

## Britain's Cultural Renaissance

By [Polly Ingham](#)

Wednesday 6 February 2008

My suggested five words for Gordon Brown's 'Britishness' are "desperately needing a cultural renaissance". Our neglect of the arts and creative endeavours has potential to drain our country of artistic talent, both as part of everyday life and mainstream entertainment. There simply won't be enough of it. This neglect is primarily financial, but it also symbolises the government's value, support and respect for artistic endeavours, which is dwindling fast.

Money has been cut from the Arts Council of England, as well as the National Heritage Lottery fund, which is responsible for aiding funding for many different arts groups. How the government seems to think this is acceptable is beyond me. I understand the need for effective management and productivity of resources, but this is not the purpose of what Tessa Jowell described as something similar to 'redirection' of government funds.

So where is this redirected cash going? Quite simply, to the 2012 Olympics. Whether you are a supporter of the Olympic bid or not, this is obviously wrong. To take away opportunities from people who can further our country's long term cultural standing for the sake of a one off international publicity event simply cannot be justified.

Simultaneously as we learn of these developments we are told by the top universities in our country that creative urges are to be suppressed during the ages of 16 to 18 in favour of more 'ideal' subjects. I am all for suitable and substantial academic preparation but what ever happened to embracing one's imagination and enjoying our studies? For those of you who are inclined towards Economics, History, French etc. then you have lucked out, the systems plays to your strengths and you can play it for all its worth. For those of you who thrive on Drama, Media and Food Technology but don't want to rule out an academically based career, then be prepared to hit a very hard brick wall, as we all will if Britain continues to tread the path of anti-culture, ever further away from the beacon of light that is cultural renaissance.



### 6 comments

[tally](#)

7 Feb '08 at 9:56 am

Sorry Polly you have failed miserably with this article by conflating England with Britain. All the problems you have outlined above are in England and not Britain.

[Report](#)

[Polly](#)

7 Feb '08 at 11:26 am

Tally,

Thank you for your succinct comment. I am aware that some of the problems I have outlined do only relate to England, but many of them do and will effect Britain as a whole. The piece was about the British government's attitude as a whole, and therefore the details of which country the policies will directly effect are almost negligible.

I hasten to add also, that this is a blog. Therefore the desire to succeed or fail does not come into it. It is merely an oppportunity to express individual opinion, and to enjoy the comments (be they good or bad) left by people, such as yourself.

Yours

Polly Ingham

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Mark

17 Feb '08 at 9:20 am

I agree. I took Politics with English and Related Literature because I had the problem of employment in the back of my head. Luckily, ive always enjoyed politics and enjoy it academically now too.

But the pressing issue of a dwindling arts sector is frightening. It seems as if the government is moving away from its policies of 'eductation, education education' to 'Education: our way and the best way'.

Artistic subjects form an essential part of a young persons overall development and provide an outlet for creative sensibilities.

Bollocks to the Olympics.

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Rinky Stingpiece

19 Feb '08 at 11:27 am

Hang on, what do we mean by "Arts" here?

Opera? Theatre? Galleries packed full of pretentious overpriced toddlersque installations?

Perhaps what you really mean (Polly) is the loss of Middle Class Arts. None of the above have any relevance to the lives of the working classes; nor to indigenous regional culture.

Where are the galleries of graffiti? Why isn't informal vandalism in housing estates celebrated as art? - probably because it wasn't made by a flock of Jeremys and Ophelias with double-barrelled surnames and plummy accents.

Why not celebrate the CCTV-captured images of after-pub brawls and the ritual coating of her majesty's highway with semi-digested kebab mixed with stella as performance and installation art?

This "beacon of light" was in the past; and we cannot live in the past.

I mean, I, like most people (it seems), am happy to condemn the Olympics and Muslim Wars as a poor return on investment; but I wouldn't be so blinkered as to condemn them for not being Art.

I would condemn the Olympics for simply being in London rather than anywhere else - why not Glasgow for Puck's sake?

Things like ballet, Turner Prize and Shakespeare are just contrived sanitised "frankenstein" art; the living art is all around us: poisonous advertising; urban dilapidation; the Celtic revival; fusion cookery; not throwbacks to the 19th century and pre-WW2 period.

Frankly, we could do with 99% of those engaged in "drama" and "media" and "food technology" to hit a brick wall at pretty high and fatal velocity for all the prolefeed and cultural devastation they are responsible for with their evident adulation for the seven deadly sins.

Before you start condemning "anti-culture"; you ought to first develop a reasonable notion of what "culture" is.

Culture must be living and not dead; and it's not acceptable for extremely niche minority interests to hog huge proportions of Arts funding.

It's bad enough that so much of the country is economically centralised around London; without it suffering from being culturally centralised, suffocated, and polluted by our own city of evil.

If you want to explore why NewLabour is draining funds from the arts sector and pumping them only into projects that support its world view; try reading "Nineteen Eighty-Four".

NewSpeak NewLabour is INGSOC!

 Report

**Chris Northwood**

19 Feb '08 at 3:56 pm

RS: Your gallery of graffiti is found wherever Banksy's work is being displayed.

 Report

**Kirsty Denison**

8 Apr '08 at 10:23 am

RS, I think to make the grand assumption that theatre and music (opera etc) are not enjoyed by the working classes is a decidedly limited and stereotyped view.

'it's not acceptable for extremely niche minority interests to hog huge proportions of Arts funding'

Theatre, music and art galleries? I don't think for a second that these are 'niche minority interests'. In fact, I'd suggest that these 'cultural' activities are available for absolutely everyone to enjoy.

The Arts Council (which is what Polly is talking about here) put a lot of research into what the population of Britain DO want from the arts which is why their decisions to cut funding are so disastrous. We could NOT do with 99% of those engaged in "drama" and "media" and "food technology" to hit a brick wall at pretty high and fatal velocity; these are creative outlets that are widely accepted as "art" whether you decide that they are or not. However, if you insist that graffiti and that which is not a "throwback to the 19th century and pre-WW2 period" is only worth our attention then perhaps look at projects such as this:

[http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/press\\_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=902](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/pressnews/press_detail.php?rid=0&sid=&browse=recent&id=902)

Let's remember that art however is subjective and to argue over the definition of it is missing the point entirely. People get a great amount of enjoyment and satisfaction from participating in these activities and to reduce funding would be a great shame indeed to all sectors of society.

 Report

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