Communications and Culture

Communications has been defined as the conveying or exchanging of information and ideas. This wide definition is taken as the starting-point for this series of books, which are not bound by conventional academic divisions. The series aims to document or analyse a broad range of cultural forms and ideas.

It encompasses works from areas as esoteric as linguistics and as exoteric as television. The language of communication may be the written word or the moving picture, the static icon or the living gesture. These means of communicating can at their best blossom into and form an essential part of the other mysterious concept, *culture*.

There is no sharp or intended split in the series between communication and culture. On one definition, culture refers to the organisation of experience shared by members of a community, a process which includes the standards and values for judging or perceiving, for predicting and acting. In this sense, creative communication can make for a better and livelier culture.

The series reaches towards the widest possible audience. Some of the works concern themselves with activities as general as play and games; others offer a narrower focus, such as the ways of understanding the visual image. It is hoped that some moves in the transformation of the artful and the scientific can be achieved, and that both can begin to be understood by a wider and more comprehending community. Some of these books are written by practitioners – broadcasters, journalists, and artists; others come from critics, scholars, scientists and historians.

The series has an ancient and laudable, though perhaps untenable, aim – an aim as old as the Greeks and as new as holography: it aspires to help heal the split between cultures, between the practitioners and the thinkers, between science and art, between the academy and life.

PAUL WALTON

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The Social Production of Art

JANET WOLFF

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First published 1981

Reprinted 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990

Published by
MACMILLAN EDUCATION LTD
Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 2XS
and London
Companies and representatives
throughout the world

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Wolff, Janet

The social production of art.—
(Communications and culture).

I. Arts and society

I. Title II. Series

301.5'7 NX180.S6

ISBN 978-0-333-27147-6 ISBN 978-1-349-16517-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-16517-9

In memory of Mary and Rosie Gertler

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Preface

This book is intended as an introduction to some of the central issues in the sociology of the arts, both for students of the arts and for students of sociology. It is not a textbook in the sociology of art, however, and it does not claim to be a comprehensive survey of the major developments and key figures in this field. Instead it pursues a couple of themes which seem to me to be particularly important in the study of culture. The primary focus is on the social nature of the arts, in their production, distribution and reception. A secondary issue which runs through the book is the problem of the author or the artist, and the question of how a sociological approach to the arts can conceptualise individual creativity, without depending on pre-sociological and mystifying notions of artist-as-genius. In some cases, particularly in the later chapters, the primary work I have called on is itself very complex, often obscure, and difficult to understand, and my exposition of it may consequently either remain fairly abstruse or fail to do it justice in attempting to simplify the ideas. However, I have tried to discuss these issues in reasonably simple terms, and to explain and present the material at an introductory level.

I would like to thank Michèle Barrett and Philip Corrigan for their careful reading of an earlier version of this book and their useful suggestions, as well as for the many discussions I have had with them over the past two or three years which have helped me develop my ideas. I would also like to thank Tony Bryant, Ahmed Gurnah, Stuart Hall, Dave Laing, Jim McGuigan and Griselda Pollock for their comments on the earlier draft, and Ruth M. Sweeney for her help in typing the final version. And lastly, I would like to thank Zygmunt Bauman and Bob Towler, both for their comments on this book and for their continued encouragement and support over the past six years.

Leeds
December 1979

J. W.