

## THE ROLE OF AN INSTITUTE OF FINE ARTS IN THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY\*

By BERNARD SMITH

DR. John Joseph Wardell Power gave to this University, by a handsome margin, its largest bequest. It was given for the study of the Fine Arts and the promotion of an understanding of the most recent forms of contemporary art within the University and among the Australian people. When Dr. Power died in Jersey in 1943 he was known only to his relatives and friends. So that one might well have asked: What kind of man was Power? Why should he have left so great a fortune to a University which had hitherto displayed no marked interest in the Fine Arts?

John Power came of English and Irish Catholic stock. The mother, who encouraged the son's interest in the arts, was the daughter of William Wardell, one of Australia's distinguished nineteenth-century architects and probably the most able pupil of Pugin, the phrenetic genius behind the English Gothic Revival. It is clear from John Power's personal library that a deep interest in architecture survived in the grandson.

Power senior was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, a successful Sydney physician and a founder of the M.L.C., by means of which he laid the foundations of his son's fortune. The son embraced his father's profession, graduated here as a Bachelor of Medicine and Master of Surgery in 1904 and continued his studies in London, becoming a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons and a Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians in 1907. To all accounts an able surgeon, Power served in the Royal Army Medical Corps and maintained an interest in bacteriology throughout his life. John Power seems to have been a quiet, unassuming man who possessed small patience with conventional behaviour. When his sister decided to marry an admiral—a stickler for the right clothes, the right behaviour and the right places, Jack Power (the family always called him Jack) arrived to give his sister away dressed in a check suit—a very loud check suit, according to his sister. The incident became an oft-repeated family tale.

But at the end of the First World War, nearing forty, Power abandoned his profession to become one of the many thousands of foreign art students who crowded into Paris after the Treaty of Versailles. In discussing that time recently, Daniel Henry Kahnweiler, Picasso's dealer and friend, remarked to me, "yes, we all knew Power, but we knew him as an artist, we did not know him as a rich man and a surgeon".

I am going to suggest that John Power's great act of generosity to this University was the gift of an alienated man. At twenty-three he left Australia and did not return, at thirty-nine he abandoned his profession, and at some time or other, to all accounts, he deeply questioned, if he did not abandon, his Catholic

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faith. These three alienations, from country, profession and religion, helped to prepare him, I should say, for his appreciation and understanding of the cubist revolution in twentieth-century art, years before any other Australian. It is true that Roy de Mestre experimented with Orphic colour theory as early as 1915, but Power appears to have been the first among Australians to grasp the formal and spatial implications of cubist painting.

In thus penetrating from the cultural province of Sydney to what was then the international centre of avant-garde art John Power may be compared with another Australian artist John Russell, nephew of Peter Russell, benefactor to the Faculty of Engineering in this University. In 1886, more than thirty years before Power arrived as an art student in Paris, Russell, following the death of his father, a rich iron-founder, abandoned engineering, made France his second home, and became a friend of several of the most advanced painters of his day—Van Gogh, Monet, Matisse and others. And like John Power, Russell decided to use some of his considerable wealth to form a collection of the most recent forms of contemporary art for Australia. A few months before he died Van Gogh wrote to Russell offering him one of his paintings for the proposed collection: "if you should go to Paris please go and take a canvas of mine at my brother's, if you will stick to the idea of some day getting together a collection of contemporary art for your native country."<sup>1</sup>

Unlike Power, Russell was unable to stick to his idea. The responsibility of a second family, the lack, it seems, of any warm response from Australia, became effective obstacles. Russell died, after living the last ten years of his life in Sydney, as unknown to the small world of Australian art as John Power himself when he died in Jersey in 1943.

It is not surprising. For between the small, culturally deprived and highly conservative art world of Australia and its two rich, expatriate sons who succeeded, in the space of a year or so in Paris, in penetrating closely to the core of the avant-garde art of their times, there remained a gap not easily bridged. But it was closing. The enormous cultural distance which lay between Paris and Sydney in the year 1890, when Van Gogh implored Russell to buy Paul Gauguin's paintings—and Russell like everyone else held back—and then went on to offer him one of his own for nothing, this distance had been closed discernibly by 1939, the year John Power wrote his will. For that was the year, as many of you will recall, when Sir Keith Murdoch sponsored the exhibition of *Contemporary French and British Art*, undoubtedly the finest exhibition of contemporary art ever to be shown in Australia, and the year the Contemporary Art Society of Australia was formed. The Murdoch exhibition included one of Power's paintings and when shown in Sydney it was purchased by a young professor of moral philosophy of this University and his wife. They had just arrived from England.

In small ways Power maintained links with his earlier life. On publishing in 1934 his only book *Eléments de la Construction Picturale*, a text on proportion theory, written—significantly—in French, but with an English translation as an insert, he posted a copy off to the Fisher Library with the inscription "from an old student" and added, with an obvious touch of pride, the degrees of his abandoned profession: M.B., Ch.M., 1904, Sydney; M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., 1907,

<sup>1</sup> Van Gogh to John Russell, January 1890, *The Complete Letters of Vincent Van Gogh*, New York Graphic Society, 2nd ed. (Greenwich, U.S.A., 1959), vol. III, p. 250.

London. His alienation, you might say, was partial, not complete. Perhaps in the end he became reconciled to his religion. His funeral service, at any rate, was held in the Church of St. Mary and St. Peter, New Jersey.

John Power's personal library, now in the possession of his wife's niece, Miss I. G. Traill of Bathurst, is helpful in rounding out the little we know about him. It is not a scholar's library, cultivating a special field, nor a dilettante's, filled with picture books not meant to be read. It is the library of a man with a deep love of visual beauty, both past and present, and curious and inquiring about it. It is centred, as one might expect, upon the dynamic tradition of western art. But not narrowly so. There are volumes on Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Scythian, Hittite and, of course, Greek art. To the medieval, the Byzantine, Carolingian, Sienese, and Romanesque he responded deeply—the colourful, aesthetic shadow, perhaps, of a questioned faith. But Power's intellect, his surgeon's need for precision, held him to the classical tradition. In that debate endemic to western art between the *Poussinistes* and the *Rubénistes*, between line and colour, it is line which in Power's taste prevails, that is to say: Botticelli, Signorelli, Piero della Francesca, Raphael, Poussin, Ingres, and their twentieth-century representatives, many of whom were Power's personal friends, Serusier, Picasso, Braque, Gleizes, Metzinger, Juan Gris. The baroque and the romantics interested him much less. His own best paintings—he received a favourable comment from Osbert Sitwell when he exhibited for the first time in 1924 with the New English Art Club—are quite the equal in quality of the better-known work of the journey-men of the cubist school, such as Albert Gleizes and Henri Haydon. They testify to the classical, intellectual cast of his mind. So too indeed did his fine personal collection, unhappily dispersed after his wife's death, which included work by Derain, Gleizes, Gris, Herbin, Léger, Rivera, Picasso, Marcoussis, Masson, Metzinger, Ozenfant, Vantongerloo, and others.

His classical predisposition, however, did not confine him. John Power's taste was, in John Constable's phrase, a true taste, in that it was not a half-taste. It was curious, eager, omnivorous almost: folk art, primitive art, the art and architecture of India, Japan and China, and oriental theatre; music, including jazz and eastern music, found him a responsive recipient. In many ways his taste recalls that of Roger Fry, where there was a similar balance of intellect and sensibility. Sensibility meant a lot to Power. At the beginning of his book on pictorial construction he wrote: "I do not wish for a moment to suggest that art is an affair of mathematical and geometric rules. In the last resort the artist's sensibility is the measure of his excellence, and nothing that he can learn will ever replace it."

I have suggested that Power might with profit be considered as a partially alienated man, and like others of his kind, like William Blake and Paul Gauguin, he saw that which is to be most valued in the form of a recovery and preservation of a lost tradition. This is clearly stated in his own book. Describing its purpose he writes: "It is firstly a textbook and secondly it is an attempt to preserve a tradition . . . . The history of this tradition is well known. One finds traces of geometric construction in very early times, used in simple forms by the Egyptians and the Greeks. Its principles were known to Cimabue and Giotto. During the Renaissance, it developed rapidly with the mathematical researches of Piero della Francesca and Luca Pacioli di Borgo who made special studies of the solid

polyhedra. Later was introduced the principle of the moving format to which I devote a special chapter and which reached its culmination with Veronese, Rubens and Poussin. Thence it continued as an established tradition with fluctuating fortunes until the French Revolution, when the breaking up of the pupil apprenticeship system scattered it to the winds, to be rediscovered by Serusier, Cézanne and later developed by Picasso, Braque, Metzinger and Juan Gris. My own researches extend backwards about ten years."<sup>2</sup>

It is not my purpose here to discuss John Power's account of the history of proportion theory in painting. What is relevant, it seems to me, to those who are charged with implementing his Bequest is the man's obvious devotion to the idea of the unity and continuity of culture. But his view of tradition is not sentimental or nostalgic; it is, in a word, revolutionary. This is revealed clearly in his faith in the future of cubism: "Cubism", he wrote, "is not valuable as a method but as an aesthetic. True it commenced with a descriptive aim, but losing that in favour of a synthetic and creative attitude, as the work develops, it has become the very symbol of liberation and the means towards one of the purest aesthetic periods in history, so that although at the moment [he was writing in 1934 when surrealism was of growing significance] the rigid construction of integral cubism is passing away, the spirit of its creative teaching is as strong as ever."<sup>3</sup>

I should like to be able to say, you see, that for John Power, tradition was the source of revolution. That, I suspect, is why he held firmly but not narrowly to the western tradition, and to the ruthlessly dynamic principles which move it. That, perhaps, too is why he gave his Bequest to a University rather than leave it to create some new Institute independent of any university. He was suspicious of the Jacobins who destroyed the guilds to establish the Ecole des Beaux Arts, wherein art might be taught according to the principles of Reason. Apocalypticism, the proclamation of new artistic Jerusalems were not his style. He was, after all, in a good position to see what, by the 1920s, the Ecole des Beaux Arts had become. A man less trustful of a University's capacity to change itself might have opted for something more new-fangled, more apparently radical.

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The University's first moves to implement the terms of the Power Bequest stimulated a public debate. There were two main questions. Did Power intend that his Bequest should teach the whole of the subject or concentrate solely upon contemporary art? The second question concerned not the span but the mode of the teaching. Should the Institute centre its attention upon theory, upon the history, criticism and aesthetics of the visual arts, bringing a liberal arts approach to the subject in the manner of the Institute of Fine Art of the University of New York and the Courtauld Institute of Art, University of London, or should it be a professionally-oriented school after the fashion of the Royal College of Art, London, or the Yale School of Art? There was also a third possibility, a combination of studio and history courses after the fashion of Berkeley, U.C.L.A. and many mid-western American universities.

<sup>2</sup> *Eléments de la Construction Picturale* (Brussels, 1934). Both quotations from Power's translation published as an accompanying insert.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

On the first question, the University, possessing no undergraduate courses in Fine Art of its own, could give but one answer. To accept a responsibility for teaching the subject at all was to accept a responsibility for teaching the whole of the subject: a rightly cherished principle, the unity of knowledge, was involved. Or, as Professor John Woolley put it in his address at the inauguration of this University on 9 July 1852, a university education "must afford a general prospect of the most important objects of thought".<sup>4</sup> That general studies should precede special studies seems too obvious to spend time discussing. It is, of course, conceivable that the Power Institute might have been developed entirely as a post-graduate Institute. There is something to be said for the view that art scholarship, requiring as it does knowledge in diverse fields: in language, in general history, in literature, in art techniques, and a need to travel to the objects of study, is best developed as a graduate study. But this would have pushed general fine art studies up to the graduate level and delayed the growth of specialized research in contemporary art still further. And for Sydney it would have been an unrealistic solution. Lacking standards of its own in the undergraduate field in Fine Art, how could it presume to select the students of other Universities, such as Melbourne and Adelaide, and Universities overseas? And what quality of staff and students could such a graduate school hope to attract?

The second question, liberal or professional studies or a mixture of the two, has more to it; and I should not like to think the discussion ended. There are some attractive reasons why a professional art school should be established within the University of Sydney. For one thing, art teaching at the public tertiary level in New South Wales is over-centralized and too much confined within the administrative structure of technical education. A lively University counterpart of the National Art School could be a blessing in disguise to an institution which carries a great burden upon minimal funds. Furthermore, Australian universities need to be reminded that Australian artists have contributed as much to civilization in this country as, for the sake of example, those professions whose business it is to civilize the law, keep us in health or house us comfortably. That in Australia, unlike Britain, the United States or New Zealand, no University has ever established a professional art school is interesting. It could be simply that no one has ever put up the money. But that no one has, may itself be a product of that curious Anglo-colonial tradition which has prevailed in the arts faculties of Australian universities until quite recent years: I mean the kind of mind that saw the indigenous culture as a threat to intellectual values. The great sense of caution which our Universities brought to the introduction of courses in Australian literature is relevant here.

I am not suggesting that the Power Institute should itself attempt to set up an art school. That, I am sure, was not intended by John Power; nor could we afford it and do what he, explicitly, asked be done. Nor am I personally convinced about the educational claims, despite high-sounding, newfangled words like environmental studies, of schools which seek to combine the objectives of scholarship with the quite different objectives of the creative artist. In my view the best solutions are those operating at London and Yale: where art schools operate independently within the same University and to their mutual advantage. An

<sup>4</sup> Address by Dr. Woolley, Principal of the University, at the Inauguration Ceremony 11 October 1852, in H. E. Barff, *A Short Historical Account of the University of Sydney* (Sydney, 1902), p. 36.

independent art school in this University could complement the work of the Power Institute in ways at present beyond us, make an important contribution to art education in Australia and the cultural life of the University. And some of us would like to think that the values which Mr. Lloyd Rees has brought to his teaching in the Faculty of Architecture for over twenty years might be continued here on a larger scale after he leaves us.

No doubt a Sydney University art school must await a benefactor. The most the Power Institute can do is to encourage a receptive state of mind within the University in hope of such an event. For the Institute the immediate need, to which it has addressed itself since it began teaching last year, is to sharpen up the dialogue between theory and practice, and encourage it to spread over the art of the past as well as the art of the present. Such a concentration upon theory, upon history, criticism, aesthetics is, in my view, essential. It is no coincidence that the great metropolitan centres of advanced art during the past two hundred years: Rome, Paris, New York, London perhaps, have been the centres in which art scholarship has been sedulously cultivated. The occupation and possession of the past provides the best base for the advance of art. Young Australian artists are now ambitious to achieve here that kind of originality which might be called metropolitan originality, as distinct from that eccentric originality which is such an agreeable feature of provincial societies. This means that we shall have to do more of our own thinking, and take theory more seriously.

On that score some of us in the Power Institute are disappointed that Mr. Clement Greenberg's visit has not yet stimulated serious criticism to any extent. There has been little evidence of any desire on the part of Australian art critics to examine the historical and theoretical structure of Greenberg's *Avant-Garde Attitudes* Lecture. Perhaps this will change now that the lecture has been published. But up to the present the most obvious result of the visit of that distinguished critic has been the emergence of the new Australian art game of "Greenberg says", a version of that delightful game of our childhood in which, as you will remember, the caller had to invoke the unquestioned authority of one O'Grady in order to evoke any response at all. The uncritical quotation of Greenberg illuminates the weaknesses of the *ad hoc* empiricism so characteristic of Australian art criticism. If we aspire to international standards we shall have to take theory more seriously.

Within the University we can make a start by providing courses in European art from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries. At present we are offering a twentieth-century course in first year and an eighteenth- and nineteenth-century course in second, which provides, among other things, a deeper consideration of the sources of twentieth-century art than the first-year course can provide. We also offer a course in aesthetics to prospective honours students and to students in philosophy. Next year we hope to offer a course in the baroque. We have also established a materials and methods class which is not examined and is available when space can be provided to undergraduates, not necessarily taking the Fine Arts courses.

These courses have been chosen to meet the needs of typical undergraduates and the terms of the Bequest. The first-year course is designed to provide the student, at the beginning of his or her university life, with a knowledge of the main developments in twentieth-century art from the post-impressionists to

kinetics and indicate the outstanding historical and critical issues. The three proposed courses of the pass major provide, for those who desire it, an opportunity to study the visual arts as a significant part of a liberal education, not inappropriate surely for a century in which the visual image has come to play such a dominant role in the communication of ideas and the creation of popular culture. Studies in western art from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries also provide, it should be remembered, useful background courses for related arts faculty subjects, such as history and the modern languages, and are important for potential honours students interested in the study of Fine Art as a background to a profession, whether in an art museum, in art education, in journalism, or in university teaching and research.

When we reflect upon John Power's keen personal interest in Asian art, upon Australia's geographic position, and upon the emergence in our own time of an aesthetic sensibility which is international in scope, the restriction of undergraduate studies to European art would seem regrettable. I hope that the Institute, in co-operation with other departments, may be able to assist the development of studies in Asian and Oceanic art. There is also a case in this University, with its interest in medieval studies, for a course in medieval art. For all such studies effective work will, no doubt, involve special pre-requisites: for the student of primitive art, some anthropology; for medieval art, some Latin; for Asian art, some knowledge of the relevant Asian language. In these fields the Institute is, of course, but one among others, but we shall be looking for possible areas of co-operation.

Unlike poetry or music, value in Fine Art is embodied in material objects, mostly unique objects. Photographs, transparencies, are useful, and great advances have been made both in the study and appreciation of art by means of photographic techniques. But alone these are inadequate: students must have access to originals. Here in Sydney, we shall have, for contemporary art, the Power Collection; for Australian art, the collections of the Art Gallery of New South Wales and the Public Library of New South Wales; for aboriginal and oceanic art, the Australian Museum; for the decorative arts of the nineteenth century, the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences. But for European art we shall have to go further afield. Our first teaching seminar on the paintings, sculpture and decorative arts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the National Gallery of Victoria will be held in August. We are investigating the possibility of a chartered flight to Italy, at reduced costs, to enable undergraduates taking Fine Art in the Australian universities to attend the 35 Biennale of International Contemporary Art at Venice in 1970 and to visit some of the major art centres of Italy.

The academic reputation of the Power Institute will depend almost entirely upon the standard of its undergraduate teaching. The honours school will need to develop a standard that will make it possible for its graduates to gain entry to good graduate schools overseas: despite the difficulty of access to originals here. In facing this problem we take heart from the achievements, over the past twenty years, of the Department of Archaeology, which has had to face similar problems. It is singularly fortunate for the Power Institute that that Department exists and flourishes. Interconnected courses in Archaeology and Fine Art both at the pass and honours level suggest interesting professional possibilities for the students of both subjects.

The obvious need to establish standards in undergraduate teaching indicates that the Institute will have to move cautiously in the development of Graduate Studies. But a Graduate School must come, if only because that is the one way in which we can keep faith with John Power's intention that there should be a strong emphasis upon contemporary studies. The Power Research Library, now open from 9 to 5, on five days a week, to Fine Arts honours students, is being built up with special attention to the likely needs of graduate research in contemporary art. Graduate research is bound to gain its character from the research interests of the most able, among staff and students. But with the swing of interest in recent years towards optical, kinetic, and serialized art it seems most likely that research will turn towards promising lines of inquiry in neighbouring areas in psychology, physics, mathematics, communication theory. A University staff colloquium on Art, Technology and Science is being established by the Institute and will hold its first session next week. Research is being undertaken in perception and the visual arts. We are interested in the possibility of following up some recent experiments at the Burdon Institute, Bristol, which have related brain states to volition and action, in so far as they may be able to throw light upon the relation between intention and action during continuous creative activity.

Another likely area of graduate research is in the field of Australian art and architecture. We shall not neglect the grass-roots of our own culture, but we may be able, in the spirit of the Bequest, to set them, more firmly than hitherto, within an international context. Consider the case of Australian architectural history, where much important work has been done during the past decade. Here a characteristic weakness has been the lack of studies which relate our architecture to its European and North American sources. We shall not be able to confine our teaching or our research too firmly within the traditional limits of the visual arts, because one of the marked characteristics of the art of our time is the way in which artists are reaching out towards art environments in which the resources developed in the past by painting, music, theatre, dance, film and television may be employed in "total" synaesthetic situations.

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The implementation of the Power Bequest, especially through the work of the Power Gallery of Contemporary Art, will help to open up Australia increasingly to the full traffic of international art. In this we shall be only one of several organizations bringing art from abroad into the country, but we shall be committed to it perennially. Last year the Power Gallery introduced kinetic art to the Australian public. This year it is showing two exhibitions of work drawn mainly from the European continent, and it will assist in bringing an important exhibition of French art to Sydney in August. The Institute, in co-operation with the Department of Adult Education, has established a three-year evening course in Twentieth-Century Art, and one member of staff has co-operated with the Television Unit of the University in a series of programmes on the Fine Arts. By such means we hope to increase the public for contemporary art. We are doing what we can to encourage overseas artists to visit Australia. Last year, Clement Greenberg visited us. This year, in Lent term, the Italian artist, Enrico Baj, visited Sydney in connection with our Italian exhibition held at the Bonython Galleries; this term, Richard Stankiewicz, the American sculptor, will be a guest



lecturer at the Institute; and in Michaelmas term the Bulgarian artist, Christo, now famous for the sublimity of his packaging, will be discussing his work with us. In all such matters we are endeavouring to evolve suitable forms of co-operation with external bodies. We are doing what we can to assist Australian artists to study overseas. Already, four artists have lived and worked, each for a period of six months, in the Power Institute studio at the Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris; and we shall try to encourage the provision of similar accommodation in such centres as New York, Tokyo and Rome. There is a need for an Australian Institute at Rome which would provide residential accommodation for Australian scholars and artists. Most civilized countries with a European heritage already possess one. But we do not. On this question of opening up Australia to the full effects of the international art scene, I am of the opinion that the provision of subsidized studio-residence accommodation for overseas artists in our larger capital cities, on the model of the *Cité des Arts*, would help eventually to make Australian art known overseas in a more civilized way than by exhibitions of Australian art overseas sponsored by the Commonwealth Government. The motives behind Government-sponsored exhibitions are suspect. If our provincial world is ever to be superseded here by an international art world, then it will emerge from an international art community located in Australia. Otherwise much of the talk about internationalism is likely to be cant.

Meanwhile the need for direct access to the international art scene abroad is even more pressing for critics than artists. An artist—think of Klee—might abstract a fine work from a gum-nut if he works that way, but critics need to see the originals of what they are talking about. The provincial critic who confined his experience to Australian art could at least build his judgements upon his experience of local originals. But the international stance now forced upon critics by the increasing movement of overseas art into this country is resulting in judgements based upon the enjoyment of photographs in art journals supplemented by knowledge of a small number of originals. It is surprising how often the photographs are preferred to the originals. There is something wrong here. The art critics of responsible newspapers should be in a position to travel abroad at least once a year.

What, we might well ask, are likely to be the effects of this increasing internationalization of the local art scene? I would suggest that in acquisitions for public art museums the Anglo-Australian emphasis which has dominated buying for over a century will probably decline. Australian private collectors may begin to interest themselves increasingly in overseas work. At present the local market for Australian art, rather swollen by inflated values, is protected from overseas competition by surcharges such as freight and sales tax. But links between local and overseas dealers, new marketing techniques, the possibility of obtaining the works of internationally famed and yet young artists at prices competitive with local prices for Australian work, could bring major changes. At the worst, a young Australian painter seeking to develop a reputation in his own country may have to take his chances on the international dealer's market, or contract out of the dealing situation altogether, as many young artists in New York and Paris are attempting to do, for example, by promoting exhibitions from their own studios. What is happening in other fields, such as publishing, in Australia might give us pause. For a long time now young Australian artists have been

complaining—if I may put it in the terms of Aesop's famous fable—of the dull rule of provincial King Log; they may have to develop radically new modes of art and life to flourish here in Australia under the reign of international King Stork.

But there is no avoiding the new situation. It is a question, rather, of how well we can prepare ourselves for it. The provincial-international issue is, of course, but the geographical aspect of the wider problem: the role of art in our advanced industrial society. If you will permit me a high level of generalization I think that it is broadly true to say that over the past two hundred years the artistic tradition has been consistently antagonistic to the values and structure of modern industrial society. And for an understandable reason. The Fine Arts have clung tenaciously to their handicraft base: from whence proceeds the view that the work of art is at best a thing original, personal, unique. Today, it often looks as though that position cannot be held for much longer. One wonders, for example, whether we are not living through the last days of painting as the men of the sixteenth century lived through the last days of the illuminated manuscript. And our industrial society has pressed harshly not only upon the practitioners of art as handicraft, it has dealt just as harshly with the theories of men like Walter Gropius who have sought a *modus vivendi* between art and industrial production. The modern industrial imperative to style for fashion and obsolescence, if one is to survive the industrial pace as a designer or manufacturer, has played havoc with Bauhaus ideals; requiring the postulation of an ideal industrial state as unreal, and much less to the heart of the matter, than William Morris's ideal medieval state. So that in recent times contemporary artists are beginning once again to face up to Hegel's great question: can art survive in the modern world, or as his follower, the young Marx, put it, "Can Jupiter survive the lightning rod?"

For those not prepared to consider a negative to Hegel's question, two starkly opposed varieties of the affirmative are, I suggest, possible. The first I would call the view of the happy industrial producer; the second the view of the unhappy, over-fed consumer.

The happy producer asserts that art will survive if it is prepared to adopt the methods of modern industrial production without question. The artist will become a designer working at the in-put end of the industrial process, like any other industrial designer, and produce his work for a large market. His name will become the brand name, or he will beat a retreat before the brand name of his manufacturer. The small personalized art-dealing forms of today will wither away in the face of international art-manufacturers and super-dealers: General Motors will be rivalled by General Multiples. The mass media will disseminate the artist's reputation, or his work's artistic qualities. The idea of the independent critic communing in private with his own aesthetic conscience and expressing influential, prestigious but entirely personal opinions will become as much an anachronism as the independent artist expressing his feelings in prestigious, handcrafted objects. He will write blurbs for the super-dealers. For what will matter is that the new artistic commodities be sold. In order to educate the conservative eye to the beauty of the new industrial city, aestheticians in bulldozers will expatiate upon the novel beauty of the twisted roots of uprooted trees. Art will be cheap, absolutely democratic and available to all in the suburban

super-market. The professional artist will wither away in happy participatory anonymity.

The over-fed consumer's view of the place of art in modern society is less participatory, more critical. It claims that those special, handcrafted objects, usually quite expensive, which have come, in the long history of the word, to be called art, have not survived into modern times simply as vestigial forms of pre-industrial production, catering for an historical nostalgia; but that they are produced in response to a human need not met by industrial production. It argues in this way. When leisure makes it possible for modern men and women to escape their role as industrial producers—I use the phrase in the widest sense to cover all aspects of production and distribution—they behave in a curious manner. Many of them take to painting or potting or gardening or knitting, or boat-building in an amateur sort of way, like craftsmen or peasants who have returned from the grave, but lost their old skills in the interregnum. This sort of thing was no great feature of pre-industrial societies. It might be compared with the way so many of us feel the need for physical exercise, swimming or golf, or tennis, to keep fit. Art, on this view, bears some similar relation to the social man that exercise does to the physical man. When modern man travels he crowds in thousands into the great art museums of the northern hemisphere during the summer months, or goes upon excursions to gaze admiringly at old buildings, or more adventurously, takes to the jungle to collect the art and artifacts of primitive peoples. If the arts of primitive peoples are made for their own rites and rituals he praises them warmly, but if he suspects that they were made for him, modern man, the tourist, he turns away in distress, shaking his head at the corruption induced by commercialism and mass-production.

This is the over-fed consumer's search for something personal, something "a little different" to take home with him in the jet. To express his point of view we might twist Lord Acton's phrase: "Mass production corrupts artistic value, and absolute mass-production corrupts artistic values utterly."

It is one aspect of the larger view that our modern industrial society is sick, both in its eastern communist and in its western capitalist form. And despite differences in political structure and stages of development between these two forms, the psycho-pathologists of sociology who have diagnosed the illness—Marx, Galbraith, Marcuse and others—though a quarrelsome lot, are in broad agreement. That still quite powerful old man, our advanced industrial society, will not admit it, but he is dying from an hypnotic gluttony, which has wrecked his figure and is now affecting his heart. A hateful malady, yet a natural one for the first human society which has found a solution to the problem of poverty and want, to die of.

Because, you see, so the argument runs, the solution to poverty involved him in his early years in creating an ethic of production as the one good: God as the GNP. Now in his old age he has learned to produce so efficiently that he has to induce an artificial hunger incessantly, by means of trances imposed by his mass media, in order to consume his enormous cornucopia of commodities. Because once he stops consuming he has had it.

On this consumer's view of modern industrial society, art in the form of personal, handcrafted objects is a subversive memory of natural food which was taken only when hungry. A memory of something lost, like youth or good health.

And the contemporary artist becomes modern industrial man's image of his own lost freedom: he sees him as the uncommitted man, unconventional, dressing outrageously, living amorally, making what he wants to, when he wants to, how he wants to: free of the industrial process: so that the artist is secretly admired and publicly distrusted. The mass-produced object comes to be identified with modern man's subjection to the impersonal forces of modern technology; while the art object, handcrafted and unique, becomes a symbol of personal freedom—and to that extent subversive.

In this connection it is of interest to note that in recent times artists have begun to make increasing use of modern industrial materials and techniques, welded metal sculpture, electrically-programmed kinetics, and much more. How are we to interpret the production of these wayward, gratuitous, useless machines, made by artists so recently working in a handicraft tradition with traditional materials? Is this a further example of accommodation to the industrial process, or is it an attempt by artists, who for so long resisted industrial mass production techniques, to secularize the machines (those highly efficient icons of the religion of industrial production), just as their forebears, the Renaissance painters, began the long and slow secularization of the holy images of the medieval world? The Pill, we have been told, is the best answer yet to the terrifying theory of the Reverend Thomas Malthus: the control of reproduction is within sight. But who will sterilize the machines and control production? Perhaps that is as good a definition of art as any: production under control.

These two opposed views: the happy producer view and the unhappy, over-fed consumer view are, admittedly, both extreme views of the relation of modern art to modern society. My real purpose in presenting them here is simply to stress that an Institute professing to study contemporary art cannot afford to ignore questions which involve the relation of contemporary art to contemporary society—we cannot afford to live in an ivory tower. Certainly Dr. Power's great gift suggests an Institute and Gallery building of unquestioned distinction—but not ivory. I foresee difficulties both with the Vice-Chancellor and the Assistant Principal should we insist upon ivory.

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What role, on a distant view, might the Power Institute (when it is fully developed) play within the University? Growth is bound to depend as much upon contingencies as upon principles so that speculation is precarious. But let me put one view, its role in a University which had fully liberated itself from suspicion and distrust of the creative artist, and had come to accept professionalism in the practising arts as readily as it accepts it in the learned professions; had created, let us say, professional schools of music, theatre, painting, dance, film and television. In such a University, the Power Institute might come to occupy a position similar to the Faculty of Science. That is to say, it might stand in the same relationship to the professional arts as the Faculty of Arts stands to the Applied Sciences. This it could do without trespassing upon the role of the Faculty of Arts as the focal point of liberal studies in the University: indeed it would be an extension of the liberal arts attitude in an area where they are now most vulnerable. For the Faculty of Arts is centred upon the critical study of language: it is the guardian of words and their use. The Faculty of Science, as

I understand it, is an extension of the liberal tradition into a special field, a field in which quantity and number have become more potent than words.

It is, however, a common enough observation that the great threat to rational thought and dispassionate inquiry today comes not from the misuse of words as such, or of numbers as such, but from the misuse of the mixed forms of communications in which words are united with visual images: in the graphic arts, the illustrated journals, film, television and so forth. If the liberal tradition is to be sustained in these powerful new areas of mass-communication, critical modes of procedure will have to be developed appropriate to the mixed media. We need an etymology and semantics of the visual image as rigorous as that of the word: to grasp the role of the mixed image in conveying information, in rhetoric, in persuasion, in the expression of feelings and the ways in which images may be conjoined with words. That means a deepening concern with the uses to which visual imagery has been put from the Egyptian tombs to its latest uses in colour television and holography.

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A distinguished scholar and teacher of Sydney University, Professor Guy Howarth, once wrote, many years before he left this country, "no one ever really leaves Australia, they all come back either in the flesh or the spirit". John Power's spirit returned eighteen years after his death. It was, for all his retiring nature, an unconventional, restless, alienated spirit, and something of its nature is embedded in his Bequest, that is, in the requirement that the most recent ideas and the most recent forms of contemporary art be brought to the people of Australia. Professor John White, then Pilkington Professor of the History of Art in Manchester University, realized this when he stressed in his advice to the University that in accepting the Bequest it was also accepting a kind of obligation to be loyal to John Power's faith in a changing, revolutionary art: an art which may appear absurd, preposterous, shocking. The Power Institute is a kind of institutionalization of restlessness, the gift of an alienated man, a gift for the promotion of change. It will stand as an interesting twentieth-century gloss upon the self-confident mid-Victorian motto of our University: *Sidere Mens Eadem Mutato*.