position that it could make such manoeuvres towards power, in all its ambiguous openness – and this is precisely the organisation's limitation (a joyless bureaucratic aesthetic) and its strength (believing that art can cause both business *and* art to re-evaluate their priorities).

IV. The Community Arts Movement

The countercultural foil to APG in the 1970s is without question the UK community arts movement. Both attempted to establish a new role for the artist in relationship to society, and as Steveni observes, both share the same components: 'people and time'.[59] Moreover, both have histories in which their fortunes are closely intertwined with public funding for the arts. Yet if APG positioned artists at the nerve centre of decision-making bodies, the community arts movement operated in less glamorous contexts, at a grass-roots level of community activism. John Walker describes how APG found it necessary to combat the idea that it was a 'community art' organisation, an agency for 'artists in residence' schemes, or that its aim was 'help for the artist'.[60] Rather, APG's concern was always to impact upon the thinking of corporations and government organisations, rather than directly empowering those people who work within them. By contrast, the ideological motivations of community arts revolved around precisely this attention to the marginalised, whom they sought to empower through participatory creative practice, and through an opposition to elitist cultural hierarchies. (It is worth remembering that in the 1970s the Arts Council of Great Britain was still headed by the aristocracy and upper middle classes.) Despite the pitfalls of generalisation when defining community arts – its multiple organisations had quite distinct aims and methods – the recurrent characteristics of the movement can be summarised as follows: it was positioned against the hierarchies of the international art world and its criteria of success founded upon quality, skill, virtuosity, etc., since these conceal class interests; it advocated participation and co-authorship of works of art; it aimed to give shape to the creativity of all sectors of society, but especially to people living in areas of social, cultural and financial deprivation; for some, it was also a powerful medium for social and political change, providing the blueprint for a participatory democracy.[61]

Although there is a large literature produced by community arts organisations, very little of this is historical or scholarly, and even less is critical.[62] The analysis of community-based visual arts tends to take the form of reports on specific projects in local contexts, by people invested in supporting these initiatives, without any overarching history or meta-theoretical discourse beyond a loosely Marxist opposition to cultural elites and the occasional mention of Benjamin's 'The Author as Producer'. Important exceptions are Owen Kelly's critical history of the community arts movement, *Community, Art and the State* (1984), and Charles Landry's *What a*

Way to Run a Railroad (1985), a critique of post-'68 radical movements in the UK.[63] Neither book emphasises the extent to which the concerns of community arts were closely related to those of contemporary art, in contrast to today's tendency to keep the two at arm's length (as can be seen in the ongoing separation between curatorial work and education/community outreach).[64]

In the UK, the first community arts groups were formed in the late 1960s: professional artists took equal roles alongside members of the community in the collaborative production of a politicised artistic project: murals, street theatre, festivals, film and video collectives, etc.[65] For many organisations, the collectivist ethos extended into squatting, communes and a self-sufficient lifestyle; it was part of an outpouring of radical activity at this time that included recreational drug taking, free festivals, new contraception, a desire to return 'power to the people', university occupations (most notably at Hornsey School of Art in 1968) and the Grosvenor Square riots (in opposition to US involvement in Vietnam). Organisers were unwaged but able to survive either from parental hand-outs or unemployment benefit from the welfare state.[66] In a visual art context, the community arts movement was in dialogue with a number of alternative initiatives, including Pavilions in the Parks (1967–71), which showed art in lightweight portable structures in public spaces; the Poster Workshop on Camden Road, which printed posters for strikers, tenant groups and anti-war protests; Cornelius Cardew's radically egalitarian *Scratch Orchestra* (1968–72), in which a group of thirty to forty players would each develop a theme for a composition and be responsible for their individual contributions; and David Medalla's 'participation-production-propulsion' events (1968 onwards, discussed below). In each of these initiatives, questions of audience, accessibility and elitism were strongly contested; participation was a central strategy and ethos for democratic cultural production.[67]

Finding a definition for these new activities was recognised to be a problem early on. By the early 1970s, the Arts Council's Experimental Projects Committee was deluged with applications for funding, and in 1974 set up a working committee to define the new tendency, coming to the following conclusions:

> 'Community artists' are distinguishable not by the techniques they use, although some (e.g. video, inflatables) are specially suited to their purposes, but by their *attitude* towards the place of their activities in the life of society. Their primary concern is their *impact on a community* and their relationship with it: by assisting those with whom they make contact to become more aware of their situation and of their own creative powers, and by providing them with the facilities they need to make use of their abilities, they hope to widen and deepen the sensibilities of the

> community in which they work and so to enrich its existence. To a varying degree they see this *as a means of change, whether psychological, social or political*, within the community. They seek to bring about this increased awareness and creativity by involving the community in the activities they promote . . . They therefore differ from practisers of the more established arts in that *they are chiefly concerned with a process rather than a finished product*; a many-sided process including craft, sport, etc., in which the 'artistic' element is variable and often not clearly distinguishable from the rest.[68]

As can be seen from this description – which comes very close to the working definition of much socially engaged art today – emphasis is placed on social process rather than outcomes, and on attitude rather than achievement. Yet the thorny question of how to evaluate this new category remained unclear. The only suggestion offered by the 1974 committee was a recognition of the importance of site specificity: projects could 'be evaluated only by enquiry and observation on the spot', hence 'visits to the localities concerned should be paid wherever possible'.[69] The committee also observed that the activities of community artists overlapped with those of other public bodies (education, social welfare, sport, leisure, etc.) – yet it stopped short of proposing to bring experts from those fields into the process of evaluation. Despite acknowledging that community arts aimed to impact upon the community, it did not develop a method for establishing how this was to be measured.

V. The Blackie and Inter-Action

Two of the longest-running community arts projects in the UK were established in 1968, and exist in some rivalry with each other.[70] The Blackie (founded by choreographer Bill Harpe and his wife Wendy) continues to be based in St George's Church in the Chinatown area of Liverpool. Its original aim was to establish 'the facilities of a Community Centre and the best the Contemporary Arts could offer under one roof, the Blackie roof'.[71] From its inception it had a commitment to showing 'high' art alongside everyday productions of local people; early visitors included choreographer Meredith Monk and the jazz musician Jon Hendricks, while many of its workshops and social games have taken their initiative from avant-garde culture (John Cage, Merce Cunningham, Samuel Beckett, Liliane Lijn, John Latham). In the early 1970s, performances of work by Cage and Morton Feldman took place alongside participatory activities such as mothers' bingo and children's playgroup, assorted workshops (typing, puppetry, woodwork, cookery, photography), a small press (for producing publicity and publications), and a radio station (Radio Blackie, set up in 1973). Still occupying the enormous former church it took over in 1968, The Blackie