a reformed fascist.[10] Pankowski's assertion of a right-wing hijack is perhaps best illustrated by a statement attributed to ATTAC Poland, which opens the article: 'The concepts of the fatherland, the state, the nation, and first of all patriotism, are under threat. ... We declare that defending the economic and political sovereignty of Poland is a necessary condition for membership in our Association. ... ATTAC is a Polish association, which seeks first of all to defend Polish interests, the sovereignty of decisions of the Polish society, Polish culture and tradition as well as Polish property.'[11]

Significantly, there is a difference between the pragmatic and publicly acknowledged 'we are neither left nor right, we are in front'[12] alliances manifest on the streets of Seattle, and the crypto convergence of left/right agendas at Poland's ATTAC. Whereas the former demonstrate the strategic opportunities and dilemmas forged by new networked forms of organisation, the latter can be linked to the reformulation of the European New Right and its hibernation in the left's 'laboratories of thought' over the last thirty years or so. Pankowski's alarmist calls, valuable though they are, fall somewhat wide of the mark: Polish ATTAC wasn't necessarily hijacked or infiltrated by the right in a significant sense it was a product of the right.

Between 2000 and 2002 the European political landscape was rocked by a series of victories and gains made by the mainstream populist right in local and national elections: Jörg Haider's Freedom party (FPÖ) in Austria; Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front in France; Pim Fortuyn's List Fortuyn in Holland; the People's Party in Denmark; the Progress Party in Norway; Vlaams Blok in Belgium and the Northern League in Italy. Where many attributed the electoral success of this populist movement to the resurgence of nationalism triggered by globalisation, migration and economic insecurity, others looked to an 'intellectual' current which had been quietly hibernating in mainstream political culture

since the late 1960s. According to two of its most prominent exponents, Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, the European New Right (ENR) is not a political movement, but 'a think-tank and school of thought' which, since its formation in 1968, has attempted to formulate a metapolitical perspective:

In a world where closed entities have given way to interconnected networks with increasingly fuzzy reference points, metapolitical action attempts, beyond political divisions and through a new synthesis, to renew a transversal mode of thought and, ultimately, to study all areas of knowledge in order to propose a coherent worldview.[13]

Its critics have claimed that the ENR's force lies in having transformed the discourse and focus of 1960s fascism by rebranding it as a critique of the 'system' that was attractive to anti-fascists, whilst simultaneously transmitting a fascist message to the initiated.[14]

As the narrative of globalisation intensified during the 1990s, anxieties associated with networked forms of organisation were identified and acted upon in activist communities. Clearer political positioning and a definition of basic ideological orientations emerged as a response to the left-right coalitions and 'transversals' being constructed to serve right-wing interests. It would take the combined impact of the dotcom collapse, September 11 and Enron to trigger a similar crisis of limits in the world of business.

BACK TO BASICS

In late 2001, as some sections of the US business community were busy preparing for bankruptcy filings and state investigations into corporate misconduct, others were looking for the hope of survival in the global downturn. For the first time in a decade, terms like 'interdependence risk', 'network discontinuities' and 'back-to-basics' started to temper the chorus of innovation, risk, expectation and hope the irrational exuberance which had accompanied the boom economy of the 1990s.

In an article published in *Strategy and Business* magazine in January 2002, Ralph W. Schrader and Mike McConnell (respectively CEO and Vice President of management and technology consultants Booz Allen Hamilton) issued a set of warnings linked to the many perceived threats to corporate America post September 11. Schrader and McConnell argued that most companies bound to the globalisation of communications, finance, trade, and corporate activity as well as their supporting infrastructures had made themselves susceptible to 'interdependence risk'. This is 'the potential for ostensibly small events a trader improperly covering derivatives trades, a rogue computer hacker, a fire in a suppliers' factory to spiral rapidly into a company-threatening crisis.' [15] Ironically, those very same risks and discontinuities, those unanticipated events that can suddenly transform an industry, did indeed prove to be catastrophic for many companies. The threat however was not exposure to remote risks intensified by global connectedness; rather, it was the potential for alliances, partnerships and networks to distort growth, and CEOs' enthusiastic abuse of this situation in exaggerated profit projections, insider deals and massaged accounts. In late 2001 the labyrinthine networks and illegal partnerships orbiting Enron and WorldCom were just coming to light: for a moment, interdependence risk threatened to engulf the system.

In the case of Arthur Anderson, its interdependence with Enron triggered the rapid disintegration of the entire brand not just the company in the US but the multi-disciplinary partnerships ('MDPs') that had underpinned its global operations. Up until this point, Anderson had challenged traditional business models by offering tax, legal and a host of professional services under one roof and was by far the largest proponent of MDPs among the 'Big Five' accountancy firms (now the Big Four). Exposure to Enron was catastrophic for the company and a major setback for MDPs in general. As Alan Hodgart, European director of Hildebrandt International Consultants, has argued 'Once the integrity of the brand is questioned, everything disappears ... everyone looks for an escape route.' [16]

Seen within this context, those debates which focused on the many perceived holes and vulnerabilities in the system as well as their 'remedy' securing the networks, protecting data and what *Strategy and Business* editor Randall Rothenberg called 'boundarylessness within borders' must seem prescient. In certain quarters of the corporate community they have indisputably contributed to the belief that finding a secure balance between a company's 'boundarylessness' (its ability to engage new people, ideas, concepts, suppliers, etc.) and its 'borders' (forms of protection against the unanticipated) have become key to survival.[17] But, as partnerships and alliances became increasingly associated with risk and the economy continued on its downward course throughout 2002/3, some CEOs started to question the viability of such a model of growth altogether.

When Bill Ford took over the ailing Ford Motors from Jacques Nasser in late 2001, he immediately reversed what had become a disastrous programme of diversification (into areas like e-commerce, parts recycling etc.), shed ancillary businesses, and implemented a general turnaround plan that he termed 'Back to Basics' (not to be confused with the last Conservative government's moral and cultural variant of the mid 1990s). From that point on, the company would concentrate on what it knew best its core business, the production of cars. This was not simply a case of redefining the core business in times of turbulence, but an attempt to roll back the company to a pre-Jacques Nasser golden age a fundamental rejection of the dotcom inspired 'consumer products company' in favour of what can best be described as a company practising 'total manufacturing' (i.e. a shift back into design, engineer and build). This was broadly welcomed by industry analysts fed up with what automotive industry expert Brett C Smith dubbed, 'the blatant hoax [dot com] played on the country by a bunch of twenty year olds!'[18] The chorus of approval was epitomised by his subsequent claim that 'October 30th (2001) is the day that signalled the end of the sea change from a management style that captured the fancy of many industrial leaders. In its place the back-to-basics approach was reinstated.'[19]

From its reinstatement on 30th October 2001, Back to Basics continued to gather pace and was lauded as a major corporate trend, with a number of companies including Gap, Procter and Gamble, Levis, Nike and Reebok, with their 'Fashion Backwards' trends following suit. *Newsweek's* grand proclamation in August 2003 that 'common sense is back in vogue'[20] found a highpoint of articulation in the 'Eyes on the Fries' strategy of the now deceased CEO of McDonalds, James Cantalupo.[21] After taking control of the company in early 2003, Cantalupo immediately reversed the headlong rush to build new outlets, arguing that diversification was the fundamental reason that McDonalds had gone off the rails. They had taken their eyes off the fries and neglected core competencies and quality in favour of unrealistic growth targets and diversification. At an annual 10-15 per cent, these had translated into opening two thousand restaurants per year, as well as investing in partnerships and other ventures to meet the expectations of Wall Street. After shedding partnerships, adding customers to existing stores versus adding stores, and revising the growth forecast to a more modest 3-5 percent, McDonalds' share price leapt back from its eight year low in March 2003.

As sections of the business community became increasingly disentangled in some cases willingly, in others forcibly from the complex networked landscape of the late 1990s, for many the project of convergence came to an abrupt halt. According to the Business Cycle Dating Committee the US economy officially went into recession in March 2001 and the dot com bubble burst a year earlier in March 2000.[22] Up until this point, many financial analysts were sticking to their guns arguing that the new economy was recession proof, that the boom-bust business cycle was a thing of the past, a feature of the 'old' economy. In this light a report from the *Journal of Private Equity* makes stark reading: in 1997, there was one Silicon Valley public initial offering per week, which produced nearly 65 millionaires per day. By 2001, Silicon Valley was suffering 4,000 job losses per month, and 85 bankruptcies per day.[23] For the business community, this trauma was further compounded by September 11 and the violently paranoid geopolitics of the US' 'War On Terror', whose security

clampdown led some analysts to the extraordinary conclusion that this 'new crisis presents issues never before faced: a halt to the headlong, liberating globalisation of the last two decades.' [24] The Back to Basics, Fashion Backwards, New Common Sense and Eyes on the Fries strategies clearly indicate a tendency towards retrenchment in the face of economic and political uncertainty, but the broader contours of a climate where, as The Economist had it, 'revolutions are distinctly out of favour' has been much less clear. [25]

[IMAGE] > Art Ecosystem model, from Taste Buds , a report on developing the market for contemporary visual art, written by Morris Hargreaves McIntyre and published by Arts Council England, 2004

A REAL PARADIGM SHIFT

In late 2001, as the Securities and Exchange Commission started to unravel the bogus networks at energy giant Enron, arts research agency AEA Consulting questioned the viability of unregulated corporate sponsorship of the arts. Using the Venice Biennale with its 'anachronistic but much revered national paradigm' as an example, its researcher Joe Hill noted that members of the Biennale's global village weren't guaranteed equal representation if some were able to outspend others thanks to strategic partnership deals with business. 'Like America's political action committees', he suggested, 'corporate sponsorship may require regulation if increasing numbers of smaller countries are to remain visible.' [26] For many companies however, market realities were already beginning to overshadow the finer points of Hill's verdict.

In the UK, the dot com implosion and subsequent readjustment of 2000/01 continued to rip through Europe's leading Venture Capital Market. [27] By 2002 it had fallen to only 20 percent of its 2000 high (from Euro 7.2bn in 2000 to Euro 1.5bn in 2002) with obvious repercussions for the fledgling Creative Industries whose entrepreneurial habitats had been spurred on by the ideology and loose capital associated with the new economy, as well as being actively supported by a devoted New Labour government. [28] The desire to create 'a society in the UK where the arts are more effectively integrated with business than almost anywhere else in the world' [29] meant, of course, that the arts had become subject not only to business values but, critically, even more closely 'integrated' into the vagaries of business trends and economic cycles. Total business investment in the arts in the UK fell from a peak of £134,627,059 in 1999/00 to £99,336,151 in 2001/02 [30] and, despite Arts & Business chief executive Colin Tweedy's claim that spending on Millennium projects accounted for much of this drop, it was nonetheless indicative of a profound crisis. The 2001 Venice Biennale had narrowly missed a cull. But shortly after Bloomberg, the British Council and their guests partied to the tune of £250,000 at Venice's art bash of the year, the traumas of a deepening recession and September 11 led to Bloomberg cancelling their annual Christmas party in London; elsewhere, Scotland's *Sunday Herald* reported that Andersen Consulting's exposure to Enron had resulted in their withdrawal from the 2002 Glasgow Art Fair, leaving the organisers with no time to find a replacement sponsor. [31] It was only a matter of time before those organisations and individuals who had looked outwards to private capital during a boom economy would need to find escape routes during a deepening recession looking inwards at core competencies and micro-economies was a safe option.

Against this backdrop of contraction, a latent crisis surfaced in the art press on the role of criticism and the 'withering away' of various categories, gold standards and specialist discourses in contemporary art in the 1990s. On the occasion of its 100th edition *October* magazine published a special edition devoted to obsolescence, which included a since much cited roundtable on 'The Present Conditions of Art Criticism'. [32] The original discussion took place in New York City on December 14, 2001 and brought together the magazines' editors and a carefully selected band of US academics, museum curators, art critics, and artists. [33] The *October* landscape is one in which the serious art critic is

characterised as an independent actor a 'third voice' outmanoeuvred by the neoliberal-pop-libertarian-aesthetics of writers like Dave Hickey on the one hand and curators' organisational access to the instruments of the culture industry on the other. Here, art criticism's crisis partly finds its cause in the ascendancy of 'belletristic' art writing; the role of the popular press is described as defining artists' careers and creating new markets/constituencies during the 1990s notably in the UK.

The 'dismantling of competence through the market' has, according to participant Benjamin Buchloh, voided the judgement of the critic and with it his/her independent mediation role between institutions, the markets and 'various segments of the public sphere of avant garde culture'. It is at such a moment that he says 'the critic has no place in our cultural structure'. In keeping with this diagnosis, the group's anxieties settle on the spectre of populism, the corrupting influence of lifestyle media and market acquiescence and, somewhat predictably, draw them towards the kind of affirmative, self-valorising standards capable of reasserting criticism's disciplinary role.

In the UK meanwhile, after a decade of false starts, an assault on the interdisciplinary and intersectoral proliferations of the 1990s started to gain currency in reactionary registers such as the New Gentleness and New Formalism. Common to the presentation of all these 'post-yBa' and 'post-Sensation' idioms was a clear sense of periodisation and place which, contrary to claims made for the art being 'uncluttered by the relics of history',^[34] in fact anchored it to history through a doggedly narrow account of the 1990s British (or rather London/Glasgow) cultural scene.^[35] Together with the implicit affirmation of the primacy of the art object, gallery and market, many of these narratives were well matched to institutional and media agendas in desperate need of new, stable and conservative ciphers of cultural value. Although careful not to lump together the diverse artistic positions in one 'movement', most interpretations followed a similar pattern of describing the new art's turn inwards to a set of psychosocial, material or art-historical default values. In most cases, the primary explanatory architecture welded together a supposed backlash against the 'aggressive' identity politics and theoretical cul-de-sacs of the late 1980s and early 1990s with a sense of disdain for the celebrity-fixated, populist venality of the yBa to argue for a move into for example more intimate, sincere, and authentic forms of production.^[36] The cumulative investment in formalism prompted Iwona Blazwick (the then recently appointed director of the Whitechapel Gallery in London) to announce on the occasion of the Early One Morning exhibition that a 'a real paradigm shift in contemporary art' had occurred.^[37]

With its concomitant returns to painting, sculpture and objecthood, the 'paradigm shift' hit mainstream visibility and institutional accord with a host of 'back to basics' exhibitions throughout 2002-2003. At a glance, these included the survey of contemporary British sculptors who 'were reengaging with the formal and conceptual business of making things' in Early One Morning (Whitechapel Gallery, August 2002); the 'art [that] seems to be rematerialising' in Object Sculpture (Henry Moore Institute, June September 2002); the lifting of '90s amnesia and 'forgetfulness about earlier forms of modern art' in Beck's Futures (ICA, March May 2002) and the 'honest colourful experience' of Days Like These (Tate Britain, February May 2003). This ran parallel to a shift of focus in sections of the UK mainstream media and specialist art press including Andrew Renton's column in London's *Evening Standard*, with its regular and sustained polemic on the demise of yBa and the ascendancy of self-referentiality and the 'artist's touch'. For a while at least, this high circulation daily newspaper wound down its love affair with the popular exploits of Tracey, Damien and co. in a bid to move its arts coverage 'upmarket'.^[38] The storyline moved from hello 'Heroes of Humdrum', Rachel Whiteread and Eva Hesse (Dec 3, 2002), to 'Bye-bye YBAs' (Dec 31, 2002) and 'Escape from Brit Art' (Feb 4, 2003). This remains The Art Story in the UK media, with a July 2004 article in *The Financial Times*' *How to Spend It* magazine reiterating that 'It's probably a reaction against the harsh realities presented by Brit Art but a lot of young artists are getting back to the physical and emotional

process of painting.’[39]

As these tendencies crystallised throughout 2002/03, a radically reformed and newly appointed Arts Council England (ACE) entered the equation. In addition to its remit to improve social cohesion, cultural diversity and generally utilise what the state perceives as the ‘transformative’ power of the arts, the new organisation put the individual artist at the centre of its policy making with an implicit remit to develop markets for sales and commissions of contemporary art. Between the lines, the first ACE manifesto ‘Ambitions for the Arts’ (February 2003) offers a glimpse into a fundamental funding realignment towards, and ‘productive intervention’ in, the existing market for contemporary art. As this market has remained relatively opaque to policy makers, a research brief went into circulation in early 2002 to tackle the deficit of understanding. Two of the most significant expected outputs of the report, which after a half-year embargo has just been released by ACE and consultancy Morris Hargreaves McIntyre under the title ‘Taste Buds’, were to

suggest ways in which artists may be encouraged to become more entrepreneurial, without compromising their practice’ and to ‘recommend strategic initiatives to develop the marketplace and enhance the purchase and commissioning of, and engagement in, the innovative end of contemporary art practice.’[40]

This clearly indicates a turn inwards in this case to intra-sectoral core strengths and offers up what might be called the ‘New Art Consumer’ (NAC) as the paramount engine of art’s sustainability. NACs’ relevance to the last three years of contraction lies in their capacity to shift the operational logic from corporatisation to marketisation, from ‘immaterial’ knowledge and services to a rematerialisation of the art object and consumer base. Where corporatisation as part and parcel of a model of convergence implied increased integration with the business community and compliance with its administrative and managerial infrastructures, marketisation relies on models of divergence and individuation. Under the jurisdiction of the State, the burden of provision, valorisation and autonomy is moved onto a carefully modelled, differentiated social system in which the relationship between individual artists and educated consumers moves to the centre ground.

To gauge the ideological tenets of the commissioning and consulting agencies exploring this framework, you need look no further than the pronouncements of Andrew Wheatley, ubiquitous art consultant, co-director of London’s Cabinet Gallery, and adviser on ‘Taste Buds’. With a track record drafting policy for government agencies, assessing National Lottery applications and engaging in a range of other arts ‘monitoring’ and ‘mentoring’ activities, Wheatley can be classed as an authority on artists’ negotiation of British state-market infrastructures. In 2002, whilst working on a mentoring scheme for arts development organisation ETA,[41] he participated in a conversation with his charge, artist Peter Seddon, which illustrates both his personal investment in the everyday ‘realism’ of the market and the normative function of his statements upon it. In ‘Angelic Markets’, he claims assuredly that although this should not to be confused with a ‘straightforwardly Thatcherite, Friedmanite, right wing, libertarian etc.’ position, markets are ‘inescapable and always [have] been in the modern world.’[42] The art market, Wheatley opines, is closely intertwined with the history of modernism and artists have always had a symbiotic relationship with the gallery/dealer system though symbiosis in this case means that ‘sometimes you have to sup with so-called devils to ensure that important work is seen.’ The only difficulties this situation throws up are linked to understanding the complex interplay between specialists that result in legitimation, consensus and subscription the ‘quite special way’ in which the art market manipulates and generates its own demand. As this ‘rarefied niche market’ is driven by complex social and professional interrelations between artists, critics, curators, dealers, collectors and academics, it behaves quite unlike a mass market of reproduced goods. With the magic ingredients of subscription being so difficult to monitor, never mind manufacture ‘Taste Buds’ may have difficulties producing the structural maps necessary for ACE to effectively intervene, entice and

educate NACs.[43]

Ever ahead of the game, by late 2003 retail company Habitat was already leading by example enrolling in its 'Crash course in Contemporary Art', soon to be followed by the Whitechapel Gallery's 'Critics Classes' and Bloomberg's 'Art School'. [44] To celebrate Habitat's support of the first Frieze Art Fair, the company brought together a range of experts to provide 'insider tips [that] will inspire Londoners who love their homes to adorn them with exciting and unique works of art to complement their home and lifestyle.' [45] As with Bloomberg's later 'Art School' in January 2004, the event took place in-house and had a clear performative function: companies were cast in the role of educational service providers, offering a kind of 'relational consumption' (Habitat customers could observe, pass by and listen in to NAC sessions at their Kings Road store; registered 'students' enjoyed portfolio sessions and private tutoring at Bloomberg's London headquarters). In addition to being an alternative to capital and real estate, NACs are enticed into the art market on the pretext that they are buying into a piece of contemporary culture. As Ben Lewis further qualifies in the 'The Price of Art', this can be accompanied by any one or all of the following: a 'new sense of writing history', 'becoming purified by the act of collecting art', and becoming part of the process of validation. [46] Consequently, it is no surprise that turf wars have opened up between curators, critics, artists and administrators regarding their respective rights, responsibilities and roles within the art ecosystem. It is tempting to read the various modes of retrenchment as indicative of a more general realignment between business, cultural organisations and the state as they jostle for the lucrative mediation rights to what is essentially a new and untapped constituency.

[IMAGE] > 'Art School', Bloomberg Space (main foyer), London. January March 2004

TIME TO TURN THE TAPS BACK ON?

Since late 2003, a renewed confidence in the business community combined with symbolic 'closure' on its multiple trauma has led some in the financial press to suggest it might be 'Time to turn the taps back on'. [47] Together with the publication of the Final Report of the 9/11 Commission and criminal indictments of WorldCom and Enron CEOs (as well as the trials of 600 or so other corporate criminals), the US state and its regulatory bodies clearly want to be seen to be putting their own house in order before November's elections and a perennially delayed upturn in the business cycle. In the meantime, whilst the unprecedented financial coverage and speculation on the growth of the Chinese economy may well indicate that, economically, the 21st century belongs to China, it also helped take some of the strain off faltering Western economies and facilitated the transferral and reanimation of dubious economic models like the Third Way. [48] But is global capital's favourite new theatre of operations any more than the physical and symbolic instantiation of 'boundarylessness within borders', the latest space of deferral for problems unleashed by global interdependencies?

Some of the key 'dangers' associated with globalisation's porous boundaries were noted in sections of the anti-capitalist community as early as the 1997, though it required the multiple trauma of 2000-1 to bring home interdependence risk to the business community. As the Forty Intellectuals, De Fabel and Enron have shown (albeit in distinctly contrasting ways), networked forms of organisation, alliances and partnerships are particularly prone to abuse, infiltration and corruption. But what happens when they go into remission? What happens when contemporary art, for example, de-links itself from the broader Creative Industries and retreats into core competencies? Recent structural changes in corporate capitalism its turn inwards, reassessment and temporary withdrawal from the 'networked society' have revealed the extent to which myriad reactionary, conservative and far right tendencies remain latent in the laboratories of thought ready to re-emerge, hybridise and claim the cultural agenda.

FOOTNOTES

- [1] Nigel Reynolds, 'Swipe at Britain as arts chief quits', *The Daily Telegraph*, 20 July 2004
- [2] On July 13th 1993 'A Call to Vigilance' was made by the Forty Intellectuals in *Le Monde Diplomatique*: <http://www.anti-rev.org/>. The Call warns of the danger of inadvertently legitimising extreme right positions. A year later it was republished as an advert with an additional 1,500 signatures. This debate is covered in more detail in 'The French New Right: New Right New Left New Paradigm?' *TELOS*, Winter 1993 Spring 1994, Numbers 98 and 99. See the right-wing Thirdway.org website for further information, e.g. on similarities to the 'No Platform' policy in the UK
- [3] Eric Krebbers, 'Together with the New Right against globalisation?', October 1998, <http://www.savanne.ch/>
- [4] Eric Krebbers, 'Together with the New Right against globalisation?', *ibid*
- [5] Public Citizen is a US based consumer advocacy NGO 'Protecting Health, Safety and Democracy'. It was founded by consumer rights activist Ralph Nader in 1971, although the organisation no longer has an operational relationship with him. See <http://www.citizen.org>. The IFG is an alliance of 60 leading activists, scholars, economists, researchers and writers representing over 60 organisations in 25 countries, and was formed in response to economic globalisation. See <http://www.ifg.org>. Mark S's criticism of these organisations rests either on their negotiating tactics (Nader, for example, was prepared to share platforms with Buchanan to oppose 'institutions of world government' and promote comparable positions on trade; discussions were also had with far right 'union buster' and Buchanan campaign financier, Roger Milliken), or on issues of funding (several campaigning efforts of the IFG have, for example, been sponsored by *The Ecologist* editor Teddy Goldsmith, whose name became associated with the European Far Right after attending meetings of GRECE)
- [6] Mark S, 'The Progressive Left's Dirty Little Secret: Public Citizen, IFG and the Far Right' 2000. In a March 1999 email to the PGA listserve, Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch field director Mike Dolan did just this, stating that 'the populist movement against the WTO transcends party politics', and that '(w)hatever else you say about Pat Buchanan, he will be the only candidate in the 2000 presidential sweepstakes who will passionately and unconditionally defend the legitimate expectations of working families in the global economy.' <http://www.alphalink.com.au/>
- [7] Mark S, *ibid*
- [8] Susan George, in an email to De Fabel, cited in *ibid*
- [9] Rafal Pankowski, 'Far Right hijacks anticapitalist group', *Searchlight* 2002. Pankowski's claims were met head on by Remigiusz Okraska, a co-founder of ATTAC Poland, who made a series of counter accusations in 'At the service of Neoliberals'. See <http://www.de.indymedia.org/>
- [10] Jaroslaw Tomasiewicz, founder of Przelom Narodowy (National Breakthrough) and more recently involved in the Association for Support of Ethnic Cultures. An extraordinary response to Rafal Pankowski's accusation of can be found at: <http://www.arts.uwaterloo.ca/>
- [11] Rafal Pankowski, *ibid*
- [12] Nicholas Hildyard, former editor of *The Ecologist*, states in his essay 'Blood and Culture: Ethnic Conflict and the Authoritarian Right', that 'the slogan "Neither Left nor Right but In Front" was first used by anarchist groups in the 1970s to signal an opposition both to the overtly statist policies of the then Left and to the elitist policies of the Right. In its modern variant, it is a slogan that calls not for opposition but for an alliance an alliance that is possible only by setting aside key political differences.' Mark S for his part cites researcher Janet Biehl's work "'Ecology" and the Modernization of Fascism in the German Ultraright', not only to track the transformation of fascist discourses into ecological and anarchist ones during the 1970s and 80s, but also to name the provenance of the same phrase, which she claims was coined by Herbert Gruel, a participant in the formation of the German Greens and later founder of the fascist-ecology group the Ecological Democratic Party (ODP)
- [13] Alain de Benoist and Charles Champetier, 'The French New Right in the Year 2000', *The Alain de Benoist Collection*, <http://www.alphalink.com.au/>
- [14] Roger Griffin, 'Between metapolitics and apoliteia: the New Right's strategy for conserving the

- fascist vision in the interregnum', *Modern and Contemporary France*, vol. 8, no. 2, Feb. 2000
- [15] Ralph W Schrader and Mike McConnell, 'Post-9/11 CEO Agenda', *Strategy and Business* (Security and Strategy Special Report), issue 26, first quarter, 2002
- [16] Jean Eaglesham, 'The Case Against Anderson', *Financial Times*, 8 April, 2002
- [17] Private email correspondence with Randall Rothenberg, Summer 2003
- [18] Brett C Smith (Senior research Associate at The Office for the Study of Automotive Transportation), <http://www.autofieldguide.com/>
- [19] Brett C Smith, *ibid.*
- [20] Brad Stone, 'Back to Basics', *Newsweek*, August 4, 2003
- [21] Neil Buckley, 'Eyes on the Fries: will new products, restaurant refits and a marketing overhaul sustain the Golden Arches', *Financial Times*, August 29, 2003
- [22] Business Cycle Dating Committee, National Bureau of Economic Research, November 26, 2001 <http://www.nber.com/>
- [23] Jeffrey E Sohl, 'The US Angel and Venture Capital Market: Recent Trends and Developments', *Journal of Private Equity*, Vol.6, No. 2, 2003, pp. 7-17
- [24] Jeffrey E Garten (Dean of the Yale School of Management), 'From New Economy to Siege Economy', *Strategy and Business*, *ibid.*
- [25] *The Economist*, July 12 2003
- [26] Joe Hill, Reflections on the Venice Biennale, *The Platform*, Volume 2 Number 2, AEA Consulting, <http://aeaconsulting.com/>
- [27] Ernst and Young report, UK Venture Capital halves in 2002 , London 13th February 2003: <http://www.ey.com/> and: UK Venture Capital investment drops again in 2003 , London 12 February 2004: <http://www.ey.com/>
- [28] According to the employment statistics provided by the Department for Culture Media and Sport, jobs in advertising and design & designer fashion actually went up 7 percent during the same period!
- [29] Colin Tweedy, Putting art into business , Oct 2004, *ePolitix.com* at: <http://www.epolitix.com/>. Colin Tweedy is chief executive of Arts & Business and chairman of CEREC, the European Committee for Business, Arts and Culture
- [30] Arts and Business survey. The levels of sponsorship decline vary from sector to sector, but in the visual arts in the UK, business sponsorship collapsed from a peak of £10.3m in 2000/01 to £6.4m in 2001/02. The statistics also point towards a movement of business funding from visual arts, museums and galleries into community type initiatives (Corporate Social responsibility), <http://www.aandb.org.uk/>
- [31] Juliette Garside, Scottish arts suffer as big business pulls plug on cash , *Sunday Herald*, 21 April 2002
- [32] *October* 100, Round Table: The Present Conditions of Art Criticism, Spring MIT, 2002, pp200-228
- [33] *October* 100, *ibid.* The Round Table included *October* founding editor Rosalind E. Krauss, fellow editors Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, Hal Foster and George Baker, art historians David Joselit, James Meyer and Helen Molesworth, artists John Miller and Andrea Fraser, and critic and MOMA curator Robert Storr
- [34] JJ Charlesworth, Not Neo But New , *Art Monthly*, no. 259, September 2002
- [35] Martin Maloney, the artist/curator who can be credited with developing the vocabulary associated with the New Gentleness, emphasised the romantic and softer nature of new art. See also Alex Farquharson's catalogue essay for Real Hearts Protest/Neurotic Souls Survive , Beck's Futures, 2002. Recent usage of New Gentleness can be found in Fiachra Gibbons, After the shocks and the hype, the gentle art of painting is ready to make a comeback , *The Guardian*, January 2, 2003. For New Formalism, see JJ Charlesworth, Not Neo But New , *ibid.*
- [36] *Variant* has critically engaged these positions with, first, Nick Evans trenchant dismantling of New Formalism and its necessarily occluded Others in Tired of the Soup de Jour? , *Variant* 16, Winter

- 2002, then Grant Kester's short essay on the neoconservative cultural tendencies of writers like Dave Hickey in *The world he has lost: Dave Hickey's beauty treatment*, *Variant* 18, Autumn 2003
- [37] Iwona Blazwick, Catalogue introduction to *Early One Morning - New British Sculpture in the 21st Century*, Whitechapel Gallery, 2002
- [38] Claire Cozens, Standard recruits seven to boost arts coverage, *The Guardian*, March 21, 2002
- [39] Jane Hughes, Could Sacha Clean Up, *how to spend it* magazine No. 124, *Financial Times*, July 2004
- [40] *Developing the Markets for Sales and Commissions of Contemporary Art*, Research brief, Arts Council England, 2002
- [41] See Education through Art, <http://www.etaart.co.uk/>
- [42] Peter Seddon and Andrew Wheatley, *Angelic Markets*, in Peter Seddon, *Essays, Diaries, Conversations*, The Centre for Contemporary Visual Arts, University of Brighton, 2003
- [43] *Taste Buds: How to Cultivate the Art Market* 14, October 2004. The executive summary and Art Eco System Model can be found at: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/>
- [44] The Habitat Crash Course in Contemporary Art, October 2003 can be found online at: <http://www.artshole.co.uk/> Art School at the Bloomberg Space, 26 January - 6 March 2004 Crash Course: Unravelling Collecting Contemporary Art with Louise Hayward, Director, Store Gallery, and Alicia Miller, Head of Education at the Whitechapel Gallery, July 2004
- [45] The Habitat Crash Course was serviced by Jennifer Higgie (*Frieze* Reviews Editor), Matthew Collings (art critic), Anthony Spira (curator), Edmund Hubbard (art consultant) and Mark Darbyshire (framing expert)
- [46] Ben Lewis, The Price of Art, *Prospect*, October 2004, see also: Francis Sheenan, The secret art of buying, *The Herald*, Glasgow, Scotland, October 22 2004. Elaine Cronin, 'Selling art for the solution', *Circa Art Magazine*, Friday 15 October 2004, and Sophie Leris, The fine art of buying, *The Evening Standard's ES* supplement, March 2004
- [47] Emiko Terazono, Time to turn the taps back on, *Financial Times*, 16 September 2003
- [48] Philip Dodd in conversation with Jonathan Freedland, 'The Long View', BBC Radio 4, Tuesday 28th September 2004. Having travelled the world promoting Swinging London as the living, breathing embodiment of the Third Way, Dodd is now the favoured talking head on its heir apparent, Buzzing Beijing, a place that is currently 'navigating a way that's neither State socialism nor American capitalism...a Third Way that makes Blair's Third Way look like a joke'

Anthony Davies <ajwdavies AT yahoo.co.uk> is a writer and organiser based in London