

# Chapter 13

## A Model for a Collective Aesthetic Consciousness

Sherry Mayo

Westchester Community College, USA

### ABSTRACT

*During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the modern media was born and viewed as an industrial factory-model machine. These powerful media such as film, radio, and television transmitted culture to the passive masses (Enzensberger; 1974). These art forms were divorced of ritual and authenticity and were reproduced to reinforce their prowess (Benjamin, 1936). In the 21<sup>st</sup> century post-media condition, a process of convergence and evolution toward a social consciousness, facilitated by a many-to-many social network strategy, is underway. Web 2.0 technologies are a catalyst toward an emergence of a collectivist aesthetic consciousness. As the prophecy of a post-industrial society (Bell, 1973) becomes fulfilled, a post-media society emerges whose quest is for knowledge dependent upon economy that barter information. This paper identifies a conceptual model of this recent paradigmatic shift and to identify some of the possibilities that are emerging.*

### INTRODUCTION

This paper utilizes Enzensberger's (1974) essay on the *Consciousness Industry* to provide a historical theoretical backdrop on today's social network post-media society. In the age of media convergence it is useful to look to social forecasters and media theorists of the past to determine how these frameworks were successful and how the present differentiates from them. The premise of this paper is that today's reality is multifaceted, interdependent, global, technology-driven, and networked. The various developments of Web 2.0 technologies and the emergence of a global social network is a paradigm shift in our consciousness, economies of varying scales, and social dynamics. All of these massive changes are happening at the human-computer-interface (HCI) and the resultant end-user created content that exists in the social network "cloud" is in need of harnessing. This flurry of creativity and connectivity shows the possibility of an emerging aesthetic consciousness, which could evolve into a creative knowledge-based economy for many willing countries and their citizens. This discussion presents the following

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-8679-3.ch013

objectives: a reframing of Enzensberger's (1974) *Consciousness Industry*, theory which is a description of current media conditions and trends, draw-backs to the social network and post-media in the present, and an aspirational conceptual model arguing for an emergent aesthetic consciousness.

## **THE CONSCIOUSNESS INDUSTRY REFRAMED FOR A POST-INDUSTRIAL SOCIETY**

*All these forms of media are constantly forming new connections both with each other and with older media like printing, radio, film, televisions, telephone, teletype, radar, and so on. They are clearly coming together to form a universal system (Enzensberger, 1974, p. 68).*

It could be just Freud's (1917) melancholia at play but Americans today still structure their institutions and corporations in keeping with the factory-model aesthetic. The habitual seating of kids in gridded rows in school, all facing one direction under the flag, and learning through passive transmission of information from teacher to student still perpetuates our educational practices. Most workers still mentally construct an image of themselves like Lucille Ball in the chocolate factory (*I Love Lucy*, Second Season, 1952-53), only willing to complete predefined tasks under micro-management. Our most elite intellectual centers remain conservatively tied to notions of corporate practices and adherence with market-forces that wag the dog. And some, only some, of our nations multi-national corporations actually understand the global kaleidoscopic, and create the age that we're living in.

Just like our addiction to post-modernist aesthetics that popular piety understood as quotation, pastiche, revisionist, feminist, multicultural, and layered; our relentless adherence to an industrial society is more about comfort than reality. Enzensberger (1974) long ago complained about the division of labor between the producer and the consumer and was very concerned about the lack of interactivity of the receiver in the power paradigm constructed by the media. However, he also looked both ahead towards new media and behind to Walter Benjamin. Benjamin (1936) understood mechanical reproduction and foreshadowed an age of many-to-many: a participatory democratic mediated society. He was concerned about the loss of aura, loss of tradition and heritage, through the endless reproduction of images from photography through film. This divorce of ritual practice around the art experience was surpassed by the functionality of the image/art object as a political transferrable sign system that could propagate agendas and build consumerism. In an industrial society aesthetics were defined by the producers of the media and sold to consumers by virtue of a capitalist model.

New media has arrived inventing the last avant-garde of artists/designers who code and subvert the interactive experience of the Internet. These "Leonardos" or artist-scientists explore the human-computer interface (HCI) as a cultural zone for social transformation (Manovich, 2001). These early adopters of PCs, digital imaging, web coding, multimedia design, and the Internet led the way to distributed knowledge, collaboration, and social organization facilitated by technology (Rhizome.org). These new media technologies have developed the Internet into a convergence media machine (Jenkins, 2008). In today's post-industrial post-media society, humans are actively participating in the creation of the media/the Internet through social networking. These Web 2.0 technologies, built upon a peer-to-peer, many-to-many strategy, facilitate end-users to help build web content that is then mined for a variety of purposes. This meta-data includes the end-users' biographical, geographical, financial, and even pictures of Mom and dog, Frodo. The emergence of meta-data provides great possibilities for information mining and

12 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:

[www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-model-for-a-collective-aesthetic-consciousness/138538](http://www.igi-global.com/chapter/a-model-for-a-collective-aesthetic-consciousness/138538)

## Related Content

---

### Poker in Virtual Reality

Miguel Rosa Duque and Todd Lyle Sandel (2022). *International Journal of Creative Interfaces and Computer Graphics* (pp. 1-18).

[www.irma-international.org/article/poker-in-virtual-reality/308810](http://www.irma-international.org/article/poker-in-virtual-reality/308810)

### Canon and Process in the 3D Modeling of Human Anatomy

Hugo de Azevedo and António B. Araújo (2021). *International Journal of Creative Interfaces and Computer Graphics* (pp. 1-16).

[www.irma-international.org/article/canon-and-process-in-the-3d-modeling-of-human-anatomy/291088](http://www.irma-international.org/article/canon-and-process-in-the-3d-modeling-of-human-anatomy/291088)

### Head Tracked Auto-Stereoscopic Displays

Philip Surman (2014). *Techniques and Principles in Three-Dimensional Imaging: An Introductory Approach* (pp. 87-131).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/head-tracked-auto-stereoscopic-displays/103034](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/head-tracked-auto-stereoscopic-displays/103034)

### Design and Restoration: An Ecological Approach

Anna Anzani and Claudia Caramel (2020). *Cultural, Theoretical, and Innovative Approaches to Contemporary Interior Design* (pp. 68-84).

[www.irma-international.org/chapter/design-and-restoration/249451](http://www.irma-international.org/chapter/design-and-restoration/249451)

### World-in-Miniature Interaction for Complex Virtual Environments

Ramón Trueba, Carlos Andujar and Ferran Argelaguet (2010). *International Journal of Creative Interfaces and Computer Graphics* (pp. 1-14).

[www.irma-international.org/article/world-miniature-interaction-complex-virtual/47001](http://www.irma-international.org/article/world-miniature-interaction-complex-virtual/47001)