

London Trend Report – October 2008

Welcome to the Creative Club...

When you hear a Londoner talk about dropping in at their “club” you can be increasingly sure that they are not referring to a fitness club. To be a member of a “member’s only” social club is currently much more “in”, and anyway, everyone and anyone can be a member of a gym if they have enough money. A member’s club on the other hand you have to “apply” to join (usually having been proposed by and seconded by two other members). Your application is then considered by a board of members (you may also have to appear at a drinks party to present yourself), and then after a suitable waiting period you may be “invited” to pay a yearly fee (naturally on a trial basis at first).

People used to turn their noses up at the exclusivity and snobbism of clubs with such procedures, and it wasn’t that long ago you had to check if they even allowed women in, and secondly what the dress code was (if women, then not in trousers). Today however membership club culture has finally caught up with the 21st century and they are de-rigueur for any member of the creative class.

One of the hippest and hottest is the bizarrely named, The Hospital (www.thehospital.co.uk) located in fashionable Covent Garden, and their buzz phrase is a “club for creative entrepreneurs”. Aimed at those working in the media and the creative industries, the club offers more than just the usual bar and restaurant, but also recording facilities, a TV studio, an art gallery, a screening room, networking events (“The Brits are so shy” says the CEO), and even a yearly awards ceremony, the Hospital Creative Awards. Keeping up with the times and trends, this club sees it as their role to discover up and coming talent, and produce, publish and celebrate their work. In order do that, the club has now opened a philanthropic department called “The Creatives in Residence” (each year members can apply for one of seven places.) As part of the programme, the chosen “creatives” will be matched with a mentor (who’s an expert in that field) and who will commit to work with you closely over the year. They will also be offered practical support and resources to help them develop projects by giving access to the studios and facilities free of charge.

Another very popular and fashionable (in a low-key kind of way) networking club with a modern “edge” is the Frontline (www.frontlineclub.com), in Paddington which claims to uniquely combine eating, drinking and thinking. Founded by independent war reporters (hence the name of the club) it attracts a broad mix of media types who contribute to/visit the photographic exhibitions and the Forum, with its screenings and discussions on media issues. As a non-profit making club, uses profits from the restaurant and efforts from Club members help the work of the Frontline Charitable Trust and its events programme.

What these clubs and others like them are trying to do is to bring together artists and the new creative class with companies, connections and money in an environment in which both feel comfortable and most importantly, equal (not the case with old-style membership clubs). “Over the past few years, artists and money people have become less socially polarised” says ex-Face magazine editor Richard Benson. Today it is about bringing them together in a relaxing, stimulating and fun environment from which everyone can benefit – both the companies and the “creatives”. These new kind of clubs try to formalise a process that should happen organically elsewhere, but for reasons of money, time, background or access, don’t always materialise.

“Men in suits need creatives more than creatives need them”, says Benson. “I think a huge growth area will be the people who form the bridge between the commercial people and the creative people.”

Membership Club Then

Snobby and cliquey

Exclusive

Covert networking

Sense of privilege

Discretionary privileges

Membership Club Now and Tomorrow

Open and welcoming

Inclusive

Open networking

Sense of sharing

Charity, support and mentoring

www.frontlineclub.com

www.thehospital.co.uk