

Dresden and Berlin, while Chapter Four concludes with two paragraphs reflecting on consumerist architecture in 'post-Wall' Berlin. The inconclusive nature of these conclusions leaves this reader again unsure of Ward's rationale for writing this book. It could have provided a critique of postmodern culture in post-Wall Germany, or it could have provided a critique of late twentieth-century American culture, both of which are suggested but not sustained in her study. It could have provided the impetus for revisiting the emancipatory promise of modernity, and yet the book ends abruptly by closing down this avenue. In inviting the modernists to speak again, does Ward achieve anything more than presenting us with another text that mythologises Weimar Berlin by flattening out the negative aspects of that culture – such as the gendered dimension of canonical modernity revealed to us by Rowe?

## Notes

1. Rachel Bowlby, *Just Looking: Consumer Culture in Dreiser, Gissing and Zola* (Methuen: London, 1985).
2. Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, ed. and trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA, 1995), p. 75.
3. W. J. T. Mitchell, *Picture Theory* (University of Chicago Press: Chicago, 1994).
4. Martin Jay, *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought* (University of California Press: Berkeley, 1993).
5. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity – An Incomplete Project', in H. Foster (ed.), *Post-modern Culture* (Pluto: London, 1983).
6. Marsha Meskimmon, *We Weren't Modern Enough: Women Artists and the Limits of German Modernism* (I. B. Tauris: London, 1999).
7. Dietmar Jazbinsek and Ralf Thies, *Großstadt-Dokumente – Metropolenforschung im Berlin der Jahrhundertwende* (Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin für Sozialforschung: Berlin, 1996).
8. Peter Fritzsche, 'Vagabond in a Fugitive City: Hans Ostwald, Imperial Berlin and the Großstadt Dokumente', *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 29, 1994, pp. 385–402.
9. Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: The Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (MIT Press: Cambridge, MA, 1995); Deborah Fausch et al (eds), *Architecture in Fashion* (Princeton Architectural Press: Princeton, 1994).
10. Peter Boeger, *Architektur der Lichtspieltheater in Berlin: Bauten und Projekte 1919–1930* (Arenhövel: Berlin, 1993); Sylvaine Hänsel and Angelika Schmitt (eds), *Kinoarchitektur in Berlin 1895–1995* (Reimer: Berlin 1995).
11. Burckhardt Rukschcio, 'Ornament und Mythos', in A. Pfabigan (ed.), *Ornament und Askese im Zeitgeist des Wien der Jahrhundertwende* (Brandstätter: Vienna, 1985).
12. <<http://www.dhm.de/museen/berlin-mitte/einf.htm>>. Accessed 25 November 2003.

## Welcome to the Desert of the Real Art World

Gregory G. Sholette

**Chin-tao Wu: Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention Since the 1980s** (Verso: London, 2002), 392 pp., hardback ISBN 1–85984–613–0, £20.00, paperback ISBN 1–85984–472–3, £12.00.

Artists are now, it seems, able to reinvent themselves for the increasingly global market. They can be successful, sell their work; they no longer have any reason to be angry social critics. This is the New Labour classless dream, a high-energy band of young people driving the cultural economy ahead, but in a totally privatised and non-subsidy-oriented direction.

Angela McRobbie<sup>1</sup>

Another Starbucks recently opened in my neighbourhood. It is the fourth to have done so within a ten-block radius of my home. Each appears identical, and each has contributed to the de-diversification of New York's urban environment, once a hallmark of that city. More than that, by displacing four individual retail stores with a singularly branded outlet, an erosion of spatial memory has taken place. That is to say, the cognitive map one maintains of a particular time and location becomes increasingly useless as individuated mnemonic references are replaced by repetitive, modular units not linked to a specific site, but instead to a chain of abstract signification that make vague allusions to notions of entrepreneurialism, upward mobility, the information industry, and the global economy. If this were the setting for a Philip K. Dick novel, it might be entitled *Neighbourhood Out of Joint*, in which an ersatz cosmopolitan environment crafted by some unknown force strove to complement perfectly the taste of a generation so cut off from the grittiness of actual, urban life that a sanitised replica of metropolis functions just as well as the real thing.

Something very much like this is taking place within the realm of the arts today – a process of displacement, incorporation, and replication that overwhelms even the memories of what preceded it. Of course, as hours spent in front of television sets or surfing the web attest, popular culture is a swiftly changing topography, one that has challenged those academics hearty enough to study it. The need simply to keep up with their mercurial subject matter can overwhelm all subtler considerations. But high art (and by that I mean those techniques and theories related to sculpture and painting, architecture and drawing) have remained tethered until recently to a definite process of validation and historical pedigree, one that while often contested and largely shielded from public scrutiny has an astonishingly undisputed lineage. In this process the institutions of the museum and art history have acted as the guarantors of high art's provenance and its privileged place within culture more broadly. In turn, much of the power that these institutions wield is dependent not merely upon

conscientious scholarship and prudent collecting, but also to claims of sovereignty that set it apart from the uninspired and often demeaning interests of the business world and popular culture.<sup>2</sup> It is this very purchase on intellectual and fiscal autonomy that is today rapidly eroding thanks largely to the aggressive intervention of private capital. In the process, something very similar to the temporal displacement brought on by targeted saturation of neighbourhoods by Starbucks, Gap, Wal-Mart, and so forth is also happening to the once privileged sanctuary of high art. In short, the memory of what it once represented, regardless of how much this is itself an ideological fiction, is now fading fast and doing so to such an absolute degree that even those raised in a previous artistic epoch find it increasingly difficult to recall how the idea of high culture formerly functioned, what it felt like to be part of it, and in what terms it was to be discussed and debated.<sup>3</sup> Into this amnesiac wasteland comes an extraordinary book by art historian Chin-tao Wu entitled *Privatising Culture: Corporate Art Intervention since the 1980s*. Wu provides the first detailed map of how this process of dislocation and displacement, in which a notion of high culture ostensibly dedicated to public edification is transformed into one in which art candidly celebrates corporate business values, has come about and gained a near global hegemony. And she accomplishes this not by spinning theoretical models, but by rendering in minute detail the process of corporate intervention that brought on this forgetting itself.

The starting point of *Privatising Culture* is not unusual. Wu begins by stating the commonly held belief that an unprecedented political and economic transformation took place in the US and Britain in the 1980s, one that brought about a fundamental transformation in, among other institutions, the world of art and culture. And not surprisingly, Wu links this sweeping social conversion to the neo-conservative regimes of US President Ronald Reagan and UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. As she puts it, the 'postwar social democratic consensus of welfare state capitalism in Britain, and to a lesser degree in America' was 'replaced by an aggressive advocacy of the so-called free market economy'. This new conservatism differed from the old in so far as 'the public policies and ideological commitment of Reagan and Thatcher were radical, not only because they departed, in a fundamental way, from their predecessors within their own parties, which had publicly endorsed a steady improvement in social services in the 1960s' (p. 3).

Wu applies the term 'enterprise culture' to this drastic economic dislocation, indicating that it is a mode of capitalism that jettisons the once sacred notion of a federally funded safety net including welfare and social services in exchange for market mechanisms ruled in the last analysis by the need to produce surplus value. Thus, motivations of private profit are substituted for what had previously been a state guarantee to protect the public interest, including its neediest citizens as well as the arts, and regardless of positive earnings or negative deficits.

However, although widely observed, the effects of this socio-economic revolution on the field of the visual arts remain little understood and largely unstudied within art-historical circles, the very discipline that, along with studio art, is most affected by this transformation. As a social art historian, Wu traces the way enterprise culture has led to a significant shift within the realm of high art in both the US and Britain. Eclectic in approach, she makes particular use of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's term 'cultural capital', but narrows its meaning to include, first, the ownership of art, and second, its 'material appropriation of symbolic objects'. In this sense cultural capital is both actual investment in art works as well as the display of competence and familiarity with artistic styles and products. This latter application of the term becomes central to the author's arguments about the nature of enterprise culture, a point I will return to shortly.

It is not as if prior to the emergence of 'enterprise culture', art and commerce had been total strangers to each another. And perhaps one shortcoming of the book's larger theoretical premise is the lack of a deeper historical introduction in which the entwined and evolving nature of that relationship is laid bare. (A disclaimer here: I was one of several readers who commented on an early draft of the text and was so taken by all that the book does provide, that I did not point this suggestion to the author then.) But Wu does stress the significantly changed nature of today's private art patron when she sketches the transformation from the individualistic, nineteenth-century capitalist class to the current, institutional, corporate one that, while still elitist, nevertheless imparts to the outside world a nebulous and unspecified image of faceless, managerial professionals. Having said that, *Privatising Culture* fully delivers on its promise to reveal, in all its profane detail, the degree to which private, corporate interests have come to completely permeate the sphere of the visual arts ever since the 1980s.

One paramount question that propels this study is not so much why powerful, multi billion dollar businesses want to collect art, but why they choose to patronise modern and contemporary art, with all its inscrutability, effrontery, and occasional scandal. In other words, if corporate art patronage is purely a public relations tool, why risk the sort of damage that Equitable Life Insurance Society courted when in 1989 it sponsored an exhibition in which Andres Serrano's infamous *Piss Christ* was one of the works to receive an award? And while Equitable withdrew its support of the exhibition soon afterwards, the BMW Corporation swiftly stepped in to take its place as the new sponsor.

One cannot help but wonder how the Dadaists, who insisted that art be a slap in the face of the bourgeoisie, would grapple with a contemporary capitalism in which Fortune 500 companies long to be associated with bohemianism and nonconformity. If the original avant-garde sought to reintegrate 'art into life', has, perhaps, that once outrageous goal now actually been achieved? Except that now, the life world that art merges with is

dominated not by liberated masses or dreams of social progress, but by the commercial ambition of global capitalism. 'Art into business' is a more apt slogan for the contemporary, neo-avant-garde. Still, it is a surprise to witness the ease with which many so-called neo-avant-garde artists have made their peace with corporate sponsorship. As Damien Hirst, a member of the so-called YBA (Young British Artists) rat pack, explained after winning the coveted Turner Prize, when it comes to corporate sponsorship, 'if art is about life, you can't avoid that side of life'. And then he added, 'undoubtedly it affects the reception of the work but that is something to work with' (p. 155). Wu unwaveringly pursues this paradox and simultaneously, almost alchemically, discovers how lead is transformed into gold, that is to say, how cultural capital becomes actual, bankable, loanable, interest-bearing capital.

Before revealing the magic formula, it is important to draw back a moment and note that the book is itself an impressive cross-disciplinary enterprise in which scholarly method, critical analysis, and investigative reporting are impeccably integrated. What emerges from this hybrid production is an act of research that is really a model of cultural activism. If this last claim appears startling in a review of a serious academic publication, I would argue that Wu's book quite literally places on the table uncomfortable issues regarding not only corporate art intervention, but the art world more broadly. This book is essential reading for students of art, art history, museum studies, arts administration, and visual culture. It is also activist insofar as most students today have had their entire social outlook moulded by the very enterprise culture that Wu sets out to expose. In short, it is a generation whose spatial memory is in need of a reconstructive jolt, and *Privatising Culture* is exactly the stimulant for accomplishing such intellectual shock therapy. There is still another way, however, in which the book operates as engaged, critical practice. Chin-tao Wu's writing, devoid of jargon, unapologetically brings a sophisticated critical analysis to bear on real-world issues instead of fashionable theoretical musing. *Privatising Culture* is in the best sense of the term a work of public intellection.

Perhaps the measure of the book's critical achievement is best reflected by the unique tribulations and outright resistance the author encountered while setting out to do her research into corporate art sponsorship initially as a graduate student in History of Art at University College London. As Wu explains: 'When I started the research for it in the late 1980s, the subject was almost unheard of within the discipline of art history. Although it had been the object of much media reporting and some academic research among the social scientists, it did not, and still does not, seem to be an 'appropriate' subject for an art historian' (p. 12). Facing a lack of primary sources and a subject whose principle actors, including the boards of directors and CEOs of both museums and corporations as well as those involved in corporate art dealing and collecting, purposely sought to keep their policies and actions private, Wu turned to empirical fact gathering via surveys and interviews. Over

one thousand sources of original data were collected in this manner. At the same time, demands by many interviewees that certain facts remain confidential placed limits on what Wu could publish. Nevertheless, the book remains a singular source of information on patterns of corporate art patronage. Nor does the reader doubt the veracity of the evidence supporting the author's conclusions.

Nowhere is mastery of background material more evident than in the chapter entitled 'Embracing the Enterprise Culture: Art Institutions Since the 1980s'. It is in this section that Wu traces the direct impact of the Reagan/Thatcher revolution on the institutions of high art while simultaneously zeroing in on those individuals within corporate culture who most benefit from the enterprise culture. Wu writes, 'The transformation of art museums in the 1980s from purveyors of a particular elite culture to fun palaces for an increasing number of middle-class arts consumers has thus to be seen within the dual perspective of government policies and business initiatives' (p. 123). An illustration on the same page shows a BMW Z3 sports car inside a very large glass vitrine with the words *Objects of Desire* stenciled behind it in proper, late twentieth-century art gallery type. The caption to what otherwise looks like an advertisement for a luxury automobile indicates that the picture was taken at an exhibition held at the Hayward Gallery in London in 1997/98 entitled *Objects of Desire*. Not surprisingly, the exhibit was sponsored by BMW. Wu raises the fundamental question: 'why are companies or corporate executives attracted to arts sponsorship in the first place?' (p. 123).

One answer comes from the lips of CEO David Rockefeller's successor at Chase Manhattan Bank, Willard C. Butcher, who states that his institution's approach to the public arena in general seeks to take a 'visible role in communicating the private enterprise perspective on a variety of critical public issues'. Still, this does not get to the heart of the issue. Wu reframes her inquiry, probingly asking, 'While culturally "playing safe" is generally thought to be the strategy of corporate sponsorship, contemporary art certainly offers more treacherous ground than that of the old masters, which are unlikely to generate controversy. Why, then, does any company choose to tread upon it?' (p. 125) As sharply rendered by John Murphy, former vice-president of Philip Morris, new art forms harbour a 'key element' which 'has its counterpart in the business world. That element is innovation – without which it would be impossible for progress to be made in any segment in society'.

This amounts to something very much resembling a cultural policy, but one established by private instead of state or public interests. In the US, where no supra-national plan exists for American culture with the exception of the politically and economically enfeebled NEA, a focused and forceful approach backed by the power of corporate leaders may very well be, by default or acquiescence, our de facto national arts policy. And if that is a tenable argument, then the individuals who lead the corporate world are by

extension also the shapers of this policy. But who are these anonymous yet powerful individuals? In many respects they are the same grey-suited men that sociologist Paul DiMaggio termed the 'Cultural Managerial Class' in his groundbreaking studies of ruling class culture in the early 1980s. As Wu concurs, they are not 'traditional capitalists in the sense that the majority of them do not make their wealth, or have it bequeathed to them, from industrial enterprises like those of the nineteenth century did; instead these chairmen/chief executives are professional managers who emerge through the so-called "managerial revolution". Their power within the corporation is achieved through their corporate position rather than family lineage' (p. 10).

By the time we read the chapter 'Embracing the Enterprise Culture', Wu has taken us on a detailed and at times incredibly complex tour of, among other subjects, the radical alteration neo-conservatives have made in US and British tax law, the dismantling of the National Endowment for the Arts, the use of charitable donations to harbour otherwise taxable income, and the overtly pro-business ideology that has colonised the Arts Council in Britain. The latter transformation is shockingly summed up by an internal Arts Council document from 1990 Wu quotes, one in which arts institutions are encouraged to develop 'new retail and marketing opportunities, to seek corporate, business and trust fund support for programmes of funding and collaborate in new enterprises initiated by the Visual Arts department' (p. 70). Contrast this with the very different type of influence once sought by the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) dating from war-time England. Much like the American Works Progress Administration or WPA, CEMA sought to foster cultural democracy in which broad public access to art included 'sending exhibits to various parts of the country, or installing murals in locations that were more accessible to people, but also through the fostering of community participation' (p. 35). In doing so, CEMA was actively 'changing the very terms of reference used by dominant culture' (p. 35). Similarly, up until the Reagan years, while promoting the 'best' of American culture, the NEA did so with a mission of bringing this outstanding art to the widest possible audience. Not that Wu sidesteps the patronising flavour of these missions. She does, however, recognise that broader access to the arts in which non-professionals interact with high culture is far more democratic than passively consuming the latest artistic fashion as dictated by the Tate or the Whitney.

Wu also spends considerable time discussing the flowering of the 'alternative art scene' in the US that was directly seeded by NEA grants in the 1970s. Ironically, much of the edgy art that corporate America now yearns to sponsor has its roots in this publicly supported era of unfettered innovation. During this same period, Jimmy Carter, the last American president whose policies still remained somewhat tied to the now-vanished liberal tradition of FDR and the New Deal, was himself already coming under attack for his so-called cultural populism by then California Governor Ronald

Reagan. As Wu writes, 'no sooner had he [Reagan] assumed the presidency of the United States in 1981 than his avowed intention to increase federal [NEA] support evaporated. Instead the administration, with unabashed candour, carried out its agenda of corporate soliciting' (p. 48). Cuts to NEA soon followed as Reagan increased the anti-liberal rhetoric and accused the Carter administration of seeking to make art a social rather than aesthetic endeavour. Reagan's allegedly apolitical arts policy would instead throw its full support behind 'high culture', with all the elitism that such a loaded term carries with it.

And this is where the displacement of public memory really gets rolling. In that same year, 1981, the White House hosted a reception for Philip Morris that ostensibly celebrated the corporation's apparently coincidental opening of an art exhibition nearby, yet more concretely signaled to the business world the new administration's emphasis on private capital's interventionist role in the arts. Reagan followed up this unique event with the establishment of an entirely new cultural prize, the Presidential Award for Service to the Arts. Among its first recipients were, along with a number of artists, the Texaco Philanthropic Foundation, the Dayton Hudson Foundation, and once again Philip Morris. As Wu summarises the zeitgeist of this period, 'the role of government vis-à-vis the arts had been redefined by the Reagan ideology'. Government would henceforth see its role in the cultural realm as one of fundraiser, not fund-giver, a role that today has been crystallised in the person of the development officer, a necessary administrative post for every not-for-profit organisation, whether mid-size or large.

Across the Atlantic, the Arts Council of Britain pronounced in a 1986 publication appropriately entitled 'Partnership: Making Arts Money Work Harder', that just like other business ventures, 'the arts are . . . competing with everybody else for the consumer's time, interest of money, and an effective marketing programme must be at the core' (p. 64). Perhaps the most hidden change to take place during this capitalist cultural revolution is also one of its most telling. It involves the 'thousands of men and women (who usually qualify as the wives or daughters of the socio-economic male elite) who serve as trustees of art museums and control invaluable works of art and buildings for the nation far removed from the gaze of the public, whose interests they, presumably, represent' (p. 84). Wu devotes considerable time focusing on the history of the trustees of the Tate Gallery, pointing out that in the 1960s, 38.5% of them came from academia and the art world and 46.5% from business, with the remainder drawn from the civil service. By contrast, in the 1980s all were from the business community. Alluding to the cultural capital such people are stewarding, she writes, 'what makes the Tate Trustee Board so eminently clubbable in business world terms is the fact that certain of the trustees are intimately related to each other either by business association or by marriage' (p. 111).

Things are hardly better in America with regard to diversity

– economic, sexual, and least of all ethnic – at least as far as US boards or directors are concerned. Focusing on the Whitney Museum of American Art, Wu points out that by the end of the 1980s only one of the thirty-four board members was a Whitney, none were black or Hispanic, and thirteen were corporate executives, nearly a three-fold rise from the 1970s, while seven were financiers and two were lawyers. Again, the contrast to an earlier era of art and business is stark. If service to the public, however compromised that may be in reality, was at least the overtly stated mission of an earlier generation of trustees, then the 1980s swept into power an ethos of naked, unselfconscious commercialism. As George Weissman, Chairman of the Philip Morris board of directors who joined the Whitney board in 1980 put it, ‘Our basic decision as a corporation was not in the development of art; our basic decision as a corporation was that we had to be unique and have a personality and an identity that was different from the rest of the tradition-bound [tobacco] industries’ (p. 92).

The message is clear enough, and the process of cultural dislocation leaps forward. And certainly, some come willing, while others, especially individual artists, museum directors, arts administrators, and curators, feel forced to embrace the new corporate ethos either overtly or indirectly. What is the next logical step in Enterprise Culture? To transform the Tate, Whitney, or Guggenheim into full-fledged, name brands that consumers will reflexively identify as edgy, innovative, and entrepreneurial – all the essential ingredients of the new pro-business world view. One remarkable icon of this marriage of art and business that Wu reproduces in her book is a Beck’s beer bottle sporting a label featuring YBA Rachel Whiteread’s Turner Prize winning project *House*. Subsidised by the same multinational brewing company, Whiteread’s *House* consisted of a massive concrete casting of the interior space of a small residential unit in East London that was targeted for demolition. As a site-specific artwork, the piece raised complex issues about the nature of interior, domestic spaces typically associated with women while also interrogating the male gendered associations of 1960s and 1970s minimalist art. But it also garnered its own share of controversies outside the art world. Generally low-income East London residents and housing activists raised tough questions about why so much public money could be spent to create an artwork, a temporary one at that, and meanwhile so little funds were available to provide actual, inhabitable, low-income housing in the same neighbourhood. Wu quips that just as the artist’s *House* could not be inhabited because it consisted of a single cast unit sans doors or windows, so too the Whiteread label that Beck’s produced in a limited edition might have looked like a bottle of brew, but was it was in fact a commodity far too valuable to imbibe.

Add to this such long-running art and business associations as that of Absolut Vodka, or the more recent collusion of *haute-couture* with contemporary art (Wu draws intriguing parallels between the Turner and Hugo Boss prizes) and the full scope of this still emerging ideological

shift that *Privatising Culture* addresses becomes increasingly evident.

Perhaps it is Wu’s bare-knuckle scrutiny of the notorious Saatchi brothers, Charles and Maurice, that is the book’s coup de grâce. Between Charles Saatchi scooping up paintings by Malcolm Morley at bargain prices just prior to a major exhibition of the artist’s work at the Whitechapel Art Gallery – where he was a trustee – to Maurice Saatchi who, while on the board of the V&A, oversaw an advertising campaign purchased by the same institution, more than any other public figures the Saatchis typify enterprise culture as it unfolds within the visual arts. Indeed, Saatchi & Saatchi ran the election campaigns of Margaret Thatcher. With this piece of information in her cross hairs, Wu reveals the alchemical process whereby private cultural capital is transformed into economic capital (p. 120).

At the same time, the Taiwanese-born Wu understands the local effects of Enterprise Culture to be part and parcel of a broader process of globalism. Writing about global capitalism from the position of a non-Westerner, Wu’s analysis pulls no punches, as when she states: ‘The missionary spirit of yesteryear has been replaced by the corporate zeal of today’s multinationals’ (p. 187). After drawing a connection between modern imperialism and neo-colonialism, she then analyses in detail the expansion of corporate art activity into the hitherto untouched South East Asian markets. Looking first at the extremely successful Philip Morris ASEAN Art Award, in which sizeable amounts of money are offered to emerging artists in Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, she points out that, ‘It is difficult to see Philip Morris’s successful incursion into the Eastern market as anything other than a throwback to the good old days of empire’ (p. 187). With an enormous potential market for its cigarettes and Kraft products in these counties, Philip Morris is indeed investing its art dollars wisely. Wu’s contention is driven home by her description of the Philip Morris Japanese Art Award. In this case offering a mere two million yen (\$15,000), its aim is to aid the corporation in taking over just a slice of the estimated four trillion yen smoking market in Japan. The cost benefits are clear, given that as little as a ‘20% share can easily make a handsome income of more than \$5 billion, not to mention the importing of foreign cigarettes, which is growing at an alarming rate of 10 to 13% every year’ (p. 183).

Even in Singapore, where the government publicly discourages smoking, Philip Morris’ interventionism prevails. The centrally controlled Singapore Art Museum, Wu explains, recently accepted a \$100,000 donation from the company in order to establish a permanent presence at the museum in the form of the Philip Morris Group of Companies Collection. For this multinational culture turns out to be little more than a smoke screen shrouding a mundane battle over market shares involving a commodity with negative social consequences.

Nor is Philip Morris unique in the way it uses high culture to do business. In 1998 the Dutch ABN-AMRO Bank actually

went so far as to drape its corporate headquarters in Taipei with a twelve-storey high reproduction of Van Gogh's painting *Starry Night over the Rhône*. The bank even claimed to have modelled the spectacle on the 'advanced Western idea of public participation in public art' (p. 185). The fact that Taiwan was a Dutch colony for thirty-eight years leads Wu to speculate. 'Would it have been possible' she muses, 'to imagine the Dutch Bank hanging a reproduction Van Gogh on a building around, say, Trafalgar Square, and proclaiming to Londoners that ABN-AMRO was giving their city a facelift by installing some free "public art" in their capital?'

If the idea of high art previously consisted of state support, both actual and symbolic, based upon the idea that culture belonged to the nation, then today, corporations have appropriated this function even down to the level of sponsoring exhibits, jurying shows, granting highly publicised awards and collecting artworks. The question of who owns cultural capital and who has the right to use it are therefore akin to challenges involving the erosion of public space. The spatial-temporal displacement from one paradigm to another takes on the appearance of a natural occurrence. The shift from an older notion of the public sphere, problematic as it was, to a commodity-centred one in which alienation and cynical resignation rule is so total that shaking oneself, one's students and colleagues out from under its influence is today a paramount political necessity. The abandonment of the concept of art as a socially progressive force has left a mass of disconnected consumers incapable of recalling the cultural alternatives only recently made obsolete. Meanwhile, an ideology that glories in the expert, the supertechnician, the high-paid manager aligns itself with an avant-garde artistic tradition that once sought to reject privilege of all types. Thus the disregard for how cultural institutions, public spaces or city streets looked before corporate penetration, before daily life was delimited by logos and the Nike swoop was emblazoned on everything from t-shirts, bus stops, and even the human body in the form of tattoos, this forgetting is also part and parcel of Enterprise Culture. It stands on the other side of a chasm from a world that existed just a moment earlier, a world in which the Philip Morris slogan 'it takes art to make a company great' would have rallied artists to join forces in denouncing the arrogance of such a motto. But as artist Hans Haacke, one of the earliest cultural practitioners actively to critique corporate arts intervention, admitted in an interview with Pierre Bourdieu:

Sometimes I ask myself whether intellectuals have, in fact, a romantic notion of the profession. The failure of the cultural revolution of 1968 may have been such a traumatic experience for them that they are incapable of analyzing what role they play today. . . . To compensate for their sense of inferiority and their disillusion with the reality of the countries that had called themselves 'socialist,' many of them defected. They are now part of management.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, Haacke's own work, along with that of younger people such as Ange Taggart, James Leadbitter, Whirl Mart, Temporary Services, Rtmart, The Reverend Billy, and scores

of other artists, collectives and creative activists, clearly indicate that resistance is neither futile nor absent from what Adorno termed the culture of administration.<sup>5</sup> Likewise, on the scholarly front, perhaps Chin-tao Wu represents the beginning of a new wave of committed art historian not only willing to write about the past, but to re-awaken the field's own critical potential in the process.

## Notes

1. Angela McRobbie, "'Everyone is Creative': Artists as New Economy Pioneers?", 2001, published by openDemocracy.net <<http://www.opendemocracy.net/themes/article-7-652.jsp>>.
2. For a fine critical analysis of this history, see Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (Routledge: London, 1995).
3. Anyone of a certain generation or older who teaches art or art history has encountered the blank faces of students when assured that there really was a time when elaborate gift shops, aggressive capital campaigns, and unabashed corporate sponsorship of museum exhibitions were virtually unheard of.
4. Pierre Bourdieu and Hans Haacke, *Free Exchange* (Stanford University Press: Palo Alto, 1995), pp. 65–6.
5. For links to counter-consumer art activists, see <<http://www.mydadsstripclub.com/links.htm>>.