



# Arts Festivals and the Creative City

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# The Anthropology of City Life

- What makes city life exciting?
- What is that 'aliveness' or buzz that key cities possess?
- How can that be created?
- What are the ingredients?
- Can all cities be exciting, creative?
- Can they get away without art?

# Cities, excitement?

- Cities became places of excitement in the modern era
- Paris is the model; diversity and velocity of change are critical
- The sensual medium was largely visual
- The social medium was the individual, the crowd, flows of people and things
- The social practice was flanerier

# Aliveness, buzz?

- Liminoid places; places of becoming
- Performing the new (technology, fashion, ideas, social ferment, music etc)
- Coffee houses, galleries, shopping arcades, public spaces, national/regional centres
- Ritual-like behaviour and self -making
- In 20th century compounded by importation of resort: cities as playgrounds

# Can they get away without art?

- Probably not: art is infused completely into Florida's creative class
- Art is a perfect ritualised, transformative and performative medium of creative culture
- Art has always been a preoccupation of governance: changing, preserving or restoring order
- Art has always been spectacle, even in early colonial Australia. E.g painting tours

# Holman Hunt *The Light of the World* (1854)



# Other devices

- National Exhibitions
- National Festivals
- Carnivals
- National Galleries and Museums
- Biennales
- Art Festivals

# Creating Aliveness

- Some cities have developed it spontaneously and not all of them are large capitals e.g. Brighton, UK
- Spontaneous liminoid city spaces include brothel and red light districts; entertainment strips; gay quarters; in certain ethnic enclaves; around markets; arts and creative quarters; culture industries; waterfronts
- Planned liminoid city spaces: Covent Garden; Inner Manchester; Melbourne Fed. Square

# Ingredients

- Performative spaces not just the tourist gaze; not static amenity
- Transitional experiences; sense of becoming something else: challenged, changed, enlightened, informed
- Dynamic, unpredictable, self-driving/accumulating ordering
- Open-ended and unbounded: diversity and tolerance as conditions for experimentation

# Can any city produce this?


- In theory yes; even very small places can acquire this dynamic
- Some places have distinct advantages: social margins; ambiguous pasts; social diversity and tolerance; existing mystique and aesthetic; primordiality; fashion
- However they usually need to be choreographed by visionary appointment or happy circumstance. Local backlashes uncommon

# Art: Necessary?

- It would seem so, yes:
  - 13 of the 15 core industries of Florida's creative economy include art i.e. design, film, advertising, architecture, performing arts, crafts, toys and games, video games, fashion, art, publishing, TV.
  - Art is a core dimension of these workers working lives, important in their life world and therefore critical to any would-be creative city
  - Art is widely diffused as a leisure interest and a key element in their touristic taste and therefore critical to policies to attract them as visitors

# What is it about art though?

- Art and arts generally are not about representing what is but what might or could or should be; how things change
- This is certainly true for modern art which maintains a critical stance to modernity as well as being its vanguard (shock of the new)
- Keeping things as they are does not generate excitement but changing them does; some (the most successful) cities become spaces of change
- The creative class *create* new things, their lives are predicated on change: art speaks to them
- Modern art has never been more popular and it is entirely down to the emergence of this new class



# La Biennale di Venezia (1895-)

## Recent Themes

- 1979 *La via novissima*
- 1990 *Dimensione futuro Future dimension*
- 1994 *Identity, prospects, reform*
- 1995 *Identity and alterity*
- 1997 *Future, present, past*
- 1999 *Over all*
- 2001 *The Plateau of Humankind*
- 2003 *Dreams and Conflicts - The Dictatorship of the Viewer*
- 2003 *Tipping Point*

# Dreams and Conflicts: The Dictatorship of the Viewer

50th International Art Exhibition 2003



*Stazione Utopia / Utopia Station*

*Il Quotidiano Alterato / Lo Cotidiano Alterado /  
The Everyday Altered*

*La struttura della sopravvivenza  
The Structure of Survival*

*Rappresentazioni arabe  
contemporanee  
Contemporary Arab Representations*

# Any Art?

- No, the creative class have eclectic taste and are knowledgeable about art; so it has to be good
- So, exhibitions of local *amateur* artists and local craft fairs, not so good; major travelling exhibitions good; major local artists very good, modern art very good; international arts festivals also very good; a biennale very good - they connect city to world
- Ybas movement and its reception shows that shock, eclecticism, diversity, change, fusion and hybridisation, anger and transgression and openness are central to its success. Corporation reception areas vie for it.

# Regional festivals

- Edinburgh (1947: 750,000)
- Adelaide (1960: 510,000)
- Tasmania (2001:100,000)
- All have had great success *because* of their location on the social margin; all have attracted artists and all attract tourists. They are art-spaces to go to

*the fringe bares all*

THE LOWDOWN ON THE GREATEST SHOW ON LEGS



# Secrets of success

- Theme appropriate to place; something at stake in the place
- Timed to coincide/overlap with other iconic activities
- Program varied, dispersed, performative
- All high quality exhibitions; attention grabbing media events; celebrity
- Appointment of appropriate experienced director
- City invests heavily in supporting festival; architecture, buildings, halls, auditoria, galleries -- on water preferably

# The Darwin Festival

- In 25th year, successful, but essentially a local/regional festival with international guests
- Excellent record of promoting local regional art; ties in with tourism from n. hemisphere; but...
- Occurs outside national festive period elsewhere; students tied up; school time
- Themed around itself as region and city; does it interpellate others?
- Does it touch the international zeitgeist?
- Does it point to what is at stake in Darwin and could it find links with the creative city initiative?

## *Tropics* (The Darwin Biennale?)

- Of the 17 biennial cities none are in the tropics.
- Using its tropical theme it could interpellate the tropical regions, esp if Darwin established leadership for creative tropical cities in other ways
- But also the tropophyles around the world and in wintry southern Australia
- Has to tie in with other activities in region
- Why not June when students in mid-semester?
- Why not similar to *10 days on the island?* An annual event with its own media window
- Tropics could be a vehicle to consolidate creative class habitus and expand reputation as destination