PUSH THE ENVELOPE

Graphic taken from architectural drawing of Proposed Ground Floor Plan, Newport Street Gallery, supplied by Caruso St John Architects.

Ground floor Areas:
Number 1 Ground Floor 306m2
Number 3 Ground Floor 172m2
Number 5 Ground Floor 125m2
Number 7 Ground Floor 180m2

Total 783m2

North

Rev A (15 10 04)

Information Issue

Proposed Ground Floor Plan

Newport Street Gallery
Caruso St John Architects
1 Coate Street, London, E2 9AG
tel 020 7613 3161 fax 020 7729 6188

Scale	Date	Drwg
1: 100 at A1 200 at A3	29.09.04	188/L12/01/A

PUSH THE ENVELOPE

SUSTAINING ARTS COMMUNITIES ON THE LEFT-BANK

a Beaconsfield symposium as part of the Lambeth Riverside Festival 2006

Wednesday 19 July 2 – 6pm

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Preface

Push the Envelope was conceived primarily for the interest of artists and their communities and organised especially for Lambeth Riverside Festival, 2006. The subject for a symposium – geopolitics on the 'left-bank' of the Thames – was born out of discussions about forging more effective support networks between existing arts communities in the Kennington / Oval / Vauxhall (KOV) area. The same discussions led to the formation of a new group, Leftbank Artists Network. The network is currently un-constituted and exists as a database co-ordinated by Riverside Community Development Trust (otherwise known as RCDT), which keeps members informed about new opportunities for artists in the area.

The symposium took as its starting point the particularity of Vauxhall and development in its environs and expanded to explore key issues of interest to artists nationwide. Six invited speakers were positioned in dialectical pairs in three sessions chaired by the curator of the event. The text that has emerged from the symposium works as a snapshot taken at a critical moment for Beaconsfield, RCDT and the various art clusters on the left-bank.

To complement the symposium's debate, three local artists were commissioned to exhibit work that addressed the context of regeneration. Caroline Todd exhibited a series of six studies, made from within and around her fourth floor flat on Vauxhall Gardens Estate. David Crawforth presented *Now, what was it that I was thinking...* a scrolling text on DVD encapsulating the clash of cultures that accompanies urban development. Judith Dean showed *Bollard* (1996): a copy of a 1970s concrete urban bollard made in highly polished black granite, its essential form suggestive of renewal.

Thanks are due to Riverside Community Development Trust, which funded the project through the Arts Council of England; Sean Creighton, of RCDT, for his work on the Lambeth Riverside Festival and invaluable editing advice on this publication, Rachel Fleming-Mulford and Eric Rosoman for Beaconsfield and the speakers and artists for their thoughtful participation in Push the Envelope.

Chair's introduction

Regeneration is happening in Vauxhall – one of the the last bastions of non-gentrified society in a central London riverside location. The KOV area has escaped change for a surprisingly long time considering its proximity to Parliament, the West End and the large-scale cultural institutions on the river but development is now underway. The riverbank is awash with high-rise luxury flats with more at planning stage and building consent has been given for Damien Hirst's gallery complex on Newport Street.

Beaconsfield celebrated its 10th anniversary in the Autumn of 2005, entering the second phase of a twenty-year lease on its Newport Street premises, prompting the need for reflection. 22 Newport Street was originally built as the Lambeth Ragged School, first opened in 1885, and derelict when Beaconsfield took the lease in 1994. We negotiated a peppercorn rent and renovated the building. It was opened to the public in 1995 as a space for the development and presentation of contemporary art and we've been commissioning and facilitating artists for more than a decade. Push the Envelope – the symposium has been part of this arts organisation's ongoing research and development, as well as meeting RCDT's agenda: to assess the current state of cultural affairs in the locality.

Looking back at the scene in the mid 1990s, Vauxhall was optimistically dubbed 'the Notting Hill of the nineties'. Active arts organisations in the area were all artist-led. There was our partnership (David Crawforth and myself) which was Nosepaint – the predecessor to Beaconsfield; City Racing at Oval Mansions – a very successful gallery run from a squat from 1988 to 1998 and Gasworks which opened studios and a gallery space next door to City Racing in 1994. Then, its informal gallery was also run by artists – the Gasworks studio artists.

BritArt was up and running. The National Lottery was about to kick-in as a source of new funding for the Arts. We claim that Beaconsfield happened *in spite* of BritArt and the Lottery, created by artists from the seedbed of studios in Vauxhall Gardens Community Centre (VGCC), just down the road at the other end of Vauxhall Walk. From there we ran the arts club Nosepaint for four years, eventually attracting a philanthropic investing partner, with whom we founded the arts charity Beaconsfield and who donated the money to get our building up and running.

Since then we've seen SPACE opening a studio complex opposite City Racing and Gasworks, the appearance of new glistening towers on the river bank and Tesco opening in Vauxhall, which was at one time undreamed of – there were barely any shops in Vauxhall, since the demise and partial demolition of the legendary Lambeth Walk. A number of commercial galleries have also moved into the area: Danielle Arnaud, Corvi Mora, Greengrassi and Man&Eve. And then, most significantly, Tate Modern opened further down the Thames, which has completely changed the cultural landscape. There have been no perceptible changes on the estates but the building which houses VGCC and the studios where our enterprise started, has been sold off by Lambeth Council to developers: the end of cheap, very cheap, space.

Looking forward: we still have the best part of ten years left on our lease. Arts Council England which has drip-fed Beaconsfield for a decade is undergoing rapid change – who knows what its role will be next year, let alone in ten years time and now we have the King of BritArt moving in next door...

Naomi Siderfin
Curator of Push the Envelope for Beaconsfield and RCDT

SESSION 1:

- **CARUSO ST JOHN ARCHITECTS AND DAMIEN HIRST'S NEWPORT STREET GALLERY**
- **SPACE AND ARTS-LED REGENERATION**

PETER ST JOHN

Peter St John is a partner in the architectural practice Caruso St John which has designed a complex of galleries, proposed by the artist Damien Hirst, in Newport Street, Vauxhall. Caruso St John has built a number of museums and art galleries nationwide in the wake of BritArt and the Lottery. A model of the Hirst property, plans and pictures were on display at the symposium, which Peter referred to during the discussion.

Planning Permission has been granted to Science Ltd to convert the Hirst premises. What is Science Ltd?

Science is an organisation that was set up by Damien Hirst to manage the production of his studio. So it's a company (of which he is the head) of artists and business people who produce his work. And they organise his shows and they organise the production of his art. They've owned the building for four years and they've been using it as studio space. But as I'll show you in a few images, only parts of the building are really usable. So they've been using it at a low level.

What are the plans for the site?

At least five galleries and a restaurant. Damien Hirst has a lot of projects on the go, and took the view that he wanted to do them one after the other. So at the moment the project is on hold. We're planning to start work again at Christmas (2006). The Newport Street Studios are former scenery-painting and scenery-building workshops, that were built in 1913 and they're listed buildings. They would have originally produced scenery for London theatres, but their location next to the railway line was very important, because then they would have been directly loading on and off the trains. They would have used the railway arches for the storage of raw materials, and the road itself probably would have been their yard. So it has this very special relationship to the railway. As does *this* space (Beaconsfield, 22 Newport Street).

Damien Hirst bought the site four years ago. He is interested in curating, and he has a very large collection. He wants to run a gallery to have exhibitions of the work of his contemporaries, and the work of other younger artists. He wants to do that with his own money, independently of commercial galleries that usually support him in the production of exhibitions, and independently of institutions. He has the money and the capacity to do that. Of course, the space will occasionally be used to produce art, and also sometimes be used to sell art. But its function is primarily as an exhibition space that will be open to the public for free. I think most of all what he wants is the kind of freedom that a collection of buildings like this can offer, to have exhibitions there that he probably hasn't imagined yet.

How personal a project is it?

It's all personal with him. He calls it a labour of love, which I think means that he's trying to use some of his money to do things that he thinks are of benefit.

Who are, or might be, the beneficiaries?

It's wide-ranging. It's about a circle of friends and contemporaries whom he wants to support. It's about having the freedom to show his and their work to the public in the way that he wants to. I think many people will benefit from it.

Private money has no obligation to the general public, so who is his audience?

You're asking me questions that *he* should answer – many people are interested in his work.

Will such a big media figure have to worry about people turning up?

You can't tell. They might not just turn up. But I think he'll want to do it anyway and he's not going to charge. It won't matter to him very much whether lots of people come, I think. He is just interested in doing it for the artists and for himself.

Do you have a view on how the development might affect the neighbours, like Beaconsfield?

It's funny that you're asking me that question right now. I think I'm a bit of an outsider here, and for me the opportunity to participate in this conference, because I'm hoping to work here for the next few years, is to meet people and to find out what's happening. I guess I have to say 'I don't know' a lot. But I think it's inevitable that the construction of this organisation would have a very dramatic effect on the whole way in which this street worked. It's a very substantial development in one piece, and I think it would inevitably provide a charge for other things to happen here. It's the kind of site that is blighted by the fact that it's blocked from the riverside by the railway line and to do something as substantial as this has the potential to unlock that.

Is the railway line the architectural challenge of the site?

I think it's an important thing that you shouldn't ignore. You shouldn't pretend it isn't there. So we're trying not to do that. It's not the main challenge. The main challenge is to make fantastic interiors for art. I think I'll just show you a few images of what the building looks like inside now. It has these most amazing eight or ten metre-high workshop interiors that were used for the production of scenery. These are the spaces which are really the reason why the building hasn't been developed up until now. Because it's listed, they have not been able to develop it for more conventional uses, like housing or office space and some of the spaces are full of amazing scenery-painting equipment.

There are scenery lifts used for painting stage backdrops, which effectively make these interiors unusable currently. One of the studios is being occasionally used by Damien Hirst and his friends, as a studio space.

But even these interiors, because they're eight or ten metres high, aren't very convenient as studio space because they're cold and un-insulated. Then there are other spaces that are equally unusable because they're very low and full of columns and at the top of the site there's empty land where there used to be a terrace. This collection of sites could have remained blighted for another ten years, and because it's been under-used for over twenty-five years, eventually they would have de-listed it and allowed it to be demolished and redeveloped privately.

Why is the site listed?

It was listed because it's a collection of buildings which, together, made up this very unusually intact industrial group. It's partially listed because of the scale of the buildings, their grouping and partially because of those scenery-painting lifts, which are very special. Actually, the proposed use is the most appropriate use that a listed building of this type could have, because gallery space is the one use that would benefit from having tall spaces, naturally lit with roof lights and these interiors will become open to the public.

What are you going to do?

There are five sites. There were four, and then on the right-hand side there's a fifth, which Damien Hirst bought at the end of last year. We're keeping the three listed buildings in the centre of the terrace. On the left-hand side is a new building, which will have an entrance on the ground floor, a restaurant on the first floor, and the top floor with the saw-tooth roof is a new gallery space. The three middle buildings will be galleries. The new building on the right will be back-up accommodation and office space for the organisation and the top floor is a studio. They're going to make an amazing street. It's very unusual in London to get a set of industrial buildings making such a strong urban form. It's the kind of thing that you might expect more in Manchester or Sheffield. The idea of the two new buildings also being made of brick reinforces that idea of the *terrace*. I think it's also interesting because all the buildings are different – like sort of tall people and fat people all standing in a row, looking at the railway.

The idea of the project is that the gallery spaces are arranged on two main levels. We're knocking doorways through the party walls of all the buildings, so that the ground floors are all connected, and the first floors are all connected, so there'll be an amazing sequence of rooms from one end of the building to the other. And then there's a big staircase right on the left-hand side, and a big stair right on the right-hand side, and a staircase in the middle standing in the courtyard at the back – this arrangement of two levels and three stairs means that the complex will have an amazing flexibility. The main entrance will be in the left-hand building, but actually each of the gallery spaces have their own front door to the street. So you can have a very small show in one of the spaces, you can have parallel shows in different spaces at the same time, or you can have enormous exhibitions. It's also intended to have a kind of spatial flexibility, because all the spaces

are just shells, so that they can work as gallery spaces, as studio spaces or as work spaces. The total floor area is about two and a half thousand square metres and that idea of the galleries all being different, I think, will be its special quality.

My favourite public galleries are probably Camden Arts Centre and the Whitechapel Art Gallery. So the idea is that this will have something of the quality you experience when you go to those organisations – you don't quite know what the extent of the exhibition is going to be, but … there's a kind of wonderful change of atmosphere between a floor, or from one room to the other. They feel as if they belong together, that there's a kind of relaxed group. So, just to demonstrate a range of the spaces: in one of the ground-floor gallery spaces we're demolishing the floor that is currently at the level of the window sills of the clerestorey windows, and we're raising it in order to make two floors – on the ground floor, of six metres, and on the upper floor, of five metres. So this gallery has clerestorey lighting and a hanging wall of four metres. One of the top-floor galleries with roof light is very tall. There is a new gallery on the top of the left-hand building, with its north-light roof and on the first floor of the corner building on the left-hand side, there's going to be a restaurant. They've been advised that it's by no means a good commercial location, for a restaurant. But I think Damien Hirst wants to design it and run it with his friends, and so that probably won't put him off. I think he'll do it anyway.

Audience Member: *What are the reasons for thinking that Vauxhall is a poor commercial location?*

It's about the fact that there aren't many other restaurants about. It's about the fact that it's so isolated, the fact that it's so far from where many people who go to restaurants are staying.

Audience Member: *I'm sure that someone from Lambeth Council would say that – I've heard them say that sort of thing before. But people like you, or people like me wouldn't believe that. I think, that that attitude would indicate that it's a good place for a restaurant. Do you know what I mean?*

Yes, I think perhaps he probably thinks the same, and that's why he'll probably want to do it anyway. But you need lots of people walking on the pavement casually to make a restaurant really work in a location like this. Where people have to travel specially, it is much more difficult to make it work. You'll get a small number of people, because they live round here but you won't get large numbers of people. If it's to really work, you need people to have travelled – and that's asking a lot for a restaurant.

How did your project the Walsall Art Gallery impact on its immediate environment – a Midlands shopping centre?

Well, that's an ideal location for an art gallery, in the middle of a shopping centre, because there's lots of people, and people can go and visit an exhibition in between shopping. That's much better than having a beautiful art gallery in a park on the outside of town. So that's ideal, particularly with

the kind of audience that you get in Walsall. It's real frontier land, trying to do exhibition galleries in Walsall. Really, the main reason that it was possible at all is because there's a permanent collection there that's very popular and very accessible. So that was the kind of foundation on which they built an exhibition programme, because there are not so many people in Walsall that are interested in contemporary art. It's been successful, but it's a mixed picture. I think the fundamental difficulty they've had is that the council haven't been giving the building enough money. A lot of projects that were funded at the time when the Lottery was first introduced have had that problem. Walsall, certainly, has suffered. The building costs a lot of money to run and the council has to run it...

Lack of money is a problem that Damien Hirst is not going to have – because the money just goes on, presumably?

It might not. You never know.

How does the Newport Street site compare in scale to other places in London – after Tate Modern, where does it come in the pecking order?

It's about the same size as the Whitechapel or the Camden Arts Centre. But … it doesn't have to answer to anyone, so it doesn't all have to be used, and it may well be that he'll have small shows and leave half the building empty and that's the way it will be designed. It will be designed so that it doesn't all have to be running at once. That's the way I would run it. It will have the potential for big exhibitions, but you don't have to, like Tate Modern, use all the spaces all the time.

What sort of infrastructure will this project require?

He has an infrastructure already. So he'll use that.

Will Newport Street Gallery go under the name of Science Limited?

I don't know what the name's going to be. They haven't told me. They're a very busy group and … I think they're like many artists – they don't plan everything way ahead. So as far as possible, I think, he likes to leave things open until he *has* to make decisions. So there are many decisions that aren't made and that's a kind of freedom that he likes.

What is the time-frame for completion?

If we start working on the project again at Christmas (2006), it might go on site next year and take eighteen months to build. So maybe in two and a half years it'll be ready.

ANNA HARDING

Anna Harding is a visual arts specialist, a writer, curator and currently the Chief Executive of SPACE, the first and largest studio provider in London. SPACE was set up in 1968 by artists Bridget Riley and Peter Sedgley and has its head offices in London's East End.

How long have you lived and worked in the East End?

Most of the time since 1983. I live five minutes from my work, which is rather convenient.

What does arts-led regeneration mean in the context of SPACE?

SPACE develops and manages facilities for both professional artists and communities local to our site. We've got sixteen sites. Historically and in the present, SPACE both contributes to regeneration and is also a victim of it. So it's quite a curious conundrum that over the years we've benefited from regeneration through funding, for instance, to refurbish studio buildings; we've benefited from cheap rents in areas which were run down and through the improvements we've made and also through artists having visions of what's possible, and being prepared to take risks, the area's become interesting to *other* people. It's the classic pattern which warehouse exhibitions are also part of. You know – you're kind of doing the developers an enormous favour by artists – in a romantic sense – pioneering. But at this stage in the game, I'd say we're more victims than beneficiaries.

Why are you victims of regeneration?

An example is the Triangle building, which is the SPACE headquarters on Mare Street. We're very glad to have had funding from six different sources to do up this building. It provides sixty studios and now we've got a really inviting entrance onto the main street and disabled access. It's kind of user-friendly, people walk in and find out what SPACE is about, how to get involved, book on courses, use print-making facilities, use media suites. It's very open to the people of Hackney in a way that SPACE never used to be. So, we're really pleased to have the support of regeneration agencies to do this. We're supporting not just fine artists but also people working in creative industries such as designer-makers, fashion; people starting up their own art-related businesses. So we do a lot more than just provide traditional studios. Our exhibition space is next door to a building that used to be an information centre and is now the kind of organic coffee bar that's really over-priced. Then over the road there's the Housing Benefit office. So we're located at an interesting point in Hackney's regeneration, in that we're on the cusp of Broadway Market and the Farmers' Market factor, which means that local Turkish and Vietnamese caffs are being shut down, because they can't keep up with those kind of rents and that pace of change. So it's sad, in a way, because actually a lot of the reasons artists like working in Hackney are because it's a multicultural and interesting, vibrant place to be. It's very fashionable. It's very pacy. There's a good music scene. It's a good place. Regeneration's going to dumb it down in a way, that's the fear, I suppose. The other aspect of all this is that the rents keep going up, and the landlords want our buildings to become residential.

Why does SPACE have a policy of not buying but renting buildings

My perception from having worked with Air and SPACE in the early eighties was (a) there was never the capital to buy buildings and (b) it was a political stance taken by a bunch of people at a certain time who weren't really into being part of that property-owning group. It wasn't something that was a priority, to own your building. OK, people have changed their way of thinking and there's a whole different mindset that a generation younger than me probably have, whereby the first thing you do is buy and then you buy to let – and all this kind of mentality. But I think there's a degree of flexibility about not owning, in the sense that practice changes, you can move on, you're not stuck with the same rigidity. Of course owning gives you the security and stability that we'd all *love*, but we just aren't in that position. We would love to be in partnership with Damien Hirst and do a joint development, with the luxury of not having to report to ten different funders and meet all the ERDF[1] criteria. That is quite arduous work. So we're really very up for talking to and working with developers who have a kind of social ethos as well as a creative ethos, and aren't purely about making maximum financial profit. There are other kinds of capital that aren't about money. I think that local authorities have cottoned on to that, and I think that that's a strength in terms of our partnerships: that we've worked with some Local Authorities who understand the value of what we do and are trying hard to protect our interests. We don't own property, but we do have certain protection under planning. So it's not all a disaster.

Are the Vauxhall Street Studios safe for the moment?

I don't think any of these old buildings are ever safe. You've always got rent reviews coming up every five years. We employ top professionals to fend off all the things that developers throw at us. But it's a building that's owned by a property developer who'll ultimately want to redevelop. It's the same with most of our buildings. They're owned by developers who, when they get the funding together, put us in a difficult position. In some parts of Hackney there's a lot of Social Housing, which means that Hackney will always be a diverse place and that is greatly to our benefit. I think that's a huge strength. Opposite our Martello Street Studios, is a Housing Association development, which I had to photograph through bars, because this is a gated community. Artists live in this place, but it's a different kind of idea about your role in society. I find it really depressing. Our building is opposite, which is rather neglected, it's got buddleia around it and it's because we just haven't got the money to be keeping these places looking as smart as the new flats over the road. There is a new Barratt development, that is on the doorstep of our Victor House Studios which are now locked behind bars. The studios are in the middle of the Barratt development. Luckily, our landlady had the foresight not to sell it to them.

Would the owner have sold the studios to SPACE?

Yes if we'd had the facility to buy. The Arts Council would only fund one studio provider for capital. SPACE and ACME[2] both applied for the same bit of money. ACME got it; SPACE didn't. So we have no capital. We'll never get that, because the Arts Council Lottery money came to an end. I think that's the sort of history of our relationship with the Arts Council, or something. I don't know – it's before my time. At Richmond House, SPACE is on the top floor, MOMART[3]

on the middle floor and Flowers East[4] on the ground floor. There have just been two big planning applications for a massive development of Richmond House which we and Hackney have opposed twice. It's going to public inquiry in October (2006) and it's going to be a moment when SPACE is going to be needing all the PR, all the media coverage, we can possibly get, because it's a real test case of holding out in a building that is currently entirely Cultural Use. So it's a kind of test to us of whether Hackney will back us. There are certain bits of planning legislation which are to our benefit and we have to play planning policies off against each other. Planning supplements, to do with Cultural Use, and to do with Employment Use can help us to protect our rights to be where we are.

Do you feel that you are always fire-fighting?

Well, that's what you do as part of any job which protects sixteen buildings alongside developing new sites. It's just that you want to make sure you're on top of the plans the developers are making around you. You can't take any lease for granted, because it's not going to last for ever. We've got twenty five year leases on most of our sites now, but we have five-yearly rent reviews. At the Triangle, this December, we will have a rent review, at which they could sting us for a 100% rent increase. That's what we're getting at the moment.

How does SPACE handle rent reviews?

We employ top city surveyors to negotiate. So we have to spend money. That's the property business. It's important to have good advice, making sure you're well represented by good solicitors, good surveyors. We're quite smart at it now. These surveyors have been working for SPACE a long time, and they know the east London property scene really well. They've just succeeded, at Dace Road, Bow, in fighting off a 300% increased rent proposal. It took two years. It was really scary. We paid them a very large fee for doing it, but they've saved ninety studios for us, for the next twenty years. Having a leasehold isn't the end of the world. People seem to have this idea that there's owning or leasing: leasings's bad, owning is good. There aren't that many buildings going that you can buy freehold at the moment, and a lot of the prices are over-inflated, because of the Olympic factor. People are paying well over the odds for some East End property, and buying really dodgy things. We are developing sites, but it's not so easy to find the capital as it was one year ago, two years ago, five years ago. There's no Lottery money.[5] The ERDF round has ended. The LDA[6] has been diverted to the Olympics. The same with the GLA.[7] It's not easy, so that's why partnership's the only way forward.

What is the strategy and the forward thinking?

We work very closely with Hackney. Take Morning Lane Studios, for instance. We've been taking on a lot of short leases from Hackney and we know full well they're short leases. Morning Lane studios will be demolished to make way for a new City Academy. We can't change that – well, you can, but that's not my job, to change that bit of politics. But Hackney know that when we lose this building, they'll feel an obligation to find us more space. We work well with Hackney and Tower Hamlets. We don't have the strong relationships with Lambeth and Southwark – there's only so much time in the week but I'd really love to get more involved in what we can do round here.

How long is the artists' waiting list for SPACE studios?

We've got eighteen hundred people on the list. It is not like a queue in terms of the date when you applied. We match people quite closely with the specific needs they have. Vauxhall Street's our most popular site. Those studios go really quickly. The ones out in Dace Road – they're a bit less accessible to public transport, so they don't shift so quickly. Turnover is perhaps 5% turn around in a year. We've got around six hundred artists in our studios, so of those, 5% will leave in a year and another 5% come in.

Given the multiple shifts that have occurred in artists' practice since SPACE was set up, is there less demand for physical studio space now compared with the 1960s?

To be perfectly honest, a lot of the studios are getting so expensive, artists can't use them enough, so they only get in there a couple of days a week – a lot of people have to work full-time, to pay the rent, pay for their materials – just, *life*. That makes the whole idea of having a permanent studio kind of ludicrous. So, a lot of people hold on to that concept, because that's, in a way, their *raison d'être*, their identity and it's great having space permanently: you can spread your work out. We also have a commissioning studio at Triangle, which we rent out on a daily or weekly basis; and that's really, really popular. We have people coming in, when they've got a specific commission or show, so within our portfolio it's not all just single artists per unit. We've got shared studios, one occupied by eight Royal College graduates who finished last summer: they're illustrators and graphic designers, and they work together, and they really like cross-fertilising and being part of a group. Also down that corridor we've got print-makers, textile design, painters, a theatre designer. They really enjoy the fact that there are different practices going on. Although perhaps 70% of our studios are rented to painters, there's a lot of other activity.

We've got Sarah Lane House, which is the basement of a block of council flats, and there are sixty studios there and they're all for designer-makers. It's in the Hoxton area, which is historically a 'furniture makers, fine woodwork' part of town and there are a lot a fashion people there. We cater today for a broader spectrum of practitioners. We also run a load of courses. At the moment, we are running an open-source software, two-week crash course which is really popular. We do all sorts: DVD mastering, Final Cut Pro, media courses and a lot of commissioning. We do a lot of stuff with emergent technologies and at the moment have commissioned artists working with RFID tagging technology[8] and artists to work in a Mental Health unit. We've done a lot of stuff on estates in Bow, where artists are working on socially engaged projects in a consultative way. A lot of this work we're asked to do by regeneration agencies. They *want* artists to be involved. They want training provision. A lot of people come to us and ask us to generate projects.

How are socially engaged projects funded?

These things are all very well funded. We make every project cover its own costs, so every unit of activity in Space covers its own costs. Everything's got to be cost-effective and run on the lowest overheads we can get away with – being lean and being streamlined and cost-effective is important for any kind of business.

1 European Regional Development Fund
2 ACME was set up in 1972 to support artists by providing affordable studio space
3 MOMART is a fine art handling firm
4 Flowers is a commercial art dealer with galleries in both the West End and East End of London
5 National Lottery funding for the Arts is administered by Arts Council England
6 London Development Agency
7 Greater London Authority
8. RFID – Radio Frequency Identity solutions

SESSION 2:

- CITY & GUILDS OF LONDON ART SCHOOL – THE VISUAL-TACTILE, CRAFT AND LOCALITY
- LADY MARGARET HALL SETTLEMENT – AN ARTISAN SCHOOL AND MUSEUM FOR VAUXHALL

TONY CARTER

Tony Carter is a practising artist and Principal of City & Guilds of London Art School based on Kennington Park Road. City & Guilds is unusual in its status as an Independent educational insitution, offering a BA and MA in Fine Art whilst continuing a tradition of training craftsmen and women. Its roots go back to the Art School founded in 1879 at St Peter's Church, Vauxhall.

Your agenda to reconnect art practice with craft skills is radical in the current climate of art education. What do you mean by the 'visual-tactile'?

I don't know whether radical is quite the word but to try to contextualise the possibility that it might be: I was an art student in the 1960's. At that time, skilled craftsmanship alone would probably not have impressed anybody that we thought we needed to impress, if we were ambitious in the art world. We were introduced at the outset to a significant distinction between craft skill per se and the craft peculiar to Fine Art. The distinction became more emphatic in the 80's and 90's, when the concept of Post-Modernism came to define the condition in which we were working. Post-Modernism and, more lately 'post-post-modernism' and 'post-historical context', are concepts which all seem to assume that art's traditional projects are complete – or particularly those identified with Painting and Sculpture. I wonder whether any of you attended the seminar at Tate Britain about six months ago at which the American critic-philosopher, Arthur Danto, his French counterpart, Thierry de Duve, and a younger American critic, Richard Shusterman, discussed the origins and implications of some of these ideas. Danto is well known, not least for a book called *Art after the Death of Art,* which identifies Post-Renaissance Art's three 'great projects' as the representational; the introspective leading to various forms of abstraction and, conclusively, a period in which art reflected on its own condition. The book represents all these territories as having been fully explored now, leaving Art's contemporary agenda devoid of any real substance and the larger question of what Art's purpose is, considerably in doubt. I don't agree with this view, but, to the extent that the art-educational context offers degree level qualifications and increased 'research' opportunities, it must represent a necessary forum for the debating of these complex questions.

My own position has always been that of an artist/teacher. I see creative possibility equally in my own practice and in helping other artists define their agendas and refine their skills. Any authority I might have for commenting or offering advice in that context derives as much from my experience of practice as from my involvement in education. In my current position as Principal of City & Guilds Art School, I feel an obligation of honour to help perpetuate the School's historic commitment to craft skills, but at the same time, an equally strong obligation to help inform their evolution – particularly in Fine Art – with an appropriate input of contemporary critical awareness.
My contention would be that the Tradition of Art as an essentially tactile/visual language did not end with Post-Modernism, and that it can still be dynamic and ongoing if we have the conviction and the imagination.

By the 'tactile-visual' I mean, in the simplest terms, the making of paintings and sculptures, that the artist's brief is to make images, reflective images on the human condition. Traditionally, the distinguishing legacy of art practice has been through the medium of painting or three-dimensional making. What I became worried about was the prospect of art no longer being grounded in those tactile-visual processes at all. What I see as important in those media is that thinking and doing are at one.

Since critical theory came to play so dominant a role in art education, there's been a great tendency for the content of art to be the product of *verbal* reasoning. The notion of the 'conceptual' is often identified as the product of that kind of reasoning and the tactile-visual has tended then to be an illustrative subsidiary of the *verbal*. That has really bothered me. I've always been for addressing the criteria by which we judge quality as intelligently as we can. But the idea of handing authority for these criteria to literary specialists or deriving models of authority from Continental philosophy is very disturbing. My position at City & Guilds has been to introduce a contemporary critical intelligence to a School whose tradition has been largely craft-based, whilst preserving the craft priority.

Changing perceptions amongst artists as to who the audience for their work might be, can dictate the *type* of work that's produced. If there was a widespread return to discrete object-making, for whom would the products be?

I think there won't *be* that kind of return to a predominant making of discrete art objects What I *would* say is that, if the legacy of art as a tactile-visual tradition is to have what I call 'first order status', that is, to be capable of originating rather than just illustrating thought, then at least some part of the art educational context has to try to protect that possibility as a serious project. That is not the same as saying that it should be counter to the many other possibilities that contemporary art allows. There is all manner of socio-political as well as cultural and historic underpinning for gestures in the name of Art which are not saleable objects destined for commercial galleries. For a small Independent school, with necessarily limited financial means the specialist legacy of a craft-orientated tradition is viable and important as long as it is contextualised intelligently, but there will not be a wholesale return to discrete object-making. If there *was*, it would reawaken a political contention that has simmered for three or four decades, that relatively few people would actually benefit in a culturally democratic way and there would be too many graduates. Obviously, the *political* objection to that form of art model has been its compromised relationship with the market-place. In a consumer economic system the market is, arguably, not interested in the finer points of debate as to where quality lies in art. It deals with what is saleable, for the most part. What is saleable is, by definition good, its clientele is, for the most part, relatively privileged.

What are the ambitions for City & Guilds School in this area?

My ambition for the School is to sustain a Fine Art department which specialises in tactile-visual conventions (Painting, Sculpture, Printmaking), but which is not Conservative with a capital C, nor dully academic. It should be informed by the critical debates which are widespread in

contemporary culture and aware of its idealistic purpose. Alongside that, we have two other main subject areas, one of which is our own diploma in Historic Carving, the other a Conservation programme at degree level. In these three subject areas we make our commitment to the aesthetic object. I mean 'aesthetic' here to signify an object which can engage the spectator both intellectually and sensually and with the possibility of significant reflection on the human condition. Across these three areas you could say we comprehensively address both the skills for making and the cultural status of various categories of the art object. In Fine Art, the object, we might say, is originated; in Conservation it is conserved or restored and in Historic Carving is replicated. In all three areas the teaching of technical skills is contextualised within a discourse which asks why – originate, restore or replicate? Recently the carving course, or rather its students, have been commissioned to produce twelve grotesques for St George's Chapel in Windsor. The originals are so badly eroded as to leave nothing to copy. Their replacements are required to be imaginative and to reflect on contemporary life, but obviously to be sensitive to the *stylistic* character that still defines a medieval building. Which is quite a challenge. I'd like to think that the presence of Fine Art can inform the carving course in respect of certain levels of imagination, and maybe that the carvers can demonstrate levels of refined craft skill, which Fine Art might yet incorporate into some of its own projects. That's the nature of City & Guilds of London Art School at the moment: It occupies a specialist position borne of idealism and expediency. It doesn't question the significance of film, video and other time-based media to the context in which we live, but we could hardly compete with Goldsmiths or any of the other large London schools in this territory. I believe in the tactile-visual as a first-order language in which the thinking and the doing are synonymous. In this respect the School's purpose is rather contrary to the Post-Modernist view of Art History but, that is my position.

City & Guilds and Lady Margaret Hall Settlement have both expressed an interest in the Beaufoy Institute in Black Prince Road. In your search for a larger site, how strong is the desire to stay in this area?

It's a complex question. City & Guilds of London Art School has existed on its present site since 1879, perhaps not in the form you would find today, but there has been a continuity in its existence since 1879 and arguably, since 1850 on another site in the same locality. In its early days, it existed very much to serve local industries: day-release workers from the Royal Doulton ceramics factory, for example. My position is one of having been employed at the School first of all as Head of Fine Art in 1998, then succeeding to the position of Principal in 2000. When I arrived, the process had already begun to obtain degree validation, from the University of Central England, perhaps for all its subject areas. As it is, we have Degree accreditation now in Fine Art (BA and MA) and Conservation. For good reason, we've preferred to keep our own Diploma for Historic Carving. The nature of art education at degree level, has become ever more exacting in ways which, you might say, are peripheral to the educational agenda: health and safety in the buildings that you occupy, accessibility for people who are disabled, the high financial cost of maintaining old buildings in acceptable order. All these things have proven to be problems for us. Though most people involved with City & Guilds Art School would like to stay in Lambeth, not least because its history is here, if we found a building that better suited our needs at the right cost in central London, somewhere other than Lambeth, then we would move from this area. In that sense I suppose many people might say of the School that it is, and has been, *in* the community but not *of* it.

So what does it mean to be 'local', in this context and in the context of this Symposium? (Beaconsfield considers itself as being an *international* organisation as well as a local one. It has a relationship with the Primary schools and at the same time with international artists and curators and has curated projects abroad...)

And if you didn't, presumably, you would find it hard to both make sense of the enterprise in your own creative terms, and maybe difficult to defend against a politically-minded audience who were challenging the point and purpose of your enterprise. Like every other educational institution, even City & Guilds Art School needs a proportion of non-European students. We're not just talking about going outside the locality but into Europe and *beyond* particularly to the Far East. In a good year, within a total cohort of – say – 170 individuals, about one-third will be non-UK students and among these, a significant number will be from non-EU countries. That would perhaps be characteristic of every art and design institution in this country. I suppose that I – like you (more than you in a way) have to make City & Guilds *pay* its way. In simplest terms, that is a matter of recruiting enough students every year and/or generating enough fee income. Because we get no Government subsidy, we're dependent on student fees and on bursaries generously donated by various London Livery Companies. The fees are higher than in the public sector and that makes us vulnerable to accusations of catering to privilege. I've always found that suggestion disconcerting and to some extent unfair, since the fees reflect only the real costs and thanks to our various benefactors, a significant number of students are helped whose circumstances would otherwise exclude them.

Politics of Education

I've come to realise that the politics of education are very complicated. Nothing is quite as one-dimensional as it may seem. The Government-subsidised institutions, that are able to charge a *low* fee for British and European students, usually charge a swingeing one for the non-Europeans. So the apparently idealistic position is inherently compromised. Royal College students from Europe will pay fees of approximately £2-3,000 per year as compared with those from outside Europe who pay something like £18,000 (per year). At least our own structure is more equable, with a differential of about £1,000 per year of difference between the European fee and its non-EU counterparts. The School has to pay its way, whatever its priorities, and recruitment from Europe and beyond helps the cause. The cause itself directs graduates into career paths which are not confined to this locality, but which benefit the architectural heritage of the country at large. I'd like to think that might be a source of pride to the local community and an honourable project by any criterion.

If, in addition to this, somebody could help me find a way to direct the skills we represent, at least more proportionally, back into the locality, then that would be great too, but I am just not sure how it would be done. My problem is that financially, the School has very little room for manoeuvre or risk-taking and keeping it alive and on course is difficult enough. To actually figure out ways, for example, to engage Lambeth Council's sympathy for our effort, knowing that we seem to be anathema to its political values, seems futile.

JEFFE JEFFERS

Jeffe Jeffers is Director of the Lady Margaret Hall Settlement and a Social Entrepreneur. LMHS was founded in Kennington Road in 1897 by the Walcott Education Trust, the Archbishop of Canterbury and students and staff of Lady Margaret Hall, the Oxford College, to tackle social and economic issues in what was then one of London's poorest areas. Jeffe was Director of LMHS in the 70s and then directed a number of projects elsewhere with a focus on economic regeneration. He has recently returned to the Settlement with a portfolio of community projects, the most ambitious being the vision for an Artisan School in Vauxhall.

If the proposed courses at the Artisan School are aimed at disenfranchised members of the community, would they have a very different agenda from the craft practice that Tony Carter has described?

I am a historian by training and an economist – I'm an economic historian – so I want to stick to those two disciplines in the sense of what I talk about. Tony's art school was started by a mad Vicar. When the Vauxhall Pleasure Gardens closed, this Vicar begged two acres to build a church. And then he didn't. He built an art school. And then, instead of starting the church again, he built a factory to make uniforms for the Crimean War. And then he built a school. And then only *eventually* did he get round to building a church. In the process of building the art school, in its very early history, he significantly changed the local economy. He changed Doulton from being, basically, a maker of drainpipes and beer mugs into being a Fine-Art potter: a lot of the artists for Doulton were trained in that school in its early days.

Doulton

The famous Doulton pottery is the building just under the railway bridge, on the Black Prince Road, with all the Doulton faïence on the front of it. So that's how close it was. The factory was there until the 1960's. People think of Doulton as being something from the Potteries (in North Staffordshire). It is a London pottery. The fire station in front of the Doulton factory, on the Embankment, was the original eighteenth-century Lambeth pottery, which made Delftware, a huge tradition of pottery in this area. So, being a historian, I'm interested in such trivia. I'm interested in the fact that the Beaconsfield building was the Ragged School, but is only one third of the original building, because the railway bought two thirds of the original Ragged School. Compensation was paid in 1907 and used to build the Beaufoy Institute, and the Settlement was involved from day one in the creation and in the management of the Beaufoy Institute, which I'll come back to in full circle.

Beaufoy Institute

The Institute is a lovely Arts & Crafts building on the right-hand side of the Black Prince Road as you go down towards Kennington Road. That building was built to train local people in high-level hand skills. It has a long history of training. It trained the draughtsmen for a company called Vauxhall Motors. It trained engineers and draughtsmen for Gardeners Diesels, one of the two very large industrial complexes which left this area and grew on elsewhere. So it had a very strong tradition of engagement. Engagement is important. It ran through as a technical school until the Second World War. It was used for other purposes during the War. After the War, it was used to

train all the craft teachers for London, until the ILEA[1] built a brand-new craft centre for training teachers, further out in South London. And it ceased. The building was then handed over to a new school, Beaufoy School, which had been built as part of the Ethelred Estate, and it was the Craft wing of the School. At a certain time (and nobody's quite sure when) it ceased to be that, but it has been empty and unused for somewhere between fifteen and seventeen years.
In its basement it still has the original 1907 belt-driven machinery, which is by itself worthy of preservation. So that building has been lying there. The building is not owned by Lambeth Council. The Council thought it was and tried to sell it. It is owned by a charitable trust, which the council manages – badly. Very obviously, since it has been left empty for a very long time. The Settlement, and RCDT and a group of other organisations in the area have waged a continual campaign to try and bring it back into use. So that's one side, and I'll come back to that as part of my full circle.

Local Economy

The other side is economics. In 1978, I did a survey of this area of local employment, and part of the survey was Newport Street and the considerable number of small businesses: mostly skilled and semi-skilled businesses – lift maintenance, things like that, which were in this area at that time. Essentially, they have all gone, and in a significant way many of them have been replaced by the arts industry, as a whole. In 2004, we did another survey of the area, and an analysis of the census data. We found some interesting statistics coming out: (a) the vast amount of arts-based – I use the word loosely – businesses, occupations, work, which had now come into the area; and (b) the large amount of traditional industry that had simply disappeared; but also one very interesting statistic, which was the composition of the arts industry. How many people in this room are university graduates or college graduates? Could they put their hands up? That's not bad. Do you know what the population in the local estates is of college graduates? It's 7%. So what we have is a dichotomy in our economy We have a new industrial economy coming in, which does not relate to this community. And that's a problem in terms of what the media are calling the 'untermensch' or the 'lost people', to talk about the deskilled, unskilled populations which are now living on our estates, and which are welded in there because of housing policy and housing price. As housing price rises, if you're on minimum wage, your chances of getting out of a high-rent council flat into the housing chain and moving out are nil. So the local people in this economy are welded into this economy, and they're being welded to low-paid jobs – to minimum-wage jobs.

Regenerative Potential of Arts and Crafts

I'm a Socialist who's very interested in how I can use Capitalist skills. John Wesley once said that the devil shouldn't have all the best hymns. We're interested in using tactics to take things forward – to bring the two together. One of the things that has been very clear to us, one of the things that we've lost, and one of the things that came out of my knowledge of the Beaufoy School building (because I knew this building in the 70s; I knew the workers in this building because a lot of them lived on the Ethelred Estate) was that those workers were the leadership of the local community. They were skilled craftsmen, they were leadership in this community, they were stability, they were a rock around which a society could be built. And we have lost those skilled artisans. It is nearly impossible to get tenants' involvement – people from the local estates involved in almost any activities. It's exceptionally difficult – nearly impossible – because that class no longer exists.

So how do I manufacture that class? I look at the arts, and I say, 'How do I engage, how do I create a mechanism that engages with this new industry, which will equally well engage with the people of this area?' And the Beaufoy Institute is the idea around which to do that. The Beaufoy has, in our sense, three purposes. The first purpose is to act alongside things like Damien's studios, to act as a focus that creates some sort of sense of place in the area, which it has lost. The Beaufoy would be a school – we call it a studio school – which is about crafts and about training. Our market analysis says that London is one of the richest cities in the world. It has large, rich consumers who want to buy beautiful, expensive things, and we should find ways of selling them beautiful, expensive things. The art on the other side of that, is that the making of beautiful things is, by itself, an ennobling and regenerative individual pursuit, in which people should be involved. It is in fact the spirit of the old Arts and Crafts Movement. We think that that spirit is still there. It is still important. It is important to our sort of community, and we should find some way of engaging that with modern design, modern art, and modern practice; but also with the old traditions which Tony so well represents.

Vauxhall as an Opportunity

So that is our idea of what the Beaufoy should be. First a school. Secondly a museum. We are looking to put in it a representative collection around the Arts and Crafts Movement, and we have been talking to some significant Collections about them coming in to act as a co-reference point, as a draw and as part of the story. Then beyond it, because the Beaufoy not only has a building, it has a lovely big empty site behind it, and there we are looking, as part of the great plan, to create between 45 and 60,000 square feet of studio space where work is practised, where students can actually do placement and where the idea of study and the idea of work can be integrated within one strategy. Then beyond that, it then grows out into a whole regenerative movement of other things which will happen in this area, because there are opportunity sites in this area which are unique. It bridges that link between Waterloo and Coin Street, which are very well developed areas of the Borough, and Brixton, which is becoming another fashionable area. There's this little desert in the middle – Vauxhall. It creates a strong bridge, a strong focus, and it reaches out. So that's our simple game.

What do you need to get the Artisan School off the ground – do you need the Local Authority on board?

We need them on board or dead! Money is always the thing… but to create money you need partnerships. At the moment we are talking to a wide range of partnerships. We are working with Dartington Hall Trust in terms of developing the school concept. We are working with the Young Foundation in terms of the actual concept of what happens inside the school, because they have written a whole series of very interesting papers on that. We are talking to two quite large Arts & Crafts collections, which I can't name because they have meetings over the next two weeks to firm up their position on this and we have been talking to some of the major national galleries about it. So that bit is actually, oddly enough, the easy bit.

How does the project work financially?

The museum bit looks like it can nearly be self-funding. The school? We are talking to Government about standing the Academy model firmly on its head: just absolutely ripping the guts out of their Academy model, taking its money and doing something radically different and dealing with a group of young people – and older people, for that matter – for which it does not deal at the moment. So basically, we're looking at those agendas. The industrial space, the commercial space – we are interested in that for three reasons. One is because of the 'connectivity' between the three pieces but also because it would be a long-term income stream for the whole process. One of the things you all know, that if you live in a grant culture nowadays, you're living in a life that's getting shorter and shorter. You have to find ways of endowing things in such a way that they have longevity and can go ahead. So those are our thrusts in terms of money. We will look to see what development money can be got from organisations like the LDA (unless they've spent it all down the river). We will look to see what deals we can do with commercial developers or whatever. We try and *avoid* that, because you rarely win that game. But we will see how we do that – and it can be done. Over a seven-to-ten-year period, as the debt goes down and the income stream goes up, then you're moving out of grant periods anyway, and you're moving towards some sort of self-funding.

How many students could the Artisan School take?

I don't know yet. That's all up for discussion. That will develop as the story develops, as partners come on board, as we start arguing the details through with the various funding bodies. I suspect we're probably looking at somewhere in the mid-hundreds – 100 or 150, something like that – but probably not much bigger than that at any one time.

Will all students be from the locality or will you spread the net wider?

The net will have to be spread wider, because London doesn't work in that totally closed-in way. We want a very significant local component, because our side bonus if you like is generating a local leadership. And that's an accident. That's not something you can plan. It happens because you have done other things. It emerges.

A smaller project that you're involved in is the Vauxhall Gardens Community Centre, which also houses twelve studio spaces. When this sick building was finally sold off by Lambeth to developers, it looked like the end of a cluster of very cheap studios. What did LMHS do to turn that situation around?

Tim Boxall has done most of the work. What we have done is the technical work of looking to see what the possibilities were. Our chief aim was to take the Community Centre and the community group out of oppositionism. It had been fighting the Council in that space for seventeen years, and, you know, opposition is a very comfortable place to be. You can sit there all the bloody time and watch, and we have spent two and a half years talking them out of that position. There had to be change, there had to be move forward. We managed to persuade them that they should accept

a deal which the Council had been offered by a developer. There was a competition. We knew the developer, a particular developer, was going to win because he was intended to win. What we have done is do a modestly good deal with the developer. We have worked out a strategy of continuity so that the building will continue to be occupied. The developer is building, round the corner in Glasshouse Walk, a new Community Centre, converting an existing building. That will be ready for them by next May/June, and they will move through. There will be artists' studios in that. Now, there will not be as many as there are in the current building, because the new building is smaller. But the other, bigger, building which is occupied at the moment has been 50-60% derelict for most of the seventeen years of its history. So basically we're getting more usable space. There will probably be six or seven studios in the new building, at the moment they're pitched at the same rents being paid now. That may not survive the economic appraisal which we'll have to do over the next few months, as we get into negotiating the detail of the development with the developer, but I suspect it will be moderately close. However, there is a downside and it's an interesting comparison. Because we are short of space, we have a South American group coming into the new centre who are going to put their office space in it, and they're willing to pay £24 per square foot for their office space. That's inclusive of heating, lighting and whatever. But of course when we examine the studio space, it's £7.20 per square foot. So the community is going to have to carry, or lose, a large opportunity cost in making the decision that studios continue. That, in a sense, is the dilemma for most studio provision. 'Who is prepared to lose that opportunity cost?' is the fundamental question that faces the studio movement. We've made a decision at the moment to do that. When we go to Lambeth Council with the full appraisal, whether they will still feel inclined to do it – because we will have to ask them for some money towards filling the gap – I don't know. That's an interesting hurdle we will come to.

You take quite an oppositional position to the idea of the arts coming in and filling employment vacuums, to ensure that industry never returns but do you also see this trend as a new opportunity for the community?

Anna described that ambivalence when she was describing the Hackney Road – her regret at the loss of the local Turkish restaurants and so on. That's what happens. The arts movement has been the leading edge of gentrification. Right across London it's been very successful. I keep telling artists there's lots of really interesting space in South Acton, but I don't see five million of them pouring out to South Acton, because they need missionaries out there. The process in terms of de-industrialisation was going to happen anyway, because it's happened right across all our major cities. So it's how we fill the vacuum. And I'm a realist: you're here – let's see how I can ride your back. It's as brutal and as simple as that. How can I turn you into – not individual artists – something that employs and whatever? I'm interested in Mr Hirst because he employs. He's like Rubens. Rubens used to employ forty-odd people. I suspect Damien employs something similar. So I'm interested in art in that sense. I love William Morris, not because he was an artist, because he had a bloody wallpaper factory. That's where I'm coming from. It's very unromantic, I'm afraid.

From your historian's perspective, what have been the effects of Tate Modern on this area?

Before Tate Modern was proposed, there was a lovely thing there called Bankside Power Station. I was the Director of South Bank Technopark, which is the Science Park which we built alongside South Bank University. We were working with a young man called David Sainsbury, who had given us £100,000 to work out how we could turn this big power station into a huge Science Park, right on the river, and to be the heart of a new London, based around technology. We were busying away, spending his money, and when I rang up one day to ask the CEGB[2] for another meeting, they said, 'Oh, too late – we've sold it to Tate Modern'. Because it's interesting to do the comparison, I looked out some of the studies that we did. We were looking at a power station which would have housed somewhere in the region of 380 firms, which would have generated over 4,500 jobs in the building, in an industry at that time (and we're talking late 70s/early 80s), where the local employment quotient was 45%. Of the workforce in South Bank Technopark, 45% was local people: not graduates – but local nerds, kids who were good at computing, who were good at Pacman and we turned them into technicians. So I look at that, and I look at Tate Modern now, and I wonder what its impact is in comparison. I haven't seen a study. I think I know the one thing it *hasn't* done is to be a significant raiser of local wage levels. A lot of the support industry, which has come around Tate Modern is in catering, wholesaling, small retailing, and it's at the very low-wage end and it hasn't been an up-skiller in that sense. Tate Modern has had a huge international impact – and certainly in terms of London as a tourist centre. I'm sure it has had that. But in its very immediate local impact, I don't know. I'd be interested for somebody to spend some money to find out.

***Can* industry ever return to the inner cities?**

I think we recently missed a major opportunity. In the early 80s, London really did have an opportunity to be one of the world's major technology cities. When we were talking about Bankside, we were actually going to bring into it Microsoft's European headquarters. We had Novell lined up. We already had grown Autodesk AutoCard, at the Technopark, into being a major employer. We had significant people going in. So decisions were made at that time that London was not going to be an industrial city (and I use 'industrial' in the fully modern sense). DTI[3] started to pull out of technology and all sorts of things. So there was a whole trend away. That decision was made. Coming back in, I think if you look at the major cities in the world – the Parises, the Romes, the Copenhagens, the Milans – they all have, in their centres, very high-grade luxury industries, which are very successful and basically, London is the odd ball out. I remember when I first came to London, and I lived in Notting Hill, I could have walked down any mews and bought a Louis Quinze sofa, or whatever, and they'd have made it in half an hour for me. All those skills have gone. When I came to work in Oxford House in 1971, down in Bethnal Green, I was just watching the end of the Hackney furniture business. I had an old man of eighty two come in to me and offer me his business, because his foreman was seventy one and he didn't want it either, just off the Hackney Road. So those things were happening.

Audience Member: *Surely a lot of the art industry is the luxury?*

Yes, absolutely. I just don't think it's well enough marketed. I don't think it's well enough managed. I don't think it maximises its growth potential. In a sense it's embarrassed by being a business and I don't think you should be embarrassed about being a business.

1 Inner London Education Authority

2 Central Electricity Generating Board

3 Department of Trade and Industry

SESSION 3

- **TATE MODERN AND ITS IMPACT ON LONDON SOUTH CENTRAL**
- **INDEPENDENT PERSPECTIVES AND THE LOSS OF AN ALTERNATIVE**

The third session took a more conversational form with previous speakers and people on the floor contributing to the debate.

SHEENA WAGSTAFF

Sheena Wagstaff is the Chief Curator at Tate Modern. Tate Modern has provided a new profile for visual art in London. The conversion of the power station at Bankside for the millennium created a long overdue facility for Modern and Contemporary art on a par with other international institutions of its kind. The impact of Tate Modern on its neighbouring arts facilities in the area known as South Central has been significant but difficult to measure.

When it opened in 2000, Tate Modern was instantly flooded with visitors. Millions of people visit, day after day. Down-river from the new museum, we in Vauxhall are interested in exploring what sort of effect this huge success story might have had on us. Aside from the obvious audience triumph, what do you think the most significant achievements have been?

The success criterion for any institution is not just that of attendance. In many respects, as Anna said earlier, the more successful you are in certain aspects of one's operation, the more you end up being a victim of that success. And that is a considerable challenge that we're facing at the moment, at Tate Modern. Being a victim of our success has manifested in different ways, one of which is reflected in Government funding. When the Government made free admission in national institutions possible, it gave other institutions additional financial support, but, not the Tate which has always been free. The building was designed with a great deal of forethought and pre-planning to cope with up to 3,000,000 visitors; but we are still attracting between 4.5 and 5,000,000 visitors a year. Which is fantastic in some respects, but it has two major negative effects, one of which is just the wear and tear on the building. The place is falling apart, and there's no time – and no money, of course – to make good the fabric of the place. Secondly, and in my mind, because I'm a curator, much more importantly, is that the experience of encountering art, whether in the collection galleries or in exhibitions – and we do do popular shows for scholarly reasons, not just because they're popular – the viewing experience, the encounter between the visitor and the art work, is compromised.

My challenge as Chief Curator is to try to make that experience a better one, so that it isn't just appealing – which it does – to a large audience. I think we're quite good at appealing to diverse constituencies, but we can't be all things to all people. What tends to happen is that the encounter with art is sometimes – either because it's compromised or just because there is such a huge influx of first-time visitors, tourists, etc. – quite a superficial one. We suffer enormously from not being able to provide the environment for a much deeper engagement and that's the biggest challenge we're facing.

Having been part of Tate Modern's success, what are you proud of?

The phenomenon of the place (the issue bears a more detailed conversation), for better or for worse, with all of its spectacle aspects, has nonetheless really stimulated and enhanced a passionate discussion about contemporary art and architecture, and many other cross-disciplinary aspects to art production. Tate Modern has contributed to that. The other thing we've achieved, which we continue to do since it's an ongoing, developing process with no ultimate stopping point, is really rethinking the way that one views history, and the history of art, through the collections and displays. It's like a biennale**:** you can't ever get it all right, but you can get some bits more right than others. I am also proud of the fact that Tate Modern is a really valuable educational resource for artists and teachers and kids, as well as the general public. Related to this is the programme of exhibitions, large and small although there's a lot more work to be done through it. As a whole the place represents an aspect of a democratic ideal, which nonetheless has got all sorts of issues and problems connected with it. Tate Modern is a different kind of model. We are seen as one of the three largest international Modern and Contemporary Institutions, alongside Pompidou and the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York, but we have a very different audience, especially in comparison to that of MoMA. In comparison to New York and Paris we also have very limited funds for acquiring art.

How does the audience for Tate Modern differ from that of MoMA?

One of the differences between MoMA's audience and Tate Modern's is that the former is significantly less. Just to give you a quantitative example. When MoMA opened, on its first day, it was free admission (huge razmatazz about it) and they had the most they have ever had on one day, which was 18,000 people. On a normal weekend, Saturday or Sunday, when there are exhibitions on at Tate Modern, we have around 20,000 people per day. So in aggregate you have a much larger number of people who come to Tate Modern from all over the world. I think we also have a larger number of people who come on repeat visits.

Is the geographical position of the museum – on the river, on a tourist route, picking up a lot of passing trade – the secret?

It's not passing trade. It *is* a destination. People have to decide to come to Tate Modern, because there's nothing else around. That's one of my complaints about working there. You go out at lunchtime and where the hell do you go? Apart from Borough Market, which is fantastic, but there's nothing else in that immediate environment, apart from building sites.

If Tate Modern has actually created the pedestrian traffic up and downriver as much as anything else, how far might other cultural organisations and art providers be able to share those audiences? Is there any way of knowing how Tate *could* affect smaller galleries and institutions?

As far as I know, there haven't been any reports. You would be more likely to know if your audiences have been diminished than Tate Modern would. Before we opened, we had a couple of

seminars with leaders of arts institutions – not just in London, but also nationally – where we talked about our ambitions for the programme, and invited comments. We felt it was crucial to be sensitive to the aims and ambitions of programming by other institutions such as the South London Art Gallery, the Walsall Art Gallery, the Ikon, the Whitechapel Art Gallery, the Arnolfini – there were lots of people there. I think there was a very real fear about Tate Modern disrupting the fragile cultural infrastructure and the inter-connectedness of the art world then – and I think it still exists. Your point about diminishing audiences elsewhere is very difficult to substantiate, but without a doubt Tate Modern is a place which offers a complete experience, and therefore people sometimes come for up to half a day: they have lunch, they shop, they see an exhibition, and then they get on the boat or get a bus and go home. They don't go on to other institutions. So I think that there is a real need for a study.

To corroborate that view, Beaconsfield, in collaboration with neighbours in South Central London such as Gasworks and Danielle Arnaud, worked with an organisation called Audiences London to analyse our audiences, and identify the people that we could feasibly attract but were not attracting. The profile for that group turned out to be people who will happily go to Tate Modern but won't go anywhere else.

RICHARD GRAYSON

Richard Grayson is an artist, writer and independent curator. He was a founder member of the Basement Group (1979-84) the counter-cultural predecessor to Locus+, an organisation in Newcastle upon Tyne which has had a significant influence on time-based practice. Richard was an AHRB[1] Research Fellow in Fine Arts at Newcastle University (2003-06) and has previously lived and worked in a number of regeneration areas: in Newcastle, Sydney, Berlin, and now in Vauxhall.

Do you have any ideas about the secret to developing audiences in the shadow of Tate?

I've got a few ideas about audience. 'Audience' is one of the shibboleths which we ought to be questioning more than we are, because it's all part of this idea of art as being instrumental, a form of social work, a vehicle for inclusiveness. I'm not saying it *can't* be those things, but it is not *only* those things. The really interesting thing about, say, the relationship between Beaconsfield and the Tate or whatever, is not the sharing of the audiences; it's the way now in which we share the artists. There used to be a time – say in 1977 – when an 'alternative' space would be showing a very, very different group of people from those people who would be shown at Tate; there was a clear gap. What's happened, which has caused great confusion for contemporary artists and for funding bodies is that, in a way, we have won. The 'alternative', the people who used to be the opposition, the progressive art of the 60s and 70s has become – by generational shift, by default, by the fact that it was making interesting work – the dominant, established debate – and with that you get money.

I'm a survivor of sitting in a very, very small basement in the North East of England in 1976 watching naked men and women stand in buckets of porridge for long periods of time as a critique of capitalism. Then, the idea that something not a million times dissimilar to that, with revolving doors going round the ceiling and an albino penguin, would be seen by 20,000 people a day[2] – would be like heaven had arrived. But you have to be very careful what you wish for. We can't go backwards but it has put us in a really strange situation.

Oppositional Practice

Sheena Wagstaff (SW)**:** You have touched on a curatorial debate that we're having now internally. I was around in New York many years ago when the Guerrilla Girls were first doing their staking out of the Whitney and posting posters all over the Lower East Side. Now we have a gallery in the collection in which we've shown all those Guerrilla Girls posters and they came over two weeks ago and did a performance in the Auditorium. So there is that aspect of oppositional practice, which has over time been co-opted by the Institution, in the Guerrilla Girls' case (and in many others') willingly.

Richard Grayson (RG)**:** Yes, co-opted – co-opted and emptied – but when one says 'by the Institution', one suggests that there's almost an oppositional situation again, as if the Institution is the spectacle that's going to suck us in. Which on one level or other may or may not be true, but there's also been a willing co-option. It was interesting earlier when Anna Harding was talking about how SPACE hadn't bought property because of a certain political mindset. Now that political mindset has been left behind. One's left with the shell and that leaving behind is partially through what happened historically, politically, but it's also partially what's happened – sadly – within the arts – culturally.

SW: Are you talking about the Institution, or are you talking about artistic practice?

RG: I'm talking about both. The idea of an oppositional practice is now almost like a form of branding. It's a style, or a form of branding, rather than a real position, because the political platform, which also involves, say, collaborative decision-making processes – about *not* owning property – has been gently put into the dump truck of history momentarily, underneath the triumphalism of post 1989 – the fall of the Berlin Wall.

SW: Except that that's what Pierre Huyghe's show is actually all about.

RG: Yes, but it is *within* the establishment. All I'm saying is that there's this massive confusion. I'm trying not to put it into binaries.

Naomi Siderfin (NS)**:** When we founded Beaconsfield our mission statement was *to fill a niche between the Institution, the commercial, and the 'alternative'*. What we were saying was that we didn't want to be pigeon-holed in any of those categories. But the question remains, where *do* you position yourself? You just get on with it, really.

RG: You do get on with it. I think this problematic is given added impetus by the public funding structures. In as much as we've moved on from the time when one could be grant-aided to be oppositional, that model has unfortunately died, underneath an invading market model. Everyone is talking of 'mixed economies'. But I'd be hard-pressed to see any real difference between the process of sponsorship and the processes of privatisation. At the moment sponsorship is massive. A company like BP sponsors Tate, for very specific reasons. They want to present themselves as radical, rebranded as 'goodies', so to speak. Now this has occurred because of the *success* of art, because of art joining the establishment, because of its financial drive. This has squeezed out the oppositional. And now the public funders can only think in terms of partnerships.

What proportion of Tate's funding is private, public, and corporate?

SW: I'm sure the Freedom of Information Act would give all of this information to anyone who would like to find out. In Tate's last report from about a year ago, 42% of funds were from Government and 58% were self-generated through sponsorship, donations from individuals, trusts and corporations, admission, events charges and Tate Enterprises – a for-profit company that handles publications, retail, the restaurants, etc.

Does corporate sponsorship create pressure for you as a curator, in terms of what you do and how you present yourselves?

SW: Ever since I've been a curator it has been a pressure. It's what I call 'corporate creep' and every five years or so, there's more and more of an incursion of corporate involvement with the public institution. I think it's our responsibility to be guardians of the public interest and yet at the same time we also need to survive; so there are some fairly – what is the word? – *robust* debates we have with the Development department, which represents these extraordinary corporate funding opportunities. Together we have to work out whether the up-front credits demanded in return for funding can be accommodated without compromise to the exhibition or loss of integrity to the institution.

Would a sponsor ever have a position on Tate's Board of Trustees?

SW: No. One of the great things about the British system as opposed to the American system (I was in the States for nearly ten years) is that the Board members do not pay to be on the Board. They are there because they are advocates, representative of different interest bodies, whether legal, academic, catering or publishing or others. We also have three artist Trustees. So, no, there's no sort of quid pro quo from that point of view and the Board have to work very hard on our behalf. Sponsorship will always be there. It has already been there for years. I think our big challenge is that we really have to build up our acquisitions fund; we have very little, and it's diminishing on a yearly basis. We have to try to raise that money, of course, through individual interests. But supporting an acquisitions fund is not attractive to a corporation. However, it is also interesting that when we opened Tate Modern, of the money raised from private individuals for acquisition of new work, to mark the opening displays in new galleries – about 85% was given by American donors; they were not British. That's because there's a history of giving in the US, as well as a recognition that Tate was on its uppers and needed some money to buy the work that justifies its being a world-class museum.

Taxing Property Developers

RG: It would be interesting to propose, say, a tax on any significant property development within three hundred yards of a contemporary arts organisation, if planning permission had been given after the arts organisation had moved in. There is this quite bizarre situation where the organisations are cash-strapped and having to go into strange relationships with people, whilst at the same time… without Tate Modern at Bankside, I would imagine that there would not be that large tower emerging behind it. It demonstrates a very clear link between how capital sees the

function of contemporary art and how Government sees the function of contemporary art. But that income stream is not made open to the institutions *or* the practitioners.

Given the huge effect on its geographical area, what responsibility does Tate feel for the residents, artists and arts organisations, in its immediate vicinity – is there a policy?

SW: Yes, there is. In fact that was the most active part of our pre-opening programme. We knew that we were moving into an area where there was a very strong residents' community. It's still there and we do a lot with local residents, who are extraordinarily supportive. So when this ridiculous tower was proposed, it was they who were more active and vehement in their opposition to it than Tate was. We had to tone everything down a little, so that it became a more diplomatic negotiation. We also work with local schools. For instance, we have a great programme called 'Raw Canvas'. There are many education and event-based programmes that include the community, along with rooms within the museum that people use for local meetings etc. The museum is an integral part of the community. As far as arts organisations go, there are a couple of small commercial galleries that have opened up around us. We are also part of a larger consortium called the Southwark Cultural Quarter – a cultural triangle between the South Bank complex, the Design Museum and Elephant and Castle. It is a consortium of many people from different organisations within that cultural triangle, talking together about possible shared programmes, particularly in connection with the so-called 'Cultural Olympics' in 2012, and what the possibilities of additional funding by the Government might be.

NS: North Lambeth is just outside that Bankside triangle, so it'll be interesting to see how far the kind of Tate effect spreads over the years.

RG: This thing about property determining activity raises an interesting question in the context of this Symposium. Not, of course, that it can be answered. To what extent is the cost of space in this town beginning to shape and materially affect the cultural life of it? Will there ever be this mysterious, mythical day, that everybody's been half-looking forward to, when people move to Manchester, say? Are we finally going to get a set-up (as in Germany or in some other countries) where there are multiple centres? We *do* have a very strange situation in this country, in that there's always been *one* centre – and then there's Glasgow. There are still people cramming in here. We're about to move into a situation where an entry-level *flat* is going to be £300,000, according to the *Evening Standard*. Every level of operation of places like Beaconsfield – but also artists, Delfina studios, artists' co-ops, SPACE – have been predicated on cheap space – and it's always been so. I was given a tour of Tite Street, in Chelsea the other day, by somebody who knows the area, who was pointing out Whistler's studio. Chelsea was momentarily a hard-down Boho-ish area – it was the Hoxton of the 1890s. But have we reached the point where the city's going to stop working in the way that it has?

Section 106

Jeffe Jeffers (JJ)**:** One of the things that many other cities have are quarters where the rents *are* controlled and where they have managed to maintain, particularly, their productive craft places and workshops. When you get outside to the edges of Paris, that doesn't apply. Things are under threat. But a significant proportion of the centre is safe. In London you had rent control until 1969.

Rent control was a very significant factor in the pattern that London had then. The pattern we have now is *lack* of rent control. It's like a sort of widening doughnut. Everything gets pushed out and pushed out. The question I want to ask is: 'What is Tate's relationship to Section 106 money?'. When a developer builds a large building, if they build more than so many units, they have to provide money under Section 106, for community benefit. Here in Vauxhall, where there are numerous proposals for fifty-storey flat blocks, the developers go around all the community groups saying, 'Want a bit of money, mate?... if you'll support our application...' and so on. If you have a friendly Local Authority, as you obviously have in Southwark, that's a considerable sum that could be organised and channelled. We're trying here to persuade the Council to create a local fund using that money, rather than letting us all be picked off one by one, bribed by individual developers.

SW: I think that's a very good point. Often the provision of affordable housing included in new developments is fudged. Developers will maintain they have included the requisite number of units for community benefit, but of course when you examine the square metreage of those spaces, you realise that the units are absolutely tiny, shoe-horned into a minute percentage of the total accommodation space within the building.

JJ: There is a Local Authority model. Milton Keynes is not Paradise, but they've taken an interesting initiative. They're not going to let a combination of the Planning officers and the developer dictate how that money is spent. It is done as part of an area plan.

Anna Harding (AH)**:** SPACE does use Section 106 funding. The Section 106 money for our Triangle building refurbishment was rather small and the legal follow-through to actually secure the money was incredibly onerous. For a grant of £36,000, it's probably cost us £15,000 in legal costs, because we have had to put a charge on the title deeds of the building, which for a small amount of money is hugely onerous on our landlord. And then there are the licence agreements. It's very time-consuming and costly to negotiate. We all want to get Section 106 to work in our favour, but it's got to be more substantial in the negotiation.

JJ: Those are not statutory requirements on 106. Those are conditions which your Local Authority effectively is imposing. That's a part of the problem. The councils tend to be very ambiguous about it, in terms of giving it away. But the legal requirements are actually pretty straightforward.

AH: We're working on other sites as well, using that mechanism. It's a very important mechanism in terms of defending cultural use of buildings, for instance, and getting it written into developers' conditions of development. On Richard's point about taxing developers – we did an event in the autumn, and invited Dave Wetzell, who's the Vice-Chair of Transport for London, who's another really fantastic socialist visionary. He's got this idea about land tax. He reckons that if you taxed per square foot of land for any development that went on, below the piece of ground or above it, and took say 1% of that cost, and applied the tax to all the new transport links going through and the underground electric pylons – all the stuff that's going on in the Olympics, the benefits could be enormous for East London. So I'd like to kind of promote Dave's idea of land tax. I have no idea how you actually get these things off the ground, apart from just saying it's a very great idea.

JJ: It's a very old idea invented in 1878 by Sorel, but a very well developed idea.

Damien Hirst doesn't have any of these issues – he doesn't have to defend his land. He's got all the money in the world to do what he likes with. He can programme the way he wants to. He has none of the worries that any of the public institutions, public-private or voluntary institutions have. Is this an indisputably positive position?

RG: One rather suspects that, from the point of view of being in that place, there are no problems associated with it – that it's really rather wonderful to have vast amounts of money with which you can do whatever you want do with. I do think that for organisations in the same environment (and I don't really just mean locally, but in the same arena) there are massive problems because it's getting to a stage now that, in a way, private money – what you're going to have with the Damien Hirst thing – buys you freedom. You can do anything you want to do. There are a thousand performance indicators you don't have to match. If you are trying to work within the same field (or in the same area) as a massively privately funded organisation, your activities – of an entity like Beaconsfield in receipt of public funding – are going to be far more delineated, far more determined, and far more *limited*, than those which can be achieved when you have that vast amount of money.

Now, unfortunately, this is going to reinforce the general mindset of cultural funders in this country, of 'private good, public bad'. I was young and naive enough to hope that when Thatcher and Major staggered off the stage, this sort of curious fetishisation of the market would stop. In fact it was just beginning, because now there's *no*where, or very few places, to go. Now, every time that something like the Hirst enterprise looks good (and it's *bound* to look good) people are going to think, 'Oh, those other organisations, those public organisations, they're not doing that well'. Therefore 'private good' – not realising that it's actually rather more complex than that. And in a way this is why the generation that Damien Hirst came out of, the yBa's[3], was so *loved*. Because they seemed not to be publicly funded. No, *Frieze* was an 'initiative', done by 'individuals'; and it seemed to speak of the children of Thatcher finally taking off. Whilst, of course, the history before of publicly funded art spaces, like Gay Sweatshop, was that they sat there and they whinged. Julian Stallabrass has this theory, which I have never seen substantiated, that Margaret Thatcher wanted to bring *in* sponsorship – market forces – to arts funding, to stop that politicised whingeing. I don't think it's a problem for Damien Hirst. Personally – if I was given £7m to do whatever I wanted to do with, it would be easy. BUT it is going to be a problem for other people who don't have those resources.

Is the Hirst enterprise going to be a problem for Tate Modern?

SW: I think it's actually very encouraging. I don't see that there's a problem at all. It's all to the good that these other kinds of models are happening. The more, the better, frankly. There's a need *always* for diverse models of exhibition making and, if an artist is being a curator, I think that's great. I'd be really interested to see whether Damien goes beyond his own generation. I hope he will. Some of the artists who interest me are those who manage to move outside of their generation, and look to younger generations, and I'd be really interested to see what he shows. I think it's a very *positive* move. The proposals are a fantastic design. I don't see that it should make incursions into *any*thing that's happening in this area. On an international scale, artists like

Pistoletto are doing exactly the same thing, and there are other examples in the States. I'm very intrigued. Artists might be able to do it a hell of a lot better than curators in institutions. We'll find out!

Voluntary Sector Inertia

Audience Member: *I think part of the problem is that art organisations – and I especially mean Tate Modern – but in general, all behave as if they're sort of marginal institutions. I think it's extraordinary how they just don't stand up to people like developers, and that it's all this thing that somehow we're not as big as them, which of course we're not. I like Richard's idea that developers must be made to pay. I've been an artist in SPACE studios since I left Goldsmiths. SPACE has looked after its artists brilliantly, but I'm appalled at the problems they come up against with developers. Part of the problem, it seems to me, is that artists and art organisations aren't educated and seem unwilling to engage with developers in their own language, in their own world, so they always win.*

AH: SPACE is saddled by the time-scales of public funders. We can't move at the pace we'd love to move. I recently employed a finance director from a commercial property background who only stayed a month because he got bored, because he can do his business plan in an hour. I can go and talk to Hackney Community Development people, then Hackney Council spends three months calling a meeting. I can't hold on to those skills, and therefore we're just stymied by this voluntary sector inertia. It's really frustrating. We're always perceived as incompetents, because we're in the voluntary sector and work for less than commercial-level salaries. You make a choice, that's like choosing to be an artist: it's kind of a vocation as opposed to you doing it for the money, and you're stuck with that sort of 'You must be crap because you're not…'

Shifting History

JJ: But that is changing. At the time when I was building South Bank Technopark, they were setting up Coin Street[4]. And Coin Street expelled me from the group because I was a wicked capitalist for building a science park. And I look at the OxoTower, or whatever, and I think, *Well!*… Things are moving very considerably in terms of people understanding that this is the market-place. It may not be here to stay, but it's what's here now and you have to learn the skills of operating in it. And one of the major skills of operating in it now is choosing your time, being very accurate about that time, getting in there and doing the deal. Those are simply modern skills that you have to acquire. And if that's what you have to acquire to win the Revolution, then by God I'm going to learn those skills. I'm lucky I had a business career before I came into Doing Good. But one of the things that's interesting me about this discussion is the history. We went through a period, over the last ten years, when we were told that history has ceased to exist. All we've done today is talk about history. And what we're talking about is, Where is the turn-point of history?' As a historian, this gives me great problems because I don't like trying to identify with that... at what point does the Tate collection become the novels of Dornford Yates? And who the hell is Dornford Yates you might ask. These are the major problems that we all face. At what period does the financial system that we're now engaged in suddenly need to be different? You often don't know. Bakunin was asked what he would do if the perfect revolution happened tomorrow, and he replied, 'Why, I would rebel immediately.' And they're out there rebelling. They're spitting on your grave right at this minute.

RG: I think that this historical point is important. At the same time that there's been an extraordinary increase in the investment in contemporary art, there has been a loss of faith within itself – a sense of doubt. There are good old-fashioned Hegelian reasons for this. We're at that stage when there's hopefully going to be some other sort of shift happening. But until then, we don't know what to do. And it will become clear. The difference between support for institutions and the idea of an oppositional organisation, if that's possible, or a *new* organisation is predicated very much on what it's representing. For instance, because contemporary art has become in a way an establishment, we're not quite sure what the next thing is. I'll just use an example – the idea of popular music. Rock clubs were *the* place, *the* market, the place where you went to see music – until dance culture happened. And then you had a totally different cultural form, determining its own outcomes. Maybe, we're at a moment when next week – next year – there's going to be a sort of rave music in the visual arts, sort of snaking through.

Meanwhile, how can some of these skills operating in separate places be connected up – why Dartington and not City & Guilds?

JJ: We did talk to City & Guilds and I talked to the board. It's not Tony's problem, it's his Board's problem – they're pretty stuck in their history, and they're unable, to use their history as a platform to go forward. They've just got both their feet set in the cement of it. The one thing you have to use history for is – give me a point to stand on and I can move the world. Our job is to do that. I just think that the board simply didn't want to go down
the direction that we were going.

Tony Carter (TC)**:** If I seemed less than enthusiastic when you approached me, it was because it takes all of my energy and all of my time to keep the School alive as it is. It is ironic that, in a context where we are talking about what 'local' means, you should be looking to Dartington Hall to help you establish an artisan school. I had presumed that maybe your problem with City & Guilds, like the local council's, is that it works at too high a level. That is a reflection of the fact that that's where I *want* it to work. It's actually where its survival is best served, by way of Windsor Castle or whatever. When you talk about the production of beautiful objects, don't assume it's easy to draw in disenfranchised individuals and train them to produce beautiful objects: they aint going to do that. Now, the idea that we could expand the brief of City & Guilds so that we *do* work at the high level *and* at a lower level too, and progress those people who have the ability, to whatever level is appropriate to their potential – that would be great. But I'd be interested to know why, for example, Dartington Hall is the probable partner in this enterprise. Is it not simply that *they* can provide money for you? In other words, there's nothing to do with concerns about locality.

JJ: No, let me explain. I was invited to meet your Chairman and your Deputy Chairman, at a very posh flat off Piccadilly, and do a presentation to them, at length, of what we wanted to do. At the end of that meeting, I went away. I thought – I'm a moderately good salesman – I thought I'd done pretty well – and nothing happened for three months. Then I got a note from Damon de Laszlo, saying that they didn't think that was the way the School wanted to go. So I'm a pragmatist. I have an idea: it needs the vehicle to go forward dealt with, we go to Dartington.

TC: But, you see, here is the kind of problem that is entirely to the point of this discussion. In a certain sense, I am in possession, for however much longer I stay, of an instrument of education. And I've explained why I have an interest in craft skills and the allying of those skills to an intelligent understanding of the legacy of recent art history, critical theory, and what have you. Now, my Board of Directors are incredibly conservative. What *they* would like to see the Art School producing is nothing that supersedes post-modernism, really, or 'Camden Town' style painting and I struggle to enlighten them as to why they should consider things rather more contemporary than that.

JJ: Frankly, after the discussion with them, I sympathise with you entirely. My position is quite simple. I'm a pragmatist. Here is an idea. Ideas have a time. They have a window. If you don't move them in that window, they die. That's just what happens to ideas. Dartington were there. They are at an interesting crossroads themselves. They're looking for a new identity. They're looking back at their past, and the Arts & Crafts Movement, and seeing how they can resume the position they once had. So that's the interesting process.

Strategic Collaboration

Audience Member: *I find that dialogue between Tony and Jeffe somewhat depressing. If we look at some of the challenges facing this area, whether it's for the arts communities, or regeneration of the estates and a number of the public-asset sites that could go over into the private sector, we're actually at a crisis point. The Artisan School idea has been shafted by the London Development Agency (LDA) and by Lambeth Council, neither of whom are interested. Therefore there is no public money via that route. Tony, on the other hand, has buildings that need a lot of expenditure on them, to bring them up to the kind of standard they should be. And he is shafted by Government, because he's independent; and he's shafted by the local Council because they have this view that he's elitist. We have the Beaufoy Institute, which is the proposed venue, ideally, for the Artisan School, where it looks like the Council officers have shafted us all yet again. They are proposing to use it for a decant of a secondary school while that school has building works done. That would put the Beaufoy out of action for five years. Then, in the LDA's London South Central Programme, which spans from the Tate Modern area down to Battersea Power Station and some of the hinterland here, we've been told, since it was launched nearly three years ago, there is no money. And then suddenly money appears, and it's going to be syphoned off to Brixton and Peckham, with Lambeth Council's approval. So this area, of Vauxhall and Kennington is being shafted by everybody. We've got developers lining up with tower block proposals who aren't prepared to have proper dialogue: they will not answer questions. We can't put any hope on Section 106 until the Council adopts a new policy, because a lot of 106 money generated in this area has been syphoned off to other parts of the Borough in the past. And that's why a number of people in local organisations are saying it's time we joined up. It's time we began to talk constructively about how we can work in partnerships to solve some of the problems.*

One of the reasons the Festival operates is to try and bring different people to work together. It's good, for instance, that Tony and his colleagues have been doing an exhibition of their work around the theme of 'Requiem' at St Anselm's Church. And this Symposium is another example. We know that there's a lot of talent hidden on the estates – people designing and making their own products who need a market-place. Tomorrow a number of people will be doing a local

designers' show and sale. But we need a lot more dialogue, we need a lot more partnership, andwe need to put aside some of the rivalries. And sometimes that involves also being blunt with each other about what concerns we have with each other. But we have to be open and listen to criticism and, instead of being defensive, try and take it on positively and get through the defensive positions

JJ: We have to distinguish always in these things the difference between a battle and a war. You lose battles, but if you have a strategic plan, you win wars. The other thing you have to remember is that radical ideas, and ideas that fill vacuums, radical ideas overcome conservative ideas or conservative objections. That's the process we're all engaged in. We just fight on to the end of the war.

Guarding the Public Interest

AH: Sheena made a very good point about the fact that we all like to think of ourselves as guardians of the public interest in all the works, the good works, that we do. I think that is very much SPACE's – in that we consider ourselves as generating future creative communities. I showed you one facet of our activity. But the other side of what SPACE does is working with excluded kids down in Bow, who are doing amazing digital sound-mixing, broadband broadcasting – there's a lot of fantastic stuff. We want those people to come through, go on to other courses. Their practice will then inform what *we* are, because models of creativity *are* changing, and we want that to inform what we do. So that's really important. What I think we're stuck with, is that the funding system is moving more towards the private elitist view of culture. The LDA are funding the VIP lounge at the Frieze art fair while we're trying to host Pilot, which is an independent artist-led event commentating on Frieze, and they can't get an Arts Council grant for £5,000. It's like – what *is* going on? So it's celebrating commercial success, and yet the whole industry that that success is born out of has no seed funding any more.

Is Damien Hirst likely to build bridges in the area financially?

Peter St John (PS)**:** There is a Section 106 contribution, but I hesitate to mention it because it's so insubstantial. It's to do with street improvements and lighting to the railway underpasses, for example – so that's a bit silly. There was a discussion earlier when Sheena mentioned that no research has been done as to what the effect of the vast numbers that are flocking to the Tate has been on audiences to smaller galleries. I'd be interested to know what people actually think, even though there hasn't been any research. It just seems obvious to me that more people go to galleries because of the Tate. That has mainly been of benefit to smaller galleries as well as to the Tate. It's generating an audience and I'm sure that will be the effect of the development that *I've* been describing. I think it's utterly unique. I think you can't draw any pattern from it, because there are no other artists like Damien Hirst in Britain. It's a pure fluke. But I think it will have a dramatic local effect and it will be of benefit to *you*, for *your* audiences.

SW: I'm sure Damien Hirst does have problems of his own. They may not be *our* problems, but they're still problems. He said in a *Guardian* article recently that he has to generate that money by making work, and it has an effect on his practice. It has an effect on any artist's work when they have to make work purely to generate money. So he's doing an awful lot of 'spot' paintings.

Positive effects of Tate Modern

Audience Member: *The first very positive effect of Tate Modern being on this side of the river is that people have started to cross the bridges and come south. When we started Beaconsfield in 1995, I (David Crawforth) couldn't get people from North London to come down at all. Now the problem with coming South is that most people wouldn't come and walk in this area. And Beaconsfield knows very much about that. So the Newport Street proposals will also affect confidence in the area and will be good for all of us.*

SW: I'm actually going to contradict what I was saying before. I was trawling around, last week, at a couple of the local galleries, and one of the people who runs a gallery there said she always knows when an exhibition has opened at Tate Modern, because there is a bigger influx of people coming into her gallery. Therefore, for some people, Tate Modern doesn't constitute a complete experience: they obviously do go round the community galleries. I want to go back to your original question, which was to pull these strands together – to think about ways in which all of us, representing our different activities and constituencies could help or enable some of the issues that have been brought up around this table. There have been a couple of articles in the press over the last month or so about a new initiative that we're embarking on, a new building that we are trying to develop on the piece of green just above where the old underground oil tanks are. The *raison d'être* for that building will be, first of all, to allow there to be more space in which to show the collection. We would also like to devote a substantial proportion of the space to enable partnerships. I think you've mentioned, Richard, 'partnership' is always bandied around as 'a good thing' and also something that attracts funding. We would like to stimulate partnerships via a sort of incubation area for cultural production of various different kinds, including aspects of technological innovation; and with different groups, particularly the 16-to-25-year-old group.

The other aspect of it is creating artist-centred spaces. I guess that what we can do as an organisation is to act as a sort of catalyst. Just by virtue of the position that we have, Tate could encourage support (including that of Lambeth) for artists' studios, because – whether they are temporary offices or studios for painters – the sites of artistic production are where it starts. If we're not able to create an environment for that in this country, and if you guys can't do it on your own, there surely has to be something that we should be able to do to help enable it. On a related point, I was reading in *Building Design* this week that there is an initiative to cede more power to the Mayor's office in respect of developers' planning schemes in London.

JJ: Terrifying.

SW: Indeed: the givens are always changing. So, as much as one can be very adept at negotiating the byways of local political structures, in fact the structures themselves change.

Qualitative Judgements

TC: I may have been more specifically involved in art education than other people on the panel. Some of the things that have arisen, like the question of the importance to Tate of its audience numbers, or its entry numbers, the question of where Damien's obligations lie (there have been many references to Damien and his friends) and Arthur Danto's argument, that all art's projects

were completed by the 1970s/1980s, raise the question of how we judge the quality of art. I don't know how the Tate deals with that, but I know that – presiding as I do over an MA course in art, occasionally being an external examiner for PhDs – the question of art, after its main agendas have been satisfied, is a very difficult one. And how you judge its value, beyond success being what it is; the successful is successful: no need to say anything more about it. Of course, if you're involved in education, you have to. And the question as to whether Tate, or any of the other large institutions, or Damien, would ever have to deal with that is another matter.

Is the act of curating a form of conoisseurship?

SW: I wasn't really prepared to discuss this issue at this kind of forum. We could be here all night, talking about qualitative issues. I've been a curator since I was twenty years old. One accumulates a lot of knowledge, expertise – I hope – on the way. Ultimately, as I think Richard has said in the past when he's been describing the choice for artists who've taken part in the Biennale that he's organised, it comes down in the end to a qualitative-subjective decision.

TC: As a curator you're dealing with the work as is. You're not dealing with laying the foundations for a creative education in the field of art, which is another matter. The only reason I raised the question was that in some way the value of art will be implicit in all other things that have been talked about here: the availability or unavailability of Local Authority support, the extent maybe to which we can feel that we could come together – I mean this group again – with a clear, shared agenda that we could take to the Local Authority or to Government or whatever, to try to change policy.

AH: Surely the Local Authority's and the Mayor's concern are far more to do with the value of art to society than the value of art *per se.* That's their concern.

NS: Dare we go off in this direction? We've probably come to the end, haven't we? Thank you for offering your thoughts on these sticky issues. Thank you all very much indeed.

The debate was followed by the official launch of the Leftbank Artists Network.

1 AHRB – Arts and Humanities Reseach Board

2 Pierre Huyghe: Celebration Park, Tate Modern, 5 July-17 September 2006.

3 The term 'yBa' was first coined by Art Monthly to refer to young British artists of the '90s.

4 Coin Street Community Builders, a Development Trust on the South Bank.

Push the Envelope

A BEACONSFIELD SYMPOSIUM

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Tony Carter – Artist and Principal, City & Guilds of London Art School

David Crawforth – Artist

Judith Dean – Artist

Richard Grayson – Artist and Independent Curator

Anna Harding – Chief Executive, SPACE

Jeffe Jeffers – Director, Lady Margaret Hall Settlement

Naomi Siderfin (Chair / Curator, Push the Envelope) – Artist and Associate Director, Beaconsfield

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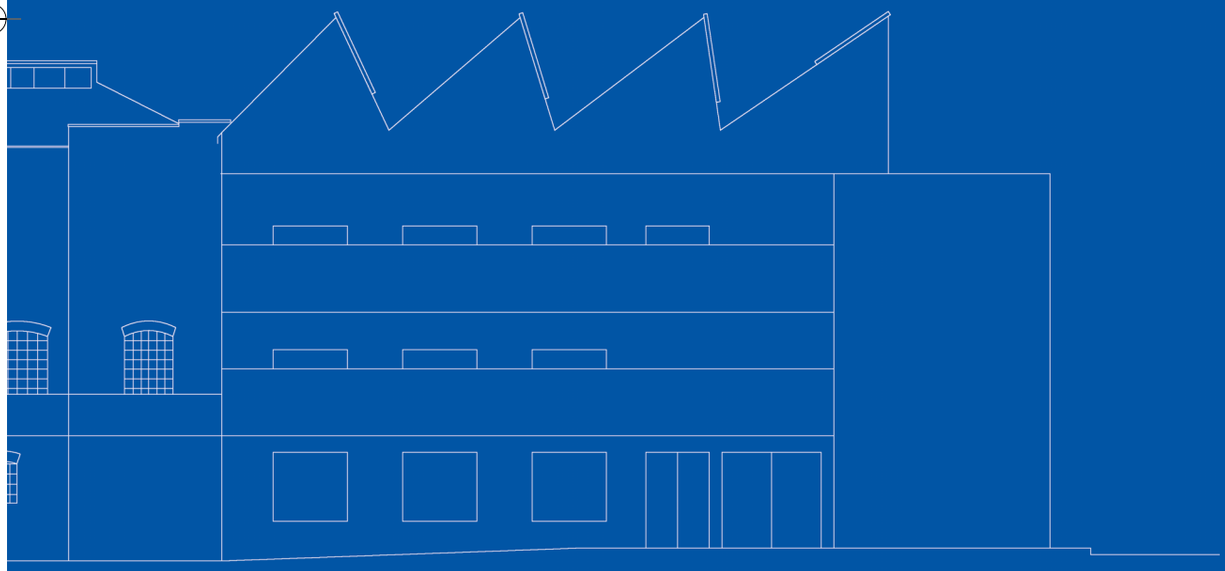
Graphic taken from architectural drawing of Proposed East and West Facades, Newport Street Gallery, supplied by Caruso St John Architects.



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