

THE ART OF DIPLOMACY:  
THE USE OF ART IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

Artists may share their work internationally to expand their audience or viewership, but non-art organizations have also historically facilitated art shows and international exchange. This project explores what is required for a non-art organization to use art as a tool for building and improving cross-cultural understanding. Lewis Hyde's theories of gift institutions and Pierre Bourdieu's theory of symbolic capital are used to explain organizations' positioning and ability to participate with artists and art. This paper concludes that organizations are enabled by the amount of symbolic capital they are able to aggregate and disavow in the eyes of the audience, and they do this by abiding the language and the rules of gift economies.

The research and writing of this thesis could not have been possible without the help of many people. I would like to thank Dr. Martin Irvine for his patience and guidance during this process which ended far from where it began. My thanks also go to Dr. Linda Garcia for her time and willingness to help. I would like to thank Heather Kerst who, time and time again, went the extra mile to help make my time at Georgetown and the thesis process as smooth as possible. I also am deeply grateful to my parents for their support and countless sacrifices on my behalf. I would also like to thank Clay Johnsen for letting me think out loud and for supporting my ego. Lastly, and most of all, this project would not have been possible had it not been for my wife's faith, patience, sacrifice and love. I dedicate this project to these people with my deepest gratitude.

Thank you,

Spencer Oscarson

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## **Introduction**

When people attempt to introduce their culture to another they often start with tangible cultural objects that can be experienced through one of the senses; food, language, customs, dress etc. But showing a culture's art is usually one of the first to be introduced. Art comes in many forms and is usually made to be aesthetically pleasing. It does not require a lesson to be enjoyed and leaves a positive impression on a foreign crowd.

Artists may share their work internationally to expand their audience or viewership, but non-art organizations have also facilitated art shows and international exchange. These organizations, both political and not, see art as a possible tool for improving international relations. This project explores what is required and what the cost is when a non-art organization uses art as a tool for building and improving cross-cultural understanding.

To start, this project begins by exploring how art is culturally specific, and how it can act as cultural ambassador. Then, this project will describe how art has been used in the past, and how it is being used presently, as a tool of diplomacy.

This project uses Lewis Hyde's theory of gift institutions and Pierre Bourdieu's theories of symbolic capital to then understand the criteria used when organizations, artists and art choose to interact. Using this criterion, this project then looks at three examples of organizations that use Japanese art and intellectual exchange as their tools to improve relations between Japan and the United States.



## **Chapter I: Culture, Art and Understanding**

This chapter's purpose is to establish not only the important role culture plays in societies, but also how the art world functions as a system that is highly organized and enabled to perform a function. This chapter has two main sections. The first will define the context in which I will use the term 'culture'. I define it as a perpetually evolving system by which humans attempt to create systems of meaning whereby they may communicate, function, grow and explore. There is a growing need to understand, as best we can, the assumptions and characteristics of our own culture in order to then have a base from which people can understand each other. In a world where we may connect to a person on the other side of the world quicker than it would take to walk to our next door neighbor, we must understand that connecting is not the same as communicating. Effectively communicating takes more than the mere ability to interact; for, without effective communications, how can meaningful relationships of trust be built? This section's second purpose is to explain the importance of cross cultural studies so that the importance of this project, as a whole, becomes clearer.

The second section will draw out a single cultural practice, namely art. It provides a backdrop for the assumption that art can facilitate cross cultural interactions, despite the broadness of its definition. Because art is the most accessible cultural object due to its 'made to be seen' nature, I assume that art can be effective as a cross -cultural communicator. What determines whether it is, or not, are the organizations that use it. Hence, organizations are the independent variable.

Only the first section of this chapter will touch on this project's assumption that cross cultural interaction, exchange, and studies are a positive force for peaceful existence in a multicultural world. Beyond this, the concept that understanding your own culture makes you aware of, and more sensitive to, another culture is assumed. What this project tries to test is how an organization given these assumptions in their mission statements, must be positioned to be efficaciously at reach that goal. This chapter outlines these assumptions.

## **Culture**

Culture makes social life possible.

-Lotman page 411

It can be a slippery practice to attempt to define the term 'culture'. The word itself has many uses and even more connotations. I feel it necessary to define it here, not only to clarify the context in which I will use it but also, to define the boundaries by which I will confine this project.

According to one textbook definition, culture can be defined as the 'intellectual and artistic works or practices which in their very forms and meanings define human society as socially constructed rather than natural' (Brooker 50). This broad view of the word avoids reference to specific cultural products, such as music and art, which can easily lead to a debate over what is culture and what is 'non-cultural' (by being its counterpart economically or industrially). This debate, played out between the liberal-conservative and Marxist traditions, lead to arguments that pit an idea of authentic moral or spiritual values that set art (often termed 'High Culture') against the mechanical and materialist order of industrial society (imbed). This debate has gone on for generations and continues to argue definitions of culture, art, groups, and identity. On the broadest level, however, all sides of the debate 'share the assumption that culture can have an

active, shaping influence upon ideas, attitudes and experience' (Brooker 51).

So what are the boundaries of specific cultures? Raymond Williams described culture as 'a whole way of life of a social group or whole society... through which necessarily... a social order is communicated, reproduced, experience and explored' (Williams 13). This characterization not only draws a line of importance around how culture is a part of defining our everyday lives, it also seems to define culture around whole societies, perhaps nations. Marshall Singer, wanting to answer for all of the questions this raised about subcultures and groups, wrote that 'every identity group has a culture of its own... every individual is a part of perhaps hundreds of different identity groups simultaneously and that one learns, and becomes a part of, all of the cultures with which one identifies' (Singer 28). It is not my purpose, nor is it necessary, to further categorize or describe culture groups. I only quote Singer here to adequately show that my use of the concept of culture is not about a national identity, but a process through which we build our lives at every level, from the national to the very personal.

A culture will provide rules or texts for living dependent upon its orientation. 'Culture can be

represented as an aggregate of texts... a mechanism creating an aggregate of texts and texts as the realization of culture' (Lotman 414-415). Some consider their culture to be a collection of texts (thought of as examples or traditions), while others see it as a set of rules.<sup>1</sup> Culture's function is to serve as a memory; its basic feature is self-accumulation (421). However, we must not think of culture as static. Cultures have need for constant renewal (420).

Seeing culture not as a finished product but as an ongoing process is important to the rest of this project. Singer described this important characteristic of culture, "...cultures themselves are constantly changing (in part because the environments in which people live are constantly changing), and thus people's perceptions of the world around them are also constantly changing (30)."

Subscribing to a culture is much like subscribing to a newspaper; it has its own history of means and methods, and a specific language. The difference is, no one is a passive subscriber. As we live and experience and communicate and exchange, in short, as history goes along, we influence and change our culture. Change in culture is only perceivable as it is manifest. And culture is

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<sup>1</sup> Some cultural elements can play the part of both, such as taboos (Lotman 415).

manifest thru acts of communication. James Carey wrote a famous piece where he defined communication as culture. He wrote that 'communication is a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed...' (21-23). No culture is a finished product. Even if you had a case where an entire culture was wiped out, the last records or objects the inhabitants left would be nothing more than insights to where the process was when it came to a stop. As Carey wrote:

To study communication is to examine the actual social process wherein significant symbolic forms are created, apprehended and used... Out attempts to construct, maintain, repair and transform reality are publicly observable activities that occur in historical time. We create express, and convey our knowledge of and attitudes toward reality through the construction of a variety of symbol systems: art, science, journalism, religion, common sense, mythology (Carey [www.scholars.nus.edu](http://www.scholars.nus.edu)).

Edward Hall sums up the definition of culture, as it is to be used here, as well as its scope of importance. He wrote:

...what gives a man his identity no matter where he is born - is his culture, the total communication framework: words, actions, postures, gestures, tones

of voice, facial expressions, the way he handles time, space, and materials, and the way he works, plays, makes love, and defends himself. All these things and more are complete communication systems with meanings that can be read correctly only if one is familiar with the behavior in its historical, social, and cultural context' (42).

One aspect of what Hall wrote here, which, is an essential theme in this project, is that it takes familiarity to understand ourselves and others. Our degree of familiarity will determine how easy we find it to communicate with others. Familiarity facilitates better understanding. It is usually easier to get a message across in a conversation with a lifelong next door neighbor in a small town than it might be with a person who is from a country we couldn't find on a map with an encyclopedia. While the concept may be simple, it is one that has become more and more important in our present world.

In many ways the world is shrinking at an incredible rate. Strange and often frightening groups are coming into contact with each other at ever accelerating rates. Isolation is unthinkable. More people are living and working and studying among people of different cultures today than at any previous time in history. That experience can be made easier, more

productive, and more satisfying if we better understand the process at work. And while intercultural communication may be a difficult task, it is not impossible (Singer 29).

Facilitating this 'task' is the goal of many organizations around the world. They must choose an access point to people's cultures which they attempt to encourage, build or facilitate. As was mentioned above, this project focuses on the use of art to perform this function.

Edward Hall wrote that culture cannot be read with assurance if you are not familiar with it (42). Gary Weaver explained that great anxiety can occur when we encounter an unfamiliar culture. The common (over)use of the term 'Culture Shock' refers to this anxiety which can come by a loss of familiar cues (cultural values that provide assurance whether things are happening the way they 'should' or not), a breakdown of communication or an identity crisis. All of these commonly occur upon entering or encountering a foreign culture (176-177). Weaver addressed the issues of the sojourner as he/she prepares and enters a new cultural setting. Although the organizations later used in this project do not aim at preparing people to physically move into another culture



their statements of purpose resemble Weaver's explanation of how and why it is important to overcome these issues.

The loss of familiar cultural cues can be disorientating but 'frees the people from habitual ways of doing and perceiving things and allows them to adopt new cues. *It also brings to conscious awareness the grip that our culture has on our behavior and personality'* (Weaver 180, emphasis added). This last part is the key to the initial assumptions this section addresses. By familiarizing yourself with another system of living, another culture, you may be able to better see the negative meanings, stigma, bias, and connotations inherent in your own. This exercise could provide a person the ability to choose more freely how to feel and interact with people of other cultures.

So if becoming aware of other cultural systems can provide an opportunity to be more receptive of difference from one's self, how is this done? Umberto Eco defined culture as a:

...whole encyclopedia that the performances of that (culture's) language have implemented, namely the cultural conventions that that language has produced and the very history of the previous interpretations

of many texts, comprehending the text that the reader is in the course of reading (Eco, 1992, 68).

Languages, including their various dialects and discourses form a kind of cultural dictionary. Each culture uses this unique dictionary to attach specific meanings to practices, codes, signs and symbols thereby making up their culture's unique 'encyclopedia'. Simply put, the dictionary is linguistics and the encyclopedia is the worldview described using the language as found in the dictionary. These cultural dictionaries and encyclopedias preexist the specific members (as they are born into or adopt the culture), but they (the members) do play a part in its constant evolution and motion (Eco 1992, 1984). Eco's conceptualization of culture in these forms provides a simple way to familiarize oneself with a culture with which one has no experience or understanding; come to an understanding of these elements, and one will have a general understanding of the people who subscribe to that culture. In another project I outlined the questions that such a semiotic attempt would require. Attempting to explore a cultural dictionary or encyclopedia would be a study of a system of signs, their meanings and how they are derived as such. The whole discussion does not need to be repeated here, only the idea that these cultural

dictionaries and encyclopedias are accessible to non-members<sup>2</sup>. And a person need not know the entire history of every sign and its meaning in order to 'be acquainted' with another culture. One only need be introduced to various signs, concepts, histories or meanings that will make possible the awareness that Weaver said can foster our ability to objectively see our own cultural encyclopedia and its' positioning as well as another's. Weaver suggests the sojourner study not only cultural objects, but cultural and linguistic theory in order to prepare for immersion, but for the purposes of bolstering relationships through better understanding, various texts can be shown and shared that can provide a chance for this process to begin. Art is one of these texts.

## **Art**

Art is one of the easiest cultural products to spot. The process of art (the history of art) is well recorded and reported. As a 'physical' cultural product, it is easier to observe as it is produced, discussed and exchanged. Art can be experienced through any of the senses; it can be viewed, heard, touched, and even tasted.

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<sup>2</sup> Oscarson, Spencer. "**Mythbusters and Semiotics**". Final Project for CCTP-748, Georgetown University,. December 2007. Dr. Martin Irvine. It can be accessed at <<http://www.metapedia.com/wiki/index.php?title=Sjo24-2>>

The organizations described later (chapter 4) all have one thing in common; they all use the exchange of art and education exchange to facilitate understanding between two cultures in order to build a stronger relationship. They all function based on the same assumptions, first, that understanding another culture's art allows better understanding of the other culture and, second, that understanding another culture facilitates a stronger relationship with them. This section's purpose is to provide some backing to these claims.

Art is a culture specific text and, by necessity, is made using a 'dictionary' and placed in the culture's encyclopedia. In other words, art is to be understood through the historical context in which it was made. You do not need to know the whole encyclopedia to make or 'read' it, allowing you to appreciate art, but the more of the context you are familiar with, the more meaning you can draw from a single text.

Even as the art world expands and the ability for artists to show and create work outside their own cultural boundaries grows, many artists are forced to use 'terms' from their cultural encyclopedia just to be recognizable in a place from which to begin. For example, looking Japanese is a starting point for many Japanese artists' work and

careers (Higa, 7). This Japanese presence is visually represented by using forms from the 'Japanese Encyclopedia'.

The Japanese artist Takashi Murakami exemplifies this idea. Through his art, Murakami not only builds on the semiotic past of Japanese art, but his work is often a commentary on Japanese culture, and history. He chooses to mimic specific styles of pop culture/art to comment on his own understanding of his national and cultural heritage (Darling 2001). As a small child in post World War II Japan, Murakami enjoyed putting small models together. These models were made by a Japanese company called Tamiya. The Tamiya logo was a red square and blue square side by side with a large white star in the center of each and the word 'TAMIYA' written in English WWII Jeep-esque type-font.

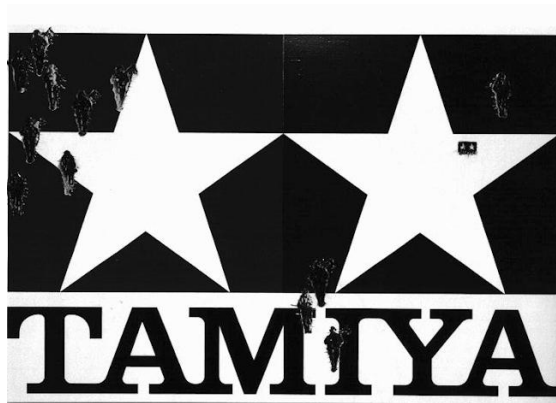


Figure 1 - Signboard TAMIYA, 1991



Figure 2 - Signboard TAKASHI, 1992

It was not until he was much older that Takashi realized that this company was using symbols borrowed from

the US military that would give a feeling of bold strength. It was then that Murakami realized that as a child he had no idea what symbols and meaning he had so innocently bought into. So from 1989 to 1991, Murakami both replicated and mimicked this trademark symbol replacing the text with 'TAKASHI' (Yoshitake 115) (see figure 1 and 2 Taken from Schimmel 162-163). Murakami explained that this piece, along with a whole room of small toy-type objects in his gallery showing are meant to teach Japanese children the importance of understanding what they are being sold, what they mean and where they come from (MOCA Murakami video tour).

Another painting Murakami explained is his first large scale painting that brought him financial success and notoriety, a piece titled '727' (Figure 3 taken from Schimmel).

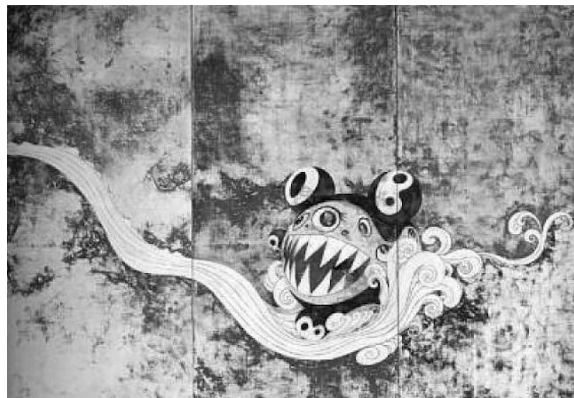


Figure 3 - 727, 1996

The title mocks a large cosmetic company in Japan that took on the name '747' from the American made jet simply because it sounded 'cool'. Murakami thinks this mentality of using random names and other symbols without understanding their context, simply because their originating country gives them a 'cool' ring, is "stupid" (MOCA Murakami video tour) .

Murakami's intelligent use of forms and symbols, which have now passed through whole generations since the end of World War II, clearly show how he feels about what they have meant to Japanese society and culture. His psychedelic, rearranged and deranged Mickey Mouse type character, Mr. DoB(Figure 4 from Schimmel), his oversized porn-ish otaku figures My Lonesome Cowboy, Hiropon, and Second Mission Project Ko, as well as his short films and anime use a variety of historic contexts mixed with new methods, meanings and symbols. These works are not merely paint on a medium; they are communicating both an entire history and the artists commentary about it.

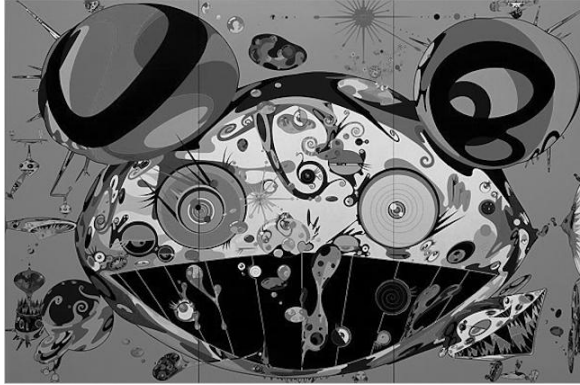


Figure 4 - Tan Tan Bo, 2001

It is possible to enjoy Murakami's talent and the aesthetics of the works without understanding the enormous amount of texts to which they point<sup>3</sup>. However, if a person does, then the art becomes much more than an admirable painting and it can provide insights about the use of the texts, messages, symbols and their meanings. This lesson then has the potential to widen that person's understanding of that culture, and by comparative association, his or her own culture.

So art has the ability to provide both education about another culture, as well as the power to instruct people about their own.

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<sup>3</sup> Murakami said he was surprised and embarrassed by how popular 727 became because people did not ask what the painting or its title meant. So in a way they were reenacting the context of what the painting was about. It is even the cover of the exhibits catalogue (MOCA Murakami video tour).



## **Understanding**

One's culture is a particular view of the world and way of expressing, reading and communicating. Each person belongs to many different cultures and is involved in the continual renewal, and revision of the meanings and methods of each. One form through which these views and language is used is art. Every instance or object of art, just like spoken language, is the result of a history of signs, symbols, meanings and feelings about them. Perhaps no person knows the entirety of his or her own culture or its cultural dictionary and encyclopedia. It is not needed in order to function or to be a member of it.

Likewise, when we use art as a window into a culture we do not subscribe to, it is not necessary to study and understand every intended symbol and meaning. However, knowing and trusting that it is there is a first step to understanding. If we can first validate another culture's art by treating it as meaningful and valuable, it sets the stage for future dialogues, communications and eventual understanding.

## **Chapter II - Soft Power and Art in Diplomacy**

This chapter has two purposes: first, to define soft power and how it is related to the attempt to both attract and coerce people of another culture with one's own. Second, this chapter will identify three kinds of soft power in order to define the proper place for the practice of introducing art as a tool in diplomatic efforts. Doing this will begin to define the contexts in which it can be used and still be 'art' as defined in the first chapter.

### **Soft Power**

'Cultural Relations can be defined as the broad range of contacts through which the way of life of one people is made known to another' (Matsuda 6). These include direct personal interactions, such as studying abroad or having a visiting professor, as well as the less personal communications between people and media in its many forms. 'From these contacts arise opinions and attitudes, favorable or unfavorable, about the foreign nation and its culture' (imbed). This influence at work has been termed Soft Power (Nye 1991). Nye explains that soft power works by codetermined attraction. A country's soft power is determined, not by an inherent attractiveness but by its

ability to make itself attractive to the audience. 'A country's soft power rests primarily on three resources: its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lines up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when they are seen as legitimate and having moral authority)' (Watanabe, Intro by Nye X). Soft power is only applicable to that attraction and not the forces or the resources that produce it.

Attraction depends on what is happening in the mind of the subject. While there may be instances of coercive verbal manipulation, there are more degrees of freedom for the subject when the means involve soft power. I may have few degrees of freedom if the person with the gun demands my money or my life. I have even fewer degrees of freedom if he kills me and simply takes my wallet from my pocket. But to persuade me that he is a guru to whom I should leave my estate leaves open a number of degrees of freedom as well as the possibility of other outside influences arising and influencing the power relationship. After all, minds can change over time, whereas, the ideas cannot be revived (Watanabe, intro by Nye xii).

Others have tried to argue that what Nye calls Soft Power is really a new form of imperialism where stronger economies (most notably the United States) forces their

cultural cues, meanings and values on others (see Tomlinson 1991, Matsuda 2007). Although this outcome can perceivably happen, more recent research has shown that the cultural object and products have acted as stimuli, creating complex reactions from positive and avid acceptance to resistance and rejection. The cues and values must be fit to, or enmeshed with, those already in place. For this to happen requires a certain amount of compatibility, and far from a passive response to an imperialistic takeover, cultures have shown that they will take, adopt or adapt only that which they find useful and will refuse or reject that which is not appropriate for their situation or what they want (Matsuda 6, Traphagan 417-418).

What is important to this project is to show that Soft Power is a conscious effort to make one's culture attractive to another in order to provide the chance (because there is always a chance that the other will not like it or flat out reject it as not compatible) of understanding, cooperation, or negotiation. Soft power involves negotiation (Kobayashi, 14 Nov 2008). Hard Power is the opposite of this, perhaps based on the same motivations, but without consideration for the consent of the receiving culture. Hard power would include military action or direct binding policies or policing, etc.

So when art is considered as the tool of Soft Power, for the sake of increasing diplomatic relations, how and where can it be used before it is no longer functioning naturally as 'art'?

### **Cultural Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Globalization**

Cultural *relations* grow naturally and organically, without government intervention—the transactions of trade and tourism, student flows, communications, book circulation, migration, media access, intermarriage—millions of daily cross-cultural encounters. If that is correct, cultural *diplomacy* can only be said to take place when formal diplomats, serving national governments, try to shape and channel this natural flow to advance national interests (Arndt p.xviii).

Although soft power - as a term - can be used in contexts that do not involve official national policy, such as grassroots diplomacy, the word does seem to carry the connotation of official government involvement.

As far as diplomatic efforts that involve the use of art (in its many forms) go, there are three general categories: Cultural Diplomacy, Public Diplomacy and Globalization. I will briefly define each to explain why I consider the Public Diplomacy the context for the type of

exchange herein examined. Perhaps the defining feature of each is the level of government involvement.

Cultural diplomacy' really defines a specific practice from a specific time period. Just over seventy years ago 'the US department of State created a new dimension in the conduct of its diplomatic relations with other countries, by adding to the formally established relationships with the official spokesmen of other governments a program designed to cultivate closer contacts between the people of the United States and those of other countries through educational and cultural exchange (Espinosa VII).

Cultural diplomacy began between 1923 and 1938 in Europe and the United States. These efforts included the creation of offices in the Department of State specified to redesign cultural relations, and select diplomats who would serve as Cultural Diplomats. The job of cultural diplomats would be the same as other diplomats, namely representing their country, advising the ambassador, building networks with foreign notables, negotiating agreements and, administering staff, but doing so 'with a special sector of the political culture, the host country's educational system, its intellectuals, and its artists' (Arndt xix, 49). These efforts were spurred by the rise of Fascism and were later a primary tool, or weapon, of the Cold War (Arndt

2005, Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008). In the beginning many, including the founding director of the U.S.'s efforts, Ben Cherrington, saw Cultural Diplomacy as an apolitical activity. It was obvious by 1943, however, that there were obvious policy impacts and cultural diplomacy was understood to serve solely national interests (Arndt xix). In interviews with practitioners, the term 'Cultural Diplomacy' was only used in that context (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008, Ito 16 Oct 2008).

Diplomatic efforts aimed directly at general populations, even those done through embassies, are described as Public Diplomacy. I take this working definition of Public Diplomacy from the practitioners I have interviewed. The front line of this approach may be the cultural offices of national embassies in foreign countries. These offices focus their work on connecting directly with the general populations of these countries (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008, Ito 16 Oct 2008). In the many organizations that do this kind of work, I have observed that, as the level of government's involvement goes down, so does the use of the term 'diplomacy' because use of the term adds a political connotation to their efforts (Fish 12 Dec 2008).

Globalization is a term that needs defining even to be placed within this discussion. It is the reason Cultural Diplomacy was abandoned and governments, organizations and media groups evolved (in definition at least) into Public Diplomacy. Again, the practitioners I have talked to form the basis of this definition. They attribute globalization to advanced technologies and mobility. Globalization's effect is to take that which only public officials and the largest corporations previously had access to, and place it into the hands of producers, a wider range of companies and the public who are connected and affluent enough in the use of technology to access it. The internet is perhaps the first and most prominent example. So much has been placed online, legally or not, that anyone who can use a computer can encounter a foreign culture's products (art and other) on a grand scale, in as much as that culture has access to the internet and the ability to use it. Kobayashi Tetsuaki, director of the Japan Foundation office in New York City, said that it is not uncommon for them to show a Japanese film or anime to a group of high school students, even in the most unlikely places in the United States, and run the risk that the audience may know much more about it than they do (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008).



Perhaps the defining factor of cultural diplomacy, public diplomacy and globalization is the orientation to government. Cultural Diplomacy, as a historical term, was a government practice. Public Diplomacy has more practitioners than just governments, but more often than not, governments play a role in funding, or administrating it. Globalization is not an orchestrated effort at all, but the unintended consequence of years of technological, organizational and economical "progress". Globalization is not useful as a subject of this project because it is not something organizations typically 'use' as a means to accomplish their ends. It is not a program. It may just not be programmable.

The arts are somewhat programmable; however, governments have become aware of an inability to easily mold arts to fit their needs. It is as if they were trying to use a screwdriver as a hammer, although they are savvy to the idea that there are situations where it is neither an appropriate nor an effective tool. Why would that be? Though the differences and uses differ, what specifically separates the two from working flawlessly hand in hand? This is where we must place our previous description of art next to the organization of Public Diplomacy to see where

they match up and are able to serve each other's needs and where this is impossible.

The arts have always had the advantage of transcending language barriers. One can admire Phidias without Greek, Van Gogh without Dutch or French, Richter or Bolshoi without Russian, or Bartok without Hungarian. The arts also have a corresponding, if sometimes useful, disadvantage: imprecision. What is seen by the receiving audience is rarely specific and not always what the sender wishes, even when it is a strong message in itself (Arndt 360).

Perhaps there is incompatibility of ends in any mode of communication, including diplomatic efforts, but it is especially visible in arts. This may be because art does not convey messages in conventional language. Art is created using a dictionary of signs, symbols and meanings which are to be understood in the context of their unique culture and history (Chapter 1). Unless it is made as part of a specific foreign relation's project, any use of a work of art is likely taking it out of the context in which it was created. Chapter 1 discussed how introducing these cultural products across boundaries can facilitate understanding of another system of meaning making (another culture in other words). However, it is not the 'culture' that we are talking about; it is organizations, most of

which are somehow representative of a national government. So the question becomes: To what degree can a government use a culture's art for its national interest and it still be art?

The arts have never been the property of a whole nation or race, and something is risked when they are employed for a social or political reasons. Ideally intercultural mobility should emerge as a manifestation of the vitality, pervasiveness, and needs of the arts and the artists themselves, without reference to foreign policy, but in a society which at the same time sees the artist as a representative of some of its most conscious values (Lowry 41).

This quote describes an ideal. The authors recognize this fact and created a list that describes the steps from art fulfilling the purposes of diplomatic programs without any interference down to completely government controlled programming. Keep in mind this was written about the United States Cultural Diplomacy in the heat of the Cold War (1963).

- 1) Spontaneous intercultural movement as a manifestation of the vitality and pervasiveness and needs of the arts and the artist, without reference to foreign policy.

- 2) If such movement could not be spontaneous, but required public or private funds, then the use of such funds without reference to national policies.
- 3) Public funds to use the arts as media by which illuminate and reflect the Western ideal of supremacy of the individual.
- 4) Public funds to reflect abroad a particular American view of man, wherever it exists.

In the case of the United States, the Fulbright Hayes act states that the purpose of exchanges is to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and other countries of the world (section 2451). Even number four can do this. However, I am looking more generally at how well art can be used in this role. So I see this list as a scale. Number one represents the ideal situation where art, acting like art, coincidentally fulfills with the desires of policymakers. This ideal is diluted down through the list to where number four is restricting art from functioning 'naturally' as only specific pieces or messages are being bent to the will of national interests.

In order to understand how and when a government led effort can be done thru art without interfering with how it can function naturally, the next chapter will address how

art creates and exchanges its value. After all, it is the value of art that these efforts are trying to plug into. But how can value be attached to the concepts spoken of in chapter 1, namely art's ability to share the cultural encyclopedia, to be a kind of Rosetta stone to understanding culture? That is the challenge addressed in chapter 3. In this chapter I have focused on diplomatic efforts that use arts and defined the context in which it is currently being done. Also, I have now suggested that the effectiveness of their use may depend on the context in which they are being used. To complete this chapter I will again share a brief example of the use of art in diplomatic setting.

### **The Venice Biennale**

The Venice Biennale was established in 1893 as a National Italian Art Fair. The following year invitations were sent for international artists to participate. Except for a short break between 1942 and 1948, the Biennale has continued to grow in size and influence. Although it began as a traditional visual art venue, the Biennale now includes venues for cinema (it claims to be the first international film festival), architecture, dance, music, and theater. The 2007 Biennale was a 150 day event that

witnessed nearly 320,000 visitors in the art venue alone ([www.labiennale.org/en/](http://www.labiennale.org/en/)). One art critic said there is a certain tribal quality to this gathering (and to large biennales in general). He wrote 'The art world is now so spread out that events like these are one of the only ways to feel a sense of community' (Saltz 2007). These gatherings gain significance not only in the international media; they also serve as a venue for artists and others in the art world to come together, see what is being done, talk, converse and corroborate about the exhibits there and others going on elsewhere. In fact, the last few days before the biennale officials opens to the public, it opens for vernissage where only those who receive special passes may come to see the exhibits and join in talks and seminars ([labiennale.org/en/art](http://labiennale.org/en/art)).

But its size is not what makes the Venice biennale an interesting example; it is the fact that participation is now organized by nation, not artist. Although there are various sponsors and participants, the exhibits are created through an interesting process where participating countries choose a curator to organize their country's participating show ([www.labiennale.org](http://www.labiennale.org), Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008). But rather than using the embassies, diplomats, cultural attaches or even specialized cultural government

agencies, committees are formed that then choose a leading artist from their country to curate their country's exhibit. After the curator is chosen, the diplomats and government officials step back and allow them to choose and design the exhibit. The amount of space given for the artists to control the exhibit varies by country. But the result is that, though backed by both government and private funding, the Biennale still functions like any other non-government related art show except that exhibits may be referred to by the exhibit's country of origin. This provides a special context for the event.

The Venice Biennale is the only international art fair that invites national participation. Other triennials and biennales invite individual artists (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008). In Japan's case, the national government delegates responsibility to the Japan Foundation, a government regulated, but legally independent, public diplomacy organization. The Japan Foundation then puts the decision of choosing a curator into the hands of a separate, non-governmental, committee and it decides who will be hired to put together Japan's exhibit. The director of the Japan Foundation told me the reason they ask this committee to find a curator is that it further separates the

government's involvement in the decision and allows for great objectivity in the process (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008).

The Venice Biennale seems to fall right around number 2 on the scale that balances government's involvement in art diplomacy; at the scale of this art fair, only with the cooperation and additional funding of national governments can so many leading exhibits come together from all over the world at one time.



## **Chapter III - Gift Institutions and Symbolic Capital**

The central question of this project is what positions a non-art organization enabling the use of art as a tool to accomplish its purposes. For the two to collaborate there must be some area of overlap in their use and purposes. An organization can be framed around the idea of using, or supporting the arts, but it is harder to imagine it going the other way. As said in chapter 2, the arts do not belong to anyone. So it is the organizations that must orientate themselves to the arts in order to plug into some aspect of their influence. The scale from chapter 2 describes how an organization's<sup>4</sup> involvement can vary from a supportive position to an interfering one. The level of participation narrows the spectrum of the uses, purposes and, meanings of art when they are shopped for and only select pieces are promoted. Although the art world is an institution larger than any single organization or government, it would be a mistake to imagine that it is not affected by them. It is a two way road, but it is the

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<sup>4</sup> The authors were speaking specifically about governments, but the principle they describe is applicable to any institution which is not formally part of the art world.

organizations which are trying to plug into the art world's influence and so it is they who must position themselves to do so.

The organizations used as examples in the next chapter all have one thing in common, they believe in art's ability to foster better understanding and relationships between cultures. Diplomatic branches of national governments are an obvious example of an organization that might understand the benefit of using art to accomplish its aims; namely improving relationships with other nations and improving its own image. This is the logic underlying two of the three examples to follow. But before the examples can be examined, we must understand how they are positioned to be involved with the art world.

The art world is a highly structured and organized institution. The art world is structured into many professional tiers or network nodes which cooperate to add value which is usually symbolic but can also sometimes be material and financial. In order to understand what it takes to work with them, we must know how they are structured and what they value. Without understanding the base relationships and the economy of the art world outside organizations would not know how to participate nor would they know what the art world values and considers

worthwhile. There are few tasks in human history that seem as impossible as placing value, as the term is typically understood, on art. If a price tag could be placed on it as easily as a product off an assembly line, most people would not call it art! The whole point of art, one might say, is that it is not created or 'consumed' like products and therefore its worth cannot be defined. We do not 'use' art. One practitioner said it is hard to measure success because art deals with hearts and feelings and those are changes that are most difficult to measure (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008).

Much has been written on the 'use' value of art although most meaningful analyses try to get at the fungible value of symbolic capital, which is discussed in the second half of this chapter. Another way in which this subject can be viewed is through the theories of gift economies. The ideas of gift giving; its functions and systems of rules, is really about cycles of value exchange. There are many studies, books and other recordings of gift cultures, but they mostly exemplify the core theory established by very few. Most prominent among those is Marcel Mauss. I rely heavily in this section on the work of Lewis Hyde who not only did a fabulous job describing Mauss's early writings on Gifts, but who also gathered and

amply described the inner workings of a gift economy; where the value lies, how it moves from person to person and the effect it has on people and groups. I therefore will use his distilled definition as a base.

The second view this chapter will use is that of Pierre Bourdieu's theories of symbolic capital. Here Bourdieu did that which many thought impossible; he defined a system of how this artsy kind of value is created and stored by people and objects and how it can be transformed into economic capital. Although this project's focus is not the value creation of art, understanding the process whereby symbolic capital is created and preserved is the process non-art world organizations must be able to plug into if they want to participate in the exchange, thereby benefitting themselves from the profits art has to offer.

Gift economies will explain how the art forms and artists are formed, the rules of exchange and the relationships it creates in the language the field uses. Theories of symbolic capital will explain how value is added and extracted in the backstage language that practitioners can not use openly, but explains their actions.

## **Gifts**

The gifts we are talking about are not presents which are wrapped and placed under a Christmas tree. One time holiday celebratory exchange, as many American's may think of Christmas or birthday presents, is only one form that giving can take. Marcel Mauss understood gift exchange to be 'a "total social phenomenon" - one whose transactions are at once economic, juridical, moral, aesthetic, religious, and mythological...' (Hyde intro xxi). There are specific characteristics that define a gift. Mauss said that 'gift economies tend to be marked by three related obligations: the obligation to give, the obligation to accept and the obligation to reciprocate' (imbed). The object passed is only the vehicle of what the gift bestows (imbed 46). So what constitutes a gift (the object given), to some degree, is a matter of opinion (imbed 86). The general characteristics of a gift are not as flexible.

Firstly, a gift moves. 'A gift that cannot move loses its gift properties' (Hyde 8). Like a river that would no longer be a river if it ceased to move, those people through whom the gift passes act as a channel which the gift affects and blesses as its passes (imbed). The actual object given in the spirit of a gift can be passed along or

another object may take its place, either way, it continues to move as 'the gift'.

The second essential characteristic of gift exchange is that the gift must be consumed. To the giver, the gift is consumed in the giving (imbed 26). It is a sacrifice and it must be understood as such. The food is consumed, the piece of art is viewed or listened to; the body of the gift is consumed but the spirit is not. Quite the contrary; through this process the spirit of the gift increases. It is this increase of spirit which is passed on; this ever increasing spirit which is the gift (imbed 42, 47).

An example Hyde describes illustrates these two characteristics. Early anthropologists recorded that among Native American tribes of the northwest, there were small copper pieces, like small copper sculptures, which would be given as a gift to another tribe. The receiving tribe would then reciprocate with blankets and other wares. The amount of blankets would at least equal the amount that was received last time that copper was gifted to another tribe. Then they would present the tribe from whom they are now receiving the copper with even more blankets. This increase was the reciprocating gift. The coppers would thus gain in notoriety, worth and, most importantly, spirit.

This increase stays in motion by following an object, in this case, the copper piece (Hyde 42). The gifts are consumed in the giving. The received copper would bring notoriety to the group which held it, and the blankets were used by the other tribe to survive the coming winter. All participants benefited collectively from the increase in spirit. 'Gifts are a class of property whose value lies only in their use and which literally cease to exist as gifts if they are not constantly consumed (imbed 26)'. If any one of these tribes refused to pass on a copper by presenting it as a gift to another tribe, it would no longer be a gift. Its worth would become stagnant and stale. In time, it would be little more than a piece of shaped metal.

Likewise, it ceases to be a gift if it is sold or if one of the possessors personally benefits from its increase (in spirit). The nature of the object is changed. It ceases to be gift and instead become a commodity. The continual growth is in sentiment, and if a person turns that sentiment into personal gain, it is being taken out of the context in which it was born and nurtured and put to a purpose for which it was never intended (Hyde 26, 46, 78). Transfiguring a gift's worth into monetary value changes the gift's nature (imbed 26).

Gifts have worth and commodities have value. It may be little more than semantics to use 'worth' and 'value' like this, but it can help clarify their meaning and the purposes to which they can be put by doing so. A gift's increasing worth only works when it is constantly passed between the groups involved. It cannot be invested in anything but the further increase of the general spirit of compassion and sacrifice of the connected people without ceasing to exist. When a gift is assigned value and bargained for, it benefits the possessor only, and the spirit born from the collective passing it had undergone ceases to feed and bless the group. It is no longer a gift and damages the balance of the gift cycle from which it was taken. (Hyde 78).

Gifts move in cycles and circles; this is another of its characteristics. The increase in spirit cannot occur the first time a person gives to another. There is no context from which to have an increase. It is when the person who received that first gift keeps it moving by passing it on, with the increase of spirit, to a third party<sup>5</sup>. Two people giving and reciprocating gifts do not

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<sup>5</sup> The spirit is often manifest by a material increase, like a tribe giving more blankets than they received when they gifted the copper, but it is not a requirement. Again, the increase is in the sentiment and cannot be placed on a scale (Hyde 43, 44).



make a gift institution, or the type of gift exchange Mauss and Hyde wrote about. If there are only two people, the gift is never out of sight, and its worth is constantly before the participants. This does not allow room for the spirit to expand and increase the way it can when the gift leaves our sight before returning. Each giving is an act of social faith and the gift must be given blindly (imbed 19-20). The larger the circle, the more abundant the resources will be. When the circle is big enough for you lose sight of it before it comes back, it will be more satisfactory when it does (imbed 23, 25).

Two ethics guard this process. First, there can be no discussing, which is to say, no bargaining. A person may wonder what will come in return for his gift but he is not supposed to bring it up. It is not barter. Second, 'the equivalence of the counter-gift is left up to the giver, it can't be enforced by any kind of coercion...It is as if you give a part of your substance to your gift partner and then wait in silence until he gives you a part of his (Hyde 19).'

These are the characteristics and guidelines that define a gift. I have already mentioned that gift institutions involve a whole circle of participants. Each

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characteristic corresponds to a trait of the group, and each has a profound consequence if not fulfilled. First, dealing with the fact that the gift moves: The movement of the gift is what marks members as participants in a gift institution. This involves each of those who are presented by the gift to adhere to the three Maussian obligations; to give, to receive and to reciprocate. Doing so includes you in the cycle and thereby links you to all others through whom the gift passes before coming back to you. On the other hand, failure to do so, or inability to do any of these three disavows you from participation and from benefitting from the increase of spirit which connects and simultaneously elevates all members of the cycle together. Gift cycles create one of many (Hyde 85).

When a gift passes from hand to hand in this spirit, it becomes the binder of many wills. What gathers in it is not only sentiment of generosity but the affirmation of individual goodwill, making of those separate parts a *spiritus mundis*, a unanimous heart, a bond whose wills are focused through the lens of the gift (imbed 45).

Gifts may be given as gifts of incorporation or as gifts of peace. The former class is a gift which brings people together to make one of many; the latter is the

extension of the olive branch and is the first step towards normative relations in circumstances where there have been none (Hyde 73, 74). Whatever the nature of the gift, it does not create boundaries when it passes rather, it overrides, diminishes and, in some cases, erases them in order to link people or groups together. This is the opposite of how a commodity works. 'A commodity can cross the line without any change in its nature; moreover, its exchange will often establish a boundary when none previously existed (as, for example, in the sale of a necessity to a friend) (ibid 79).'

Due to the varied nature of the parties involved and their cultural understandings of what a gift may consist (the object passed), the gift may increase as natural fact (when gifts are actually alive), as natural-spiritual fact (gifts that are agents of a spirit that survives the consumption of its individual consumption), or as social fact (when the circulation of gifts creates community out of individual expressions of goodwill). In all of these cases, the increase pertains to an ego or body larger than that of any individual participant (Hyde 48). The circulation of the gift feeds the community spirit, not the individuals, even though individuals may receive material wealth in the course of the commerce of gifts.

This is the correlation with the next characteristic of a gift spoken of earlier, that a person cannot benefit personally from it. When the flow of increase is reversed, meaning it is not channeled and directed towards the next person, but towards oneself, 'we nourish that part of our being (or our group) which is distinct and separate from others (Hyde 49).' Gift bonds proceed or are forged by donation and that is absent, suspended, or severed in commodity exchange (imbed 80). By benefiting from the gift we weaken our connection with the circle and strengthen our separation. Gifts must be consumed; they cannot be invested (imbed 79). Positive reciprocity refers to the constant increase that the gift follows around the circle. Negative reciprocity refers to the extracting of that worth and trying to turn a profit. Where we cannot maintain institutions of positive reciprocity, we are unable to pull community out of the mass. Where we can, we find it possible to contribute toward, and pass along the collective treasures we refer to as culture and tradition (imbed 49-50).

The important thing to take from all of this is that, inasmuch as adhering to these things will include you in the gift institution and benefit you through the constant increase of spirit, the lack of adherence to the same

obligations, taking action to benefit independent of the group from the gift, or preventing the gift's movement around the circle, whether done willingly or unintentionally, will remove you from the institution, the group, the cycle, the circle and all that its membership means.

There are also reasons a person or group might intentionally opt out of participation. This same consequence of being bound up with each other in a gift institution can be seen as a negative if one does not wish to associate or be connected with the giver, or another member of the cycle. Gifts can restrict freedoms and create indebtedness and feelings of resentment. This is the reason politicians and judges are legally not allowed to accept gifts in many cultures. It would connect them in a manner that would compromise their ability to stand in an unbiased manner. 'Gifts from evil people must be refused lest we be bound to evil (Hyde 95).' Givers, who care about the relationship, make a point to assure that their gift is not perceived in terms of power and debt - that the gift is not conditional (imbed 89-90). 'We cannot really become bound to those who give us false gifts. And true gifts constrain us only if we do not pass them along - I mean, if we fail to respond with an act or an expression of

gratitude... Bondage to our gifts... diminishes as we become empowered to pass them along (imbed 91).'

### **Balancing Act**

The market can change a gift into a commodity thereby removing it from circulation and injuring, sometimes eliminating, groups the gift had created. This is not necessarily done by the action of the gift moving into the market, it is actually when the gift is lost in self consciousness that it ceases to be gift. This is almost certainly done when a person steps outside the gift institution and looks upon the gift with an eye for value. When we count, measure, reckon value, or seek the cause of a gift, it becomes commodity and is a subject of the market (Hyde 196).

If it is not the market itself but a person's attitude towards the gift that changes its nature, gift institutions and the market do not have to be wholly separate spheres; there can be reconciliation between the two. The balancing act is to ask to what degree one may draw from the other without destroying it (Hyde 356-358).

The next section explains how art is a gift and will give an example of how this balance can be done by explaining how artists must survive in both spheres.

### **Art as gift and the life of the artist**

Works of art derive from, and their bestowal nourishes, those parts of our beings that are not entirely personal, parts that derive from nature, from the group and the race, from history and tradition, and from the spiritual world (Hyde 197-198).

Art functions by giving of its vitality to those who look upon it (or listen to it, etc). It gives inspiration, an increased spirit upon which others feel moved. In this way, art cycles in the form of inspiration and vitality.

This gift institution begins with an artist. We call them 'gifted'. There is a great amount of work involved in gaining the capabilities to push the paint in the right way, play an instrument or learn to orchestrate music, however, part of the work of the artist is invocation, it cannot be made; it is given to them. The preparation, evaluation, clarification and revision create within them a begging bowl where the gift may be accepted. Many artists explain that part of the work is not their own. The fine tuning of the art work is secondary to the initial 'idea' is down (Hyde 186-187). And just as the recipient of a gift cannot talk about what they are expecting they have coming to them, so artists must silently accept the gift as it comes. Imagination and creativity are not subject to will (imbed

188, 191). Artists have long provided myths to explain the origin of this creativity; they speak of inspiration, gifts from the Gods, a personal deity, a guardian angel, or muse (imbed 190). Furthermore, by tapping into the creative spirit, the artist does not become the first receiver, but enters into the history of art and artists who preceded him/her. Often artists will speak of the inspiration they received from the work of others. Not only does this include them in a gift group or community, but this explains both how they receive the gift, and how they keep it moving. A gift moves.

Art could not work in the first meaning without being presented to crowds of people. Whether in museums, galleries, performance spaces, halls or parks, an artist will recognize the work of the (gift) spirit and must pass it to an audience. If the gift is not shared, it ceases to move and thereby ceases to be a gift. Publish or perish is the mantra of artists, both for their livelihoods and for the livelihood of the gift which passes through them (Hyde 189, 195). If there is a connection, the gift can reproduce the gifted state in the audience.

Let us say that the 'suspension of disbelief' by which we become receptive to a work of the imagination is in fact belief, a momentary faith by virtue of which the



spirit of the artist's gift may enter and act up on our being. Sometimes, then, if we are awake, if the artist really was gifted, the work will induce a moment of grace, a communion, a period during which we too know the hidden coherence of our being and feel the fullness of our lives (Hyde 195-196).

This consumption does not empty the vessel,

...on the contrary, it is the talent that is not in use that is lost or atrophies, and to bestow one of our creations is the surest way to invoke the next... Bestowal creates that empty place into which new energy may flow (Hyde 189).

For the artist, this is where the balancing act comes in. The artist must maintain the position which allows bestowal of a gift, but the artist also must eat. The artist must nourish the spirit by disbursing it without benefitting 'too much' (Hyde 193). Art and the artist reside simultaneously in two economic spheres; they must work with the gift but survive in the world. As mentioned earlier, they can touch without neutralizing each other. For the artist to remain primarily an artist, they must protect the work space solely for the gift but allow contact with the market (Hyde 358-359). A person who is oriented the other way, working in the market with only

limited contact with the art/gift world could not be considered a full time artist.

The trick is for the artist to convert all market value derived from his gift back into gift worth by investing it into the work. There are three basic ways of doing this: the artist may take a second 'night job' by which to pay the bills and support his/her 'main' work, being art. Second, the artist may find patrons to pay the bills and keep them supplied so the artist never has to venture out of the gift institution. The artist can also apply for and survive on grants. The third method is for the artist to straddle the line him/herself and allow enough contact only to sell their work. Most often this method includes the use of a manager or other market insider to do the selling so as to minimize personal contact with the market (imbed 359-360). This is risky, second jobs that deaden the spirit, becoming beholden to a patron, having to enter the market so it will sell for better prices, these all can endanger the gift and weaken the resolve and the artists sensitivity to the spirit of the gift. But it is possible, and it is done by many artists around the world. Again, the key is re-converting all market value back into gift worth without violating the character of the gift. This usually means the artist

rarely gets rich off of the work. Even when the pieces are selling in the millions, the market value is invested directly back into working with the gift and the artist gets by without usually becoming 'rich' (imbed 362).

This balance is delicate and still involves all of the unwritten rules and decisions mentioned earlier giving agency to the receiver/giver to choose with whom they will connect themselves and in what manner. Even in a balanced exchange between gift and market institutions, there must be trust that the gift will not be betrayed and the giver and receiver have the right not to accept or pass a gift if they believe the relationship the exchange would create is not acceptable or what they want.

#### **Where gifts are not enough**

What constitutes art may be in the eye of the beholder, but the art with which this project is concerned is that which is valued by the rest of the art world. Art at this high level circulates with the greatest attention following it (the question of this fame, recognition and otherwise inexplicable value is the subject of the next section). Theory of gift economy alone is not adequate to explain why some public diplomacy organizations are able to access recourses from the highest levels while others find it harder to find cooperation from big name, large scale

artists, scholars etc. The rules of gift economies, like those spelled out by Lewis Hyde, explain a system of ancient tribal customs extremely well, but do not explain the institutionalization of modern exchanges. How do we know when an audience has received the gift of the artist? There is no way to know. How then do we know if it has moved? Without being able to track the gift, how are we to know when people's actions are participatory acts in a gift institution? If we are to assume that the gift has been received simply in the act of its giving, what does the audience do with it? How do they keep the gift moving? Hyde suggests that the audience members feel inspired, redeemed, and fortunate; art contains the vitality of life and restores it to us when we are in need. The recipient is inspired and keeps the gift moving by creating his or her own art (Hyde intro xii, 33). Hyde mentions only this and then moves on to how the modern day artist balances the gift with the market. We are left to wonder how exactly the gift moves in its circle from audience eventually making it back to the artist.

In his introduction Hyde suggests that art can survive without the market, but not without the gift (intro xi). In his conclusion however, he admits that his understanding of the gift-market relationship is not compatible, like oil

and water, as he first assumed. The artist and the market can mix. More than just overlapping a little though, I think that in today's art world, art cannot survive without the market. The point to which modern industry and economic systems have become intertwined with how art is presented and moves constitute the very legs that support the artist and keep the work moving in front of the eyes of audiences. In today's world, art will not leave the studio without the moving current of the market. More than just providing momentum for pieces of art, artists such as Andy Warhol proved that art can be produced *in* the market. As importantly, he showed the market can actually *be* art. He turned name brand commodities such as images of Campbell's soup cans, boxes of Brillo soap pads or Heinz ketchup into pieces of art. Market items became art and art became commodity (see Honneth 2005). Warhol's ability to brand art spread to his very person. Warhol is art and a brand and a person; the three cannot be separated. Murakami Takashi, by using the same factory style and ideas of branding has worked much in the same way, as the examples from chapter one illustrate (see Hebdige 2007).

What the theory of gift economy is missing is value. Hyde does not discriminate or define the value of art and artists. Perhaps, he felt it might undermine his argument

that gifts have worth and commodities have value (Hyde 78). Hyde was concerned only with how a gift's worth might travel into the market and still remain a gift. The increase in worth was spiritual and not a value that could be extracted or exchanged. One could see the increase in spirit by comparing how many blankets were given this time compared to the last time. Unlike a stack of similar blankets, however, works of art have individual values. Therefore we must understand how artists and works of art obtain value to understand how they can participate in gift institutions. How aware are organizations that use art exchange of the value and worth of the art? They must be aware of it to some degree else why would they think it is worth sharing?

Hyde's Gift institutions do not answer these questions. Gift institutions do provide several ideas that help explain how non-art organizations can involve themselves with the art world thereby enabling the use art for their purposes. Gift institutions explain the creation of art in the language of the artist, the need to share it with another and the relationships this exchange creates. It cannot, however, explain how high level artists gain the significance and the value/worth their work embodies. For

this we turn to Pierre Bourdieu's explanation of symbolic capital.

### **The Forms of Capital**

Pierre Bourdieu said capital is a 'force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also... the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world. It is what makes the games of society... something other than simple games of chance (1983, 241).'

We do not live life like a game of roulette (usually); capital, in all its forms, takes time and effort to accumulate. Cash is only one form of capital, but it is usually followed like bread crumbs by those who study how social systems work. However, it is 'impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduces capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory (Bourdieu 1983, 242).'

The science of economic theory describes personal profit and defines all other exchanges as non-economic, therefore, disinterested.

In particular, it defines as disinterested those forms of exchange which ensure the transubstantiation whereby the most material types of capital—those which are economic in the restricted sense—can present themselves in the immaterial of cultural capital or

social capital and vice versa. Interest... cannot be produced without producing its negative counterpart, disinterestedness... Finite economic practices cannot be made without there being another to balance it - art for art's sake (Bourdieu 1983, 242).

Economic theory has a hard time accounting for the production and evaluation of things like art or education, especially in attaching a value to them. 'The extreme difficulty of converting certain practices and certain objects into money is only due to the fact that this conversion is refused in the very intention that produces them, which is nothing other than the denial of economy (Bourdieu 1983, 242).' The very function of these worlds (the economic world of art or education) is defined by a collective refusal of commercial interests and profits. 'These practices, functioning as practical negations, can only work by pretending not to be doing what they are doing (Bourdieu 1993, 74-75),' namely, turning a profit. This process is called disavowal, or misrecognition (Bourdieu 1983, 241 and Bourdieu 1993, 74, 81). It is a necessary process whereby symbolic capital is accrued, invested and at some point, exchanged for economic capital. Symbolic capital is recognition.



...[E]ffective capital is the (mis)recognized, legitimate capital called 'prestige' or 'authority' , the economic capital that cultural undertakings generally require cannot secure the specific points produced by the field... unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital... the only legitimate accumulation consists in making a name for oneself, a known, recognized name, a capital of consecration implying a power to consecrate objects (with a trademark signature) or persons (through publication, exhibition, etc.) and therefore to give value, and to appropriate the profits from this operation (Bourdieu 1993, 75).

Symbolic capital is a general term for non-traditional capital that can be categorized in a couple ways.

Bourdieu described three forms capital can take; *economic capital*, which can be immediately and directly converted into money, *cultural capital*, which is convertible on certain conditions and is institutionalized into forms such as educational qualifications, and *social capital*, which involves the connecting of individuals who combine the net value of their cultural capital (Bourdieu 1983, 243).

The subject of cultural and social capital are essential in completing an understanding of how individuals accumulate personal value (for example, as an artist), how

they are connected and grouped, and how individuals are chosen and initiated for membership. Theories of gift economies provided half of this explanation. Hyde's explanation of gift institutions describe how artists work, and how the exchange (or performance) of their works facilitate relationships and create, or define, groups and networks. But gift institutions do not seem to explain all of what occurs when organizations use art exchange to improve international relations. Yes it provides a theory for the inspiration required to create works of art, but though its language, it disavows and misrecognizes what it is doing, namely fostering and protecting economic value. Bourdieu's description of the different forms of capital can explain this missing piece.

### **Cultural Capital**

According to Bourdieu, cultural capital has three forms: the embodied state, the objectified state and the institutionalized state. These can be seen as either different states cultural capital can be found in or as stages since each state tends to lead into the next. Bourdieu formed these categories when studying scholastic achievement in children. He realized that scholastic achievement could be explained better by position and class than by individual aptitude (1983, 243). Other economic

theories 'fail to take systematic account of the structure of the different chances of profit which the various markets offer these agents or classes as a function of the volume and the composition of their assets (imbed 244).'

Economic theory ignores the role cultural systems play in the 'reproduction of the social structure by sanctioning the hereditary transmission of cultural capital (imbed).'

The condition in which this cultural capital is embedded in individuals is called the *embodied state*.

Capital in the embodied state is a personal investment of time. Like muscle and suntans, no one can earn it for you; you must go through the actions yourself. It is self-improvement; you are literally investing in yourself, and the gains are non-transferable. Its value is perceived as competence or authority, which exerts an effect of recognition. Like economic capital, the value of cultural capital is derived from a basis of scarcity<sup>6</sup>; not everyone is able to gain and/or maintain that competence and authority.

Transmission is the link between economic and cultural capital, and it is established through the 'mediation of the time needed for acquisition (Bourdieu 1983, 245-6).'

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<sup>6</sup> Lewis Hyde agreed that the 'worth', and consequently the 'value', of gifts is rooted in the same economic principle of scarcity (Hyde 28).

Initial acquisition occurs mostly during the period of socialization. The individual can only prolong the acquisition process if there is a means of supporting his or her free time. For those in the education system that means having a family or parents that can provide support during the educational process (imbed).

The next state of cultural capital is the 'objectified state'. This stage occurs when the cultural capital is objectified into material objects; the acquired competence and authority is applied to the creation of an object. The capital instilled in these objects '...is transferable in its materiality... but what is transmissible is legal ownership and not (or not necessarily)... the possession of the means of "consuming" which... are subject to the same laws of transmission' meaning they are non-transferable (Bourdieu 1983, 246). To own the means of production only requires economic capital, but to make them work, or to work them, one must be able to access embodied cultural capital. Cultural capital in its objectified state presents itself as autonomous coherent universe; which means it is like language, which is historically created by many parts and cannot be separated into the parts that aided in its evolution. Participants and stakeholders only hold value (and protect it) by keeping it active by constantly

(re)appropriating it in/by working and creating works. They draw profits proportionate to their mastery of the objectified capital and its scarcity (imbed 247).

The last state of cultural capital is the *institutionalized state*. Institutionalizing cultural capital can neutralize some of the qualities that put biological limits on the bearer. For Bourdieu, who studied the performance of students of different classes, observed that one way of neutralizing biological limits of the bearer in academia was the creation of strict educational qualifications for entrance and the completion of diplomas. The established prestige of institutions limit the ability to call into question, at any given time, the value, or cultural capital of the bearer by conferring on the holder a 'conventional, constant, legal guaranteed value with respect to culture (Bourdieu 1983, 247-8).' A degree from a prestigious university takes some of the pressure off an individual because he or she can rely on it to speak for him or her in certain culturally defined situations, like being introduced at a social function or job interview. Cultural capital in the institutionalized state works by collective magic; one only has to hear the name of the school to be convinced of the cultural capital it represents. It allows instant imposed recognition.

It is in this state that we not only feel or understand the value of the cultural capital, but we can begin to derive economic value from that capital. By conferring institutional recognition on the cultural capital possessed by any given agent, we are able to compare it with the cultural capital of another person. This 'makes it possible to establish conversion rates between cultural capital and economic capital by guaranteeing the monetary value of a given (institutionalized) capital (Bourdieu 1983, 248).' The scarcity of this capital is a derivative of its value.

If we liken these three states of cultural capital to language, the embodied state would be the amount of time and the effort required to put into learning the history of words, grammar and contexts in which they have been, are, or could be used. The objectified state would represent the state of a language in any given generation. Though constantly evolving, the objectified state produces an object (although language is not a great example of a material cultural object) into which people, armed with capital gained in the embodied state, apply their authority to manipulate and rework it. Their authority, and thereby the value of their work, is determined by how much embodied capital they possess. The third state, the institutional

state, would be a printed dictionary which represents an institutionalized object, authored by those with the most authority (capital).

### **Social Capital**

Cultural capital describes how an individual attains, applies and derives value from 'culture'. Social capital describes how the capital possessed in these single states is combined to form a collective value, which is much stronger than any single possessor could own.

Social Capital is-

...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintances and recognition—in other words, a membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a "credential" which entitles them to "credit", in the various senses of the word (Bourdieu 1983, 248-9).

These relationships can only exist in the practical state, in material and/or symbolic exchanges which help to maintain them. Lewis Hyde would argue these relationships are established through gift institutions. They may also

be socially instituted and guaranteed by the application of a common name (family, class, tribe, school etc).

The capital of each agent is enlarged and can now be defined by the-

...size of the network connections he can effectively mobilize and on the volume of the capital (economic, cultural, or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected... The profits which accrue from membership in a group are the basis of the solidarity which makes them possible (Bourdieu 1983, 249).

Hyde described this same situation when he said that the larger the gift cycle is the more abundant the resources and the greater the influence those who touch it will have (25). These networks are highly organized and are by no means a natural, or given occurrence. They are carefully constructed and monitored efforts at institutionalization. They are the product of careful investment strategies 'aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term (Bourdieu 1983, 249).'

The constant exchanging encourages, presupposes, and produces mutual knowledge and recognition.

Exchange transforms the things exchanged into signs of recognition and, through mutual recognition and the



recognition of group membership which it implies, reproduces the group... Each member of the group is thus instituted as a custodian of the limits of the group; because the definition of the criteria of entry is at stake in each new entry, he can modify the group, i.e., its fines, its boundaries, and its identity, is put at stake, exposed to redefinition, alteration, adulteration... Every group has its more or less institutionalized forms of delegation which enable it to concentrate the totality of the social capital... in the hands of a single agent or a small group of agents and to mandate this plenipotentiary... to represent the group, to speak and act in its name and so... to exercise a power incommensurate with the agent's personal contribution (Bourdieu 1983, 250-251).

Here we can recognize the importance in the decision of an organization, or an individual to link with another. Gift economies described the relationships and how they are forged. Cultural and social capital does the same, but each through its relative prospective. Not only are the metaphysical bonds and, more or less, spiritual flow of the work at stake, the branding and economic capital which can be derived from the work is affected by who participates with whom and what circles touch what points. If the nature of the work of an individual is not uniform with the

gift, or the cultural/social capital, they will either alter or destroy the nature of the collective to which it is joined. The gift cannot maintain its progression, and capital is redefined and devalued.

All of this is still not enough to explain the positioning of organization to artist and why some work with one organization and not with others. The capstone to symbolic capital, that which allows for its value to hold in (or against) the economic market is the ability to disavow or misrecognize that same capital.

**The final act: A performance of Disavowal / Misrecognition**

As was mentioned above, what allows symbolic capital to earn, maintain and exchange value is the fact that they do not appear to be doing what they are doing. This disavowal, or misrecognition, is the magical handkerchief placed over the hand just as the trick is being performed. The trick would lose its mysticism if the audience could see what was *really* happening. It would appear as magic, and it certainly would not be a trick. In fact, Marcel Mauss used the analogy of magic when he explained how it takes a collective of insiders to produce and maintain the sources of power in what Bourdieu later called symbolic capital. Bourdieu said that the value of cultural products, which is incommensurate with its means of production,

requires the collective history of tradition in that field (Bourdieu 1993, 81).

Whether or not the magic act is done consciously or not may not matter. What matters is how well the under workings are hidden from view from the audience.

The value of works of art in general...and the belief which underlies it, are generated in the incessant, innumerable struggles to establish the value of this or that particular work...Even if these struggles never clearly set the 'commercial' against the 'non-commercial', 'disinterestedness' against 'cynicism', they almost always involve recognition of the ultimate values of 'disinterestedness' through the denunciation of the mercenary compromises or calculating maneuvers of the adversary, so that disavowal of the 'economy' is placed at the very heart of the field, as the principle governing its functioning and transformation (Bourdieu 1993, 79).

Bourdieu's adversary is anything that would corrupt the 'purity' of the gift, or, in other words, expose the backstage workings of symbolic capital. Two possible examples of an artist's adversary could be, one, the appearance of caring more for making profit than the making of art, or two, anything that makes light or devalues the meaning or importance of art. There is no clear form these

adversaries take; no specific person or group whose sole purpose it is to devalue other people's symbolic capital. Hyde's initially thought that the market was *the* adversary of the gift, but he later saw that it is not the market, but ideas or forces that can work with or in the market to devalue a gift or its giver (Hyde 356-359). These ideas or arguments are not inherently evil forces, they are called 'adversary' only because its positioning is *adverse* to the maintenance of the gift or symbolic capital.

One example of how an 'adversary' can form is the story of Marla Olmstead. Despite being only 4 years old, Marla's abstract paintings were compared in scale and skill to Pollock and Kandinsky (My Kid Could Paint That 2007, [Sonyclassics.com/mykidcouldpaintthat](http://Sonyclassics.com/mykidcouldpaintthat) 13 Apr 2009). Her paintings were being highly praised but the attention brought to her age and lack of formal training by the media became, as Bourdieu suggested, an adversary that threatened to break the spell of abstract art. The fact that a child could paint at that level suggested that abstract art is easy, meaningless color on canvas. "She is painting exactly as all the adult paint[ers] have been in the past 50 years, but painting like a child, too. That is what everybody thinks but they don't dare say it," said Oggi, a leading Italian weekly columnist

([Sonyclassics.com/mykidcouldpaintthat](http://Sonyclassics.com/mykidcouldpaintthat)). When the CBS program *60 Minutes* interviewed 'professionals' who suggested the whole thing was a hoax and that the father had actually painted all of the pieces, those who were following the story in the media shifted their attention from whether or not abstract art is a valid (read 'valuable') form of expression and, instead, started discussing whether or not the father had conned the media (imbed). Abstract art's performance of misrecognition appears to have avoided detection by directing attention away from the art and on to a human interest story.

This project now turns to look at specific examples of organizations that use gift giving and the exchange of symbolic capital to improve international relations. It is not important how acquainted the individuals working at these organizations are with the ideas of gift institutions or symbolic capital. What is important is how their organizations are positioned to enable interaction with art and artists. Since all of the example organizations are non-profit, the most likely adversary will be the idea that they only facilitate art and intellectual exchange in order to benefit politically. By examining how they are situated and how those working at the organization describe their purpose and programming, a picture can be drawn of their

mechanisms for performing misrecognition and how they face their adversaries.

## **Chapter IV: Examples of Art in Diplomacy**

This chapter will introduce three organizations which use art and education exchange to improve Japan-US relations. Although the three vary somewhat in their programming, what separates them are their areas of influence and the levels at which they interact with the intellectual and art worlds. The purpose herein is not to critique or to prove one better than another, but to provide working examples of the theories laid out in the previous chapters and to show how their positioning affects their ability to disavow their social and cultural capital which defines their areas of influence.

The three organizations are the Japan Information and Culture Center (JICC) in Washington, DC, the Japan Foundation in New York City, and the Japan Society, also in New York City. These three have been selected specifically because they represent three points on a spectrum of government involvement. JICC is the cultural and public affairs office of the Japanese embassy and the headquarters of similar offices in other Japanese Embassies around the United States. The Japan Foundation was organized by the Japanese government but has since become an independent

administrative institution. Although it is still mostly funded and regulated by the Japanese government. And the Japan Society is a non-profit, non-political American organization.

If they were all in the same classification politically, there would be little difference between any of their goals and aims. However, the resources they have at their disposal, the circles in which they work, and the level of art and art producers with whom they work are different. To compare these examples, we would need to examine how political positioning affects organizations of this kind. However, that is not the intended purpose of this chapter. A comparison of that sort would not be a fair test. It would position these institutions against each other, as if they were competitors in the same market. The area in which they work is the antithesis of competition; it survives through cooperation. Each of them seem to have some level of understanding of their strengths and their limits, and they cooperate often in order to reach their common goals (more of this will be explained in the body of the chapter).

One thing that can be analyzed is how their political positioning affects their ability to pull off the misrecognition/disavowal necessary to accomplish their



purposes. One thing that comes back into play, beyond the simple questions of maintaining gift institutions and cultural capital, is the fact that these are not art or educational institutions in that they are not, firstly, museums or schools, their purpose is diplomatic (if we may momentarily remove the insinuated political meaning from the word); organizations which have chosen the art and intellectual exchange strictly as their tool and context.

### **Japan Information and Culture Center**

The Japan Information and Culture Center (JICC) is the Cultural and Public Affairs Section of the Japanese embassy in Washington, DC. It was organized around 30 years ago, but the JICC organization as it is today was founded 15 years ago (Ito interview). Its stated purpose is "To promote better understanding of Japan and Japanese culture by providing a wide range of information, educational services and programs to the American People (JICC website)."

It operates from its own premise a couple miles from the embassy and includes office spaces for the three diplomats who administrate and the local staff of six, a research library, a 152 seat auditorium and, a 15,000

square foot gallery space (Ito 16 Oct 2008 and JICC website).

JICC have several ongoing programs which serve the Washington, DC area. Their educational program serves schools in DC from grade 3 and older. Anywhere from 4,500 to 6,000 students a year come to its premises and are given a presentation by a member of the JICC staff. The presentation includes instruction, videos and interactive activities which introduce Japan and its culture (Ito 16 Oct 2008). JICC has prepared an information packet, available online for free in PDF format, which provides instructors with basic facts and instructions on simple cultural items, examples of the Japanese language, how to make basic traditional foods, lists of websites and pen pal programs. The in-house gallery has ongoing exhibits of local Japanese artists, art with Japan as its theme, or other traveling shows<sup>7</sup>.

The JICC also presents events such as films and lectures, at Smithsonian venues. Most often these are held at the Freer and Sackler Gallery which focuses on East Asian art (Ito 16 Oct 2008). The JICC also provides its auditorium to the DC Anime Club's monthly showings of

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<sup>7</sup> The current exhibit is actually a traveling photography showcase sponsored by the Japan Foundation (JICC website, February 2009).

Japanese *anime* movies. It also has an author talk series and online essay and photo gallery shows. The student groups come twice a week. The gallery hosts about 6 exhibits a year. They usually do two films and one lecture each month and present around four performing stage events a year. The JICC partners with other embassies and other cultural institutions for large events such as the yearly European Asian Short Film Showcase (imbed).

Ito Misako, the present director, described the JICC as the front line of the Japanese government's public diplomacy efforts. She defined public diplomacy as the efforts of a national government made directly to the people of another country. She said that their efforts are focused towards making the world 'happier and peaceful (Ito 16 Oct 2008).' The press information section of the embassy's role is to disseminate the official standing of the Japanese government and policy to the American public. The JICC, organization-wise, is a part of this section, but its role is different in that its programming introduces Japan, Japanese people and culture, not official positions or policies. The JICC has some wiggle room, although Director Ito said that, as diplomats, they are always thinking about national interests.

So if it doesn't meet or it would have a possibility to violate the national interest of Japan or Japanese government, I wouldn't think to do these things. But normally, we have freedom and we have reliance from Japanese government to conduct our programs (imbed).

Director Ito said that in this way, the activities of the JICC work towards the same ends as the embassy, namely protecting their national interest. They certainly allow for disagreement and varying opinions of artists, lecturers and, speakers, but she said allowing the performance depends-

...how artistically the drama is conducted or achieved. It depends on the quality of the drama. If it is made for the purpose of criticizing the government, it's not an art form. Art should be purely art, and artists don't say those kinds of protests in art form. So if it is an art form, I think it is OK. And we think we have accountability and transparency [for] why we are conducting this performing art at [an] embassy premise. We can explain why: because it is pure art (Ito 16 Oct 2008).

This clearly states the JICC's view of the arts and perhaps how they view their function. This quote also provides insight to how JICC views itself as being in a

position to support and channel the arts towards improving an understanding and image of Japan in the US.

Of course, everything the JICC does is reported to the embassy. The government decides its total budget, some of which comes from tax dollars. Hence, they operate on very limited funds. The JICC does not offer speaker fees and avoids using copyrighted material in the gallery shows and films so there are no extra royalty fees. If a speaker is coming in just for the lecture, JICC can usually only provide transportation and one night's accommodations. The embassy expects JICC to conduct these programs free of charge to the public, so there is never entrance or ticket fees (Ito 16 Oct 2008).

Artists are chosen because at least one of the diplomats feels that their work represents Japanese culture, in one way or another. That being said, Director Ito noted that programming is audience orientated: what does the audience want to see? However, she explained, what people want to see and what we would like to show is rarely different so it is not too hard to balance (Ito 16 Oct 2008).

Director Ito said that the goal is simply to get people interested in Japan, to share something and "promote a more accurate understanding, or a deeper understanding,

of Japan (16 Oct 2008).” Their job is to provide a hook that will catch a person’s interest and plant in them a desire to know and understand more. She described the effect this can have on people as having a worth that cannot be profited from, as in the case of money. She specifically refused the use of the term ‘value’ and instead described the worth of the artists’ work as a manifestation of the virtue of the presence of Japan and Japanese Culture (imbed).

This brief introduction to JICC shows us both the form an organization in this position can take, and also, through the language of its director, we can analyze how they describe and perceive themselves. It is the director’s job to create in the eyes of the organization’s employees, an understanding of the organization’s mission statement and a vision of how that is done given their position (politically, economically and culturally). By speaking with the organization’s directors this project hopes to understand how the organizations understand their own ability to interact with and participate at high levels of both the art and intellectual world.

The fact that the JICC is not housed inside the Japanese embassy itself provides the physical space it needs to operate, but perhaps more importantly, it provides

a space between the political and the artistic nature of the programs. The audiences can attend an event without feeling like they are attending a government function. This separation is essential for the disavowal Bourdieu spoke of; for the symbolic capital embedded in art to show its worth and value, it must perform without looking like it is doing what it is doing (chapter 3). This is how the symbolic capital<sup>8</sup> is able to function, and the gift is able to remain a gift. Otherwise, the performance would appear, not as the work of an artist but, as a political transaction. If it is obvious that the national interest is benefitting, the gift ceases to be gift. Not because the nation is a negative force, but strictly because it violates the rules governing gifts and symbolic capital. No one must *appear* to be benefitting. It must be seen as 'art for art's sake'.

This point about capital is key in these examples; the symbolic and the economic capital will determine how these organizations are able to function and at what level. It takes both kinds of capital for any organization to function. JICC's programming is focused almost strictly on the Washington, DC area, unlike the other two examples that follow. So the capital it requires to function will be

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<sup>8</sup> In other words social capital, or at least its center component, cultural capital

less. Aiming the JICC's influence towards larger populations over a larger geographical area would require a larger amount of economical capital, in order to market to more people, and greater symbolic capital, in order to extend the JICC's prestige to multiple networks and communities. Still, the limitations posed by their minimal budget is compounded by the fact that what they do receive comes directly from a national government whose interests they are accountable to. These two facts define the limits of their involvement with the art world and thereby their area of influence. This positioning is both a blessing and a curse. Being 100% politically tied means they have great capital within the lines of political figures and movements. Most likely, they would be visited by even the highest visiting political officials and other dignitaries, while other organizations of their size might be overlooked. On the other hand, they might not look as appealing to visiting artists and academic superstars who are looking for a specific type of performance space and audience. Their capital, their gift, is subjective to the circle they are trying to influence or work with. Remember, what constitutes a gift is often a matter of opinion (see chapter 3). In the same vein, symbolic capital is not a universally valued form of capital. When it is accrued,



its value is determined by its scarcity and applicability with respect to whom it is being offered, and whether it is traded or exchanged. Some artists may not value the gift (the specific form of symbolic capital held by an institution). The matching up of the right gift/capital and the right organization with the ability to disguise its political role explains the position of an organization such as JICC. So it will be with the next two examples. Even though their stated purpose and audience may vary slightly, the capital they need in order to function is the same.

### **The Japan Foundation**

The Japan Foundation was established in 1972 as a special legal entity to undertake international cultural exchange. It was established by Japanese law. In October of 2003 it was reorganized as an independent administrative institution. Its head office is in Tokyo, but there are 21 other offices in 20 other countries, as of August 2008 (JF Fiscal 2009-2010 Program Guidelines). Its stated purpose is:

To contribute to a better international environment, and to the maintenance and development of harmonious foreign relationships with Japan, promoting better mutual understanding among nations, encouraging

friendship and goodwill among the peoples of the world, and contributing to the world in culture and other fields through the efficient and comprehensive implementation of international cultural exchange activities (Independent Administrative Institution Japan Foundation Law, Article 3).

The Japan Foundation does not have facilities for hosting events; rather it sponsors and supports programming at other venues and institutions. The Japan Foundation is different from the other two examples in so far as it is positioned, not as a performance space where Japanese art is to pass through, but as a backer of opportunities.

The Japan Foundation sponsors three programs; the Arts and Culture Exchange, Japanese Language Overseas, and the Japanese Studies and Intellectual Exchange programs. These areas of focus are the same three pursued by the other two organizations, the difference being that Japan Foundation does not carry out any functions itself, but rather awards grants and assists in providing the opportunity for others to act them out (Japan Foundation NY website, Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008).

In 2007, the Japan Foundation employed 230 people worldwide, and had an annual budget of 16.2 trillion yen, about \$164 million US (Waseda University Lecture notes).

However, the Japanese government has begun cutting its financial support by 1.2% yearly, forcing the Japan Foundation to rely more heavily on its own fund raising (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008).

Kobayashi Tatsuaki, the deputy director general, explained a vital aspect of how the Japan Foundation is able to work towards their goals. What is essential, he explained, is the fact that the foundation is not the government. While the foundation owes its existence to government action, and receives a majority of its funding from the national government, it is not representative of the government (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008). Director Kobayashi explained that this independence allows the foundation to orientate itself more freely than if they had to act with only national interests in mind. The foundation focuses on making its programming as objective and academic as possible. It does this by passing much of the decision making to entirely non-political committees. One example of this is the American Advisory Committee (AAC) which consists of fifteen Japanese researchers in the United States who select the people, institutions and projects that will be supported by the foundation. This committee makes recommendations to the president of the Japan

Foundation and, according to Director Kobayashi, these recommendations are 'basically totally accepted' (imbed).

One example of how the Japan Foundation uses this committee is the selection process for the Vienna Biennale (see chapter 2). Nations receive the invitation from the biennale but how the curator and representative artists are selected is left up to the national governments. In Japan's case, the Japan Foundation is given the responsibility of selecting the person who will curate Japan's exhibit (Kobayashi 14 Nov 2008). To further distance the decision from the political realm, the AAC selects who they feel is at the height of the Japanese art scene, in other words, they select the person they feel has the greatest symbolic capital at their command and could thus assemble the top artists at his/her side to create a meaningful and 'important' exhibit.

The Japan Foundation is able to function at the level it does due to several factors; its budget is substantial, it does not directly represent government, and it puts as much distance as it can between the political aspects of the foundation and its accumulated symbolic capital. This distance is achieved by not producing the shows and performances themselves (they sponsor and give grants where they see the money would have the greatest effect), and by

delegating decisions and selections of who and what to sponsor to those in positions within the gift institution they are plugging into.

Director Kobayashi described the difficulty of assessing and reporting their success to the government which created and supports them. But he expressed a positive view that those they report to understand that the foundation is not a PR company with short term image goals, but rather a cultural and educational exchange promoter with long term goals and programming.

The same principles of misrecognition and disavowal that we observed in the JICC's case can be seen operating here. Chapter 2 suggested that the more the government attempts to wield the arts as a weapon of propaganda, the less they act as 'art'. I would go so far as to suggest that when any non-art entity attempts to put art to its use it will have the same effect. Just as in the case of the JICC, this conclusion does not suggest that government's purposes are immoral, corrupt or less than that of the arts, only that the close proximity of the national government to the decision making of these foundations certainly makes disavowal more difficult. Promoting the arts through sponsorship and delegating the decision making to unrelated committees works as a buffer which allows the gift to move,

symbolic capital to accumulate and for its investment to be made through moderately effective disavowal.

### **The Japan Society**

The Japan Society was founded May 19, 1907 by a group of prominent New York business people and philanthropists (Japan Society website). Officially, it is an American non-profit organization and therefore completely non-political (Fish 12 Dec 2008). It would be illegal for the Japan Society to take a political stance on any subject. It has continued to prosper with the exception of a short break during World War II. Post-war meetings began as early as December 1946 and open exchange and activities were under full way by 1951, including sponsoring a trip to Japan for Eleanor Roosevelt in 1953 (Japan Society Celebrating 100 Years, 33-35).

The Japan Society is lead by a board of directors whose members are leaders of industry and academia including Sony, Goldman, Sachs & Company, IBM and, Columbia University (Japan Society website). There is also a full time administrative and faulty staff of around 62 (Japan Society Annual Report 2007-2008, 63-64).

In 1971 its headquarters, the Japan House, was built on 47<sup>th</sup> street and 1<sup>st</sup> avenue, almost directly across from

the United Nations. Refurbished and added to in 1998, it now contains beautiful indoor gardens with a waterfall and reflecting pool. There is a lecture hall that can accommodate up to 100 people and an adjoining kitchen to facilitate catering and meals. The building also contains an auditorium with a capacity of 245 for lectures, film showings and music and dance performances. There is a 14,000 volume library and a separate language library and rare book collection. There is also a language center where regular Japanese language courses are taught in three classrooms (Japan Society facilities pamphlet). Perhaps the center feature of the building is the large Japan Society Gallery which was renovated in the 1990s with updated lighting, heightened ceilings and humidity controls (Japan Society Celebrating 100 Years, 90).

The unofficial statement printed in several of their publications and on the website states their purpose as:

...A non-profit, non-political organization that brings the people of Japan and the United States closer together through understanding, appreciation and cooperation. Society programs in the arts, business, education and public policy offer opportunities to experience Japanese culture; to foster sustained and open dialogue on issues important to the US, Japan and

East Asia; and to improve access to information on Japan (Japan Society Annual Report inside cover). The organization's programming is divided into three general areas; business and public policy, arts and culture, and education (Japan Society Annual Report 2007-2008).

Robert Fish, director of the Education and Lectures Program explained that the implied goal of the organization is simply "to provide information and ideas about Japan in a realistic way to a general non-specialized audience, as well as encourage interaction between Americans and Japanese at various levels; at the very senior levels also at younger or junior levels (Fish 12 Dec 2008)." He said this 'realistic view' includes both the beauty spots as well as the pimples, and that they had "failed if after they were in (the Japan House) Japan was just a beautiful place... Just like we fail if they walk out of here and Japan is all about... odd people who like strange things (imbed)." This ideal is no different than JICC or Japan Foundation. In fact the Japan Society's education programming is much like JICC except with a larger specialized staff and greater resources, allowing it to offer not only programs for students, but also trainings and lecture programs for educators as well.



As a non-political, non-profit organization, the Japan Society runs entirely on donations. In 2008, the organization's total revenues, gains and other support totaled \$11.2 million USD and total net assets at the end of the year totaled \$93.8 million USD (Japan Society Annual Report 2007-2008, 53). The Japan Society has a great number of assets to work with. The Japan Foundation is actually a yearly donator in the over \$50,000 donation category (Imbed, 54). In fact, the Japan Society is one of the primary venues and partners through which Japan Foundation channels its programming. A special publication, celebrating 100 years of the Japan Society, was printed in 2007. It highlights a tradition of a century of high profile leadership and programming. In spring 2005, one of the Japan Society's most visited exhibitions, *Little Boy: The Arts of Japan's Exploding Subculture*, curated by none other than Murakami Takashi, was named Best Museum Show in New York by the International Association of Art Critics. It broke the record for catalogues sold (Japan Society Celebrating 100 years, 94.)

The Japan Society's success shows that its assets are significant not only in economic capital but in symbolic capital as well. Director Fish explained that these two are related. He said there are historical and geographical

reasons for why the Society has the capital it does. Where it not located in New York, the Japan Society, as it is, could not have been founded by the caliber of people with the expertise and wealth that they commanded (Fish 12 Dec 2008). The organization became an extension and an apparition of the cultural capital they held collectively. Director Fish explained that-

...when you have that financial stability, people are much more willing to commit to participate and employees are much more willing to be committed... I think there is a circle of reasons that (the resources are) there... It was founded over one-hundred years ago, which gives us a historical legacy, which...when you're working with Japan, particularly some large Japanese institutions, having a historical legacy helps... It makes it much more likely that your phone calls are going to be answered (imbed).

This touches on the economic capital and the symbolic and exemplifies how the two blend together in an organization such as this.

The Japan Society uses this advantage to the benefit of its purposes. It brings in the 'movers and shakers', but it also uses its stored capital to bring in and give significance to no-name's who have something interesting or important to say. Director Fish said the majority of these

elites who come to speak, show or perform do not do it for monetary gain. In fact, they often re-donate anything they receive back to the Japan Society or to another non-profit. Why come then? The gift must move, and they can see how it affects their personal cultural capital. They come because the Japan Society can offer something other places cannot, a very specific audience that is often, but not necessarily, elite.

Director Fish said those who come to perform or speak "usually get less out of it than we usually get from them... we get what we want when we serve our public." There are two things in this quote: first, Director Fish is expressing the idea that as the Japan Society 'gifts' an audience to a visiting artist or speaker, the Society receives back more than it gave. He is describing a specific moment of the gift institution they participate in. Secondly, he is very effectively acting out the misrecognition and disavowal necessary to successfully assert their cultural capital in a way that allows the art to function at its unadulterated, fully saturated strength.

So these three things can explain the high level at which Japan Society acts as channel for the arts and academia to promote cross cultural understanding: one, their long history is a long embodied state upon which they

have built and invested their cultural capital; two, as a result, the size of their assets (economic and symbolic) is considerable- and, remember, in gift economies, the size and age of the cycle has a multiplying effect on the assets of the cycle as a whole. And lastly, being totally non-political eliminates the need to filter any programming decisions through a process of political accountability or benefit. In fact, in an act of further disavowal, the word 'diplomacy' is rarely, if ever, used in the halls of Japan Society. They choose instead terms like 'educational cultural institution' or exchange (Fish 12 Dec 2008).

### **Final Thoughts on Institutions and Art Exchange**

Each of these three organizations works in different spheres but they can and do overlap. All three of them often cooperate and collaborate on large events and programs. They are not competitors and it is impossible to speak of one as 'better' than the others. The breadth and scope of what they are able to accomplish and with whom they are able to work can be explained by analyzing how their positioning affects the accrual of symbolic capital, their ability to disavow (misrecognize) in the eyes of their audience what they are doing (often manifest by proximity to political affiliation), and their stance as a

recipient or giver of a gift. Robert Fish said that even with their substantial assets, there are those who do not wish to perform or speak at the Japan House because they do not wish to be branded as a 'Japanese Artist' (Fish 12 Dec 2008). All of these factors can be used to explain these organizations; what they have, what they can do and what allows them to do it.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

This project's purpose was to explore what is necessary to enable a non-art organization to use art as a tool for building and improving cross-cultural understanding. The first chapter explained how art can act in such a role due to its ability to share with others a cultural context from which understanding can develop. In this sense, art can be a Rosetta stone, facilitating communications and more effective understanding between cultures.

Art does this as a function of its nature. It is a cultural product and can introduce that culture to another. However, when non-art based organizations reach for art as a means to accomplish their goals it is taken from its 'natural' context and its effectiveness can be inhibited. That is where the focus of this project enters; what affects an organizations positioning so as to facilitate or hamper art's ability to function 'naturally'? To explain how art, artists and organizations positions two theories were introduced; gift institutions and symbolic capital.

Gift institutions explain the creation of art in the language of the artist, the need to share it with another

and the relationships this creates. The language of gift economies treat art and the giving and receiving of gifts as sacred objects that cease to exist when their sacred nature is betrayed and turned to profit. But just providing the language of gift institutions means nothing without understanding the function this language serves. Its function is to facilitate the exchange of symbolic value while pretending to not care about 'value' at all. What gift institutions explain is that if this value is not disguised, the exchange is debased to a market trade and the shared meaning which would have bonded the giver and receiver together cannot exist when seen as a bartered commodity exchange.

An understanding of value is provided by the theory of symbolic capital. Within symbolic capital are the inner workings of how non-economic value is created, accrued, stored and, spent. This capital is built up over time by individuals who can then link their assets together to form a recognizable system whose value as a whole is far greater than its individual parts. The value of their assets is described using terms like street credit, accreditation, fame or prestige. In order to be exchanged symbolic capital's economic value must not been recognizable as 'value' (in the economic sense of cash value) because it is

supposed to be its antithesis. It is art for art's sake, not art to make money. Disguising symbolic capital's value requires an orchestrated effort, a collective magic act, called *disavowal* or *misrecognition*, where those who wishing to exchange or cash in on their accrued symbolic capital distract the audience from seeing what is truly happening. This is often done by using the language provided by gift institutions. Increase is only an increase in spirit, there cannot appear to be any personal profit occurring or else the spell is broken.

Both of these theories, gift institutions and cultural capital, also explained another important part of the question, the criteria for how people or organizations choose who to exchange gifts with, thereby linking their symbolic capital. The theory of gift institutions explain that exchanging gifts with that which is evil binds you, in fact *makes* you a part of the evil. Symbolic Capital theory explains that exchange with the wrong people can have a negative effect on the value of your symbolic capital, just as proper associations have a positive one.

Only by combining the theories of gift institutions and symbolic capital in this manner can we paint a picture of what affects the positioning of a non-art organization to be able to connect with art for use in their diplomatic



endeavors. The ability of these organizations is dependent upon a base of cultural and social capital and who they are able to connect themselves with via gift institutions. Effectiveness at disavowal - misrecognition, the ability to evoke value without appearing to do so, is the key.

In the three examples provided in chapter 4, both symbolic capital and the ability to establish gift institutions was viewed in relation to the organizations' orientation with national government. In chapter 2, Blum was quoted as saying that the level of government involvement endangered art's ability to work naturally, but he failed to explain precisely why other than to say that art cannot be owned by any one entity. One can be closely related to government and still have a plethora of connections in high places, but hosting performances or lectures may require the use of a buffer of some kind in order to disavow satisfactorily.

Japan Information and Culture Center is defined by its being an actual government office. Its purpose is not the arts, but that of protecting and ensuring national interests. Because their base is the national government they have built in relationships and associations at political levels which other organizations would have to forge through gift institutions to secure. But this

project is focused on the organization's ability to plug into the art world. So the lack of distance between the organization and politics makes disavowal difficult; the audience is so close to the stage that they can see who is pulling the strings and benefits from their approval of the performance.

The Japan Foundation, although established by national law, has power to separate decision making from the national government which is used to further delegate and distance decisions of association to the most subjective body they can call on. This ability allows the foundation greater leeway to disavow its responsibilities to serving the national interests. Perhaps the greatest example of this process is the Foundation's ability to draw on some of the biggest Japanese names in the art world to participate in the Japan exhibit at the Venice Biennale.

The Japan Society says that its purpose is met when their public is served; perhaps one of the strongest statements of disavowal one could make. It means the Society has no purpose other than to exist as a channel through which the arts and intellectual exchange flows naturally and unhindered. It hides the fact that the organization was established and worked very hard to forge greater and greater symbolic capital for over one hundred

years. Thus it can claim that no other organization, association or government is being served. The Society's disavowal hides the fact that it knows otherwise. Indeed, it knows that *everyone's* needs are served when art is free to serve itself.

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