



**Email Postings April 2007**

## **Art's Place in Organization Studies**

### **Summary**

This series of emails examines the place of art in organization studies beginning with Steve Carroll's insights into the perceptions artists have of management studies. Mid-way, the discussion morphs into ideas of finding a middle path that attends to a critical approach.

Edited  
Ralph Bathurst 29/04/2007

Stephen (Steve) Carroll

Friday  
6/04/2007

Because of illness issues I was unable to read until recently the answers to the query from Stefan about how the study of artists from the fine arts (sculpture, painting) might be applicable and useful in the education of manager-leaders. I did summarize these for my own purposes and then discussed this issue then with the three artists in my family and also with several of my business school colleagues. I was surprised at the considerable skepticism I encountered unlike the responses of most (but not all) the AACORN respondents.

One said 'as an artist I could focus on one project and invest all my attention there but as a manager I had to split my time over a vast array of projects, problems, and goals'.

The jobs are quite different. Another said 'as an artist I had certain aesthetic standards which in the business world had to be so compromised to economic perspectives and lack of aesthetic sensitivity that I continually felt quite depressed. All of my academic colleagues said that the fine arts were for enjoyment in an aesthetic sense only and not useful for managers. However they concurred that some of the arts (films and some literature) did have value in management education and were in fact long used for that. They also tended to say that contemplating completed art objects added nothing of educational value but conceded when asked that studying the artistic process could have some relevance with what manager-leaders do at some times.

Yesterday I visited the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and just looking at paintings and sculpture I could see lots of educational value in contemplating fine art. The art also was created with a view to reminding observers of important stories and myths in particular cultures which underlay fundamental values and beliefs of that culture and which help bond individuals together. These stories like all of literature obviously help us to transcend vicariously our limited experiences due to things like age, era, geography, gender, and ethnicity. As several AACORN respondents indicated art teaches us to see what we usually do not notice – it tells us this is important!

'The skill of the painter lies in the eye not the hand.'

Even if we do notice, it helps us to see more clearly (as someone once said, 'the beauty behind ugliness and the ugliness behind beauty'). Art reminds us of the many exemplary heroes in our past which we obviously need to remember in coping with great difficulties and trials. It tells us that others who are different than us can be just as beautiful and wise as we are. Looking at art can temper our arrogance (of plentiful supply in management) and can help us to remember what sages of all nations have said are the most critical human values such as compassion and wisdom, even if they so often overlooked. Of course art can help provide us with hope and positive emotions in such a trying world that all too often breeds cynicism and bitterness. It provides an escape from tension and stress. If we go behind the creation of individual objects to the artist we can obviously learn lessons from the process used to create it and perhaps to the lessons from the artist creators themselves.

I suppose all of this is obvious but why do so many – perhaps most – ignore it to their detriment? Of course I'm preaching to the choir here.

Steve

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Daved Barry

Saturday  
7/04/2007

Beautifully said Steve. A very eloquent summary and a nice addition to Nancy Adler's points on why the fine arts are so valuable to organizations, despite that organizational instrumentality often blinds out what you're saying. I think what goes especially under-recognized is this *reminder/wake up* quality (makes sense, if what you want to do is keep on sleeping). In a different conversation, Henrik Schrat was noting that art's value is in reminding us of our unique abilities to create, and create/see in unusual ways (seeing what goes unnoticed) – and that this has always been a feature of so-called great art – which is why it's worth revisiting, even if we might not use those techniques or approaches anymore.

In this, I suppose it's really more than a reminder. Or it's a reminder that has a certain lifelessness and undecidability (unlike post-it reminders).

Your comments also got me to think about where our area is heading. And I'm starting to think that it may indeed take its place alongside science-based organization studies – much more than I'd first considered. If you think about it, all the science-based organization studies have looked to the harder sciences for tips on quality, rigor, methods, and the like. Despite that, we have always acknowledged that organization studies is a messy business – that organization life could never be controlled or modeled as well as in a lab and that generalizations from lab studies would always be a so-so, incomplete endeavor.

As our gaze has shifted toward the arts, I see the same kind of relationship developing. That is, we are looking to the standards set by the professional fine arts, while at the same time realizing that they are probably quite unattainable in organizational circles. Just like the hard sciences were used to 'keep organization studies honest', we're more and more using fine arts to set the standard for how we should form and judge organizational art efforts – whether from an arts and/or a craft perspective. Your quote of one of your artist-manager colleagues ('as an artist I had certain aesthetic standards which in the business world had to be so compromised to economic perspectives and lack of aesthetic sensitivity that I continually felt quite depressed.') catches this very nicely.

Daved

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Hatch, Mary Jo

Sunday  
8/04/2007

Cannot resist jumping in on Daved's point about the scientification (chortling required here) of AACORN. Lusting after publication leads right back to our jumping off point for AACORN, i.e. wanting to do something else, something aesthetic or artistic. How do we resist this pressure? Is there a way to satisfy the constraints of journal publication *and* be creative? Isn't this what many of our artist members have told us makes art great, that creative responses to constraint can be the most liberating act we can perform? Maybe we should focus on not giving up our aspirations. One way of course is through starting our own journals, but that almost feels like quitting to me. How can we invade the territory that threatens to redefine us and redefine it instead? We are starting to get sessions on a variety of rosters in the divisions of the Academy of Management (AoM) and we are making even greater headway at other conferences. I know it did not look too good when AoM kicked us out. But maybe that was only a warm up for the real fight. Sorry to be using so much aggressive imagery here. Seems to be all I can come up with at the moment. Jean's article,<sup>1</sup> which I finally got around to reading this week, enraged me. Another idea would be to use our own theory and envision a future in which the Academy is aestheticized. What would it look like? Who would we be in that world? And how would business have had to change to support our legitimacy? Perhaps that could lay the ground for avoiding what almost sounds inevitable when framed in the way Daved just described. At least let's not go there so soon! We are just getting started.

Jo Hatch

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<sup>1</sup> Bartunek, J. M. (2006). A time for hope: A response to Nancy Adler. *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 5(4), 500–504.

Daved Barry

Sunday  
8/04/2007

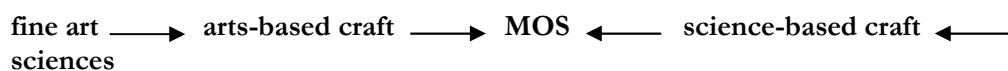
I didn't mean that AACORN is being scientized. Actually, I meant the opposite, that we're beginning to find arts-based standards for making and judging work that are just as rigorous, important, and contributive as the hard science standards that have been used in Management and Organization Studies (MOS) for the last century. Things like what you're mentioning here (creative use of constraints) and like what Steve Carroll mentioned last time (e.g., noticing the unnoticed). It's kind of like what happened when Yvonna Lincoln and Egon

Guba wrote *Naturalistic Inquiry*<sup>2</sup> – where they developed a set of counter standards for social research.

An example is experimental research. As you know, MOS has borrowed heavily from both the physical and life sciences – numerous threats to validity, double blind experiments, replicability, reliability – all those concepts and terminology that came from other science labs. Business school laboratories tend to physically emulate their science lab counterparts. Ignored is the fact that art has always had experimentation too – involving very different processes (sketches, being *completely contaminated*, play) that are just as strong and useful, but not codified the way scientific experimentation has been and not based on the same ways of knowing the world. Watching Peter Hanke and Paul Robertson<sup>3</sup> carry out *conducting experiments* with their audiences is a great case in point. Because they're after meaningfulness rather than truth, they employ an experimental methodology which is almost the opposite of science-based methods (experimenter bias is valued, aesthetic/emotional response is privileged, and accidents are encouraged); yet it's just as robust and efficient as the science-based lab studies I've been part of. Probably more so. In this, they represent a very good standard, one that's certainly on par with the other standards we've been using in MOS.

The main problem has been time, and as Eirik Irgens/Ernst Cassirer would say, 'habitual blindness'. MOS has used science standards so long that it institutionally forgot that other equally valuable standards exist. But that's changed now, and is continuing to change very rapidly. Culture studies, poststructuralism, SCOS, organization aesthetics, and now AACORN are all developing standards that were completely unimaginable when I was in school.

I mean, when I was studying we didn't know of the term qualitative – it simply wasn't in any of our dictionaries. I only stumbled across it after graduating and finding it used at a school of *special education*. That was 20 years ago, and just look at how different things have become. This would be even more the case for Steve Carroll, who was one or two generations before me, and who was for many years a real aesthetic rarity – the only MOS guy any of us knew who regularly and rigorously took in the world's art. If we needed him for advice, we could usually find him at any of the art theater screenings. I remembered him saying that he tended to split the two, having a kind of separate day and night life (Steve, correct me if I've misspoken). Dennis Gioia is another one like that; at one point he told me he could never conceive of crossing his professional photography work with his life as a business academic, that it would be professional suicide. Jo, maybe you were another, at least when you started in MOS. But all that's gone now. Sure, I get grumpy about the AoM Academy of Arts thing, but as you and others have pointed out, these new standards/paradigms are shooting up anyway, right in the midst of the science-based mainstreams. The ground has been well tilled and fertilized by the previous humanities movements, so things are springing up quickly. Ten years from now I suspect we'll have a flourishing artistic MOS as a viable alternative to scientific MOS, replete with majors and minors in artistic research methods. Maybe it will resemble Ernst Cassirer's concept of *two-eyed* viewing (art eye + science eye = binocular vision), which Eirik Irgens is working so hard on. Something like this:



I like your questions Jo, about what would AoM and the general business academy look like if it were more aestheticized. I would imagine that some of the answers will revolve around importing more and more rigorous and high-level arts standards, but also gradually educating the academy's citizens so that such standards can be understood and valued. Having first heard the word 'qualitative' 20 years ago, it's taken me a good 15 years to really appreciate and understand what that word means. The same will be true for the word 'art' (though I hope it won't take so long now). I know that's really abstract and doesn't really address your question ... but that's all that's in me just this Easter morning.

Daved  
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<sup>2</sup> Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.exart.org/index.php?section=mod\\_calendar](http://www.exart.org/index.php?section=mod_calendar)

Elmes, Michael B. [[mbelmes@WPI.EDU](mailto:mbelmes@WPI.EDU)]

Monday  
9/04/2007

Thinking about Daved, Mary Jo and Steve's thoughtful comments over the past two days ... I wonder to what degree the lines we draw to distinguish between what *we* do (as ACORNers) and what *they* do as scholars who operate from a more scientific perspective are illusive and serve other purposes. I am thinking here about poet, Gary Snyder's comments about nature and where to find it (he said something like, 'look to the plants sprouting up in the cracks of the sidewalk rather than the magnificent forests of the national parks'). Maybe there is more art in the way *mainstream* MOS research is conducted that anybody cares to admit – sure there are constraints and epistemological differences as well. But there is a lot of art I believe in a rigorous double bind study (and considerable rigor in the kind of artistic experimentation that Daved described). Which then raises the question of why we see, believe in, and act on these lines as if they were real ... I would argue that in the mutually constitutive world of resistance and identity, that we need mainstream MOS research to define who we are and what we are about in the academy. That is a good thing I believe and ultimately a good thing for the academy. Expelled from the AOM meeting, perhaps it inspires us to have these conversations with ourselves and those mainstreamers on the other side ... indeed, in the spirit of Easter, perhaps it enables us to rise up like seeds scattering in the wind.

Hope everyone has had is or having a lovely Easter.

Michael Elmes

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Hatch, Mary Jo

Monday  
9/04/2007

You are right Michael. You provide a way to see the beauty in even the most positivistic styles of research. I find it easier to do this with leadership practice for some reason (love?), seeing in it the ideas that artists have sensitized me to. I need to do this with research as well, which I guess I have begun already by looking into painting methods as a means to grasp the differences between research methodologies. But in this I still hold onto the divisions, as you rightly point out. In future I shall see what happens if I give that up and hope for a more peaceful or at least graceful/grateful state. Thanks for the pointer!

Jo Hatch

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Steve Taylor

Monday  
9/04/2007

I hope that you are right, Daved, that in ten years organizational aesthetics will have the same legitimacy that qualitative research has achieved. I say legitimacy because it feels like I have to fight for the legitimacy of approaching something from an arts based perspective every time I write for a MOS journal.

I also have the same experience when I try to write about action research.

And I realize that there was a time when action research had moved pretty far up the legitimacy curve in MOS (there were centers of action research at prestigious universities such as MIT's Sloan school), but it somehow failed to make it. So I have a cautionary tale in my head as well.

And to add to Mike's idea, I think that beauty is one way to legitimacy.

Beautiful writing, beautiful research, or at least artful writing and research are much harder to ignore and leave in the dustbin of academic history – whether that research is science-based or art-based.

Anyway, just my thoughts on this fine April morning (it is still below freezing here in New England).

Steve  
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Daved Barry

Tuesday  
10/04/2007

Yeah, I suppose you're right Steve – it's possible to gain a footing and still be side-lined in the end. Action research is a good example. Still, I'm encouraged by what I'm seeing in the mainstream MOS journals this last year, especially *Academy of Management Journal (AMJ)* and that special issue on *rich* research. In several of the pieces there you can almost substitute *rich* for *art* and *aesthetics*.

Just take a general survey of journal titles this year and compare them to titles 10 years ago – much more humanist than before.

And there's a broader move afoot as well, grounded in business itself, that I think makes this shift if not inevitable, at least more possible than I once thought. I'm thinking of the rise in the search for meaning at work in a time where people (especially Americans!) are working all day and night.

Long working hours, rising education and disposable wealth, and increased competitiveness due to global trade and the internet (with the concomitant search for new methods) all seem to be really testing the instrumentalist science-based models (which aim at more efficient pathways to wealth but don't provide the wherewithal to enjoy that wealth in meaningful or sophisticated ways).

With this, I think that the first-world countries are collectively moving to a point where being a *business artist* will have the same appeal as being a business scientist. For sure I'm seeing that shift in Northern Europe, where more execs than I can count are looking to form *cultured* organizations, and often in very artful ways. Take the Danish Tax Ministry. They've bought an island in the 'Second Life' virtual world (<http://secondlife.com/>), where they are holding public forums to play around with taxpayer issues.

Participants assume virtual identities, have virtual fights, innovate ... it's extremely bizarre. Even stranger, they've managed to sell off parts of their island at a profit, thus helping pay for the whole venture. This is the tax service, home of some of the most conservative people in Denmark (well, used to be). Brave new world.

To come back full circle to the issue of publishing and so on, Mary Jo asked what would an artistic, aesthetically sophisticated MOS community look like (I'm paraphrasing). For one, I think we would see organizational art projects that can pass muster in the art community. These might come from MOS academics, but I think that's still a ways off. It will more likely be professionally trained artists who've become curious about organizations and economics and who are partnering with MOS people (Rob Austin's and Lee Devin's collaborations are an example)<sup>4</sup>. I sense that you, Steve, are one of the few who've been trained enough in both the art and science community so that you can produce works that art professionals *and* the MOS communities value. That might change – if programs like Donatella's at BI continue (and hers is certainly flourishing), we're likely to see a new generation of business students who also have professional arts training – some of these will certainly migrate into the business academy. NUROPE is pushing things that way as well, along with the sharp rise in the status of European journals like *Organization Studies and Management*. Studies that are gradually taking the *cultured* high ground. The new journal *Aesthesis* will hopefully be a path-maker in this regard. People like Antonio Strati, Pierre Guillet de Monthoux, and David Weir are chipping away at educating the business schools about art standards – and gradually raising the bar.

For another, I think we'll see rising recognition in the kind of usefulness that an arts perspective provides – peripheral vision, meaning, new insight, reformation. Raghu Garud<sup>5</sup> really struck a *need for meaning* chord with a lot of the North American Academy with his last article, and others like Weick and even Denny Gioia have also been pushing for this ... but, but, but – this will only be if the works are as elegant and well crafted as their science-based counterparts (which is devilishly hard to do). In my communications with editors like Martin Kilduff (*AMR*) and Sara Rhynes (*AMJ*), I see that they're becoming more oriented towards cultured studies (not culture studies) – maybe as a response to the increasing number of

journals, maybe the trends I mentioned above, both ... I don't know. They want beautiful research. Beautiful, cultured, meaningful – those terms will take a lot of work and development, but its happening. Mike's and your points about beautiful experimental research are also relevant here – it might be that we'll find artistic standards eventually standing alongside the science ones in the mainstream journals – that when we review for these outlets, we'll have a choice of rating papers on their artistic merit, scientific merit, or both.

I'm not sure what other things might change. I'd really welcome more of these 'what would/could a Business Arts Academy look like?' scenarios.

Daved  
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<sup>4</sup> Austin, R. D., & Devin, L. (2003). *Artful making: What managers need to know about how artists work*. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

<sup>5</sup> Garud, R., Kumaraswamy, A., & Sambamurthy, V. (2006). Emergent by design: Performance and transformation at Infosys Technologies. *Organization Science*, 17(2), 277–286.

Pierre Guillet de Monthoux

Tuesday  
10/04/2007

Daved

Just to thank you again. My god you are network theory and practice incarnated. So let us just follow you implicit advice; to realize we are all together drops in an ocean that will change the course of mainstream management. So just keep doing the sublime, beautiful and crazy things you all are up to ... Feels good indeed, thanks Daved!

Pierre  
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Stephen (Steve) Carroll

Thursday  
12/04/2007

Hi Steve T

I guess I agree with your comment that it may be more difficult to sell art perspectives or organizational aesthetics to our fellow academics and the research gatekeepers than it would be to sell it to managers in organizations. That's certainly been my experience. Again, virtually all of my business school colleagues have had a negative *set* against the idea that artistic perspectives and processes could have a useful place in management education.

On the other hand, the short course I prepared and presented first to executives and then later to MBA students entitled 'Coping with the new leadership realities: Lessons from the arts and humanities' has had an extremely positive reception. Why? After reading your note, one reason must be the sheer beauty in the material itself.

In the course I use slides of paintings, film clips, excerpts from novels and autobiographies, as well as quotations and ideas from various philosophers (Aristotle, Plato, Socrates, etc.). The paintings they examine include: *The Expulsion of Adam and Even from the Garden of Eden* (to discuss the concept of the psychological consequences of regrets), *Socrates Drinking the Hemlock* (discussion of truth and ethics), a Norman Rockwell magazine cover (depicting unintentional moral modeling), and others as well as multiple paintings of Joan of Arc, Napoleon, Caesar, and other important historical leaders. Film clips include *Julius Caesar*, *Henry V*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and *Dead Poets Society*. Novels include *Middlemarch*, *Executive Suite* and others. Most of these images, film clips, and excerpts do have the quality of great beauty and that is why, I guess, the audiences seem to be so transfixed (I can see their reactions – the moist eyes etc.) and the lessons seem to be memorable according to the comments of the learners. Great art does have the ability to connect a learner to certain individuals, ideas, and perspectives as you and other AACORN members have said. Also as you say beautiful art takes many forms – paintings, films (painting with a camera), novels (painting with words), and biographies (painting with acts and behaviors). It has been said that all great art is engaging – through beauty. Of course brevity and profundity must be there as well.

Thanks for your comments.

Steve

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Steve Taylor

Friday  
13/04/2007

I recently had the experience of a reviewer (for *Organization Science*) telling me that my writing should be more beautiful. The reviewer was suggesting that if I was serious about aesthetics than the reviewers should be judging the writing on beauty. I tend to agree. Unfortunately for me that didn't mean they weren't also applying more traditional criteria, so it translates into the bar being that much higher. But I have to say that I am okay with this because it does open the door for including artistic criteria in the assessment.

Personally, when I hear Daved's question, I find myself more interested in what would businesses that have taken seriously the idea of management as an art look like? I have dreams of leaders and managers caring as much about whether their actions are beautiful (or comic or sublime or whatever aesthetic category they aspire to) as they care about whether they will produce profit and are doing the right thing. For me that would be a really interesting triple bottom line – artistic, moral, and aesthetic results.

Just waiting for today's snow storm,

Steve

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David Boje

Friday  
13/04/2007

I have been asked to write a piece for *Organization Science*, a response to an article I reviewed and rejected at *Academy of Management Review*. The article I rejected was accepted without one single change to it.

Another reviewer at *AMR* also had rejected it. We were amazed *Organization Science* would take it without changes.

On Steve's topic of how beautiful to write a review for *Organization Science*.

I think it begs the question of whether beauty of discourse is what the ways of discourse of organizations are about. To me, and strictly by personal view, is organization discourse is pretty ugly, spam-ridden, over-simplified, sales hype, spin and more spin that dare I say is quite manipulative, even if some advertising agency and public relations firm says its 'beautiful'. Perhaps I walk on the dark side of critical theory, critical discourse, and every other critical discipline. I am reminded of Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man*<sup>6</sup> book where only the discourse of positivity (and beauty) and only the *Organization Science* discourse that trashes all critical social science is admitted into the official arena (exceptions are made, I exaggerate for effect, yet I do not believe *Organization Science* has much of a critical aesthetic currency, yet it is very highly rated among journals of appreciative positivity).

It would be neat to establish a beautiful organization. Sorry all I see and experience are organizations making people miserable, people caught up in psychic prisons of shame (a move from Morgan's metaphor paradigm to Chris Poulson's shame paradigm). To me, and this is me – my two cents – organizations are full of process addictions and process addicts, where the biggest addict sits a top what someone once called the Phrog Farm, the biggest addict rules the co-dependents, in spaces of workaholic, ragaholic, and what Ken Smith and others call the inter-group.

How is writing on beauty of organization possible in a society addicted to war, fear, greed, the Wal-Mart effect, Disneyfication (the production of spectacle as beauty substitute), barbie-driven body surgery, and what sociologist George Ritzer calls 'McDonaldization'. I drive down the streets seeing this spectacle of horror, and how could anyone write of beautiful. More writing like Upton Sinclair, more Rachael Carson, more Dante, and more Rabelais.

There is too much beauty writing, too much deference to *Organization Science*, too little

walking on the dark side. I am turning from Kantian to Aristotle ethics. Aristotle in his book on ethics, asked about taking the middle path, not a compromise path, but a way in-between good and evil, virtue and vice, rash and cowardly – to find the courageous

I miss the Fringe Cafe, and did not go to last to Academy of Management. I protest their refusal to have an Art's division, a place for a critical aesthetics, amidst what Debord calls the 'Spectacle' (Baudrillard appropriated as simulacra). Who needs science without art? Who needs academy science that cannot come up with a position on ethics in the Enron era? Too much celebration of beauty, not enough critical studies. Yes, there is a Critical Management Studies area, some, on the fringe work in critical aesthetics, but the main ballroom, the main theatre stages of Organization Studies, and Academy are devoid of critical art.

My answer, and it's just me, to Daved's question, is that a Business Arts Academy would deploy the art of the Situationist; critique the way the business of corporatization that ruined health as a place of care in the U.S.A. is not doing corporatization of the university. My university is as state university, and under the corporatization model, is converting line faculty positions to money-raising positions, doing *sanding* of janitor positions in possible and alleged retaliation to employees unionizing the university.

Administrators are expanding and bloating budgets. It's a crazy system. Class sizes getting bigger, fewer faculty, more of 'let's patent some science-types invention', or 'write a grant to bring in federal dollars to increase surveillance in the climate of fear.'

I am not allowed to use university email to be a voice in my own university. I violate policy just by sending this message.

Yet, it is worth that risk

David Boje

speaking as private citizen, not as member of my own university, not as member of Academy, just as human being.

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<sup>6</sup> Marcuse, H. (2002). *One-dimensional man: Studies in the ideology of advanced industrial society*. London: Routledge.

David Weir

Friday  
13/04/2007

Hi David

Your last message rang a warning bell, especially this last section.

I quote from your message, where you say:

I am not allowed to use university email to be a voice in my own university. I violate policy just by sending this message.

Yet, it is worth that risk

David Boje

Speaking as private citizen, not as member of my own university, not as member of Academy, just as human being.

My university reads and audits our email. So be it.

Some questions:

Can this be correct behaviour for a University?

Is this a general phenomenon?

Is this the 'freedom of speech' for which 'The West' is apparently famed?

What support can AACORN give?

Surely it is freedom of expression that unites the artist and the scholar?

Well, if so, we have an issue now!

A luta Continua.

David

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Jürgen Bergmann

Friday  
13/04/2007

Hi David

I'm shocked about that information concerning surveillance of mails by the university. To which extent is reaction possible? Do you really believe that the mail you have written could be used against you? Or is that surveillance *only* prevention against terrorism? Do you feel that this control is already terrorism itself? Does that mean incoming mails are scanned too? Is there a mobilisation of concerned people against that control?

If not: Why?

If yes: How can I or others support that mobilisation?

I'm also shocked that there are only some few responses to your mail within the AACORN community!!!

Is there resignation?

Why don't you use private mail? Or does that make no difference?

This is a subject to speak, to write, to communicate, to publish!

Art matters!

Jürgen

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David Weir

Friday  
13/04/2007

Hi Jürgen

That is exactly why I wrote my response to the original email of David Boje.

It seems to me to be a terrible situation, an abuse of power and an intrusion into private space.

Without private space the life of the scholar and the artist are alike compromised.

It may not be long before someone is forced to drink hemlock for 'corrupting the young'.

And the Patriot Act is well named if, as Dr Johnson said 'Patriotism is the last resort of the scoundrel' or as Ambrose Bierce improved on it ... 'In Dr. Johnson's famous dictionary patriotism is defined as the last resort of a scoundrel. With all due respect to an enlightened but inferior lexicographer, I beg to submit that it is the first.'

A Luta Continua!

David

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George Cairns

Friday  
13/04/2007

Dear All

I have followed recent discussions within the limits of time constraints and other pressures to *perform* as Head of Department in the contemporary world of academe as profit centre.

I am simultaneously enthused and horrified by the indications that the aesthetic is being absorbed into the mainstream discourse of both management itself and of management and organization theory at the level of the academy. The enthusiasm is for obvious reasons. But, beyond that, I am very cynical about the reasoning and have real concerns that *interest* from the broader community may be based upon:

1. an attempt to 'raise the bar much higher', as Steve indicates, but to act as a criteria for justifying exclusion rather than explicating inclusion
2. instrumental incorporation of the aesthetic language into management-speak, not from commitment, but in order to seek justification of *business as usual* (c.f. the language of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and corporate environmentalism,

and the emasculation of *critical management* within the academy)

I would like to see more discussion of the aesthetic as the field of resistance to managerialism (both in business and within academe), not as the seed-ground for its next fad.

I think I have nightmares where Steve has dreams.

George

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Mary Jo Hatch

Friday

13/04/2007

I hope the snow is beautiful, Steve.

The triple bottom line is a warm thought for a cold day. But why should we have to leap over a higher bar than anyone else? If the standard applies, it should apply to all. On the other hand, maybe it already does. Could the problem be that those in power positions (editors of *A* journals, for example) have a different aesthetic than the one(s) we fancy? Or to put it another way, do we only get published when an editor's aesthetics resonates with our own? Do we need to confront the problem of some editors applying aesthetic judgments (what other kind is there) that render our work *ugly* and inadmissible but only acknowledge their use of aesthetic criteria when they want to hoist us on our own petard? If this is the case, then we share a challenge that artists have faced for ions, changing the criteria for what is beautiful. Does anything change if we frame the matter in this way?

Maybe what I wish for is a future when everyone declares what they find to be beautiful. That way at least we can begin to sense what sort of aesthetics inspire the editors of our journals and know better what we must overcome to get published. When I was a doctoral candidate we used to feed off the piles of papers the faculty 'suggested' we read. I think that established my first academic aesthetic, of course it was strictly in terms that were acceptable at my school, but never prevented me from taking off in my own direction as soon as I learned to use the library. Still, having this sense of what was valued as beautiful helped me craft a dissertation that passed muster and gave me access to others' realities in way that helped me create my own. I truly wonder whether, if editors posted their list of most beautiful examples of scholarship, it might improve more than the ability of researchers to find proper outlets for their work.

Jo Hatch

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Stephen (Steve) Carroll

Friday

13/04/2007

Just wanted to mention one aspect of producing beauty that I don't remember seeing mentioned. The production of great beauty often requires such an enormous effort and so much time that it usually has to be constrained by real life realities. My mother and my brother who both worked as commercial artists were frustrated continually by this. Artists of all types very often work on projects for a very long time because they are never satisfied with their efforts. They have an ideal vision which is never realized. The *Mona Lisa* was not still finished after four years. Michelangelo might never have finished his ceiling if the Pope had not told him he was going to remove the scaffolding in a certain period of time. Jane Austen, as I remember it, spent years reading her novels in process to family and friends and changing them constantly. Thomas Hardy the same, except he had to meet the deadlines of his editors and he learned to produce great poetical prose within the time limits imposed. Artistic perspectives often do conflict with economic imperatives. The maximum of beauty possible within the constraints imposed is what we have to deal with in the real world.

Steve

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Laura Brearley

Friday  
13/04/2007

Hi Everyone

The conversation has arrived at a place where I find myself too.

How to live with hope and awareness against the backdrop of despair in our organisations and in the world?

How to enliven the shape and substance of our conversations in journals, conferences and board rooms?

How to stay engaged while not propping up what is sick or evil?

When I connect with you lot and with people like you at home, it seems more bearable to stay awake and engaged. It helps me to broaden the frame and to remember too.

I've been thinking a lot about a quiet line that Al Gore says in *An Inconvenient Truth*. When asked how he coped after having the presidency snatched away from him, he says, 'It was hard but you make the best of it.' It's such a funny old cliché but it seems profound to me these days.

If we are to 'redream the world' (Ben Okri) and 'deserve our dream' (Octavio Paz), it seems to me we need to do as Al Gore has done and 'make the best of it'. Ben Okri reckons that it is more difficult to love than to die. He says we need to go on living and loving as best we can.

I have a journal where I write down ideas that feed me. My most recent entry is from Bruce Springsteen. It seems to relate to the current AACORN conversation and to my own struggles with despair and hope and my search for a voice that feels alive and essential.

Bruce Springsteen says on his 2003 DVD with the E Street Band:

'You're always in search of your audience. You're always looking for them. Part of you is expressing something that you need to express but you're also searching for something that they need.'

I send you my love and my wishes that you are finding ways in your own worlds to express what you need and an audience who is ready for you.

Thank you for the conversation and for being there.

Laura Brearley

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Steve Taylor

Sunday  
15/04/2007

Hi everyone,

I think that it's no easy thing to do what Laura is talking about, but I do have an example to share. I've attached a piece by Nancy Adler,<sup>7</sup> whom I have convinced to let me share this with the list) which I think walks this path in a beautiful way.

When I think about how Nancy manages to do this, my theory is that she has learned to let her artistic sensibilities guide her as she lets what she has in her to share pour forth. I also see that there is a mastery of technique in this article, that I also see when she presents, and in her paintings, that is clear when I look for it, but doesn't get in the way. I think many academic pieces are about showing some mastery of the technique without any sense of the artistic sensibilities. And for me, technique should always be subordinate to artistic sensibilities, except perhaps when you are first doing exercises to learn technique. For this to work you have to master the technique and internalize it so that you can get past it. It feels to me like she has done this with this article and it offers us some sense of what the academy might look like if it were (much) more aestheticized (to respond to Daved's query).

Steve

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<sup>7</sup> Adler, N. J. (2007, February). *I am my mother's daughter: Early developmental influences on leadership*. Paper presented at the 17th Kravis deRoulet Conference on Early Developmental Influences on Leadership Success, Claremont McKenna College, Kravis Leadership Centre.

Henrik Schrat

Monday  
16/04/2007

Dear all

Reading through the thread: Art's place in organization studies:

How Jo has put it in the beginning: How can we invade the territory that threatens to redefine us and redefine it instead?

That argument is the reason why I as artist fiddle around in business studies. In that sense I am with George and the notion of resistance as well, talking about aesthetic categories as beauty is one thing, but its resistive quality is another. I don't think its romantic, to understand a subversive quality as inherent to all – good – art. No subversion, no art. Can be subtle and hidden, but no way out of that.

But who am I to tell you that good research and writing has that too, and the interesting parts of the whole arts/business discourse are doing it: art – may it be either as metaphor or in relation the real existing art world – is seen as a potential hub to move on and resist in organizational studies. (As a selling point too, of course.) It is a good thing to do, to construct an unknown other field, whose perception is pretty much shaped through organizational studies, and only very slow develops links with the actual art discourse. Maybe there's no need at all of that links actually – if the notion of *art* opens a placeholder within a stuck discourse there is actually more art in that operation, than playing around with a wrong understood external artiness.

Lacking the insight you guys have in the history of MOS and their inner movements, I experience a open and *unsorted* field, it's like a fertile swamp of knowledge, with drifting logs of wood and stuff in it, logging onto each other and letting go. Croaking little green guys included. For me it feels as if there is a certain excitement around, the spirit of departure, which I would suppose settles down some day, and paths and ways will appear in the dried up swamp, and some trees will start do grow.

A concept as old as 'making and matching' developed by Popper and used by Gombrich works for me still well – both for scholars and artists – to see a lot of parallels and to feel also home in a scientific realm. Though I am sure that I constantly misunderstand everything. That's fine and fun.

A remark about power: I miss often in MOS texts the critical dimension of power. Generally speaking and in a historical sense. In Critical Management Studies, there is loads of it, of course. But that's the trick, which seems to repeat the problem in the inner art discourse: that the only ones which care about that dimensions are deeply in a post-Marxist tradition, and mostly think in quite uninteresting, self reflexive categories, and don't move on in the fields they are actually talking about, dealing with Capitalism as a phenomenon.

And in the for me more interesting fields of discourse, there is a remarkable lack of the dimension of power and politics.

Of course: It can well be that I have read the wrong texts so far.

Another personal remark: I use MOS happily as quarry for my discursive positioning in arts practice – funny enough facing probably comparable problems like the ones of Art in MOS you are talking about. My involvement in MOS can seriously damage my career in the arts, if I don't play it very carefully, at least after an initial excitement it gets marginalized. The culture technique of deliberately *not knowing* is in the arts still mighty and – tricky – also I do see that point as important. One of my gallerists told me the other day quite straight things about what happens if he tells clients that I write a Management PhD. It's *so* conventional.

But does a clear image of an enemy not produce a lot of power? Jo, I am with you. I wanna redefine and add to it rather than leave.

Best

Henrik

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David Boje

Wednesday  
18/04/2007

It is correct, or at least ethical behavior, as it has answerability to it. It is for Aristotle a bit rash.

It is a general phenomenon. Since 9/11 and PATRIOT act there is email surveillance The west Wild myth is pretty much fizzling out. Across the street from our 3-horse ranch, they sold the Bureau of land management Land to two developers. Where to ride? Where to walk in the dessert once it is all lawns, sidewalks and pavement? The usual democratic process of City and County working all the details with the developers, and then inviting citizen participation, if you are willing to set for 6 hours through meeting then get 5 minutes to talk. Few are that persistent. It is endemic to U.S. process.

AACORN is awesome support. There are more brilliant ideas flowing here. I love the aesthetic way of sensing. It is healthy discussion, even enlightening. Keep it up.

David

David Boje

Signing as private citizen, not as university employee.

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Luca Zan

Saturday  
28/04/2007

Looking at the subject of these messages (Art's place in organization studies – finding the middle path) I was a bit surprised not to find any reference to another possible stream/area of research in which arts and management can meet, in one way or another.

I am referring to the study itself of arts entities, not only in the creative process, but in general in managing these strange (anomalous?) kinds of bureaucracies (sometimes lasting for centuries). In particular I am referring to the use of some sort of critical management studies applied to arts organizations (in particular *big* ones). This is the kind of research I am doing, starting almost a decade ago, and I can ensure you how fun and interesting is to analyze the British Museum, Pompeii excavation, archeological teams, and so on, from our point of view.

This is also the opportunity to advise the AACORN community about the book *Managerial Rhetoric and Arts Organizations* (2006)<sup>5</sup>

More than a one way application of management – as a given body of knowledge – to arts organizations, in my experience this process tends to undermine not a few of the elements representing the identity of mainstream management. But also, I guess, can provide some different perspectives even in the *critical* area. Without aiming at any systematic analysis, there are three aspects that I'd like to mention here.

**First**, when talking with an archeologist or curator, they will not understand our ways of framing (and fragmenting) our field/s. Sometimes they will not even understand the distinction between an economist and a management scholar, not to say further *subtle* differences we tend to make. This forces you to some forms of holistic approach, which is so difficult to pursue *within* management field, in a sense questioning the very way in which management scholars construct their professional domains (and sub-domains).

**Second**, the very internal inconsistency of management studies in themselves is one of the things I learn in this research, and never realized before. Even inside the same documents (e.g. a consultant report in the case of the British Museum) you will find different traditions/matrixes/parts/*souls* of management studies providing different (and contradictory) advice. Such a situation of *epistemological inconsistency* is of a great value. Perhaps even a mainstream-for-profit business course should address the issue, for the *chaos* of our body of knowledge is an intriguing and positive element if you understand it (it opens up different perspectives/dialogues). Otherwise is likely to get into a serious mess (unconscious mess: ask the people at the British Museum!).

**Third**, at the risk of appearing naïve, there is a point that is perhaps linked to our ideology (?) as critical scholars (to a greater or lesser extent). I have the feeling that in some part of most

of us (including me) there is still some sort of aversion to management studies because it is related to some form of political involvement (I don't know how to say it, but some elements of *rebels-ism* are still present in me). If you do your research referred to organizations that are free from a similar ideological bias (in themselves/in our mind) our critical view could take different ways, may be more *compromised* not just in terms of action research, but in more radical ways of moral involvement ('we can change the world', as we used to sing some years ago). If I care – and I do care – of the future of Pompeii excavation, despite my critical approach there is still a way of using management studies also to understand and help the situation. Put more explicitly, despite my aversion to mainstream management, I find that management as a body of knowledge (under a *modest* approach, and without any simplistic view of the complex micro-economics and micro sociology that are there involved) can be desperately important for the survival of these organizations (even acknowledging that most of the time its is used exactly the other way round). Rediscovering some *positive thinking* and even some forms of *prescriptive attitude* of management studies also under a critical perspectives is thus something that makes me think.

**Finally**, being arts entities related to the public sector, also opens the door to a less superficial understanding or comparison of the evolution of public sector also in these professional organizations, with much more problematic outcomes (and several pitfalls) to address. This may also refer to the modernization of the public sector in China, in the management of Cultural Heritage.

Because most of the realities analyzed in my research are published in journals that will be very unlikely to come to you desk, in the following I am listing the most important of them. If you are interested and find troubles in getting some of them please let me know.

Luca

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<sup>5</sup> A free chapter can be downloaded at Palgrave website:

<http://www.palgrave.com/products/Catalogue.aspx?is=0230000223>

**Luca Zan: Major publications on international journals on management & the arts**

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- (2007 June, forthcoming). Change Processes at the Shaanxi History Museum: Managerial Challenges, *Museum Management and Curatorship*.
- (2007, forthcoming with Narduzzo, A.). The Opificio delle Pietre Dure in Florence: Between Excellence and Surviving. In Ayata B. (ed.), *Kulturen och dess ekonomier*, Studentlitteratur AB, Stockholm.
- (2006). *Managerial Rhetoric and Arts Organizations*, Palgrave MacMillan.
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- (2000). Managerialisation Processes and Performance in Arts Organisations: The Archaeological Museum of Bologna. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 16(4), 431–454).
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- (Working Paper with Masino, G.). The Ferrara Buskers Festival: Managing of Meanings and Social Emergence. *University of Bologna*.