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# CENTRE FOR CONTEMPORARY CULTURAL STUDIES

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## Stencilled Occasional Paper



FRAMING THE ARTS: THE ROLE OF CULTURAL INSTITUTIONS

by

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## Introduction

In a recent paper on Art, Ian Jeffery commented that:

More than at any time in the past contemporary high art is completely absorbed in an internal dialogue, often so private as to exclude all but a small band of devotees. In many cases artists have adopted the mannerisms and some of the attitudes of logicians, aesthetics and philosophers and this has resulted in a style of activity absolutely alien to that of the painter or sculptor. The result is a rift, not only within the community of artists, but between practitioner and any sort of audience other than immediate colleagues. We are, then, living in conditions where the gap between contemporary practice and public understanding of that practice is widening. As a result, interpretation has become rooted more firmly than ever in the hands of professional art watchers, agents and apologists. (1)

In this paper I want to explore this question of the gap between the practice of art and its audience, or, rather, its potential audience, in relation not just to art, but to the Arts in general. Rephrased, the question might be: why, in spite of their relatively wide availability, do the Arts appear to be the property of a relatively small minority of consumers? Jeffery's article seeks the answer to this problem in terms of the internal organisation of the art world, and while agreeing with much of his analysis, I believe it is more productive to locate that world within its larger societal context for in broad terms we are talking of a separation between Art and life, and it is for the sources of that separation that we must look.

In looking at that broader context, I take as my starting point the fact that our society is a complexly structured capitalist society, that is, a society organised around the production of commodities for profit, which has as its necessary basis the division of society into classes and which division necessarily produces various forms of class conflict. The Arts, along with all other forms of commodity in this society, involve the processes of both production and consumption. In trying to answer the question, I intend to look at the conditions of both these processes in relation to the relevance or lack of it, of the Arts for the majority of the population.

## Art as Production:

We often equate the Arts with Culture, but here I want to suggest a rather broader conception of culture in which Art is in fact only one particular form among a whole range of cultural forms. Provisionally, at this point, I would like to offer a definition of culture as the patterned set of symbols, both linguistic and non-linguistic, used by a social group for purposes of communication with one another. Cultural forms, I would then suggest, may be thought of as recurrent and organised sets or relations within which these symbols are encoded as a unit of communication. As I argued above, the Arts may be seen as one particular cultural form within our own culture, a form which Marcuse describes as follows:

What constitutes the unique and enduring identity of an oeuvre, and what makes the work into a work of art - this entity is the Form. By virtue of the Form, and the Form alone, the content achieves that uniqueness which makes it the content of one particular work of art and no other. The way in which the story is told; the structure and selectiveness of verse and prose; that which is not said, not represented and yet present; the interrelations of lines and colours and points - these are some aspects of the Form which removes, dissociates, alienates the oeuvre from the given reality and makes it enter into its own reality: the realm of forms.

The realm of forms: it is an historical reality, an irreversible sequence of styles subjects, techniques, rules - each inseparably related to its society, and repeatable only as imitation. However, in all their almost infinite diversity, they are but variations of the one Form which distinguishes Art from any other product of human activity. Ever since Art left the magical stage, ever since it ceased to be 'practical', to be one technique among others - that is to say, ever since it became a separate branch of the social division of labour, it assumed a Form of its own, common to all Arts. (2)

If, then, artistic production in all its various styles, etc., nevertheless recurrently takes one particular cultural Form which distinguishes it from all other cultural products, what is the consequence of the presence of this Form for the relation between Art and social life which we have taken as the object of enquiry? What is it that is special about the Form of Art which distinguishes it from other forms of cultural production when they all share the same general process of transforming the raw material experience of life into symbolic form for communication? Marcuse's observations again offer a starting point; he suggests that the characteristic of the idea of Art has been the attempt to unify the Beautiful and the True;

Harmonization of the beautiful and the true - what was supposed to make up the essential unity of the work of art has turned out to be an increasingly impossible unification of opposites, for the true has appeared as increasingly incompatible with the beautiful. Life, the human condition, has militated increasingly against the sublimation of reality in the Form of Art. This sublimation is not primarily (and perhaps not at all) a process in the psyche of the artist but rather an ontological condition, pertaining to the Form of Art itself. It necessitates an organisation of the material into the unity and enduring stability of the oeuvre, and this organisation 'succumbs', as it were, to the idea of the Beautiful. It is as if this idea would impose itself upon the material through the creative energy of the artist (though by no means his conscious intention). The result is most evident in those works which are the uncompromisingly 'direct' accusations of 'reality'. The artist indicts - but the indictment anaesthetizes the terror. Thus, the brutality, stupidity, horror of war are all there in the work of Goya but as 'pictures', they are caught up in the dynamic of aesthetic transfiguration, they can be admired side-by-side with the glorious pictures of the king who presided over the horror. The Form contradicts the content, and triumphs over the content: at the price of anaesthetization. The immediate, unsublimated (physiological and psychological response: vomiting, cry, fury, gives way to the aesthetic experience: the germane response to the work of Art. (3)



Thus, the artist's transformation of his raw material into the finished cultural product is one which necessitates the subjection of the content, the raw material, to the aesthetic standards and disciplines of the Form which he has chosen for his product, to the idea of the Beautiful. Reality, the artist's experience, is thus subordinated to the external technical demands of the world of Art, to his attempt to create a work of art from that raw material. Art, then, may be said to involve a special vision, a vision which is double edged, firstly, the ability to apprehend the reality but an ability, then, to look away from that reality to the structures and strictures of the Form in which it is to be re-presented.

Here, from, Marcuse's comments, we may begin to see the sources of the separation of Art from life, by virtue of the very existence of Art as a distinctive cultural form, for Art itself demands the subordination of life to the organisation of the Art form. In the same way, Marcuse hints at the relations involved in the consumption of Art, to which I will return in more detail later, by pointing to the way in which the dominance of the art Form over its content demands from its consumer a response not to its content but to the way in which that content is formally represented, a response to it in aesthetic terms.

However, at this point, we have only Marcuse's relatively abstract observations on the Form of art, but that cultural form, like all others, requires a material basis in social life to maintain its existence. Its continuation does not simply happen in the head of the artist, but the artist's material experience is structured and organised in such ways as to produce and reproduce this Form of art as the only possible shape of artistic production. In the following section, I want to examine some aspects of this organisation.

The organisation of artistic production:

The Arts are typically encountered through the contact of a Tradition which is said to contain the Great works of Art, a Tradition, which as Williams has argued

(4) is continually being reshaped by the dynamic of the society's developing culture. This process is one of continual re-evaluation, selection among the whole range of artistic production and re-interpretation, and is a process which is almost totally in the keeping of the professional guardians of our cultural inheritance, i.e., those who have already been thoroughly socialized into the established form of artistic production and evaluation. This tradition establishes and keeps in circulation through its constant presentation of great works of art and great artists two main features of artistic production, firstly, the Art Form itself, and secondly, the identification of Art with the work of individual creativity and genius, dislocating the product from the social conditions of its production.

For those who are selected via the educational system to become "trainee artists" this tradition is embodied at the heart of their training in organised institutions both as the History of Art and in the seemingly neutral techniques to be acquired for proficiency in artistic production, i.e. the means of achieving the established standards, the means of re-creating the Form. These institutions also perform the function of segregating the would-be artist into a social world whose main organising function is the reproduction of the necessary techniques of artistic production via the socialization of the neophytes into the methods of such production, i.e. a world which has as its central focus the production of the Form of Art, not its content. The ethos of production is, like that contained in the myths of the great tradition (and indeed, like the myths of the bourgeois society of which it is but a part), an individualised ethos, laying its stress on the individual's production and creativity, supported by an infra-structure of examination and assessment which is almost totally individualised. The Coldstream Report of 1960 even went so far as to formulate the idea of the individual genius into one of the two groups of students whom it was the Art Colleges' job to select and train:

The Art student intending to enter employment as a designer in an industrial firm after a senior full-time course may never get further than working in a subordinate capacity as an interpreter or adapter of the designs of others. For such work, however, a sound art training will stand him in good stead if he is to play his role in industry effectively...

The art schools have also to pick out and train the future original designers. These may be few in number, but it is in the performance of this function that the schools can make an outstanding contribution...(5) (my emphasis.)

This arbitrary division into the creative super-humans and the ordinary run of the mill student reproduces the myth of the 'lonely genius' in a particular organisational formula. And even though the above quotation is explicitly concerned with industrial careers for art students, it points to a more general aspect of the infra-structure of the organisation of artistic production. In the case of the industrial career, the art student is moved beyond the Art form into a more common form of production, the industrial-commercial form. What concerns us primarily here is the situation of the would-be artist who opts for art rather than industry.

For these would-be artists, their future role as artistic producers is almost totally dependent on the available career structures (these being the biographical experience of the organisational infra-structure of the art world). The three main openings for artists (though they may vary for the other arts) are as follows: firstly, for a small number, the possibility of gaining a commercial income from gallery patronage; secondly, again for a small number, the temporary possibility of government sponsorship; and thirdly, the most widely available, entry into teaching which allows time for art-work. This means that in each case the would-be artist's career is dependent on professional evaluation for advancement, the system operates through its own internal referents, the established professional conception of artistic production.

Thus, the possibilities for an artistic 'career' are heavily dependent on the artist's reproduction of that professional conception of art, fundamentally on the reproduction of the established Form of art. This reinforces the stress in the production of art objects on the formal and internally derived aesthetic standards, rather than on the object's external reference points in reality. Jefferys describes this situation as follows:

But, where the artist's livelihood once depended on bourgeois and critical acceptance it now depends almost exclusively on the opinion of fellow

artists, at every level, that is, except that of the most ambitious high art. The critic may sustain a general level of public interest but it depends on artists to decide who shall enter their profession. To attain this status entails passage through four clearly defined stages, through foundation studies on to a diploma course, from there into a post-graduate department and thence into a part-time-teaching post. At each stage acceptance or rejection is in the hands of a group of artists; if the aspirant is successful he can become an artist with an established income from teaching without ever having subjected his work to criticism from the outside. To become an artist means to opt for a system almost exclusively based on progress through co-option. These are jealously guarded rights. (6)

I have been attempting to suggest in this section that the organisation of artistic production via a set of social institutions functions to maintain Art's sublimation of reality by making the only conditions under which artists can produce 'acceptable' art those which stress art's aesthetic form in the guise of professional standards. As a supporting document to this argument, I would like to end with some quotations from an art student about his and others' situation in this institutional world of art:

From the very beginning of my art training I was taught to appreciate that type of art which is recognised by the 'educated' part of our society to be 'good art'. I was taught to revere the old masters and the Impressionists, and, gradually, through the process of education, I acquired an admiration for the modern movements in painting and sculpture, which I mistakenly believed to be a form of cultural revolution. For a total of five years, first in grammar school later in art school, I was made to accept and believe that the standards and criteria of great art were the standards and criteria recognized and accepted by that 'educated' section of society, and that mass culture, if there is such a thing, is something which is to be scorned as being unrefined, commercialised and base. Simply, we have 'good' art and 'bad' art. The good art is the art of the intelligent, enlightened, sensitive minority of the population, and the bad art is the art of the unfortunate, unenlightened working class. This anyway, without mincing words, is how most teachers, most- so-called intellectuals, aesthetes and, unfortunately, most artists, see the situation. And, worse than this, they see no immediate hope of the masses ever catching up and being able to appreciate the subtleties of modern art. They are, as a result, content to accept that the only people who will really appreciate 'good' art are those who constitute the educated elite of our society. The only people able to patronise the exclusive art galleries are the very rich, so that to exist in society the artist must rely on rich Americans of the British boss class to purchase his work. He is therefore dependent on the positions of the galleries in society. They must be situated in the most affluent, exclusive areas, they must maintain an air of respectability or else a traditional guise of daringness and experiment. Whatever it is, it is as far removed from the working class as it could be, it is as phoney as it could be, and as decadent as it could be. Yet it is the situation which is accepted almost unquestioningly by the intelligentsia.....

Our big-name tutors at College, those who have made it in the gallery system, moan and groan at the situation but continue to encourage students to ignore the situation and orient their teaching methods towards a passive acceptance of this state of affairs. They would wish their students to do as they themselves have done, conveniently to forget the economic and political set-up of which they are an essential part. They would like to believe that their art is totally unaffected by whatever political system is being imposed upon the mass of the population. They claim to crave only for artistic freedom, and they generate an atmosphere of 'I'm all right, Jack, I'm producing my highly personalised art objects, I haven't time to change the world, I'm too involved, too passionately involved, in my work. Some of us are serious about what we do, you know. We have to be professional if we are to survive in the art world... I want nothing of it. I don't wish to participate in their inane pseudo-intellectual conversations about 'their thing'. Because ninety-nine times out of a hundred their thing is a phoney product of a phoney conditioned mind. It exists as the luxury of a bourgeois elite. It is totally irrelevant to the lives and struggles of the great mass of the population and it is the inheritance of years of acceptance of the myth of the 'artist' as being the

lone spirit, free from the mundane pursuits that govern most people's lives, and born radical, the free liberal thinker, sitting up on high creating his works in an attempt to communicate the ideas of a superior mind to the philistine public. I would define him as a reactionary, as an apathetic non-thinker, content to fill his role of being the mysterious man of inspiration by never even attempting to communicate with anyone save that illustrious elite with which he so readily associates himself. (7)

What I think, the anger of this piece should direct us to is the existence of strong organisational structures around art which make its present form the only possible form which art may take. For the artist to be accredited as an artist, he must produce art in its proper Form, there exist no alternative artistic structures from which alternative forms could be generated on any real scale. Having discussed some of the conditions of artistic production, we should also be aware of the fact that the conditions of its consumption are also influential in its relation to its potential public. Having so far argued that the form in which art is produced acts to dislocate it from immediate social experience by locating its points of reference in an abstracted aesthetic sphere, I now want to argue that the conditions of its consumption serve to reinforce this movement of dislocation from the experience of the majority of the population.

#### The organisation of artistic consumption:

Just as in the previous section I argued that the form of art is dependent on the conditions under which it is produced, so to understand the way art is consumed (or not consumed) we must look at the institutions through which art is mediated to the public. In looking at these institutions, it is again more important to look at their form, the way they attempt to structure sets of social relations in a particular way, as it is to look at their content. That is, in the same way that institutions concerned with artistic production structure the relation between the artist and his production, and with other artists, so the institutions which mediate art to its potential public structure the relations of consumption.

Before dealing with the more obvious mediatory institutions such as galleries and theatres, I first want to deal at some length with educational institutions, for these are the first set of socio-cultural institutions (biographically speaking) to provide an orientation to the Arts, and it is here that such an orientation is primarily established or not established among the potential public for the Arts.

That orientation consists, in part, of a set of cultural techniques which enable the individual to be able to approach the art object in order to be able to appreciate it. The creation of this orientation is essentially the task of creating an appreciative relation to the art objects being considered, and to the body of great works as a whole, encouraging the student to develop a sensitive and critical (to a limited extent) response to the works he or she is studying. The central point about this part of the consumptive orientation is that it attempts to create an engagement with the work of art in terms of its own discourse, i.e., with the formal aesthetic qualities of the work of art, with Art as Form.

This orientation is also primarily linguistically organised, partly because of the internal structuring of education around written examinations, but also because to enter the artistic discourse demands the learning of particular 'languages', because the arts are themselves only socially available through a variety of linguistic 'frames', either in the work itself as in literature, or its location and description as in art, or by virtue of it having a notational form, as in classical music (as opposed to the oral and unwritten basis of folk music for example).

These abilities are necessary in order to be able to pose oneself as a consumer of the Arts, for it is impossible to enter the discourse of the arts without these skills. However, in educational terms, the acquisition of these skills is typically dependent on learning another set of skills, entering into a "hidden discourse" within education. That is, entry into the artistic discourse via education cannot be simply considered in purely artistic terms, but must take account of the fact that such learning takes place within the educational structure, as part of the educational material to be acquired as part of an individual's educational career. Having located this initial acquisition of artistic appreciation within the total educational structure it perhaps becomes easier to understand why the majority of children, especially working class children, should not acquire it. That the majority of working class children do not experience

anything more than the minimum possible educational career has, for a long time, been a well-established educational fact. More difficult has been the task of explaining why this relation between class position and educational performance should exist.

I do not believe that the answer can be found in any simple view of working class children as suffering from "cultural deprivation", which makes them less well-equipped to succeed in education. This formula assumes that children acquire more or less of a single monolithic culture along a simple linear gradient measuring from none to full knowledge, and that those who live under a variety of social handicaps (poor housing, large families, low incomes, old schools, etc.) are less likely to be able to acquire sufficient of the culture to perform well at school. Against this view, I want to offer a picture of Britain as a culturally stratified and divided society. However, this division is neither total, there are not two completely separate cultures; nor is this division between two equally strong cultures. Rather the cultural division is between a dominant culture, which embraces most of the society and is subscribed to in one form or another, with varying degrees of commitment by most of the members of the society; and a subordinated culture, which is more localised and limited, and yet still extremely powerful.

These two cultures have developed out of the historical experience of the two major classes of our capitalist society, the dominant class - the bourgeoisie, and the subordinated class - the working class. Just as the working class has been materially subordinated to the bourgeoisie, so they have been subordinated culturally, but have never been fully incorporated into the bourgeoisie world view and culture.

In dealing with this cultural division, I shall now have to expand on my earlier provisional definition of culture, by arguing that culture involves not only sets of symbols, ideas, images and world views, but also the sets of relations, rituals, practices and institutions in which those meanings are embodied, maintained and developed. The difference between the two cultures is located in the historical fact of bourgeoisie dominance, which means it has been able to shape the major social institutions in its own image (for example, an educational system articulated around the principle of individual competitiveness), and this permeates the whole of the society. By contrast, working class culture has only been able to institutionalise itself in a relatively few, and relatively localised institutions. The most obvious example is organised labour, but other less obvious examples exist, such as the traditional organisation of the working class neighbourhood with its close kin and friendship networks, its territorial loyalties, boundaries and focal points, such as the pub, corner shop and football ground. These last institutions, although not in the normal sense working class property, have been culturally appropriated by the working class as significant food for their leisure activities. Some institutions were both owned and controlled by the working class, the most obvious example being working men's clubs.

The education system is a part of that dominant culture, and also a crucial part of its attempt to permeate the society, and mould both the members of the society and the institutions after their image, and way of life. Education was significant not only because of the content to be learned there, but also in terms of attempting to establish the correct social and moral ideas and behaviour, and by introducing the working class young to the disciplines and the subordination to authority which they would be expected to show in their working life. (8) That is, both education's content and form (in the sense of its rituals, organisation and sets of relations) were of considerable importance in the establishment of compulsory education. The dominance of the educational system was not easily achieved, nor was it simply a matter of the generous minded bourgeoisie granting education and enlightenment to the uneducated and unenlightened working class. Rather, it involved a long struggle to remove and suppress alternative educational institutions, both formal and informal, among the working class, the ultimate solution being to make attendance at state schools compulsory. The drive for state education embodied a determination for the State to control the upbringing of the young of the working class to ensure they acquired the appropriate habits and disciplines, rather than the amorality, laxity and subversion which the educational inspectors believed they were subject if left to their own devices, or rather to education by their own class. The weight of the demand for the introduction of State education, and its motivation may be gauged from Tremmenmeere's comments:

In all that related to a knowledge of the world around him, of the workings of

society, of the many social and economic problems which must force themselves daily upon the attention of the working man, the mind of the growing youth was left to his own direction, and therefore liable to take up the facts and principles as chance might dictate. They are generally led into error and persevere with it the greater obstinacy they want the knowledge to enable them to see where they went wrong. (9)

The consequence of this struggle over education, between the State institutions and those organised within the local community, was the elimination of the alternative structures, and the establishment of the State system as Education, not simply one type of education. This structural imposition (finally achieved with compulsory attendance) meant the identification of the State system, both its form and content, with Education, with no other possibilities left to offer alternative forms. (10) This incorporation of the working class young into these state institutions has hardly finally resolved the problems of the education of the 'uneducated'. Although, there are no large scale institutional alternatives for education for working class children, forms of resistance to the dominant system are still maintained on a day-to-day basis within the system. Because education is equated with compulsion (school's a place where you have to go), and is an alien environment involving enforced subjection to disciplines by external figures of authority, and the necessity to study what are often experienced as irrelevant curricula, education in both its form and content is resisted, either passively, through sheer disinterest, or more through truancy or "playing up" in the school - producing a situation which has been described as "running guerilla warfare".

The active resistance is based on two things, firstly, the importation of their own culture (from the neighbourhood and the street corners) into the school situation thus challenging the routines, rituals, and relations of the school situation; secondly, such resistance involves working class youth in an exploitation of their only "bargaining power" in the school situation, their own presence, a presence which is demanded of the school by the State system. It must be said that this 'resistance' is rarely formally organised, not articulately political (as it is in the more middle class based Schools Action Union), but is informal, albeit usually collective and typically involves just the transfer of 'normal' outside activities and rituals (their "located culture") into the dislocated culture of the school. (11)

To return to the Arts, within the school system, they are only one aspect of a wide range of educational content which is rejected together with the whole idea of Education as compulsion by many working class kids. However, in the particular case of the Arts the irrelevancy of education in general is perhaps intensified by the dislocation of Art from social life by virtue of its Form. The resistance to it is likely also to be intensified by the strands of anti-intellectualism within working class culture (a suspicion of those who are clever with words, especially long ones; a resentment of those who seem to perform no useful productive work and so on.), an anti-intellectualism which manifests itself in the derogatory epithets which become attached to those interested in the arts, poofs, wankers, softies and posers - for example.

Thus, I am arguing that the resistance to the arts can only be partly understood in terms of art's own dislocation from social life, and must also be seen in terms of the educational structures within which the ability to appreciate art is supposed to be acquired.

However, within this framework of cultural conflict, there remains a grain of truth in the notion of cultural deprivation (as if they lived in a cultural vacuum) the dominant classes practise what Bourdieu terms "cultural investment". (12) He argues that there is a close relation between position in class structure and the amount of 'high' cultural consumption which takes place and that this consumption also represents an investment in the child's educational career, for the education system operates with content which focuses on that high cultural knowledge and utilises the codes from it which are necessary to its educational appropriation. Thus, Bourdieu argues, the educational system functions to reproduce the existing distribution of cultural capital. However, he goes on, this only masks a further and deeper process, which is the reproduction of social, material, capital, by legitimating its transmission in the guise of educational achievement:

By making social hierarchies and the reproduction of these hierarchies appear



to be based upon the hierarchy of 'gifts', merits or skills established and ratified by its sanctions or, in a word, by converting social hierarchies into academic hierarchies, the educational system fulfils a function of legitimation which is more and more necessary to the perpetuation of the 'social order' as the evolution of the power relationship between classes tends more completely to exclude the imposition of a hierarchy based upon the crude and ruthless affirmation of the power relationship. (13)

Although education only marginally affects social mobility, the representation of it as being an open contest in which each individual succeeds or fails according to their own merit adds a legitimating gloss to these processes of both material and cultural reproduction.

These two aspects of the educational process, the resistance of many working class children, and the tendency for the system to reproduce the existing distribution of cultural capital, allow us to take this particular cultural institution as the one where the complex cultural codes needed to enter into an appreciative consumption of the arts is either established or rejected. From education we must now move to the other cultural institutions through which the Arts are made available for consumption, and here I am primarily concerned with what might be termed public institutions, such as theatres and galleries.

One primary qualification for the role of consumer (though like all the qualifications and rules in this section it is not necessary to possess or follow them, rather a role expectation) is an already acquired set of techniques and codes which allow the consumer to enter into the appreciative consumption of the work(s) of art being presented to him. Both through the public designation of the institutions concerned and their advertised contents, it is established that these are places concerned seriously with the presentation of the arts, they exist as a separate world to be entered only by those with a serious intention to consume their objects. These institutions both formally and informally structure and define the proper role of the consumer: regulations governing his behaviour and such physical arrangements as cordoning off exhibits to prevent the public getting too close, and the separation of the theatre stage from the audience are some of the more visible definitions of the consumer's position which organise his relation to the work of art being presented. This division of object (or creators) and consumer reflects traditional conceptions of cultural creation, which is that culture is only created by a handful of gifted individuals (and/or skilled professionals), while the majority of the population are destined only to be consumers of culture. The imposition of this limited definition of culture (whereas I would argue that each social individual is involved in the continual creation of culture) parallels the imposition of one form of education as Education.

The role of the consumer is essentially a passive one, he does not create, merely appreciates the object created for him, whether he be confronted with the disembodied and dislocated product of a dead painter, or an "in the flesh" performance of a play. The nature of the cultural experience is continually in the hands of the skilled professionals. The consumer may discuss, consider or reflect on the experience but cannot actively intervene in the "work of art". This division of creators and consumers reinforces the separation of art from social experience by insisting upon its special, even transcendental qualities which separate it from the mundane human experience.

These cultural institutions are the selves, in some cases, mediated to their potential audiences through the public pronouncements of cultural critics. This mediation further intensifies the stress on the formal quality of art, for the critics are in a sense the aesthetes of aesthetics. Their profession involves the engagement with art not just simply in terms of its own discourse, but with an emphasis on one particular standards, the formal qualities of the art object. (14)

In this section on the consumption of the arts I have attempted to show how the organisation of its public consumption functions firstly to limit the consumption to those who possess the 'correct' cultural techniques with which to be able to appreciate the world of the arts, and secondly through both its physical and social organisation of the position of the consumer to stress the 'specialness' of the art object in relation to the mundane world. I also argued that the educational system was a major force in shaping the individual's orientation to the art world, with an especial stress on understanding the arts

within the total educational structure, which must then take into account the class structured relations of the educational system.

#### Alternative cultural forms:

After presenting what I believe to be a very pessimistic view of Art's lack of relation to the majority of the population, it now seems incumbent upon me to discuss some of the alternative possibilities in cultural forms. I shall start by considering two attempts within the arts to overcome this experience of separation between the cultural form of art and the located culture of the working class, and conclude with some examples of alternative cultural forms among the working class young.

The first internal attempt to break down the limitations of the arts organised itself against the art form around the idea of "anti-art" by trying to remove the formal material limits of the production of art in the creation of 'living art'. Yet, as Marcuse's comments, indicate, even this seemingly radical attempt to overcome Art's barriers does not resolve the matter:

Living Art, anti-art, in all its variety - is its aim self-defeating? All these frantic efforts to produce the absence of form, to substitute the real for the aesthetic object, to ridicule oneself and the bourgeois customer - are they not so many activities of frustration, already part of the culture industry and the museum culture? I believe the aim of the 'new art' is self-defeating because it retains, and must retain no matter how minimally the Form of Art as different from non-art, and it is the Art Form itself which frustrates the intention to annul or even reduce this difference, to make Art 'real', 'living'.

Art cannot become reality, cannot realise itself without cancelling itself as Art in all its 'living' forms, even in the most destructive, most minimal, most 'living' forms....

The anti-art of today is condemned to remain Art, no matter how anti- it strives to be. Incapable of bridging the gap between Art and Reality, of escaping from the fetters of the Art Form, the rebellion against 'Form' only succeeds in a loss of artistic quality, illusory destruction, illusory overcoming of alienation. (15).

This attempt to remove Form mistakes the sources of the alienation of Art, and consequently seeks its salvation through an internal revolution. But in the very moment of engaging with the Art Form and attempting to negate it the dominance of the Form over artistic production is maintained. To the extent to which any art is produced under the present social organisation it must succumb to the Form if it is to be Art, for to realise Art is to drop that which separates art from reality, that which is the precondition for the existence of Art, the Art Form itself. The artist is in the double-bind situation of either retaining the Form and thus maintaining the separation of art from reality, or removing the form and stopping producing art. This continuity of the Form is not simply a matter of the good will of the individual artist (or as Marcuse noted earlier, of the artist's "psyche") but is rooted in the social division of labour of a capitalist society, and in the infra-structural organisation of the art world itself. Whatever the artists' intentions when a play is presented at the theatre, no matter what its content, it still remains true that 'the play's the thing' - the theatre remains 'mere' theatre. (16)

A second development within the arts has been the growth in France of "cultural animators", artistic professionals who, either state sponsored or voluntarily, have offered their professional skills to local community based groups in an attempt to encourage them to give a public and artistic form (usually theatrical) to their own experiences. While this may be seen as breaking down one artistic barrier at least, that between consumers and creators by placing the possibilities of creation in the hands of those who would normally not have access to them, it still fails to overcome the central issue of the art form and its separation effect. Theatrical presentations of this sort are firstly dependent on finding groups who are sufficiently sympathetic to the idea of artistic production to become involved, but more importantly the very theatrical form which they are offered involves the transmutation of real experiences and problems into theatrical ones, into a specially created performance. (17)

Finally, I would like to briefly illustrate some alternative cultural forms from within the activities of working class youth. I have chosen ones deliberately which involve elements of self-generated drama and expressivity, but which are deeply located in the routine cultural milieu of working class youth, and which also stress an element of collective creation which is foreign to the world of the arts.

Football "hooliganism" offers some of the most attractive examples for my purposes here. The conflict between rival ends at football matches involves the appropriation of facilities back to a more traditional usage within working class culture from their present status as a part of the 'legitimate' entertainment industry. The conflict between the rival ends has taken on highly ritualised forms, governing the locations for violence, the sorts of violence involved, who is and who is not a legitimate target for such violence, often prefaced by a highly ritualised exchange of insults. The ends also, of course, tend to have their own resident 'poets', creating new chants, often involving the use of melody lines from current songs (as well as more traditional ones) with the addition of new and more appropriate wording. Finally, the ends also developed their own line in art work, the technological advance of the paint spray can placing the possibilities of artistic creation within their reach, even if their achievements have not attained the same quality, thoroughness and inventiveness of the notorious New York subway artists.

The list of possible examples here is endless, but the most interesting thing about them is perhaps that they involve the appropriation of a variety of raw materials, in the form of settings and content, for their own cultural creation. This 'creation' however, typically involves the reworking of that raw material into the terms of their own located culture, into their own cultural forms. Just as in art, this process of transformation involves its own material and institutional basis, although perhaps less visibly so; but, unlike the arts, they point to the possibility of transcending the division between cultural creator and cultural consumer (or perhaps, more precisely, point to its falsity) by continually creating, organising and presenting (often as in the arts, to an uncomprehending audience) their own cultural events and objects, even in this very limited way.

If it is true that the symbolic content of their cultural creations are as incomprehensible to many of us, as that of the arts is to them, I suggest that this offers a final illustration of the deep cultural divisions which I have argued exist, and a testimony to the power of the claim of bourgeois cultural forms to constitute 'Culture' and to deny the legitimacy and even existence of others.

## Footnotes:

1. Ian Jeffery, "Integrating Art into Society" in D.Holly(ed.) Education or Domination? Arrow,1974,pp. 140-1.
2. Herbert Marcuse, "Art as a Form of Reality", New Left Review,p. 53.
3. Marcuse, op. cit.,pp.54-5.
4. Raymond Williams, The Long Revolution. Penguin
5. Quoted in The Hornsey Affair, Penguin, 1969, p.77.
6. Jeffery,op.cit.,p.144.
7. The Hornsey Affair, op.cit.,pp.70-2.
8. See Richard Johnson "Educational policy and social control in early Victorian England." Past and Present, no.49.
9. Quoted by Paul Corrigan in "Working Class politics - the hidden materialism." mimeo, University of Warwick,1974.
10. See Corrigan, op.cit.
11. See Corrigan, The Smash Street Kids, Paladin, forthcoming.
12. Bourdieu "Cultural reproduction and social reproduction." in R.Brown (ed.) Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change. Tavistock, 1974.
13. Bourdieu,op.cit.,p.84.
14. On cultural critics, see Theodor Adorno Prisms, Neville Spearman,1967.
15. Marcuse,op.cit.,pp.55-7.
16. On this point, see Hans Mayer, "Culture,Property and Theatre" in L. Baxandall (ed.) Radical Perspectives in the Arts, Penguin,1972.
17. On cultural animators, see: A.Martynow-Bemiche, "Animation and Theatre." Council of Europe, Strasbourg,1974; P. Moulinier, "Reflections on the training of animateurs." Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 1974.