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Art and Citizenship-Governmental Intersections

by

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Synopsis

The thesis argues that the relations between culture and government are best viewed through an analysis of the programmatic and institutional contexts for the use of culture as an interface in the relations between citizenship and government. Discussion takes place through an analysis of the history of art programmes which, in seeking to target a ‘general’ population, have attempted to equip this population with various particular capacities. We aim to provide a history of rationalities of art administration. This will provide us with an approach through which we might understand some of the seemingly irreconcilable policy discourses which characterise contemporary discussion of government arts funding. Research for this thesis aims to make a contribution to historical research on arts institutions in Australia and provide a base from which to think about the role of government in culture in contemporary Australia.

In order to reflect on the relations between government and culture the thesis discusses the key rationales for the conjunction of art, citizenship and government in post-World War Two (WWII) Australia to the present day. Thus, the thesis aims to contribute an overview of the discursive origins of the main contemporary rationales framing arts subvention in post-WWII Australia. The relations involved in the government of culture in late eighteenth-century France, nineteenth-century Britain, America in the 1930s and Britain during WWII are examined by way of arguing that the discursive influences on government cultural policy in Australia have been diverse. It is suggested in relation to present day Australian cultural policy that more effective terms of engagement with policy imperatives might be found in a history of the funding of culture which emphasises the plurality of relations between governmental programmes and the self-shaping activities of citizens.
During this century there has been a shift in the political rationality which organises government in modern Western liberal democracies. The historical case studies which form section two of the thesis enable us to argue that, since WWII, cultural programmes have been increasingly deployed on the basis of a governmental rationality that can be described as advanced or neo-liberal. This is both in relation to the forms these programmes have taken and in relation to the character of the forms of conduct such programmes have sought to shape in the populations they act upon. Mechanisms characteristic of such neo-liberal forms of government are those associated with the welfare state and include cultural programmes. Analysis of governmental programmes using such conceptual tools allows us to interpret problems of modern social democratic government less in terms of oppositions between structure and agency and more in terms of the strategies and techniques of government which shape the activities of citizens. Thus, the thesis will approach the field of cultural management not as a field of monolithic decision making but as a domain in which there are a multiplicity of power effects, knowledges, and tactics, which react to, or are based upon, the management of the population through culture.

The thesis consists of two sections. Section one serves primarily to establish a set of historical and theoretical co-ordinates on which the more detailed historical work of the thesis in section two will be based. We conclude by emphasising the necessity for the continuation of a mix of policy frameworks in the construction of the relations between art, government and citizenship which will encompass a focus on diverse and sometimes competing policy goals.
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Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

Signed

Lisanne Gibson