

PRAXIS: Art in Times of Uncertainty

In his seminal novel *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859) about life in Paris and London, the English novelist Charles Dickens wrote 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...we had everything before us, we had nothing before us.' aptly capturing the mood of the time. Almost a hundred and fifty years later the feeling of disillusionment, the failure of politics to handle the 'big' problems; the recent financial collapse; the assault on the environment; and a general sense of individual and collective alienation which a global society has not been able to rectify all seem palpable. Might we be the observers of a universal depreciation of the system of thought, of an irreversible collapse of ideologies?

In the field of cultural production, the dominance of the art market, the ineffectiveness of cultural theory and the over-theorisation of culture seem to have dissociated art from real life. In his provocatively titled book *After Theory*, the English theorist Terry Eagleton claims not the death of theory, but the redefinition of its goals and fields of research. Perhaps this time of uncertainty could be the moment for the reconsideration of the intrinsic worth of artistic practice. The moment to explore art as a privileged space for relatively free expression of ideas and thoughts and for an alternative view of the world and the social environment. An art that goes back to life, back to **Praxis**, to the creative activity that contributes to the formation of a political view and to a new way of thinking and being. According to ancient Chinese philosophy, revolution is realignment with the order of the world. Could this be the time to seek a true revolution? Can art provide a window of opportunity in these uncertain times?

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