

## Defining the Creative Industries

**Simon Roodhouse** gauges the government's creative industries

STIMULATED BY THE ‘New Labour’ government in the 1990s, the economic role and function of the UK’s creative industries aroused international interest. Chris Smith, Britain’s New Labour Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, confirmed early in his ministry that the creative industries were a growth sector of the UK economy, saying ‘It is incumbent on the government, in partnership with industry, to take active steps to promote economic growth in the creative and cultural sector. If we do not do so, then others will reap

stressing efficiency, effectiveness, value for money, and market forces. Smith reinforces this interpretation: ‘ensuring that the full economic and employment impact of the whole range of creative industries is acknowledged and assisted by government’. (Smith 1998)

The DCMS’s interest and engagement with the creative industries, through the establishment of the Creative Industries Task Force (CITF), chaired by the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, cannot be seen as anything other than a direct engagement by

**‘What is of interest in the idea of a creative industries ‘construct’ is that it provides a framework for engaging with both public and private sectors in a fairer way...’**

the economic reward’. (Creative Industries Task Force 1998)

As a result, the creative industry concept has been set out in one of four key policy themes for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) economic value. The other three themes, access, excellence, and education, are perhaps the predictable interests of any Labour government.

It does seem, however, that the theme of economic value is a maturing of the Thatcherite ethos,

government in creative activity for economic gain.

Through the Creative Industries Task Force, the government then set about defining what they meant by the term ‘creative industries’. The concept stemmed from an interest in the knowledge economy, and the definition was largely pragmatic; ‘those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through

the generation and exploitation of intellectual property’. (Creative Industries Task Force 1998)

The sectors identified within this framework are: ‘advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, designer fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, software, television and radio’. (Creative Industries Task Force 1998)

These sub-sectors would not necessarily recognize themselves as creative industries, for example architecture has much more in common with construction than it does with the arts and antiques trade. This shows that the idea is a policy construct, which has yet to be recognized by those working in the field.

The concept of the creative industries has more in common with the emerging global economic interest in the knowledge economy. This is typified in ‘*The Independents: Britain’s New Cultural Entrepreneurs*’,

Leadbetter & Oakley, 1999) *The creative economy, How People make money from ideas*, (Hopkins; 2001: xiii) and, *Creative Industries: Contracts between Arts and Commerce*, (Caves, 2000) with our engagement with copyright, patent, trademark and contracts mechanisms.

What is of interest in a creative industries ‘construct’ is that it provides a framework for engaging with both public and private sectors in a fairer way, establishing cultural activity as new industry, and engaging with convergence arguments generated through advances in technology. This leads to a reassessment of the traditional forms of government intervention in support of the arts and culture as described in *Creating a Sustainable Culture for Everybody* (The Reformer, Centre for Reform, Roodhouse 2002).

These and other related issues are to be investigated in the *Creative Industries Journal*. ●

### FURTHER READING

*Creative Industries Journal*

Edited by Simon Roodhouse

Subscription: Three Issues

£30 Personal / £210 Institutional

ISSN 1471-5880 / Volume 1, 2009



The scope of the journal is a global one, aimed at those studying and practicing activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent, and which have a potential for wealth creation. These activities primarily take place in advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, fashion, film, interactive leisure software, music, the performing arts, publishing, television and radio. The journal provides a forum to challenge definitional assumptions, advance the social, economic, cultural, and political understanding and engagement with the creative industries at local, national and trans-national levels. The journal welcomes articles based on a critical engagement with the creative industries concept from theoretical and practice perspectives. In addition it will set out to encourage critical writing on private sector activity as well as the publicly funded.