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Collections in the Balance

Elizabeth Casale

China and Russia are becoming increasingly powerful presences in the global art world: on the auction market, in legal manoeuvring around the import and export of artworks and in repatriation initiatives. The profound shift in the global balance of economic and political power from West to East that underpins this parallels in many ways the shift between Europe and the United States that occurred between 1900 and 1920 – the golden age of American collection building – when plutocrats such as J. Pierpont Morgan, Benjamin Altman, and Henry Clay Frick went on a shopping spree that “stripped Europe of her treasures,” as the New York Times reported in 1911.¹ Supported by the press, who largely saw the phenomenon as a patriotic metaphor for America’s “coming of age” and for the virtues of American free market capitalism, and by a permissive tax and legal system, they laid the foundations for America’s greatest museums. A critical difference between then and now, however, is that the current generation of economic and political leadership is motivated not simply by the acquisitive instincts of the super-rich but by powerful national sentiment as well.

The Chinese and the Russians are both increasingly focused on repatriating their countries’ cultural heritage. Repatriation, through both legal claims and the market, is a component of broader ambitions to situate their countries unequivocally within the modern, global economy. In both cases, China and Russia are consciously reverting to a pre-Communist stance that not only accepts collecting as a legitimate pursuit but also encourages it as part of a larger strategy that recognizes how a robust art market and strong support of high culture can help position a country domestically and internationally.



According to China's Ministry of Commerce, the auction industry in 2004 did US\$24 billion in business, a 45% increase in

just one year. Record prices are regularly paid by new collectors from mainland China, sending prices rocketing and edging some Americans and Europeans out of the market.

As part of its strategy, Beijing recently removed the restriction on foreign auction houses operating on the mainland and instituted new policies that allow Chinese art and antiquities acquired legally and exported in earlier periods to be brought back for auction and then re-exported if bought by an overseas buyer. In 2005, China also formally requested a U.S. embargo on all Chinese art made before 1911, a move that has evoked not only predictable scepticism within the art market, but also among some experts in cultural property protection.

Russia is also easing restrictions on import and export to encourage collecting, as prices for Russian art have escalated in the past few years. Similar to the U.S. in 1909, a new regulation that took effect January 1, 2004 eliminates the 30% tax on art imports and allows Russians to import art they have acquired abroad free of all customs duties. The government recently moved to relax exports as well, an even more significant development.

In Russia and the Ukraine, a small group of billionaires and a larger class of newly-minted millionaires are eager to flaunt their elite status through the acquisition of cultural artifacts. They are rapidly forcing the development of the art market there, especially the market for Russian art. While oligarchs such as Mikhail Khodorkovsky frequently make headlines, new "mystery" buyers seem to appear at every sale, such as the unidentified Ukrainian buyer who spent a cool £12 million at Sotheby's sale of Impressionist and Modern art last summer.

In addition to stimulating private collecting, some efforts within China and Russia are deliberate repatriation strategies, spearheaded either by individuals or the state itself. China's People's Liberation Army, through its art recovery effort, is spending tens, perhaps even hundreds, of millions of dollars in a calculated plan to repatriate Chinese art treasures, often paying prices far above market value. The International Herald Tribune reported in October that the PLA, operating through a corporate subsidiary, The Poly Corporation, is even targeting particular items now owned by American collectors including Ronald Lauder, Jack Wadsworth and Leon Black.

The effort is driven in part by China's plan to build 1,000 new museums by 2015 and the concomitant need to fill them with something, but the drivers are deeper. Li Nan, a former army major who now heads Poly Culture and Arts, has said: "The current mission is simple: repatriate China's heritage."²

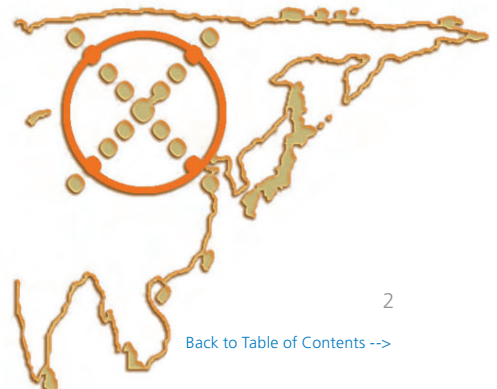
By some estimates, the Poly Group has assembled a collection worth more than \$100 million in less than ten years.

Recently, they paid \$8 million for a single Imperial bronze jar, and millions more for three important 18th century bronzes looted by the British and French during the Opium War. Considered national treasures, the loss of these masterworks (which are also traditional symbols of power) was a national humiliation, and their return was heralded by state-run media as a sign of China's growing power.

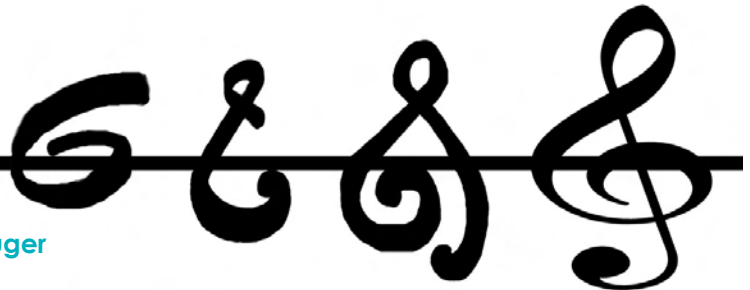
In Russia, billionaire Viktor Vekselberg has established the Link of Times Cultural-Historical Foundation, which has an explicit mission "to search for, acquire and bring back home to Russia historically significant works of art. The time has come to retrieve them."³ Vekselberg made headlines in 2004 when he purchased the Forbes Fabergé Collection for an estimated \$120 million.

The long term rise of the China and Russia as collecting powers poses a triple threat to collections in Europe and the museums that house them. Many of the leading museums in Europe today lack sufficient acquisitions funds and the tax framework to encourage gifts of art; their economies are not minting the plutocrats and "hedge fund collectors" who donate collection items and funds; and their collections lend themselves increasingly to restitution claims. And that means that today they risk being "stripped", no longer by Americans, but by individuals, governments, and even armies from the East.

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Intelligent Organizational Design



Joe Kluger

Most arts leaders today subscribe to a Darwinian view of institutional survival: those with a strong base of audience support and financial resources will be successful. Many of them cut their arts management teeth during the seemingly inexorable rise in arts funding, triggered by the creation of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965 and the Ford Foundation endowment challenge grants made that same year.⁴ Since those days the environment for the nonprofit arts has changed radically. The environmental challenges facing arts groups today – including increased competition for philanthropic funding, increased competition for the leisure time and disposable income of arts consumers and increased costs for marketing, fundraising, personnel and health care – make the acquisition of sufficient operating and capital resources far from certain, even for the best organizations. To fill the increasing gap between earned revenues and expenses, professional arts leaders are exhorting Boards of Directors to “give and get” more contributed revenue. Boards are responding with pressure on arts executives to find more earned revenue and reduce expenses.

Some of the unintended results of this sector-wide survival of the fittest approach include:

- Admission price increases driven by revenue needs, which cross price sensitivity barriers and reduce customer demand;
- Compromises in program or artistic quality for short-term positive financial impact;
- Expense reductions beyond mere administrative and operating efficiencies, causing the elimination of mission sensitive programs and activities; and
- Fundraising “fatigue,” through long-term alienation of tapped-out board members and donors

Many arts groups now face chronic operating deficits, even after exhausting these fundraising and expense reduction strategies. Even those organizations that have balanced budgets are often doing so with non-recurring revenues, such as gifts from major donors, which they would prefer to preserve as capital assets.⁵ Yet few arts and culture organizations have considered the spectrum of organizational design options, including mergers, alliances, joint-ventures and outsourcing as a strategy for sustainability.

Although divinely inspired intelligent design may have no place in the public school curriculum, arts organizations that choose to employ “intelligent organizational design” strategies proactively have several opportunities including: 1) increased program resources; 2) reduced fundraising pressure; and 3) enhanced institutional credibility with donors who are looking to invest in non-profits that operate efficiently. Mergers and alliances are a common strategy in the commercial world, where market forces cause the principles of natural selection in organizational evolution to force efficiencies. There have been barriers, however, to the common use of intelligent organizational design as an option for non-profits arts groups, except in response to institutional crisis or pressure from funders.

The resistance comes from fear of some or all of the following:

- Loss or change of mission;
- Loss of control over decision-making;
- Increased bureaucracy and inefficiency
- Loss of institutional identity;
- Loss of power and influence (organizational and individual);
- Reduction or change in scope of programs and activities;
- Reduction in overall philanthropic resources; and
- Alienation of key stakeholders (e.g. funders, members)

It is possible, and increasingly necessary, for a non-profit arts or cultural organization to address these fears – whether real or perceived – and take advantage of the strategic, operational and financial benefits of collaboration or consolidation. To do so requires a carefully designed, disciplined process of decision-making, containing the following seven steps.

STEP 1 Form Collaboration Subcommittee:

Determine who from the board of each organization will serve on a small joint “Collaboration Subcommittee,” responsible for drafting plans and recommendations. This becomes an incubator for testing theories and resolving disputes before they are brought to the full boards for review and action.

STEP 2 Engage a Neutral Facilitator:

In a commercial transaction, both parties usually engage separate advocates, with economic market forces serving as a natural catalyst in the transaction. In a non-profit consolidation, the economic forces are usually not immediate enough to be the driving influence in the transaction. A neutral facilitator – engaged jointly by both organizations – can fill the mediator role in a non-profit collaboration, minimizing the risk that institutional or individual egos will be a barrier to decisions that are in the best interests of the organizations’ respective constituents.

STEP 3 Interview Stakeholders:

Confidential discussions with key stakeholders of both organizations will help the facilitator understand the history, challenges and opportunities that each

faces, as well as foster greater buy-in to the plan. These private discussions can also uncover fears and barriers to the successful implementation of the plan, which are more easily overcome when they are brought to the surface early on.

“IN STRUCTURING
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- Thomas A. McLaughlin

STEP 4 Choose Organizational Structure:

Delineating options for collaboration, and choosing the most appropriate structure, is one of the most difficult, and important, tasks. A merger may be the right strategy in some situations, such as the recently announced merger of Cleveland Opera and Lyric Opera Cleveland,⁶ in which the two organizations want to become one at the board, management, mission and program levels. But, there is a spectrum of other collaborative options to consider, including a holding company, with semi-autonomous subsidiaries; strategic alliance; shared services corporation; joint-venture; and outsourcing. According to author Thomas A. McLaughlin, “In structuring nonprofit mergers and alliances, as in all good architecture, form should follow function.”⁷ The ideal organizational form should correspond to the degree of commonality of interest

that exists in some or all of the mission, programs, governance, management, operations, and administration of each organization. The key is to ask where on the organizational spectrum of functions to share decision-making control, and corresponding financial responsibility, and where to keep them independent. Having a clear understanding of the institutional objective for the collaboration will help find the right answers.

STEP 5 Identify Key Policy Issues:

There are many issues that must be addressed before deciding to proceed with any non-profit collaboration, including assessment of mission compatibility, organizational culture compatibility, organizational structure, governance, board leadership and composition, professional leadership/structure and personnel, nomenclature/branding/identity, disposition of assets and liabilities, office space, authority and approval process, and timetable. One of the most critical success factors is determining which of the above key policy issues are first order policy issues (which must be agreed upon before making a decision in principle to proceed with the collaboration/consolidation) and which are second order policy issues (which are better made after making a decision in principle to proceed). This is a counterintuitive approach for those who are used to negotiating agreements and, understandably, want to smoke out conflicts in advance. As in pre-nuptial agreements between spouses, while it is important to have consensus over key values, non-profit mergers and alliances can be derailed by emotional, “lightning rod” issues, which are not critical policy issues.

STEP 6 Develop Communications Plan:

If knowledge is power, it is critical for that power to be harnessed properly. Before the process begins, the collaboration subcommittee must communicate to all stakeholders who, from the boards and administrative staffs, will be included in what discussions and meetings. Make it clear who will have the authority to make decisions, who will be consulted in advance of decisions being made, and who will be informed of decisions before they read it in the newspaper or hear about it at a cocktail party. Participants in the deliberations must be held accountable for adhering to confidentiality protocols, as a great communications plan can be rendered ineffective by even one individual who violates its principles, with or without intent. (Beware the consolidation plan naysayer, who uses the inaccurate or premature disclosure of confidential information to incite fear and rebellion.)

STEP 7 Build Consensus:

The collaboration subcommittee should present its recommendations at separate meetings of the organizations' boards, facilitate an open discussion and obtain consensus regarding:

- The type of organizational structure to pursue;
- The resolution of first order policy issues; and
- The board's desire and will to develop an implementation plan, including resolution of "second order policy issues" and drafting of definitive governance and operating agreements.
- Separate meetings of the organizations' boards should be scheduled again, when the collaboration subcommittee has developed its recommendations for the implementation plan.

Natural organizational selection in the arts will – as with humans and animals – lead to the survival of only the fittest organizational species, as there may not be enough resources in the cultural ecosystem to support the number that exist today (regardless of artistic merit or community relevance). Wise arts leaders recognize, however, that institutional strength is measured not by the false pride of maintaining independence and control, but by optimizing resources for program activities. When there is a proactive, intentional process to develop a collaboration or consolidation, intelligent organizational design can be an effective strategy for strengthening artistic institutions, helping them achieve their artistic missions, and enabling them to survive the challenges of today's uncertain arts world.

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Some Thoughts On Consumer Behavior



Alexis Frasz & Chris Lorway

Many of the factors that are likely to have the most critical impact on not-for-profit arts and cultural organizations in the U.S. and Europe – the size and composition of audiences, the availability of suitable cultural product, the underlying economics of presentation, etc. – lie beyond the immediate environment of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in broader technological, demographic and social trends. This article explores three trends that are likely to have an impact on consumer behavior in the nonprofit arts sector in the coming years.

Trend 1: Digital communication

Digital media and the internet are playing increasingly important roles in the way the arts and culture are created, distributed and consumed.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal digital music downloads are increasing rapidly. According to the music industry group International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, during the first half of 2005 legal

downloads accounted for US\$790 million in sales compared with US\$220 million for the first half of 2004. Virtual peer-to-peer networks for sharing media, both legally and illegally, are also thriving despite lawsuits by recording companies trying to curb their revenue losses. Compression technology which facilitates quick and easy downloading of high quality video is entering the mainstream.



The recording industry is no longer able to deny the impact of the internet on its business. The jazz musician Maria Schneider won a Grammy for a record that was released on the web alone; Wilco by-passed their label by doing the same and received rave reviews from fans and critics alike. Meanwhile Google is aiming to digitize and make available for download virtually every book ever written with its Google Print service (currently held up in legal wrangling with print publishers).⁸

Generations X and Y have grown up with the internet and rely on it as a medium of communication as well as an information resource. A recent study conducted by Pew Internet & American Life Project revealed that 57% of American teenagers who have internet access could be considered content creators, meaning that they "have created a blog or webpage, posted original artwork, photography, stories or videos online or remixed online content into their own new creations."⁹ In addition, 51% of online teens indicated that they download music and 31% say that they download video.

There has been a spectacular growth in the use of the internet to find information about cultural opportunities in recent years. ATLAS data shows that the proportion of all cultural tourists using the Internet as a source of information in advance of their trip rose from 16% in 2001 to 34% in 2004. This proportion is likely to increase as Internet driven businesses increase their market share and it becomes more difficult for businesses to survive at all without an online presence.

Text messaging has become an increasingly popular, even primary, medium of communication in many countries, the US included. Businesses of all types are exploring ways to use the medium for everything from marketing to customer feedback.



"Folksonomic" social classification systems enabling people to classify their own pictures, bookmarks, and web pages (e.g. Furl, Flickr and Del.icio.us) are becoming increasingly popular as means to get information and critiques of cultural products. These sites are posing a significant challenge to the authority of "official" information about arts and culture whether through websites, critics or other more traditional authoritative voices. Well informed bloggers and web-based critics are able to amass loyal followings who often find their perspectives more useful and "authentic" than the official version, which can have an air of disingenuity.¹⁰ Contrary to the initial bias of many who believe that unofficial sites are unreliable, the most extensively used sites are monitored closely by a

community of knowledgeable amateurs and professionals. Those that appear to have a hidden agenda, are careless, or are of inconsistent quality quickly lose credibility and readership.

At the same time, sources that are trusted have a significant amount of power over a broad consumer market. A number of the for-profit music and publishing industries have recognized this and have tapped into these unofficial authorities to help market their wares. This must be done with care, however, for if bloggers appear to be giving preference to inferior products for kickbacks they can quickly lose their status as an arbiter of taste. This peer-based monitoring is, some believe, a characteristic of cultural criticism today, returning a refreshing sense of integrity to a field that has been found sorely lacking in an age of media consolidation.

The Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum is attempting to lead the museum field toward embracing these new paradigms of consumer engagement with content. In their plans for redesign of their website, which will allow users to post their own content, critique shows and create their own classification systems for museum holdings, they have bravely embraced the populism of sites like Flickr. Although some have raised concerns about whether this type of approach will damage the authority and reputation of museums, the Cooper-Hewitt sees it as a necessary adaptive step in its evolution as an institution.¹¹

The quality of virtual experiences is improving and becoming more widely accessible. The advancement and proliferation of digital media can offer non-media based arts and culture a way to add value to what they offer and new

ways of reaching audiences. Strategies include: allowing visitors to download audio commentary and links before attending a concert or exhibition; providing digital interfaces at the site as a way for audiences to delve deeper into what they are experiencing; and allowing audiences to download recordings of the performance they have just heard onto their iPods through docking stations.

Trend 2: The discriminating consumer

For various economic and non-economic reasons consumers are becoming more selective about how they choose to spend their discretionary time and income.



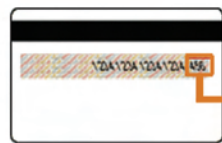
IMPLICATIONS

Non-profit cultural institutions are competing for consumers, not only with each other, but with the entire and growing spectrum of entertainment options, many of which are produced by for-profit industries and sold on a global marketplace. The highly educated, higher income consumers in the U.S. and Europe have traditionally been the non-profit arts' largest market, yet they are also the group for which competition is most fierce.¹² These consumers are increasingly mobile and increasingly unwilling to make a commitment to any one organization or activity, as organizations experiencing decreases in subscription levels and difficulty finding new board members testifies. Many consumers report wanting experiences that are relaxing rather than challenging, something that pits the traditionally high arts experiences, assumed to require more time and energy, against lower investment entertainment options.

There has been great economic growth

in the U.S. and Europe over the past decade, yet this growth has not been even, leading to wide income disparity and a growing cadre of super-rich individuals. Middle-class incomes are stagnating as economic growth increasingly benefits shareholders and the top salary earners rather than the median working household. In the U.S. real productivity growth has increased by an average of 2.7% a year since 1973 but real median family income has risen only 1% a year in that time, and that growth is mostly attributable to women joining the workforce.¹³ As consumer purchasing power decreases, household debt increases and choices proliferate, consumers are discriminating more in terms of what they consume and support.

Consumer spending in U.S. and Europe has held up, even though real household income has decreased and many costs of living, such as gasoline, have increased. Consumers are increasingly living on credit, and household debt is reaching new heights in Europe and the U.S. It is widely predicted that "rising interest rates, a cooling housing market, and fewer mortgage refinance cash-outs will soon force households to restrain spending and resume saving" in the U.S.¹⁴ Europe will likely experience similar trends if the economy continues to stagnate and consumers continue to embrace debt financed consumption.



last 3
digits of
your credit
card number

Another factor contributing to consumer selectivity is the perception in industrialized countries that time is scarce. Studies which use "time diaries" to record the way people spend their time show that this is not actually the case – people in in-

dustrialized societies actually have more free time than they did 40 years ago.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the perception of less free time is prevalent and has implications for the consumption of culture. In addition to looking for "value for money" experiences, people are also looking for "value for time" or "on demand" experiences. For example, TiVo, a popular brand of digital video recorder (DVR), not only allows users to record programs by specifying variables such as a genre, actor, or director, but also records programs based on the viewing habits of the owner.¹⁶ The wealthy, highly-educated consumers are those most likely to pay a premium for time saving devices. As the cost of these eventually comes down they may also prove to be more affordable than non-recorded cultural experiences.

Trend 3: Cocooning

Due to increased production and expanded distribution networks, consumers have an increasing number of choices of how and what to consume and are increasingly choosing to do it in the comfort of their own home.¹⁷

IMPLICATIONS

Digital satellite TV and radio are expanding the quality and quantity of options for consumers, which some analysts predict will shift the balance of people's cultural consumption toward private rather than public spaces. The volume of creative content in all media is growing and there is an ever-increasing quantity of interfaces through which consumers can access it.¹⁸ Live and virtual cultural experiences are becoming more competitive in quality and price.

Consumers are increasingly "cocooning," opting for the option of recorded or televised cultural events, which are cheaper and can be experienced in their own home. iPod and iTunes, 24-hour TV

on mobile phones, computer games, the internet, and high-definition digital TV with 1000s of channels are all beguiling and increasingly cheap forms of media. According the Veronis and Suhler, the media investment bank, the average time spent in the U.S. consuming media (excluding time in front of an office computer) is expected to reach an average of 78 hours a week by 2008.

Many cultural producers that depend on the visitor's presence are struggling to deal with this trend. However, some analysis suggests that the extent to which consumers are turning their homes into high-tech havens has been exaggerated by technology firms pushing a futuristic vision of home entertainment for profit.¹⁹ The idea of a "digital home" may well be as successful as the "paperless office," in other words, a chimera.

Some suggestions

The world has changed dramatically and will continue do so. So what is the non-profit arts community to do?

- Offer "high value" experiences and appeal to consumers seeking a wide variety of leisure experiences at a range of price points.
- Develop your skills at maneuvering the web and using other digital technology and establish supportive virtual communities of producers, dealers, visitors, buyers, and commentators. Consumers increasingly expect to be able to find information about whatever they are looking for online, and culture is no exception. Organizations that find ways to link to other convenience services - such as ticketing, accommodation, travel, and restaurant reservations - will find that they have a competitive edge in the marketplace.
- Convince consumers you are worth the trip. Arts organizations that depend on the presence of an audience in some form (museums, theatres, opera houses, festivals) will need to make a convincing argument for the unique value of the live experience. Visitors may expect a unique, intense, all-consuming experience when they do venture out, and not be satisfied with a high-quality show or exhibition alone. At the same time, high artistic quality and a powerful, involving experience continues to distinguish successful artists and institutions from the rest - mid-quality theatre, exhibitions, and live music are struggling to survive.

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BOOK REVIEW:

The Economy of Prestige:

Prizes, Awards, And the Circulation of Cultural Value



book by **James English**
ISBN: 0674018842

article by **Adrian Ellis**

This book offers both a description and an analysis of the rise of literary and arts prizes since the inception of the Nobel prize a century ago and of their explosive growth – genuinely exponential in some categories - in the past twenty years in particular. English's approach is notable because books about these sorts of things tend either to be anecdotal or theoretical. Instead, he manages to combine an analytical framework with good stories and panache as he explores what he believes, rightly in my view, to be important middle ground between the abstract theorizing of cultural sociologists like Bourdieu and the prize industry's own hype and chatter.

He suggests that there are many areas of cultural life that warrant this sort of attention, in which the complicated and intertwined roles of diverse actors in the cultural sphere are put under the microscope, and the complex relationships between the public life of culture and the creation of value are dissected. He sums up his manifesto as follows:

"The middle-zone of cultural space, [is] a space not just crowded with artists and consumers but with bureaucrats, functionaries, patrons and administrators of culture, vigorously producing and deploying such instruments as the best-of list, the film festival, the artists' convention, the book club, the piano competition. Scholars have barely begun to study these sorts of instruments in any detail, to construct their histories, gather ethnographic data from their participants, come to an understanding of their

specific logics or rules and of the different ways they are being played and played with....And unless we begin to examine some of these neglected agents and instruments of cultural exchange, whose rapid rise is one of the most striking features of cultural life in our time, we cannot hope to discern reliably the ways in which the 'games of culture' have changed since the nineteenth century."²⁰

His basic thesis is that our standard reaction to cultural prizes – one of deep scepticism about the relevance of the endeavour to the underlying issues of assessing quality and of *schadenfreude* at the controversies and pickles that juries get into – is naïve in the extreme. On the contrary, our literary and cultural tastes – and the markets that they move – are decisively influenced by prizes and the publicity and prestige surrounding them. Without them and their complex layers of opinion formers co-opted as judges, critics and participants, we would be rudderless and adrift in our choices of cultural consumption. Far from being irrelevant side-shows, as we like to believe, they are the one of the primary mechanisms by which cultural reputations are built and maintained. The hierarchy of prizes is finely tuned, and cultural players must in turn be finely attuned to that hierarchy. "The vast literature of mockery and derision with respect to prizes must, in my view, be seen as an integral part of the prize frenzy itself, and not in any way advancing an extrinsic critique."²¹

His tour *d'horizon* moves from on the role of prizes from Greece in the sixth century BC through to such peculiarities as the prize for "the best unpublished novel based recognizably on the geographical area of Lichfield District, Staffordshire;" and concludes with an analysis of "The Global Economy of Cultural Prestige." He argues that major trans-national awards now serve to bring "indigenous" art together under the rubric of "world" culture irrespective of their national standing and act as supranational forces in determining cultural legitimacy.

This book is worth reading both as an example of what an empirically minded theorist can bring to our understanding of the political economy of cultural life, and for the wry insights into how vested interests try, and sometimes succeed and sometimes fail, to manipulate taste for profit.

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CONFERENCE REVIEW:

New Orleans: Rebuilding the Musical City

Organized by the Center for Jazz Studies
at Columbia University and the Institute
for African-American Studies

New York - January 26-28



Alexis Frasz

There have been many academic conferences and seminars around the country exploring the impact of Hurricane Katrina on New Orleans and the city's fate in its aftermath. This conference, organized by the Center for Jazz Studies at Columbia University, has been one of the few to focus on the role of culture in rebuilding the city. It had a clear thesis: that the musical culture of New Orleans, jazz in particular, "contains the principles for reconstruction of the city: improvisation, resiliency, truth-telling and radical inclusiveness."²²

The passion and intensity of the speakers and participants were palpable. After introductions by Columbia University Provost Alan Brinkley and director of Jazz Studies Robert O'Meally and a moving hymn sung by New Orleans vocalist Juanita Brooks, the day kicked off with the first of three panels, "Jazz, Blues, Architecture, City Planning, Geography." The group of architects, builders and urban planners discussed how the principles of jazz, such as improvisation, creativity, and structure, could inform the rebuilding process. Panelists argued that vibrant city needs both a sound structure and life to animate it and that rebuilding must leave room for interpretation by individuals and communities. As one person put it "a body without a soul is a corpse, and a soul without a body is a ghost."

The second panel, "Musical Families and Neighborhoods of New Orleans," included legendary New Orleans musician Alan Toussaint and folklorist Nick Spitzer. Panelists discussed how the culture of New Orleans has been influenced by its particular geography and architectural history.

It was suggested that the segregation of New Orleans neighborhoods was actually an advantage for the musical legacy of the city, allowing subtle stylistic differences to be preserved even within a small area. Regular flooding in neighborhoods that were below sea level served as a constant reminder of the precariousness of existence which became manifested in New Orleans music and culture as rawness and a passion for living life to the fullest.

The final panel, "Jazz, Politics and Rebuilding New Orleans" acknowledged the impact of New Orleans on national and international culture and explored how it can be rebuilt with social justice for all residents, including those who have been displaced. One speaker and former resident emphasized the importance of involving citizens in developing the rebuilding strategy: "nothing about us is for us without us."

At times the conference felt more like a service or revival than an academic undertaking, with members of the audience responding audibly to the presenters and to each other. Panels and talks were punctuated by performances and jam sessions and moving personal anecdotes that resonated with the memory of New Orleans. The conference was not only educational but also cathartic, an opportunity for those who love New Orleans to express their affection and their grief. It was very...New Orleans.

There was a pervading sense among the conference participants, some of whom had left New Orleans long before Katrina hit, that New Orleans will never be the same. There was also an acknowledgement that the problems that Katrina exposed were deeply embedded in New Orleans before the storm. How does the city preserve the essence of itself while correcting the terrible social and economic problems that have long plagued

it? Despite the three-panel structure, there were two overarching themes that cut across the whole conference: culture is essential to regenerating New Orleans and the culture of New Orleans is embodied in its people. Unless the citizens and artists driven out by Hurricane Katrina are actively helped to return, the rebuilt New Orleans will not bear resemblance to its former self.

Conference participants condemned the opinion, voiced elsewhere, that the replacement of New Orleans' displaced population with a wealthier and whiter one is a solution to at least some of the city's problems.²³ One participant asked, "is a tiger still a tiger if it's tamed?" What people love and miss about New Orleans is its unique and vital culture, and this culture is created by, embodied in and expressed through its people, including (some would even argue especially) its poor people and its African-American people, hundreds of thousands of whom were displaced. In New Orleans there is not a clear boundary between performer and audience, its culture is living and ephemeral and intricately linked to the rhythms of everyday life. Without its citizens and artists, New Orleans risks becoming a museum of what was, a site of historical preservation, a snapshot of a living culture as it was at a particular point in time.

There was a deep mistrust expressed by many at the conference of the current efforts by the government and the private sector to rebuild New Orleans at the same time as there was a plea for leadership. There was a firm belief that the people of New Orleans, including the people who are currently far from their homes, must be involved in guiding the reconstruction of the city. If the citizens of New Orleans are marginalized, relocated and absorbed into other communities, the city that is rebuilt may be clean and safe, but it will not be New Or-



leans. The conference concluded with some suggestions for next steps including:

- Enhancing and supporting neighborhood based groups of artists (neighborhoods are the “cradle of creativity”)
- Creating a national website and database to connect and serve displaced artists
- Coordinating an outreach effort to encourage New Orleans citizens to vote
- Protecting the land from private speculation, e.g. designate New Orleans a World Heritage Site or form a Community Land Trust
- Developing a comprehensive media campaign to draw attention to the rebuilding and the city, leveraging the one year anniversary in particular
- Conducting a cultural mapping project to better understand the cultural ecology of the city

The first step for those who are in a position to lead or assist in the rebuilding of New Orleans must be to start a dialogue, to listen, absorb and react appropriately. Without a better defined organizational framework the city risks chaos, but without the freedom to improvise and explore options it risks a formulaic, uninspiring and unjust future. Maybe planning is a bit like jazz after all.

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Worth Noting

What Should I Read Next? ●

In a populist version of the Amazon recommendation algorithm function, www.whatshouldireadnext.com generates reading recommendations based on readers ratings (rather than reader’s buying patterns). As they say, “it’s kind of It’s a bit like browsing the bookshelves of a (very) well read friend.” A friend that won’t let you borrow any books.

You Can Lead a Horse to the Water... ●

Are you trying to bring your technology up to date? www.techsoup.org offers advice, discussion forums and free or drastically discounted software for nonprofits.

“When young folks are motivated to action, when they act with insight, soul and fire, they can rekindle the weary spirit of a slumbering nation. It’s time somebody woke us up.”



[Listen](#) to Wynton Marsalis’ speech at the reopening of Tulane University urging young people to get involved in helping to rebuild New Orleans.

↑ Onwards and Upwards: Max Anderson, after a two year stint at AEA, is returning to line management as Director and CEO of the Indianapolis Museum of Art. Our loss and Indianapolis’ gain.

Other stuff

AEA has done recently

- AEA Consulting has been working with the Cultural Committee of the Mayor's Bring Back New Orleans Commission on a plan for the revitalization of the city. Click [here](#) to find out more and read the report.
- ["Building Success"](#) by Adrian Ellis. *Museum Practice*, (Spring 2006): Issue 33, 34-37,
- Listen to Adrian Ellis interview with WYNC on ["Can Culture Save Downtown"](#)
- ["Attendance Figures Alone Are Not the Only Sign of Vitality"](#) by Adrian Ellis. *The Art Newspaper*, (March 2006).
- ["The Expansion Wager: Collectors v. Crowds,"](#) by Maxwell Anderson. *The Art Newspaper*, (February 2006).
- "The Rand Corporations three challenges for survival," by Adrian Ellis. *The Art Newspaper*, (January 2006).
- ["Warning: Earned Income Can Be Bad for Museum Health,"](#) by Maxwell Anderson. *The Art Newspaper*, (December 2005).

FOOTNOTES:

¹ "How We Strip Europe of Her Treasures of Art," *The New York Times Magazine*, (February 19, 1911): 9.

² A. Craig Copetas, "China is Racing to Get Her Art Treasures Back," *International Herald Tribune*, (October 13, 2005). (<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5228964>) quotes a Poly executive as saying that the firm began as an arms trading wing of the PLA but cut all ties with the military in 1998.

³ The Link of Times Cultural-Historical Foundation, http://www.treasuresofimperialrussia.com/e_preface.html.

⁴ Ford Foundation Annual Report, (1966)

⁵ Daniel J. Wakin, "Metropolitan Opera, in Tight Times, Receives Record Gift of \$25 Million," *New York Times*, (January 5, 2006).

⁶ Donald Rosenberg, ["With a merger in the works, opera's not over in Cleveland."](#) *The Plain Dealer*, (February, 23, 2006)

⁷ Thomas A. McLaughlin, *Nonprofit Mergers & Alliances: A Strategic Planning Guide*, John Wiley & Sons, (1998):105.

⁸ Victor Keegan, "A bookworm's delight", *The Guardian* (Friday October 21, 2005). <http://technology.guardian.co.uk/online/comment/story/0,12449,1597792,00.html>

⁹ Lenhart and Madden, *Teen Content Creators and Consumers*, Pew Internet & American Life Project, (November 2, 2005).

¹⁰ Maxwell L. Anderson, "Wo will own Art Museums' Content", *The Art Newspaper* (October, 2005). An excellent example of the new festival commentators is <http://www.we-make-money-not-art.com/> by Regine Dabatty, who is now invited by festivals to represent their festivals.

¹¹ Linda Hales, A Curate-Your-Own Museum Web Site. *Washington Post*, (Saturday March 11, 2006). <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/03/10/AR2006031002342.html>

¹² Robert Hewison and the Henley Centre for Forecasting, *Towards 2010: New Times – New Challenges for the Arts* (Arts Council, 2001).

¹³ Roger C. Altman et. ai. *The Hamilton Project: An Economic Strategy to Advance Opportunity, Prosperity and Growth*. The Brookings Institution. (April 2006).

¹⁴ Sara Johnson. *Global Executive Summary: The Outlook for Global Consumer Spending*. Global Insight.

¹⁵ John Robinson and Geoffrey Godbey, *Time for Life* (Pennsylvania State University Press, (1997).

¹⁶ BJ Pine II and JH Gilmore, *The Experience Economy*, (Harvard, 1999):163-5. See www.tivo.com.

¹⁷ On consumers being demanding, see Hewison, *Towards 2010* (2001): 44.

¹⁸ Hewison, *Towards 2010*: 47; Deloitte, TMT Trends: Media Predictions 2005.

¹⁹ "Science Fiction", *The Economist* (Sept 1st 2005) (http://www.economist.com/science/displayStory.cfm?story_id=4342418).

²⁰ James English, "The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, And the Circulation of Cultural Value", *Harvard University Press* (2005):73.

²¹ James English, "The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, And the Circulation of Cultural Value", *Harvard University Press* (2005):253.

²² Fred Bernstein, *Music is a Major Key to Rebuilding the Musical City*, . http://www.columbia.edu/cu/news/06/02/music_key_revive.html

²³ Charles Babington, "Some GOP Legislators Hit Jarring Notes in Addressing Katrina," *Washington Post*. (Saturday, September 10, 2005): A04. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/09/09/AR2005090901930.html>