

In 1986 crossing
into East Berlin
one was soon in
a typical 19th.
century city
quarter except
for the utter
greyness, bullet-
holes and

A multiple world

In 1986 crossing into East Berlin one was soon in a typical 19th. century city quarter except for the utter greyness, bullet-holes and frequent plaques commemorating unspeakable events. But it was in the wasteland in the middle of West Berlin that I felt a contemporary despair: the sight of tramlines just disappearing into the blank foot of the Wall. How had this been tolerated for 26 years?

* * *

Around 11.30 on Friday morning in London's Portobello Road market the bin-men arrive to clear the morning's fruit and veg crates piling up at the edge of the pavements. Among those weaving around them are the latest wave of migrants to this area: the wives of american merchant bankers. Like the tourists of numerous nationalities and some of the mixed local population, they must sense this really is a site of a multiple world.

But whereas metropolitan cities, or some areas of them, may be able to embrace the prospect of multiculturalism and hybridity, elsewhere the process seems more precarious.

Post- fall of Berlin Wall, but also post 9/11 there is a darker model of what may also be happening to us. On the one hand globalising, the contemporary phase of an anonymous capitalist machine: 'This Star Trek notion of infinite diversity in infinite combination', as Kaucyila Brooke put it in 1994, ' which is perfect for Benetton ads and Coca Cola's "small world" capitalism.' (1) On the other is a response which may be the one of choice for those who see little or no shape in contemporary globalising, or reject it completely: a folding back on and into oneself for identity - ethnic, of faith, sectarian. (2) Such regressive responses would have shocked Jean Monnier and the other founders of the european community for whom its philosophical richness would emerge from exchange and diversity.

* * *

Based in the multiple and democratic nature of printmaking the Hibrida projects have welcomed the new possibilities of exchange with art schools and institutions in the enlarged Europe. They have set up intriguing dialogues that are just beginning. We are very excited about the prospect of future collaborations, some real question-asking about our traditions and differences to come.

Notes

1. 'Are you politically correct?', part of a multiple photo-piece, Photographers' Gallery, London July 1994.
2. cf. Erich Fromm, writing in 1955, 'Any regression today from freedom into artificial rootedness in state or race is a sign of mental illness, since such regression does not correspond to the state of evolution already reached and results in unquestionably pathological phenomena.' *The sane society* p.71.