

MATTERS 3

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It only takes two people to make a fact.

Matters 3 is a publication that is interested in people who are thinking and doing interesting things. The information held within is not unique to this publication. The material that makes up this edition of the *Matters* series can be found elsewhere in various guises, though in some instances this is the first time these have been deciphered from the great ongoing stream of events and published in semi-permanent fashion.

Matters 3 is a project designed to impel application over reflection, and though my desire is that all who put the journal down will do so richer and more capable, if this happens even once the project can be called a success.

The contributors who were approached and responded, I am glad to say, did so with a view to this being an opportunity and not an imposition, as is the danger of any such endeavor. The contributors to *Matters 3* have significantly humbled me, and I am indebted to them.

There were a number of contributions that I attempted to get which I was unable to. These include Christopher Finlayson, the National Party's Minister for Arts and Heritage, on the state of the arts and Pita Sharples on minority campaigning in majoritarian systems. Sadly my persistent inquiries using publicly available contacts made no headway. There are also a number of potential contributors that I have been too slow in following up to include in this edition.

Matters 3 will be updated on the 21st September 2009, with a second series of contributions. Further to those already commissioned, there is room for more. If you are interested in contributing a response to something in this edition, or something of your own instigation, feel free to email me at johnwardknox@gmail.com

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Thanks to Emma and Hamish.

Matters 3 is edited[thus] by John Ward Knox

Matthew Crookes

No Place Like Home?

In Medieval England it was against the law to be at large without patronage of some kind, or any visible means of support – one had to belong, whether to the village, to the Church, or to the Lord of the Manor, and freedom to roam was simply not an option. In stark contrast, in the second part of *Down and Out in Paris and London*, George Orwell describes travelling around England in the company of tramps and down-and-outs, obliged under the vagrancy laws of the time to keep walking from place to place (actually, from one 'spike', or casual ward, to another). Different circumstances to fundamentally the same principle; the necessity always to have purpose, or to give the impression that one has somewhere to be.

Similar sentiments certainly exist today. Periodically, and usually in the build-up to some sporting or other international event, a city will try and disperse its less picturesque citizens to the edges, out of sight of those it is trying to impress. The Australian Satirical TV show *The Chasers* memorably dealt with Melbourne's preparations for the Commonwealth games by approaching suburban residents and asking them to take in homeless people for the duration of the games¹. Occasionally too, one encounters a politician, usually to the right of the political spectrum and generally low-ranking, who will make some controversial call to chase 'homeless' people off the streets. For the most part such characters recede into the background, rather more quickly than the homeless people they so object to. In these examples too you will notice that the 'homeless' are treated as a generic group, defined by their lack of a postal address, the sins of one conferrable to all.

There is a long tradition of artists occupying unwanted or redundant spaces, sometimes alongside, but often in direct competition and as a deterrent to vagrants and squatters. Maybe artists are the lesser evil in the eyes of speculators and landlords. The curatorial group Cuckoo has, for the last few years, staged shows in 'gap' spaces, spaces either between uses or within established art venues, between shows. Move in, set up, stay awhile, and then clear out. And recession economies in particular seem to favour a culture based around short-let spaces. Renew Newcastle, a scheme started by Marcus Westbury in Newcastle, NSW, works on this very principle, aiming to establish artists and art venues in derelict buildings as a means to generate activity in the city centre.

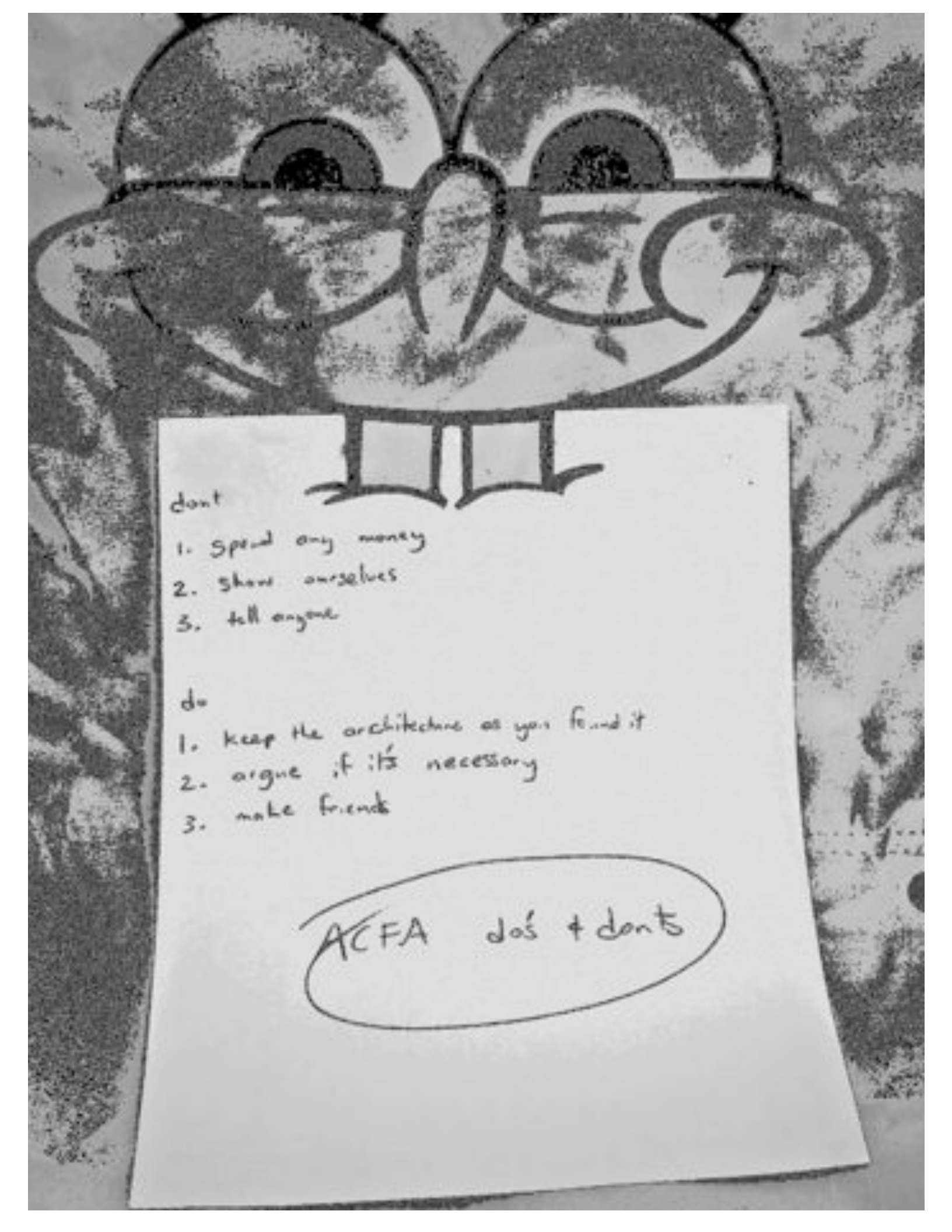
Sleepinginairports.com is a website devoted to those attempting to save money on their travels by, as the title suggests, staying in various airport terminals overnight (but not always successfully sleeping). This activity is widespread enough to have spawned the website and a small but dedicated community of 'airport sleepers' who share jokes, anecdotes and photographs. On the whole it presents a sanitized, middle class approach to sleeping rough (airports are graded on the quality of their facilities and amenability to those crashing-out there, and the presence of 'homeless people' is certainly a demerit in the eyes of the contributors).

Nonetheless the concerns the site raises about staving off over-zealous security staff or intrusive cleaners are not so different to those whose nights in the open are a more substantial part of their lives, and whose foes more dangerous: Should one stay in view or be concealed? Both leave one vulnerable to different nuisances and dangers. What's the best way to sleep on a bench with armrests? Dozens of solutions. Where's the warmest/ driest/ best lit corner? Ditto. The key issues that emerge throughout, it seems, are not to be seen or to remain in the same place for long. Staying one step ahead and deflecting attention, because being *outside*, literally and metaphorically, leaves one open to abuse from

¹ The Chaser's War on Everything, Season 1, episode 5.

both sides of the law.

A Centre For Art



don't

1. spend any money
2. show ourselves
3. tell anyone

do

1. keep the architecture as you found it
2. argue if it's necessary
3. make friends

ACFA dos + don'ts

John Minto

A portrait of protest for the young artist

Art arises from life. It may simply reflect on events, experiences, feelings and emotions but it can also challenge and provoke.

There's an insightful cartoon by Australian Michael Leunig which shows a person sitting enthralled watching a beautiful sunset on TV while outside the window the real event is taking place unnoticed. Art sometimes resembles the televised sunset which is a pale substitute for the real experience and which fails to excite in any meaningful way. It is on the other side of art as conscience and critic, prodder and challenger where it reaches its most important role. In a musical context these two sides of art could be the difference between a Hayley Westenra and a Gin Wigmore.

It is this power of art to incite, annoy and confront which is the subject of this contribution.

Every protest group I've ever been associated with has had its artists who, as part of their activism, have designed posters or produced individual pieces of art which have helped carry important messages to a wider public. It's not a case of emphasising artistic style over political substance but the political communication needs a carrier pigeon and while people like me can usually do OK with the words, the visuals are what carry the day. It is the image which links to internal human emotions and subliminal feelings which has greater impact for most rather than the rational argument. More often than not it's the poster or image which is the essential effective vehicle for the message.

Advertisers know this better than anyone. They are paid very well to subvert our best intentions and our noblest ideals with seductive images to manipulate our inner emotions. They also work hard to associate a brand with these emotions such that the brand becomes the medium for their buy, buy, buy messages.

So what role does art play in a protest movement? A much greater part than you might think is the short answer. A few illustrations from my experience.

During the protests against the 1981 Springbok tour a sub-group called Artists Against Apartheid (AAA) formed from mainly Auckland based artists. They spearheaded a large protest march on the eve of the final All Black/Springbok test and the outpouring of artistic talent on the side of the oppressed was incredible. There were puppets, masks, posters, caricatures, fancy dress. The entire march of some 20,000 was itself a piece of colourful, provocative, challenging street

theatre. Among the most memorable images the following day was a black zeppelin-like balloon which floated across Eden Park emblazoned with the single word Biko. (It was 12 September 1981 and the anniversary of the murder of black activist Steve Biko in South African police custody). It could be argued that mini-zeppelin had a greater protest impact than much of the street-level action. It carried a message seen by millions as the game was broadcast around the country and around the world. This was a case of artists as a group joining forces to act together as activists on the streets as well as produce powerful, evocative and influential works of art.

If there were any artists on the other side of the debate it wasn't obvious. Their efforts in any case consisted of just half-witted slogans saying "Fart on HART". (For those of you who under 35 HART (Halt all Racist Tours) was the main anti-apartheid organisation co-ordinating opposition to sports links with apartheid South Africa)

The artworks from that period were stunning, not just for the variety of campaigning images and posters but in the more traditional works as well. For example the late Tony Fomison produced a small but striking image of a rugby ball on an altar for an art auction to raise funds for the anti-tour campaign. The idea here could be read in several ways. Do New Zealanders really see rugby as a national religion? How much was New Zealand sacrificing for rugby?

When Nelson Mandela came to New Zealand in 1996 we presented him with a framed poster produced by Stanley Palmer of a young tagger who had just completed spraying the words Free Nelson Mandela on a wall.

(Which reminds me - where has all the great political tagging gone? Has it really died? Are we just left with territorial tagging and changing Peter McCracken's first name to Phil?)

Auckland artist Peter Lange produced and fired drinking mugs telling the story of the young black man sentenced to several years in a South African prison for scratching the words Free Nelson Mandela on the side of his enamel mug at work. We sold these mugs as fundraisers – again art was a vehicle to carry the issue.

The peace movement produced a similar outpouring of artistic expression later in the 1980s. There were thousands of images and art works of all kinds which couriered this issue through the community. Art made relevant what happened in Washington and Moscow to us in the South Pacific. The images more than the words told the story. Again art was the carrier pigeon for the message.

Artist Ralph Hotere's work reflects two ways of using art to convey political challenges. Sometimes the meaning is in your face (eg his works using Polaris missiles or Moruroa as themes) while at other times it is much more subtle (eg the mournful images reflecting on war which he produced after visits to Sangro in Italy where his brother was killed in the Second World War. For me the pieces are desolate but warm with conflicted emotions).

The artists of each generation find their own voice based around their own experiences and the issues of their day. I'm not an artist but I'd like to think any artist reading this would be encouraged at the power of art as a means of expression to carry critical communications to the wider society. These ideas will never be carried by art which is well paid to produce. It's usually only artists working for advertisers who are well paid. Instead the most important art will be from an artist's own time and talent because the challenges we need are not those telling us what to buy but those evoking inner beliefs which subvert the consumer and empower the citizen within.

To all young artists out there – you have a lot more power than you think. Be courageous and use it.

Newcall

Selina Foote and John Ward Knox in dialogue

JWK – Hey Selina, what do you think of having an email conversation about Newcall, which we then print as NC's contribution?

SF - That sounds good and easy to do. I was a little awkward at the meeting. I'm happy to contribute as much as you want. But I appreciate that this is your baby and you have invested a lot of energy and thought to matters 3. However because you have commitments with Chris I'm also happy to take any pressure off you that I can.

JWK - Ok. I'd be glad for your contribution.

Can you start off by telling me your position on how you came to be involved in the Newcall venture, and maybe expand specifically on the points most pertinent to your needs/desires at the time? I'm thinking that we write fully and expand on points of interest so that this can serve as a document for M3, with the knowledge this is likely to be our contribution. But no need to make it pretty, just 'cos people will read it! Hah.

Then I will expand upon your response and we will go from there. Needs to be done and dusted by the first of September though.

Cool?

SF - Cool I'll send something through in a day or so.

JWK - Cool. The sooner the better though

SF - Hi John,

Hope you're good.

Tone is a bit of a stab in the dark. Let me know your thoughts. It's a bit of a casserole so feel free to pick it apart.

There is something about summer that encourages ideas. Things feel optimistic and realistic. It allows for ideas which perhaps at another time of year, in a different climate, would seem unreasonable. Adults in shorts. Bare feet. Outdoor meals. Things that allow for or perhaps spur on conversations about grand ideas. Newcall was conceived in these early days of summer.

Collectively we agreed that there was a space missing in Auckland to see contemporary art, to talk about it, read about it and think about it. We felt a need for a challenging space. Somewhere that presented physical challenges. I wanted somewhere that showed work outside of a domestic sized space. One that presented the challenge of exhibiting domestic sized work in a museum sized space, perhaps. One that removed structural intimacy and relied on the work to create its own space. Or alternatively a space that allowed for monumental work. A space, that if the work wanted it to, would take it all seriously.

These were just ideas. We had ideas of the constant movement and re-establishment of a space. One that would refresh itself and reinvent itself with each show. It became evident that we wanted to create something not limited to a space. Something, that established a different tone from other spaces but with a shared aesthetic. Something, that encouraged rigorous conversation around young artists' work. Something, that moved away from the institutional methods of presentation and review. Something, that was not a comfortable or settled arrangement. One, that would remain fluid, that had the ability to adjust and restructure itself. And importantly, something that sat apart, denied itself the role of a 'stepping stone'.

best selina.

ps. john, I saw your show. It's really beautiful.

JWK - Hey Seli.

That's a very pretty casserole. Kind of like it has been made of mint and lavender. And though I am very fond of flowery analogy and all that, maybe we are giving ourselves too much credit, as having more knowledge when we started than we actually did..

For a start, I'd say that one of the biggest incentives for the creation of a space wasn't our perceived lack of critical venues (I mean, we had Gambia and ACFA doing really great critical things) but that we wanted to create a space for ourselves in an art world that would not assimilate us straight out of art school. This was my second time finishing art school, so I had experienced the post 4th year blues, emerging out of the convenience and luxury of a system that allows and encourages you in your slightest quirk. I don't think we could really have accurately perceived a gap in the critical arena, because none of us was involved to the extent that we were aware of every thing happening every where.

I think what we were doing was going contrary to the conventional model of supply following demand. We created excess supply, by creating this new avenue (Newcall) and then slowly this avenue integrated itself into the stream of demand. Y'know, people were only just interested in the space when it first started, and I think that maybe that is natural with new spaces, but there certainly wasn't any audible sigh of relief from the art community at large when we opened (at least that I could hear..). What we did which was really quite good though, was to prepare our space well. Those months of renovations really paid off as we were able to let the architecture do a big chunk of the work for us.

It's funny though, because like you say, we were interested in having an entity that wasn't determined by the space, that was ideas driven, but we kind of ended up with the opposite. I remember I came up with the dorky idea of calling the thing a mobius-space, one where the outside and the inside were blended in a continuous line. Very M.C Escher... So that there was continuity between the experience of the gallery and the surroundings.. And now people have to buzz to be let in. Ha! Well ideas change.

Also, there was the palaver with the names. We went through all sorts of different things, flowery vagaries, rigid acronyms, one-word statements, most of which reminded me of those horrible stores like 'nest' or 'malt' (though I admit, I still like '*buildings*'... I'd still call a gallery building, or buildings). Then we settled on the name of the site. So we kind of

let the space do the talking for us, on a lot of things.

I also think that a lot of what you write is from the luxury of our current standpoint. We didn't know what we were getting into. A lot of the things we did were very definitely in line with the model of an artist-run-space as stepping stone to professional career in the 'real' art world. I don't think we did these things intentionally, but it is much harder to bother to build your own ladder when you can see one already there, within your reach, if you catch my drift. I think we have been trying to wean ourselves away from this approach, but it can be slow going. It has to be said also, that sometimes we were not helped by the attitudes artists brought with them into the space. We have seen some pretty bad shows at Newcall, ones that could be replicated in any dealer gallery and not feel out of place. Don't get me wrong, I like dealer shows, but what we offer is something really quite big. A big, clean space, where you can do anything. Maybe it is naive of me to expect that people not make domestic sized artworks and install them as if they were each an individual gem to be purchased, but really it seems that the space is being used as if there were an ultimate end of salability to individual works.

I think that we are seeing the floor used like a pedestal, when an object is placed there, it is respectfully proportioned to the other objects in the room, and you can move around it and admire it from all angles. Similarly with the walls. But that's just a pet gripe. There have been moments when the artists showing have really succeeded too, Sean Kerr's show was a cracker and I really liked the benches of Sean Grattan's recent show, especially with the interlude video. I think these shows didn't respect the gallery as a "gallery" per se and I think that it'd be good to see more projects have the guts to do this. But then I also think that it is kind of dumb to think about guts.

What do you think about the shows we have had? You and I are very different artists so I assume we have differing outlooks.

Could you talk about some of the problems we have faced that you are aware of?

best

John

SF - Hi john,

sorry it's late. esquires' internet was down .

Yes. I remember when talking about creating a space, we were all too aware of the other artist run spaces in Auckland and how they operate. We did agree that there should be a point of difference with Newcall. And I think that this changed from the idea of being a portable space, to one that would attempt to be more rigorous with its criticality. I remember one of the first things we laid down at the start of Newcall was that all shows should be accompanied by a text and a talk that would encourage critical engagement. I remember also discussing our dissatisfaction with critical responses to artworks in Auckland, being too meek, and how we might stir things up a bit. But that's perhaps all too ambitious.

There is an interesting trend that you mention John, with the dealer-esque style of shows that have appeared at Newcall. I think part of the lure for artists to make such shows is that we have a big, clean space. I remember wanting to have a gallery space that was

essentially bare, with none of the wallpaper, carpet and fixtures that regularly occupy artist-run spaces. Part of this was me thinking about my paintings in an ideal space. And white walls and a clean open space do appeal, though I am well aware of the likeness to a dealer space. The problem of painting being read in a commodity sense is an ongoing nag. There is always the fear that work will be dismissed by an audience because of this. Particularly with small, domestic sized paintings.

One thing that is problematic with the shows at Newcall, which has come up in recent conversations, is the role of artist as curator. Newcall is a big space to take on. Particularly as a lot of our artists that we have shown are fresh from the small exhibition spaces of art school, or other artist run spaces. The solo show also brings its own problems. There are a lot of difficulties which arise from artists installing and curating shows of their own work. There is a preciousness to the work that comes across in some shows, as you say treating the work like 'gems'.

It was also interesting to note that as Newcall got more shows under its belt, the more our aesthetic became defined, though not deliberately so. And often artists work began to change to fit into this aesthetic that Newcall had independently created for itself. My favorite shows were Marnie and Martin's show, 'Blue as Silver as Gold' with you, Patrick and Sasha and Sam's painting show. The first two, because they both used the space in a way that it hasn't otherwise so successfully been used. Both shows also had a really nice balance, the work was cleanly placed in the gallery but not precious, the fact that people could walk through your work, though often not on purpose, said something of this. I also liked Sam's because it was a really exciting painting show. And there never seem to be many all-painting shows around. This highlights one of the biggest problems at Newcall for me. And perhaps one that we spend a great deal of time addressing – how can we show work that gets us excited? Of course our audience extends beyond the collective, but that seems to be the first step. To get us excited about the work.

JWK - Yeah that energy thing is a big problem. I think that problem may be endemic to art in general a bit though too. Art can be so bloody boring. I know there are no hard and fast rules about caliber of art practices, but I do think that more often than not, the most exciting artworks are ones that relate to larger spheres of interaction and discourse than purely art-related ones. Of course I'm not advocating some goofy relational thing, but I do think we have had a lot of 'art' art exhibitions. They have probably been good 'art' art, but their brand of affect is limited to the small sphere of interaction of a gallery. You generally have to premeditate a position of generosity or leniency before entering an art gallery I think. It takes a certain amount of generosity of thought to consider somebody's abstraction of value as a potential lesson. You really have to humble yourself if you want to experience art as a catalyst of emotion/information/value.

Does that make sense?

What I am trying to say is that so often you have to be heavily invested in art already to be able to get anything back from it, because the nuances and specifics that separate a great show from a naff one are often ones that are only recognisable by those who are already familiar with the specialist nature of the language.

I liked Martyn and Marnie's show too. I think it should maybe have been a Martyn solo though. That was our inexperience again. That work was so good. It was like Kate

Newby's wonderful Gambia show, where the relationship between you and the object was just not argued. With Martyn's, the billboard was billboard sized. Simple. With Kate's the division was kind of akin to a full sized and overblown golden section of the gallery, where you inhabited the golden 5/16ths or whatever it is in a perfectly believable haze. These were great shows because you could never be bigger than the art. Maybe that's a simplistic view but it certainly applies to the potential of the Newcall space. You can dwarf yourself in it in a way that you can't if you are constrained by the fact that the things on display have to go into somebody's home. Lets invite Martyn to have another. He has this awesome wall sculpture/furniture thing made out of wood that he was planning for Wellington that didn't go ahead. But back to the point.

I don't have a problem with paintings or small-scale things in the space though, so long as they are purposefully produced or purposefully displayed. When things just sit there like sad little chickens is when it starts to get problematic.

Something that *is* really exciting is the new Newcall Publishing venture. It is really exciting. Hopefully Matters is something that will keep going. Do you know if anyone has put their name forward to be the editor of Matters 4?

I think there is one really important thing to acknowledge with a mind to what Newcall can do for others (aside from the product we provide in the way of exhibitions, talks and texts), and that is to serve as an example. Not in the top down kind of way, but in the way that we really didn't know quite what we were getting ourselves in for and that we kind of couldn't have done it without that naiveté, or at least, maybe we *wouldn't* have done it had we known how much work it would be. I think unless you are working a bit too hard you are not working hard enough, and often, naiveté is the only way you will undertake something that has the potential to exceed you. I think Newcall has been a really great learning curve for all of us, with the added difference that we are learning our lessons in public.

I think learning in public, so long as you learn the right lessons when they come is a commendable thing to do, otherwise you are not open to those chance things which can provide the essential material to a meaningful project. Artist-run-spaces are kind of an avenue for learning in public, generally, and I think sometimes people treat them as repositories for answers and not questions, which kind of defeats the purpose in my eyes.

448 was really great when it was around. There were heaps of mistakes there, but really good ones. The new RM is really exciting too. Maybe we need to open ourselves up to a bit more risk again?

SF - Yeah I think that's it in a nutshell. We need to take more risks. But not just us, the shows that get proposed need to take more risks. It seems a little like people at times, approach a show at Newcall as one that will get them into a gallery, or at least been seen by people who can make that happen. Which explains why so much art seems to have that aesthetic, scale etc. And with that logic why artists may play things safe.

We've had shows that perhaps didn't best use the space and ones that were a bit dry but none that any of us would really call a fuck up. Which means either all risks were pulled

off successfully or we didn't take any.

sorry I'm on a half hour lunch break trying to eat a sandwich (which I had to pick mould off) as I write this so it will have to be brief plus I overslept my alarm by an hour and a half this morning, which is why, this wasn't done before work.

Any way, I think with Newcall, Acfa, gambia castle, 488, Rm, there is a really great sense of optimism and energy. And it's great that Auckland, small as it is, has the ability to support this niche community. There is always a question of longevity, but that perhaps will be addressed when things come to their natural end.

time to go,
best,
selina

Paul G. Buchanan

Are We There Yet? A conceptual framework for evaluating democracy in Aotearoa.

Paul G. Buchanan

New Zealand has an international reputation for being a robust liberal democracy, one that is on the leading edge of democratic politics when it comes to reconciling citizenship rights in a heterogeneous society with the economic and social dilemmas produced by the fluid dynamics of an increasingly globalised world. In that measure it is considered an "exemplar" of democracy in action, because as a trade dependent and labour-poor primary and value-added export good producer, New Zealand serves as a weather vane or barometer for larger global trends.

The trouble is that the international perception of New Zealand does not necessarily accord with the perception of those who live in the country. Many Kiwis see reason to despair of New Zealand society and the political framework that governs it. Issues of corruption, crime, welfare dependency, addiction, apathy, bigotry and reverse racism, xenophobia and lack of assimilation, economic narcissism, governmental indifference and other pathologies occupy the popular imagination. For many New Zealanders, be they Pakeha, Maori or from other ethnic, national or religious backgrounds, the take on Kiwi democracy is that it is dysfunctional and needing of major reform. The trouble is that a majority may agree that democracy in Aotearoa is not working "properly," but there is no majority consensus on how to fix it. Perhaps that is due to a failure to fully appreciate what the term "democracy" means.

This extends to academic analyses of New Zealand democracy. That field is dominated by voting behaviour specialists, cultural relativists and constitutional law experts. The former are preoccupied with discerning the minutia of voting, party and coalition dynamics and media coverage of campaigns under Mixed Member Proportionality (MMP). Cultural relativists, ignoring the fact that there are many societies in which colonial and pre-colonial cultures mix, write about Aotearoa as if it were *sui generis*. As hard as it may be for some to accept, New Zealand is just another point in the spectrum of post-colonial democracies, and its issues are no more or less than in any other. As for the constitutional law experts, they are most useful in giving *ex post facto* interpretation to matters of legal import. In each case the focus is on the why and how of contemporary democratic practice in Aotearoa rather than the fundamentals of it.

Concern about the quality of democracy is not exclusive to Aotearoa.

Scholars have lamented the eroding quality of democracy in established countries (the USA and UK are glaring examples) as well as in newly democratic countries (the recent coup in Honduras showing that authoritarian legacies are alive and well over a decade after the ostensible transition to democratic rule). The concern is that any combination of electoral politics and constitutional rule now suffices as "democracy," particularly when rooted in market-based economic systems. As Lenin pointed out, such democracies are "capitalism's best possible political shell" because the emancipatory intent of democratic rule is undermined by legal sophistry and reified material hierarchies. It is elite rule by another name.

With that in mind, this essay attempts to deconstruct the concept of democracy in its basic dimensions. It does so as a primer rather than as a scholarly excursus, which among other things means that it will be devoid of citations. Instead, a short suggested bibliography is appended by way of reference.

Procedural versus Substantive Democracy.

To begin with, we must separate "democracy" into its procedural and substantive dimensions. Procedural democracy refers to the means (procedures) by which political power is acquired and maintained. Substantive democracy refers to the three levels where democratic societies are reproduced: institutional, societal and economic. I explain each in turn.

Procedural democracy is characterised by open competitive elections between self-constituted political actors awarded equal legal status and collectively organizing free from interference from the state, with an unencumbered right to vote shared by the entire adult population of citizens (and in the case of NZ, permanent residents). Elections are held at regular intervals, either chronologically pre-determined (such as in the USA) or within statutorily regulated temporal time frames (such as in NZ). This much is the obvious procedural minimum—there is more with regard to how the selection of incumbents of political decision-making positions is accomplished (i.e. things like party primaries and party lists). But the key points are the freedom of expression, preference and competition embedded in the concept of procedural democracy; and the fact that elections, in and of themselves, have no intrinsic worth. To wit: by themselves elections are just a procedure, or as a Chilean observer once commented, a type of "secular communion" held at regular intervals by the electorate to consecrate their commitment to the political form as well as to select those who shall temporarily rule.

That is where substantive democracy comes in. Elections without institutional, societal and economic underpinnings are all procedure and no substance. Ferdinand Marcos held (and won) regular elections, as did the PRI regime in Mexico for six decades and Brazilian military regime of 1964-1985. A host of contemporary authoritarian regimes hold regular elections as well, but the outcome is pre-determined: the ruling party always wins. Thus, what matters most for the constitution and consolidation of democracy is not holding elections per se, but the substantive reproduction of democracy in its institutional, societal and economic dimensions.

Institutional democracy refers to the organization of the state apparatus and collective actors, the rules that bind them, and the forms of interaction they engage. The guiding principle of institutional democracy is transparency, equality and accountability. Institutions, both public and private, big and small, operate in away that minimizes preferential bias or ascriptive intrusions in their governance and policy outputs. The notions of polyarchy and pluralism apply here. Good representation of the concept is the notion that "justice is blind" or that collective agents and public officials are responsible (effectively answerable) to their principals. Needless to say, even in an advanced liberal democracy like NZ, the reality is somewhat less than the ideal.

That may be due to difficulties at the societal level. Societal democracy refers to the inculcation of notions of consent, concession, compromise, common interest, equality, solidarity, individual and collective rights, mutual consideration, egalitarianism and legitimate exchange. This promotes general belief in tolerance, respect for difference, non-hierarchical outlooks and negotiated solutions in the pursuit of mutual second-best collective outcomes (as opposed to self-interested first choice maximization of opportunities). It also promotes a (relatively) high degree of public participation in politically oriented activity, whether it is measured by involvement in party politics, demonstrations, protests or hikoi as well as voter turnout. That is, civil society is independent and active, as opposed to controlled and contrived. This is what distinguishes democratic from authoritarian societies. Yet here too the ideal is not matched by reality even in the most mature of democracies, although it remains an aspiration.

Part of the reason societal democracy is less than perfect is due to failures to achieve economic democracy. At an economic level substantive democracy involves a general agreement within society that favours political guarantees for maintaining a minimum standard of living and just compensation for productive labour. It includes acceptance of minimum health and welfare standards for those who are structurally unemployable (i.e., through no fault of their own). The means of achieving economic democracy are much debated (for example, via "trickle down" market

effects or Keynesian welfare statism), but the fact of its necessity is not.

There is a fair bit of argument about what dimension should come first. Does procedural-institutional democracy precede societal and economic democracy (as liberal theorists claim), or, as Marxists argue, is the process the reverse? Can it be imposed by external actors, or is influence the upper limit of external democracy-promotion efforts? If so, which dimensions are best targeted? The degree to which a society has moved towards achieving procedural and substantive democracy helps distinguish between liberal, illiberal, exclusionary, delegative and radical democratic systems.

As an example, let us imagine that we can "score" democratic "quality" based on a continuum from least to most robust (please note that this is my subjective rating for heuristic purposes and does not use Freedom House or Transparency International scores). Generally speaking, arrayed on a scale of 1-10 (1=undemocratic; 10=democratic utopia), countries are considered democratic if they score above 5 on all dimensions (a minimum of 20 points). Moreover, that score is not static or immutable—it varies over time depending on socio-economic, demographic and political conditions. Thus, when I arrived in NZ in 1997 I scored the country as an 8 on a procedural level, 8 on an institutional level, 9 on a societal level and a 7 on an economic level. By 2007 my scores for NZ were 7.5, 7, 8 and 6 (a net decline of 3.5 democratic "value" points). In contrast, I had the US scored in 1997 as 6, 6, 8 and 7, moving to 5., 5.5, 7.5 and 6 under the reign of George W. Bush.

What should be noted is three things: 1) how long histories of liberal democracy do not translate into the ideal; 2) democracy can regress as well as progress in substantive as well as procedural terms; and 3) since that is the case, it is unrealistic to expect newly democratizing societies with long histories of political and social authoritarianism to be anywhere close for at least a generation, external assistance included.

Consent.

One of the most undervalued concepts in the study of democracy is the notion of consent. Yet it is an absolutely vital aspect of social discourse. "Informed consent" is considered essential for medical treatment; sexual relations should be consensual; parents must sign consent forms releasing schools and sports organisations from liability in the supervision of children, citizens consent to the decisions of their elected representatives, etc. Even so, in the study of democracy the notion of consent is conspicuous by its undervaluation even if implicit in any discussion of the term. I shall attempt to address it here. In order to do that, I must explain the two forms of political rule, and they are not democracy and dictatorship.

The two types of political rule are hegemonic and domination. Domination is rule where the population acquiesces to superior force and the socio-economic dictates of elites. Hegemony is rule by ideological leadership and consent. Consent is the willing acceptance and subjective incorporation by subordinate groups of elite ideology, political authority and socio-economic institutions. Under rule by domination people do not necessarily agree with or accept the legitimacy of the political and economic elite--they just bow before their power. Under hegemonic rule people believe in the legitimacy of the elite ideology, its political institutions and type of socio-economic organisation. They actively accept the elite worldview.

Consider this parallel in family life: children raised in abusive households do not consent to the authority of their parents; they just acquiesce to their superior strength and physical control. That relationship ends as soon as the child is old and large enough to either leave home or physically confront the abusers. In "hegemonic" households, children consent to the authority of their parents because they believe that parents always have their best interests in mind. Hegemonic regimes have an element of coercion in them (such as the discipline of good parents), but it is not the majority basis of rule. Rather, is used as a disciplinary device against ideological transgressors (which is essentially what all criminal penalties are in democracies).

Dominating elites rule primarily rule by coercion and are not concerned about securing majority consent; hegemonic elites do. The good news for those interested in authoritarian regime demise is that rule by force cannot last indefinitely: you cannot coerce or repress the majority in the same measure over extended periods of time without ideological support or increased resistance from the population. Thus it is hegemonic rule that is the most durable.

Although all episodes of domination are dictatorships properly conceived, and all democracies are ostensibly hegemonic, hegemony can be achieved by authoritarians in specific instances. The key is to substitute rule by force with ideological leadership designed to secure consent over time. Thus, the Cuban regime in the 1960s and 1970 could be considered hegemonic; so can Singapore and the People's Republic of China. People believe in, support and approve of the authoritarian leadership's way of doing things and prefer not to have things change. Conversely, democracies can lose ideological support and the consent of the majority if they fail to deliver on popular expectations or if the leadership begins to rule in its own self-interest. At that point hegemony is lost and domination begins. This was seen in several Latin American countries in the 1990s (think of Peru under Alberto Fujimori as the salient case).

The key to securing and maintaining mass consent is to simultaneously meet popular expectations on the political, social and economic levels. Consent needs to be simultaneously reproduced on all three dimensions for hegemony to obtain. Although popular support may ebb and wane on any one dimension at a given moment in time, the aggregate must be maintained. Thus, for example, the economic reforms of the 1980s caused severe dislocations in New Zealand, but it did not fundamentally undermine majority support for democratic institutions or social mores. However, when a crisis on one level deepens and extends into the other two, then the possibility of an "organic crisis of the state" (to use Gramsci's term) becomes real. That is the revolutionary moment. In order to stave off that possibility, hegemonic regimes continuously engage in reform mongering, which is the proactive use of socio-economic and political reforms to address popular grievances and dissipate discontent before they become a matter of mass protest (and is the opposite of crisis management, which is reactive to public pressure).

The bottom line is that consent is given willfully, actively and freely. It implies (relative) freedom of choice in doing so on any intersubjective dimension. Acquiescence is unwillingly given, passive and a product of the fear of consequences. It implies limited or no freedom of choice. Majority consent is the basis of long-term rule; majority acquiescence is not. Of course, consent can be manipulated or, as Burowoy argues, manufactured. Parties, unions, firms and other collective actors frame/channel the hegemonic "debate" in ways that reaffirm rather than challenge the status quo. Through such agents elites may construct the terms of the "debate" in a way that clouds the nature of their relationship with subordinate groups or which diverts attention from the essentials of that relationship and towards incidentals like sports, popular culture, nationalism etc. But even if the debate does not "touch the essential" (another Gramsci phrase), it does not mean that it cannot be addressed should citizens demand it. That is why subordinate groups need to be autonomous and self-aware in the expression of their collective interests.

The most important aspect of consent, at least in terms of the construction of democracy, is its contingency. Consent is not given once, forever. It is, in reality, contingent on popular expectations being met over time. Think of it this way: most adults in their 40s will not consent to be paid the same salary as they were as teenagers in their first job. They expect more because of their experience, knowledge, discipline etc. Likewise, people living under hegemonic rule demand that their expectations be met at the political, social and economic levels. They want the political leadership to be responsive to their concerns; they want the social order to be peaceful; they want their material needs to be met. Moreover, what constituted the minimum "threshold" of consent in one era will not necessarily suffice to maintain it in the next. In most democracies today, people expect more out of life (and from the state) than they did in 1880 or 1980. Should their expectations not be met, then the slide towards organic crisis begins.

In democratic capitalism mass contingent consent is two-sided: capitalists consent to a restrained rate of profit and limits on their exploitation via the regulatory and fiscal intervention of a State ruled by majority-elected and responsive political classes (politicians and state managers); subordinate groups consent to the (structural) rule of capital in exchange for incremental increases in their standards of living and freedom of opportunity within the productive apparatus and social division of labour. Together, this dual consent constitutes the democratic class compromise that is, however implicit rather than formalized, at the heart of all democratic capitalist societies.

Thus the “matrix” of consent requires simultaneous reproduction of dual thresholds of consent on all three dimensions leading to a contingent class compromise over time—no mean feat, yet the basis for hegemonic rule in a democratic capitalist society.

That brings up a sub-set of the larger consent equation: delegation of authority. What exactly do people consent to when they delegate authority to elected officials and state bureaucrats? What does the act of voting give as titular rights to elected and non-elected authorities, and how much does it hold them responsible for their actions? How is the “power to decide” delegated, and what are the substantive areas covered by that (implied) delegation? This is important because governments claim “mandates,” which presumably are based upon implicitly given consent (via the vote). But what are the outer limits of such mandates, at least in terms of what the voting population explicitly consents to?

For example, in Aotearoa do citizens delegate the authority to spying domestically as well as internationally, and if so, on what grounds and under whose authorization? Do they delegate authority to make economic policy or parts thereof without popular consultation? Do they delegate authority to politicians to set their own salaries and attendant perks? Do they delegate authority to send their sons and daughters in military service to foreign conflict zones in which there is no immediate national security threat? What is it, exactly, that people “delegate” to political elites in a democracy? Is it a delegation of broad government policy but not specific powers on more narrow issues, or is it *carte blanche*? Is acceptance of government edicts and laws a true reflection of the delegation clause inherent in the granting of mass contingent consent, or is it merely acquiescence? If not delegation-as-consent, are such edicts and laws legitimate?

There is more to the picture but for the moment this sketch will have to suffice. One thing to bear in mind is that the pursuit and maintenance of mass contingent consent is actually an argument in favour of

parliamentary democracy over its presidential alternative, and in favor of MMP over first-past-the-post, two-party systems. The reason is that parliamentary balances under MMP systems are (theoretically at least) more finely attuned to the fluid dynamics and complexities of reproducing a minimum threshold of mass contingent consent in heterogeneous societies in which individual and collective expectations often differ (when not counterpoised)

Uncertainty.

The thing people fear the most is uncertainty. Bad or good, things that are known can be prepared for and dealt with. Things that are unknown can be ignored. But things that are known in the abstract but unknown in their specifics cause visceral angst in human beings. We know that we are going to die, but not how. We know that airplanes crash out of the sky, but not when. Many terminally ill people have noted that it is the uncertainty of their prognosis that is the hardest aspect of their condition, and that the final prognosis gives them the peace of mind to accept their fate. None other than Donald Rumsfeld draws the bottom line: There are known knowns and known unknowns, but the problem lies with the unknown unknowns.

People consequently spend their whole lives hedging against uncertainty. We cling to our parents at the sight of new and strange things, waiting for their reassurance that all is OK. We go to school and educate ourselves so that we can increase our career and income prospects. We form emotional attachments and enter into relationships in order to avoid the uncertainties of solitary existence. We buy insurance. We double-check our parachutes and bungee cords. We clean our guns, we check the oil and fluids before long trips--our lives are a long list of hedging against the uncertainties of the moment and the future. The point is simple: there is an innate fear of uncertainty inherent in the human condition, which we constantly try to overcome by imposing degrees of certainty in our lives.

That makes democracy a most remarkable (and some would say unnatural) form of political rule. As part of the quest for certainty, humans establish social hierarchies. Firms, schools, churches, unions, parties, even the family itself, are hierarchical organisations. Thus authoritarianism, as the ultimate political expression of social hierarchy, is also the ultimate guarantor of political certainty. As the saying goes, Mussolini made the trains run on time. Many have argued that authoritarianism (especially in non-Anglo Saxon societies) is the more natural form of political regime. Perhaps there is some truth to that. After all, under authoritarian regimes there is the certainty of punishment for voicing opposition, the certainty of favour given to allies and toadies, the certainty that you will not be bothered if you keep your head down and go to work or school, the certainty of imprisonment or death should one confront the hierarchical status quo. Authoritarians are all about certainty,

and in that measure they are naturally reassuring to a risk-adverse and uncertain public.

Yet, democracy is unique in that it takes what we fear the most--uncertainty--and turns it into the centerpiece of the political system. Elections are no more than institutionalised (if not ritualised) uncertainty. At the moment of ballot casting, no one knows the outcome. To be sure, incumbents may have an advantage over opponents, opinion polls attempt to semi-scientifically show clear tendencies among voting preferences, and electoral fraud abounds at all levels in many democratic regimes. These occur because contenders for elected positions are trying to achieve some measure of certainty over the outcome, which creates a whole industry of prognosticators and facilitators attempting to do the same for profit. In other words, the measure of a mature democratic system is the relatively high degree of uncertainty of its electoral processes (i.e. procedures for political leadership selection).

The more certain the outcome of any given election, the more undemocratic the political system in which it occurs (fully understanding that popular support in advance of elections can make outcomes all but certain--but the point is that we do not absolutely know that at the time our ballots are cast). But that still does not address the existential dilemma, which is that we want to have some degree of certainty about where our lives are heading, politically and otherwise.

The answer, as it turns out, is counter-intuitive yet simple. Institutionalised uncertainty in the form of regular free and transparent elections amongst a universally enfranchised adult population is not only a contradiction of the social hierarchies that are the organisational bulk of most human society. They are also a guarantee of accountability. That is the beauty of the mechanism, and why it needs to be protected. Hierarchy may guarantee some degree of certainty, but it reduces accountability in most instances. The duty of those at the top of social hierarchies is to themselves and other social leaders, and much less so to their subordinates. The reason? Hierarchical accountability leads to more certainty in decision-making, which makes for better inter-elite trust and bargaining (if not better outcomes for all). That is why genuine grassroots consultation in hierarchical social systems is an exception rather than the rule.

Uncertain electoral outcomes are what keep politicians honest and accountable. No matter what they do, they know that at regular 2, 3, 4 or 6-year intervals they will be held to account by the voting population. While they may try to hide their corruption and personal malfeasance, politicians ultimately have to deliver on the promises and behave according to popular expectations of office-holders (or at least disguise

their behaviour accordingly). It is the uncertainty of the electoral moment that hangs, like the shadow of the future, over present political decision-making; politicians need to think of the future electoral consequences of their current decisions. This may, from time to time, lead to sub-optimal policy outcomes since popular majority opinion may not always be informed on specific subjects (the despicable treatment of Ahmed Zaoui by the Fifth Labour government was due, in part, to its calculation that rough treatment of a Muslim asylum seeker would be countenanced by the New Zealand public in the wake of 9/11--and it was).

The larger point is that institutionalised uncertainty in the form of open and transparent elections at regular intervals is a hedge against unaccountability on the part of the political elite. Thus the siren song of politicians who say that is in the general interest for them to make policy unencumbered by popular opinion or who ram through policy without popular consultation must, at all costs, be resisted. Politicians may argue in favour of such powers on efficiency grounds, but in actual fact they believe that the public are either stupid or suffer from shortsightedness and political amnesia, thereby leading to no adverse electoral consequences and a reaffirmation of elitist policy-making in the event that their arguments prevail. The voting public must consequently run against instinct and embrace uncertainty when it comes to the political system and policy-making, since it is that embrace that promotes accountability from those chosen to lead it. Put another way, government assurances that it has the "best interests" of the nation in mind when it comes to policy should be subjected to the (ideological) reality of check of citizen remonstrance. That requires an interested, if not always informed electorate.

Entitlements.

One of the most divisive issues in modern democracies is the notion of entitlements. In New Zealand the dividing line mostly centres on interpretations of Te Tiriti and its sequels. In this discussion I shall try to unpack the concept in order to phrase its importance to sustainable democracy in broader terms.

Let us first clarify what entitlements are not. Entitlements are not objective rights. Objective rights are universal standards guaranteed and enforced by the State. Contrary to what many believe and the desires of constitution-makers, they are not naturally given or divinely ordained. Rights are not "objectively" or materially inherent in the human condition (contrary to what theologians and natural law and capitalist theorists believe). People are born into social contexts in which the notion of inalienable or universal rights may or may not exist, and may shift depending on circumstance (think of the US government stance on torture under W. Bush). Individual and collective rights are not guaranteed *Deus ex machina* but by human invention. They are a human artifice encoded, enshrined or ensured by human instrument. Thus, be it the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights or civil liberties statutes in any

given country, universal rights standards are effectively created by and enforced by States, which are also the primary abusers of individual and collective rights. Universal rights in principle are selectively upheld in practice depending on the disposition of States and the regimes that govern them. In reality they are not natural, innate, inherent or immutable, but instead are the intellectual product of human beings (elites, for the most part) acting upon notions of collective interest in specific historical contexts. In saying this I mean no disrespect to natural rights theorists and the human rights community (of which I used to be part). I am merely pointing out that the construction of "rights," universal or privileged (such as property rights) is just that, and not an act of God(des) or Nature.

They may overlap with universal rights and are often confused with them, but entitlements do not originate in the State and are not always universal or objective. Instead, entitlements are subjectively driven assessments of what is expected or "due" a person or group based upon their location in the socio-economic and political context. Such assessments are group and context specific in origins, although "outsiders" may believe in their validity. Thus, Kazak goat herders may feel that they are entitled to guaranteed pasture; Taiwanese teenagers may feel that they are entitled to MP3s; Cubans may feel entitled to first class health and education services; Singaporeans may feel entitled to cheap public housing and food; Argentines may believe that they are entitled to a daily ration of "*bife*" (steak); Tongan fishing villagers may feel entitled to a portion of any day's catch; Salafists may believe that they are entitled to religious freedom in Christian societies; Pashtun fathers may feel entitled to marry off their daughters as they see fit, and to kill them if they disobey; African-Americans may feel entitled to affirmative action; physically disabled people may feel entitled to accessible facilities; religious, ethnic and linguistic minorities may feel entitled to observe their differences in a preferential way; Maori and other indigenous groups in post colonial societies may feel that they are entitled to the land, sea and air that comprise the physical boundaries in which they exist, and to continuing the cultural practices of their ancestors. The point is that all people have a sense of entitlement to something, and that something is a product of historical events and political practice translated into current perspective, grievance, and approach, all subjectively assessed from the standpoint of the individual or group in question. Although they may be well founded and quite necessary for the people in question to lead fulfilling lives, and may in fact be universally shared, these notions of entitlements are not, by definition, rights.

Authoritarians do not worry about reconciling their political projects with notions of entitlement. They can recognize or disregard entitlements as they please, using force as the ultimate arbiter of disputes arising from differences over who is entitled to what. They can do the same for rights. In democracies however, particularly those in heterogeneous societies with past records of oppression, exploitation and expropriation,

addressing the issue of selective group entitlements is central to regime stability. That is where the so-called rights of the majority may run in conflict with the entitlements of minorities. Rights are always universal and State-granted; entitlements may or not be. The question in democracies is how to reconcile them.

Depending on the political strength of any given actor, selective notions of entitlement can be pushed onto the policy-making agenda. If successful, the promotion of entitlements can lead to legislative recognition, which in turn can lead to the treatment of entitlements as rights. The key to democratic stability is for selective entitlements to be accepted by the majority as if they were universal rights. That assumes majority consensus on the historical record that produces a shared definition and perspective on selected group entitlements as well as their means of achievement or redress. That is, above all, an ideological project.

Rights are defined, bestowed and enforced by the State, in a top-down process of elite attribution and mass application. Entitlements are construed "from below," originating in grassroots conceptualisations of what is (historically) due to or expected by a given group or groups. In the measure that selective notions of entitlement enter into the majority consciousness as reasonable and fair given a particular history and current context, they then have the chance to become part of the policy process. In the measure that they enter into the purview of the State (as the operational agent for the implementation of policy), they can become synonymous with the general interest. At that point they become synonymous with rights, which means that they are State-sanctioned and enforced. But however conflated their usage may become, entitlements can never be construed as rights unless they are universally shared. That is why debates on selective entitlements are so heated and divisive. Be it on matters of cultural identity, resource extraction or political representation, the conflict between selective entitlements and universal rights is a permanent feature of the social landscape in modern democratic societies.

I admit to not having a complete grasp on how to reconcile group entitlements and universal rights in a democracy. Yet it seems that it is one of the most important and intractable issues in the reproduction of the democratic form. Yet it is the resolution of the entitlements versus rights conundrum that lies at the heart of sustainable democracy in the early 21st century. And that, again, may be in the first instance more of an ideological project than a matter of policy.

Contingency and self-restraint.

In section two of this essay I mentioned the notion of contingent consent. I noted that consent is not given once, forever, but instead is contingent

on collective and individual expectations being met at the economic, social and political levels. In this section I shall attempt to broaden that notion.

Adam Przeworski pointed out that democracy is a contingent outcome of conflicts. No more and no less, "democracy" is a particular method for resolving political conflicts between competing groups and collective agents. There are other methods of resolving such conflicts, but those involve degrees of coercion, intimidation and imposition rather than peaceful resolution of competing interests (i.e., the authoritarian solution). Democracy is unique in that it is a political system and society that is based upon the contingent, amicable resolution of conflicts between collective and individual interests. It is therefore unusual in the sense that it has an institutional bias in favour of compromise rather than imposition. It is unique amongst social hierarchies because of its preference for the middle view, rather than elite preference or imposition. In New Zealand the bias is evident in the preference for state (via the courts) mediation over litigation when it comes to civil disputes, with mediators explicitly charged to find a "reasonable middle" to disputes unless there is obvious evidence of malfeasance by any party. However, the orientation towards peaceful or amicable conflict resolution in pursuit of mass consensus adds weight to the contingency of the resolution in question. Once again, we must unpack the term in order to understand its broader implications.

Democracy survives in the measure that it meets popular (not just majority) expectations. Expectations are a product of popular conceptions of entitlements and rights, often enshrined in law but always perpetuated in folklore and myth. The key for all governments is to manage expectations so that the political form can be reproduced. Authoritarian regimes reduce expectations (often to zero) in certain policy areas in order to satisfy those in others (if at all; in their most degenerate stage authoritarian regimes become mere kleptocracies, ideologically perverse fetishists or homicidal cliques, as the regimes led by Anastasio Somoza, Kim Jung-Il or Robert Mugabe attest). The difference is that democracies must satisfy popular expectations in virtually all policy areas, or at least convince the public that a commonly-recognized hierarchy of needs must be satisfied in order of priority, so as to reproduce mass contingent consent successfully. Everything political, in other words, is contingent in a democracy.

Democratic rule is contingent on popular expectations being met, and those expectations are raised or lowered by party promises while in government and opposition. In the measure that popular expectations of policy outcomes are broadly met, the government survives and the regime prospers. In the measure that popular expectations are not met governments fall and regimes are undermined. The reason for the latter is that, when confronted with repeated failures to meet expectations by

ideologically different governments, popular confidence in the regime type as a whole begins to diminish. If prolonged, such a loss of confidence can lead to withdrawal of mass contingent consent to the regime, as people do not differentiate between the inaction or failures of particular governments and the regime as a whole (this was seen in Latin America in the 1990s and led directly to the resurgence of indigenous socialism in that region in the 2000s).

Put another way: how many people, including those in the media, confuse the term "government" and "regime" when addressing issues of policy even during stable times? (another reason why conceptual precision should be a requirement in journalism as well as academic discourse). The result in any event is mass withdrawal of consent and a crisis of the regime. Hence, of all regime types, democracy is the most contingent on popular expectations being continuously met, which in turn forces political elites to frame policy debates in ways that allow them to do so. The more informed the public and the stronger the sense of entitlement and basic rights in society, the harder it is for elites to control the terms of those debate.

How then, can democratic governments continuously meet popular, or at least majority expectations with an eye towards peacefully resolving collective conflicts in order to secure ongoing contingent mass consent given any particular mix of perceived rights and entitlements? The answer lies at the heart of democratic society and is what distinguishes it from all non-democratic social hierarchies: self-restraint. Collective and individual self-restraint is the hallmark of "mature" democracies.

Contrary to economic logics that posit that the uncoordinated actions of self-interested maximizers of opportunities lead the market to clear in an equilibrated state, strategic interaction in democracies is predicated on the conscious adoption by collective actors (and individuals) of self-restraint when pursuing their interests. The use of self-restraint (or self-binding strategies) is done in order to pursue mutual second-best options rather than first choices, since the unfettered pursuit of the latter can lead to unbridled conflict that, although individually optimal for the victors, is collectively sub-optimal in terms of social peace and regime stability (as it is inherently unstable and prone to challenge).

In other words, democratic actors adopt mutual second best strategies that if individually sub-optimal are collectively efficient, in no small measure because they distribute the costs and benefits of solution sets in a fair and Pareto-optimal fashion (Pareto optimality is a condition whereby actors cannot advance their individual positions without jeopardizing those of other actors. Hence a solution is Pareto optimal when no actors can advance their positions without hurting others). Under some conditions

solution sets can also be Nash equilibrated in that all actors achieve their best possible collective outcomes given the presence of competitors. In terms of democratic collective action, the ideal solution set is Nash equilibrated and Pareto optimal.

Actors may use militant-moderate strategies to pursue their interests, in which they stake a militant position or demand in order to create space for the achievement of moderate compromises (as occurs in collective bargaining), but the objective is the moderate goal, not the militant demand. In adopting the mutual second best approach to strategic interaction, collective actors and individuals take into account the interests and strategies of other actors. The democratic "game," in other words, is coordinated, with actor coordination premised on mutual self-restraint.

Recall that capitalist democracy is itself a product of self-restraint and compromise on the part of capitalists and workers: capitalists consent to democracy and a reduced rate of exploitation, while workers consent to private ownership of the means of production and the universal logics of capitalist markets. Democracy is, in effect, a grand compromise born of collective self-restraint in pursuit of mass contingent consent. The problem is in the details, and the asymmetrical power dynamics that underpin arguments about detail.

The threat to democracy comes when collective actors and individuals abandon the practice of self-restraint. Often this is done because the actor in question believes in the superiority of its view on a given social construct or policy issue, but it can also be simply a matter of greed or ingrained authoritarianism. In New Zealand the political party that is the closest to this approach is ACT, which sees its market/libertarian/social authoritarian beliefs (there is a contradiction there) as superior to all other political views and thus not worth compromising. Most other parties, to include the Greens (the next most "principled" Party), understand the give and take needed for the collective mutual second best to obtain over time, but ACT remains zealous, some might say extremist, in its approach to policy-making. In the measure that it continues to do so it is, consequently, a threat to democratic stability.

As with the other concepts examined in this essay, there is more to the discussion of contingency and self-restraint in a democracy, particularly the macro-, meso- and micro-levels in which they are manifest and the tradeoffs that occur within and between each level. Suffice it to note here that the salient characteristics of democracies are their ability to inculcate in rulers and ruled the notion that self-restraint is an important ideal in and of itself, and that all political decisions and policy outputs must subject themselves to the contingency test that diminishes

uncertainties, upholds universal rights, satisfies entitlements, improves accountability and reproduces mass consent over time. In the measure that they do so, we can say that such democracies are "hegemonic."

Conclusion.

From this discussion the question arises as to whether Aotearoa has achieved a measure of substantive and procedural democracy so as to be properly classified as truly "liberal" or mature. As was mentioned above, I ranked New Zealand relatively high on both the procedural and substantive dimensions when I arrived in the country, but have seen a backslide towards in the decade since my arrival. The retrograde move is clearly evident in political society, where the major parties have adopted US style attack politics that focus on issues of character and personality rather than policy (something amply evident in the tone of parliamentary debate). The acidic tone in politics is reflected in civil society and has been abetted by the inculcation of market-driven logics of personal and collective self-interest that have had a deleterious impact on notions of collective solidarity, empathy and compassion. Bullying shares space with charity in the national character, and if present in the past it now appears as the dominant approach to differences in perspective and power. To put it differently, civil society in New Zealand has been squeezed in an increasingly authoritarian direction from the top (political society) and below (the economy) thereby reversing a long tradition of enlightened and egalitarian approaches to social difference. When zero-sum replaces even-sum or positive-sum as the main approach to economic, social and political competition, then the outlook for democracy in Aotearoa is not good.

Perhaps it takes a foreign-born permanent resident to see the decline in the quality of New Zealand democracy most clearly. But even if that it is not the case, it remains the duty of fair-minded New Zealanders of all persuasions to redress that decline. Because in terms of democracy, Aotearoa is not quite there yet.

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Daniel Webby

I do not recognise the political body.

Which is to say the political body is not like my own.

By which I mean, the greater constituency of my being remains largely unrepresented.

To which I might add, remains without means of representation.

Which raises the question; does the unrecognised state fail by proxy or by neglect?

I am less convinced by theories of knowing than by the sound of water poured from a height.

William Hsu

To Form Creative Partnerships with Public Schools

In his 2008 Ted Prize wish speech, American writer, editor and publisher Dave Eggers spoke about how 826 Valencia; a homework center/pirate supply store in his publishing company McSweeney's office provides a conduit in bringing two communities (the writers' community and that of local students) together. Drawing on the flexible hours that many of his writer colleagues worked and an interest in addressing one of the key challenges that public school teachers face; the need to give individual attention, between the hours after school and when the students go home, writers give up their time to work with students on their homework. The goal is one-on-one attention. 826 Valencia provided an opportunity for students from public schools (some poorly funded) and/or non-English speaking families to be empowered through the written word. In a context where their learning experience is reframed in a pirate supply store and more importantly where their thoughts and words are supported and honoured by professional writers who work side-by-side and model the behaviour of writers to the students. The transformative partnership has resulted in an "addictive" attitude from students towards writing and homework.¹

I came across Dave Eggers' talk about a year ago. It has been an inspiration for me as an example of the potential of unlikely partnerships and a reminder of the power of collective resilience²; communities helping people in ways that government can't or choose not to. Not long before this encounter with Eggers the new New Zealand Curriculum was released and is currently in the process of being rolled out in schools. Amongst the emphasis in this new document, a partnership between schools, students and communities has been foregrounded. However, the new government's budget announcement in May seems to have taken a turn from these initial goals. Amongst the funding cuts is the Artists in Schools programme. The Artists in Schools programme forms partnerships between people in the field of visual and performing arts with schools where a different learning context/experience maybe co-constructed. These partnerships are typically for a sustained period of time of up to 10 weeks where the artist(s) working collaboratively with the classroom teacher can decide on how he/she/they would work with the students depending on the students' needs and strengths. Though I have never been part of the programme, reading through some of the digital stories and case studies online³ I am a firm believer that it is a meaningful and rich partnership that uses very small amount of resources to achieve much of what the new curriculum sets out to achieve. On top of that the programme potentially offers some balancing of the disparity between rural schools and schools in main centres' capacity to access art practices.

With the demise of the Artists in Schools programme in sight and the example of 826 Valencia at the back of my mind, I am interested as to whether a possible conduit may be initiated and produced by the creative communities that will allow for a direct and continued engagement with public schools. I believe such an undertaking will require us to be deeply aware of our interconnectedness to the communities that surrounds us. It will require collaboration, generosity and a re-evaluation of the ways in which the surplus of our society is redistributed.⁴ It will require us to suspend our own interests and requirements temporarily to look for ways that we might be useful to others. I believe in the notion of ownership of our immediate communities, in the sense of shared care and responsibility. The expression "he rangatira taatou katoa" meaning we are all chiefs can be used to provide a way to think about relationships between communities and schools. Within this expression I understand the

position of a chief to mean one where he/she shares ownership of things that happen in his/her community and to share a sense of responsibility for the individual and collective potentials as well as shortcomings. I also believe in collective action that functions as a moderating influence that is gradual rather than radical. That is direct rather than symbolic. That is sustained rather than temporary.

Why schools? Because of the compulsory nature of schooling in New Zealand. Because school is at a time in an individual's life where they are least in control. Because children and youth in school have their rights and potentials defined by others. Because of the apparent disparity in the distribution of resources in that sector. Because it is a place where we can address feelings of disempowerment and assist young people to gain control over their own life directions.

Presently the government is focussing its emphasis on literacy and numeracy for school education. The exclusion of other modes of skills and intelligences is not only short sighted it could prevent a range of individual and collective potentials from being uncovered. Being part of communities of artists who frequently and consistently utilise and understand the value of the range of different intelligences that we have capacity for I feel that it is not out of place for us to put some brain thrust into how we might creatively shift this imbalance. To instigate models that will be responsive to the New Zealand context and sustainable to achieve the aspirations our social imagination might lead to.

-William Hsu, 2009

¹http://www.ted.com/talks/lang/eng/dave_eggert_makes_his_ted_prize_wish_once_upon_a_school.html

¹ "I wish that you - you personally and every creative individual and organization you know - will find a way to directly engage with a public school in your area and that you'll then tell the story of how you got involved, so that within a year we have 1,000 examples of transformative partnerships.

... We hope that the attendees of this conference will usher a new era of participation in our public schools. We hope that you will take the lead in partnering your innovative spirit and expertise with that of innovative educators in your community. Always let the teachers lead the way, they will tell you how to be useful.

I hope that you will step in and help out. There is a million ways you can walk up to your local school and consult with the local teachers, they will tell you how to help."

² <http://www.metropolism.org/features/interview-with-binna-choi-casco/>

³ <http://www.artistsalliance.org.nz/html/education.php>,

http://arts.unitec.ac.nz/artistsinschools/digital_stories/

⁴ http://www.messhall.org/ten_points.html

Elizabeth Coleman

The Bennington Curriculum: A New Liberal Arts

Speech by
Elizabeth Coleman
President of Bennington College

*Delivered at the Celebration of Bennington College's 75th Anniversary
October 6, 2007*

* * *

Much of what you have seen this weekend celebrates Bennington's remarkable history and its very lively present. My job is to talk with you tonight about its future—about a new initiative that we think is worthy of this moment.

About a month ago I went to a Monet exhibit at the Clark Art Institute in Williamstown, Massachusetts. It was of relatively unknown works—many of them lacking in that feel of familiarity one associates with an artist who has such a distinctive signature in our imaginations. So I was prepared to be surprised. But nothing could have prepared me for the moments of transfixing delight that I experienced.

I knew in a day or so I was going to begin teaching a new kind of course called a *design lab*. The subject of the lab is *Rethinking Education* and it has emerged out of work that is currently going on in planning Bennington's next new adventure. I knew we and our students would be focused laser-like on the huge question of what it will take to do something about the abysmal condition of education in this country. I knew that everything we did would be honing in on that daunting challenge—anything that did not take us closer to that objective would have to be put aside.

And I imagined, as I stood steeped in the pleasure of Monet, that maybe the course should start by visiting the Clark to remind us that however vast, grand, all-consuming the territory was that the class was about to enter, it could not contain the dimensions of a fully lived life. No single perspective, however majestic, can contain them. The wonder of some things is their astonishing singularity, their power in themselves to capture and enthrall us.

Tonight I am attempting a rough approximation of such a visit.¹ By talking with you in the midst of these images behind me, I hope to insure that you know when I speak about the extent of the unmet challenges and betrayals of higher education, the magnitude of the deterioration of our public life, the ambition of Bennington's new objectives—that big as this canvas is, it is not the all of it.

So what was I going to do in that classroom and what made me think that it made sense to be teaching a course, predominantly for freshmen, with the explicit, unqualified object of effecting national policy in education?

To answer that question we need to start with the world the course is addressing. It's in terrible trouble and that trouble is everywhere, whether we are talking about poverty, the environment, the use of force, health, governance, or education.

- At a time when the wealth of the world is expanding dramatically, human suffering, because of horrendous poverty, expands at a similar, maybe greater pace.
- For decades we have known that our escalating consumption of energy is unsustainable. And over the last twenty years we have been warned that industrialization and population pressures on the environment

¹ You will need to imagine flanking me as I speak two works by Monet: a hauntingly beautiful portrait of a woman and an elegant pastel landscape.

are likely to upset the ecological balances of the planet in potentially catastrophic ways. Yet the U.S. is particularly negligent in developing comprehensive strategies in response.

- **At a time when an unparalleled opportunity to influence the planet resides in what is arguably its oldest living democracy, we have seen a predilection for the use of force that is harrowing,** only to be matched by an equivalent distaste for alternative, non-violent modes of intervening on the world's stage. At the same time all of that firepower appears impotent to halt the slaughter going on in Darfur and Myanmar. The role, it would seem, for the sane and the decent is to watch.
- **Our capacity to improve the quality and the duration of human lives has increased significantly through advances in the health sciences during the last century. Nonetheless the tide of unnecessary death and unspeakable suffering continues to rise** because of our abject failure to distribute adequate medical care. And we in the United States know that this phenomenon is not limited to countries that are poor. Here, too, we still await a policy that might take on the most egregious dimensions of this untenable situation.
- **On issues of governance, one scarcely knows where to begin.** Until recently it was reasonable to presume that the greatest challenges to securing human freedom and dignity existed in the authoritarian states and in the emerging democracies. Not so any longer. Unimaginable as it may have been less than ten short years ago, the greatest assault on fundamental democratic institutions has occurred in the world's most mature democracy—the separation of powers, respect for civil liberties, the rule of law, the separation of church and state, the role of the media. And how do we estimate its cost both to this country and the world for which we once served as a model? And who would have imagined that it could occur so blatantly, so thoroughly, so rapidly with scarcely a bump in the road?
- **To turn to the subject of the design lab I am teaching—education—here again the United States served as a model to the world with its public school system. Here, too, our position has radically altered.** Despite having a research

establishment that is the envy of the world, more than half of the American public does not believe in evolution. And a good deal fewer than that understand it. Mastery of basic skills and a bare minimum of cultural literacy elude vast numbers of our students. Schools are often experienced as cold, grim, and lifeless places. In addition to blighted lives, the vital connection between education, democracy, and a vibrant citizenship—once the bedrock of public education in this country—has atrophied, making the perpetuation of that democracy increasingly precarious.

One might imagine that in such a time the public would be galvanized. Not so—beyond elections there is close to zero evidence of participation in public life, and we rank 114th in the world in our level of participation in elections. In Hannah Arendt's eloquent and succinct words: Citizenship is "the lost treasure" of American political life.

We—all of us—increasingly talk as if voting were an accomplishment and the upper limit of our public responsibilities. It is difficult to imagine that this was once a country that understood government to be of the people, by the people, and for the people. The call to greatness in Adlai Stevenson's invocation: "As citizens of this democracy you are the rulers and the ruled, the law givers and the law abiding, the beginning and the end" has been reduced to the idea of citizen as taxpayer. And as Daniel Kemmis, the former mayor of Missoula, Montana, reminds us: "Taxpayers bear a dual relationship to government, neither half of which has anything at all to do with democracy... people who call themselves taxpayers have long since stopped even imagining themselves...governing."

If citizenship is mentioned at all, it is almost certain to be about rights, accompanied by an almost perfect silence with respect to personal, civic, and collective responsibilities. And it is rights understood as uncompromising, adversarial, isolating, litigious. They are to be guarded jealously against the other who might insufficiently appreciate them—pushing away from the idea and ideal of the citizen as one who embraces collaboration in a shared identity with others that transcends differences.

Insofar as citizenship is taught in elementary and secondary schools, the student's relationship to government is reduced to that of being a passive spectator,

learning the workings of its machinery. The only activity called for is somehow to remember how government works, for reasons that do not include using it oneself or otherwise influencing it. At best one learns how to keep score.

This is a devastating loss when we consider that educational institutions are uniquely capable of providing an especially fertile soil for the growing of citizens. Civic consciousness and behavior are formed at the intersection of study and engagement—reflection and action—and in public settings where difference and conflict are plentiful and treated as assets, instead of liabilities.

We do no better in colleges and universities when it comes to nurturing the habits and values of an active citizenry. For the last century there has been a growing emphasis on technical virtuosity characterized by its incomprehensibility beyond a select few; a drastic limiting of the idea of truth (if it has any currency at all) to mere technical competence; and an assumption that the expert is the one and only model of intellectual accomplishment.

Values are further diminished by religiously avoiding any criteria that would make it possible to distinguish between the relative values of the subject matters we teach. Meanwhile the number of subjects taught only gets larger and larger and larger as their domains of inquiry typically get smaller and smaller. Every subject is equal, nothing is more important than anything else.

In short, the trajectories of specialization, an emphasis on technical mastery, neutrality as a condition of intellectual integrity, leave us unable and disinclined to take on the real world obligations of citizenship. Such obligations are much too open-ended, contentious, messy, value-laden, and dependent on capacities radically different from those of a narrowly conceived and technical expertise. The challenges of citizenship are not akin to those of choosing a major nor are they compatible with a view of life in which the highest activity is pursuing research in one's area of specialization.

The aversion within the academy to tackling such problems, no matter how pressing, can scarcely be exaggerated. Even when the very foundations on which we exist are under direct and blatant attack, the silence is deafening. When faith is presented as a legitimate ground for establishing empirical truths, we are seeing more than an assault on evolution, or even on the whole of science. The rule of reason

itself—even more fundamental, the very idea of the secular—are the real objects of attack.

The place of religion is not what is at risk in this country. What is threatened is whether there is any room for the secular. We are told that schools should teach creationism, but I have not heard anyone argue that the synagogues, churches, mosques, and tabernacles should be teaching the second law of thermodynamics or the Federalist Papers. In fact, the area being squeezed is the legitimate range of the secular. It doesn't get any more hazardous than that: The very DNA of public non-sectarian education is the rule of reason and the undiluted authority of the secular.

Nonetheless, beyond some efforts by scientists to push back on the anti-evolution front, there is little or no reaction. This seemingly impenetrable detachment is buttressed by the silo mentality endemic to contemporary academic life. An oft heard response to the suggestion that business as usual might not do under these circumstances is: "Well, I'm not a biologist so it's not for me to say."

The veritable explosion of community service programs in high schools and colleges might suggest a very different picture than what I am painting. But wonderful and important as service is, surprisingly, it often limits the realm of civic action rather than extends it.

Situations are typically sought where there is clear agreement about purposes such as teaching literacy, or working in soup kitchens, or building homes in Costa Rica or New Orleans. The choice of what to do in the world, itself, is experienced as fundamentally unproblematic. This uncompromising nature of purposes tends to make politics—by its need to compromise at every level, including purposes—seem corrupt, distasteful. Meanwhile opportunities to explore the policies that cause the unacceptable rates of illiteracy, the desperate levels of poverty, and the grave injustices in the distribution of resources remain largely overlooked.

This stopping short of engaging policy issues would be less likely were these experiences deeply connected to what is going on inside the classroom, but they are pointedly not. Community service programs remain emphatically extracurricular and, despite all the fuss made about them, they have had no impact on what goes on within the curriculum. The reason given is that the arena of civic activism is not intellectually rigorous enough to enter the curriculum. Moreover, one is told, even if it were, there is no

space; as it is, there is barely enough time to cover the fundamentals of one's field. In effect, the refusal or failure to integrate service into the curriculum locates civic mindedness outside the realm of what purports to be serious thinking and the real business of an education.

It is ironic, to put it politely, that students are expected to integrate these two dimensions—their intellectual accomplishments in class and their acts of civic virtue outside of class—while their teachers have, on the contrary, institutionalized their separation.

Meanwhile the messy world of politics remains inadequately explored—with its inevitable clashes of interests and perspectives, its need for values that can prevail in a world where goods compete and compromise is an achievement, a world where trade-offs replace the world of yes or no, up or down, good or bad.

Which brings us to the matter of values, the bedrock of it all—the severance of thought and action; the relentless focus on private goods; the atrophy of anything resembling the public good; the disconnect between virtue and intellect. Being kind, generous, decent, survive for sure; but the world of public virtue is a very different terrain where certainty is never self-evident, where thinking is no less essential than feeling, where differences of perspective and interest are inevitable and healthy.

Many of us appreciate that seeing choices in terms of axes of evil has its limitations; but so do axes of good—the presumption that there are positions of self-evident virtue, beyond doubt or legitimate criticism. I am not suggesting that we abandon the good, or the true for that matter. I am talking about a world where those commitments must exist simultaneously with an appreciation that in any situation of importance there is going to be more than one good and they are likely to be in competition.

I am talking about a world where there are no perfect solutions, where the goods are multiple and truth is contingent, not absolute; where what is needed is the capacity to distinguish the better from the worse, the more likely to succeed from the less likely; a world deeply committed to principles but no less deeply committed to the pragmatic; a world equally at odds with fanaticism and relativism. It is a world that we have largely lost.

In its place and all too often we have the fanatic, the partisan, the pious, and the relative. Saints and sinners, patriots and traitors, Republicans and

Democrats, the hypocrisies and sanctimony of family values vying with an empty-headed tolerance where the ultimate and only good is that you can say whatever you want to say and so can I.

To make matters worse, money has become the measure of all things. Its invasion of politics is well documented. Its invasion of education is no less pervasive although less documented. There is no dearth of calls for the reform of education and, while citizenship may sometimes be mentioned in a knee-jerk sort of way at the outset, rest assured you will not hear it mentioned again. On the other hand, you will look long and hard to find appeals that use any *other* rationale for change than money—whether it is the language of national competitiveness, or individual earning power.

While college preparedness is the new salvation, it is overwhelmingly valued for its access to a credential that improves your job prospects. The idea of student as customer is every bit a match for what it says about values as the idea of citizen as taxpayer. And make no mistake: Careerism is as rampant in our elite liberal arts colleges as anywhere else. Money has its value for sure—as Bennington's president, I'd be the last person to deny that—but it cannot be the measure of all things. It is a very thin reed for a great civilization and a catastrophe for a democratic one.

Not surprisingly, this dearth of values and disinclination for the political manifests itself most dramatically in a startling deterioration of our political intelligence and the equally startling effectiveness of the assault on the political values that are the mainstay of a free society. Strangely, evident as that dumbing down of the American public is, and increasingly serious its consequences, scarcely anyone makes the connection between what is happening to the political fabric of the country and what is going on in our education system.

This failure to connect the dots is most evident in our colleges and universities, which, after all, have the resources, financial and intellectual, to engage the problem and do something. They are also the institutions which have educated not only those who have engineered the dumbing down, but a good number of those of us who now submit to their machinations.

This is not some kind of plot by the higher education establishment. And none of it denies the magnitude of the formidable resources of the American

university and college—the sheer volume of brain-power, and the depth of resources available for its use. In this sense we are most deservedly the envy of the world. Moreover, many in higher education—faculty, administrators, students, trustees—are increasingly despairing of the state of the world and desperately seeking ways to overcome this disconnect between the world and the academy.

Nor does any of this change the unparalleled potential of the schools, colleges, and universities to be the crucible in which civic virtue can be learned and public problems of great urgency and importance can be addressed. Nonetheless, whatever efforts are going on in this direction are at the moment fragmentary and remain at the margins. The stranglehold of the disciplines with all of their deeply entrenched habits and interests remains intact, overshadowing and constraining all such efforts.

If we are going to get the kinds of transformations of priorities, the redirection of energies that are called for, it is going to take an idea—an idea that can generate unparalleled levels of collaboration between faculty across all divides; new models of the relationship between teacher and student; ways to develop an ongoing and deepening dynamic between the world inside the classroom and the world outside. It will take an idea that gives us the wherewithal to return values to the center of the seats of learning without submitting to ideology, partisanship, or zealotry. We think we may just have such an idea.

In its essentials the idea is very simple. To address the disconnect between the urgency of these unmet challenges and the absence of our response, we plan to use the challenges themselves to inform, enlarge, and intensify a Bennington education. That is, we intend to turn the full force of the intellectual and imaginative power, passion, and boldness of our students, faculty, and staff on developing strategies for acting on pressing public needs of self-evident urgency, complexity, and importance. The emphasis on action is very carefully considered; our goal is not to study poverty, the failures of education, the abuses of force, but to do something about them.

Several labs, like the one I am currently teaching called *Rethinking Education*, are currently being offered as prototypes: one in conflict resolution and the uses of force, and another on the environment. More will be added next year providing a much richer menu of options. As of the fall of 2008, students

will be expected to engage in the work of these labs from the beginning of their education through its completion.

They are called laboratories to underscore the quintessentially open-ended, collaborative character of this work. This is not first and foremost a matter of pedagogical preference, but one of necessity. In the contentious, messy, contingent, constantly changing world of the practical, unlike that of the theoretical, no one is an expert and, while there are those with a vast range of experience, no one has the answers. What you are capable of figuring out as you go—your ability to learn, to adjust, as events unfold—is a good deal more important than what you think you already know.

When the object is deciding on the most effective course of action, the act of leadership is to expand the input of others rather than to contain it. It is extremely likely that the more diverse the perspectives brought to bear, the better the outcome, provided those participating are working within the framework of carefully designed and focused deliberation. This means that in contrast to the accustomed model of the expert atop a human pyramid consisting of the more and less non-expert, the field becomes more akin to the easy rolls of the natural landscape.

Discussion in the form of deliberation replaces the lecture as a prominent teaching mode—deliberation understood as talk that is shaped by the need to act rather than talk that is shaped by a faculty member's syllabus. While the classroom is the ideal place in which deliberation can occur, it will take gifted leadership, committed students, and time. It also requires having a high-stakes agenda that is capable of being shared by all. Essential to the idea of deliberation is the responsibility every participant assumes to further the enterprise as a whole. The need to know acquires a special urgency and intensity that is shared by everyone at the table. Ideology, on the other hand, may well be important to learn about at any given moment, but it is a luxury one can ill afford when choosing the most effective course of action is the measure of success and failure.

In addition to Bennington's faculty and students, visiting academics and practitioners from outside the College, including business and political leaders, journalists, and social activists, will be participants in these labs. The labs in essence become organizing centers of an activity that extends throughout the College and beyond. These labs will be offered throughout

the four years of a student's education, assuring that individual programs allow for the pursuit of increasingly ambitious and demanding policy objectives.

The labs are not only designed to benefit especially from the participation of people outside the College; they also provide a framework that allows students and faculty to take maximum advantage of such visitors.

We anticipate that as the initiative develops, the reach of the College will extend further and further as more and more people come to Bennington from around the world and students increasingly use the world to extend their reach. Bennington becomes the center of an education—its cerebral cortex, as it were—but its campus in effect extends far beyond.

In addition to the labs, an important part of the new curriculum will be courses that teach capacities one needs to master in order to contend effectively with the demands of political action regardless of its particular focus. Improvisation, collaboration, and mediation join the ranks of reading, writing, and mathematics as fundamental. Learning how to listen assumes an importance that is on a par with learning how to talk.

And just as new arts enter the curriculum, the old stand-bys are transformed. The objective of learning how to make informed choices vis a vis public policy creates an opportunity for faculty to re-think what we teach and how we teach math, science, and technology. What are the things in fact that one really needs to know in this famous triumvirate that change the odds when evaluating policy alternatives and generating new options. We often proceed as if we know the answers to these answers; we don't.

It is in fact the questions *Why Math? What Math?* that are the subject of another lab going on now at Bennington in response to this new initiative. It asks flat out—are there things in mathematics that are so important that everyone should know them and, if so, what are they? Thirty freshmen signed up for this course, more than half of whom loathe math. We can assume their reason is its promise to take up the challenge that they have been beaten over the head with all their lives, and to take it up without any preconceptions.

Making the world a better place is, in addition, likely to provide a good deal more compelling reason for the armies of reluctant students to take on the challenge of exploring the worlds of mathematics, science, and technology than the one we typically in-

voke—enabling America to regain its competitive edge.

In a similar vein: When you need to make sense of the multi-layered and seemingly infinite complexities of these issues, and then have to figure out how and where to intervene, research assumes a vitality and urgency radically different from the skills and frame of mind associated with writing long papers about ready-made topics in a tightly prescribed format.

When a primary objective is, in short, educating students to act effectively in the world, it means thinking freshly about what is most fundamental. It means crossing the divides that have shaped curricular thinking for centuries. It means visual and performing artists, scientists, writers, and social scientists joining forces in designing and teaching what are, in effect, a new liberal arts.

And if we are to capture and institutionalize the multi-dimensionality of this project—its variety, energy, innovative spirit—it is likely that the traditional format of the fourteen-week class can no longer serve as the default option. Instead of the grid with its blocks of times and spaces, imagine something more akin to a medieval fair—lots going on, in a variety of formats, and all of it tempting.

You might well be wondering: Why the emphasis on addressing the public's work at national and global levels? Isn't this unnecessarily and overly ambitious; mightn't we stay at the local level? Aren't we pressing credulity to the breaking point? I hope not because there are several important reasons for this decision.

The very complexities and multi-dimensions of dealing with the quality of public life on a large scale is what makes it possible to generate a sustained and cumulative course of study that requires intellectual competences every bit as deep and thoroughgoing as those demanded from the traditional academic disciplines. And we are seeking, rather than avoiding, challenges that have the scale, the importance, the values, worthy of shaping a life as well as an education.

Equally important, drawing boundaries that would limit the public realms of the exercise of civic responsibility is to fatally undermine the democratic idea of citizenship. The responsibilities of a citizen to the public of which he or she is a member are, in a word, boundless. Citizenship is not a world where one doesn't do windows. How one exercises those responsibilities is of course always an issue.

Finally think of what it would mean if we, the intellectual centers of this nation, draw back from addressing certain areas because of their complexity.

Or to put it positively: In addition to the education these issues provide to students when embedded in the curriculum, there is, in the other direction, the added opportunity to inform public policy with the maximum possible degree of thought and imagination.

I can promise you that in the education lab, reading Whitehead's *Aims of Education* will be more important than all the studies and reports we examine, however essential they may be. Reading Whitehead means thinking about fundamental questions—and it is those questions that enable us to consider more radical, penetrating possibilities. In a world of better and worse, what you have to choose between is as important as your capacity to make the best choice possible. In such a world the values of human intelligence are never more urgent, their absence never more tragic.

While much of this initiative will be newly created, much of it will emerge from what is already here. One of Bennington's signature innovations was the invention of a term of study that takes place every year off campus—Field Work Term—whether in a job, an internship, a research opportunity, and whether five minutes away or across the globe. Important as it is and has always been, the impact of this new initiative will elevate its importance even more.

Reasons for seeking a dynamic relationship between the world inside the classrooms, workshops, and labs at Bennington and the world outside increase astronomically. Field Work Term is the perfect vehicle. Amidst the flood of ideas this initiative has generated, one is to make it possible for every student, regardless of personal financial circumstances, to spend at least one Field Work Term abroad.

The Isabelle Kaplan Center for Languages and Cultures is another example. Its demonstrated capacity to attract students to the study of languages in the absence of any language requirement has been one of the great success stories of Bennington's recent history. As in the case of Field Work Term, the Center assumes an even more central role in the mission of the College. How we address the importance of fluency in languages other than English is no small challenge, requiring a rich collaboration between Center faculty and their colleagues outside the Center.

Beyond these particulars there is of course what Bennington does in its entirety—most notably its formidable achievement in enabling students to dis-

cover and pursue their individual intellectual and imaginative identities, passions, obsessions, dreams. This of course will continue. For Bennington, passionate dedication to the maximum possible development of the individual talent is its life blood. So much the better. For the challenge of an education committed to an ideal of citizenship depends on the power it has to achieve a community of purpose amidst people whose differences are as alive as those things they share.

And it works both ways; it is certain that each student's choices of where and how to focus their energies, in any aspect of their lives, will acquire added complexity, urgency, and conviction when the stakes have been raised. My guess is that every educational institution will find its way of achieving the mix of public and private, individual and community. There is little doubt about how Bennington will do it. Both dimensions, insofar as they are separable, in fact, will be addressed as if nothing else in the world mattered.

In encountering this ceaseless dialogue between the pulls of public responsibilities and those of private ambitions and aspirations, each student will be challenged to discover in his or her own fashion, what it means—and what it takes—to live a good as well as a successful life.

Daring and grandiose for sure, but that is the fate of this College. Seventy-five years ago it burst on the scene promising to bring a new vitality, a capacity for innovation, a daring, and an unspeakable confidence in human possibilities—what Howard Nemerov, a long-time member of the Bennington faculty, called “dreaming Joseph.” And Bennington delivered on that promise. Its most famous innovation—treating the arts and artists as equal partners in a liberal education, brought a new intensity to that education and embodied and emblazoned the idea of the teacher-practitioner into the fabric of the College.

Given Bennington's very visible and dramatic history in the arts, it might seem at first blush that this is a strange place to take on the challenges of renewing a vital and vibrant idea of citizenship with its inevitable emphasis on the political. But that is to miss the point. First of all, it is past time for the artists to take their seat at the table when policy is being crafted, rather than serving afterwards as cheerleader or pallbearer. Secondly, Bennington is designed to move in the direction where things need to be done, where the stakes are high, where its flexibility, its

unusual diversity of faculty resources (as rich in the arts as in the traditional academic disciplines) combined with its small size, and its fascination with what matters, are the drivers.

This is not to deny for a moment the enormity of the challenge. To quote Ellen Lagemann, former Dean of the Harvard School of Education: “Given how difficult it is merely to change a college curriculum, which relative to changing the balance among the purposes of higher education, is barely tinkering at the margins, it is hard even to imagine how one might go about the kind of truly radical change that

would be necessary if liberal education were to be reconceived as a means to promote problem-centered ways of thinking and to better combine those with discipline-based styles of thought.”

Recently I was talking with Bill Rawn, the architect and former trustee of Bennington, about this new initiative. He said, “Bennington is right where it belongs. Fifteen years from now everyone is going to be doing this.”

So, mark your calendars, check your watches, and fasten your seat belts.

