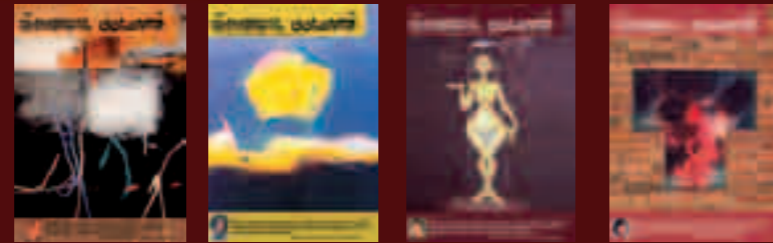


*The
role
of Art* **in
History**



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This is the third number of the Universal Colours, it is the continuation of this year's issues that we promise to do because we do not pretend that we have done the best to our readers, audiences and our dear members, but it is fulfilling the promises as the feedback we get from all. We do feel well and even better when we receive some feedback because it makes us vivid and useful.

to the near future that we live we should say that our plans in the EU-MAN is going better than the expectations, before we get a long with some Finnish organisation called VISIO FORUM which is a part of a bigger organisation working for the integration and adaptation of the society, this organisation will hold a cultural forum for the religion integration in the city of Turku for three days first, second and the third of October, EU-MAN invited to take part as partner to this forum and will use this opportunity to set some exhibition to the SALON of the forum.

The attendances to this forum expected to be some 2000 people, and that is by itself a good opportunity to show and market ourselves as professional artists living and working in the EU region, yes we need all the time to highlight ourselves and since there are a lot of artists and other people who do not know

about our organisation, we accepted this invitation and we put ourselves as partner not as guest because they have two dimensions as we all know.

As well the EU-MAN will make a good Autumn Salon in London this year, as its tradition EU-MAN made some 7 Autumn Salons since its establishments, it should be every year but of course we should be frank to ourselves and say that we cannot afford it all the time, but we are very satisfied with our work, our progress and the all that we achieved up to now.



Autumn Salon this year will be for some 24 artists 9 from Russia and the rest from our group they will present their works in the venue of Red Gate Gallery which is in the centre of London, and will be one of our qualitative exhibitions that we do so some little catalogue will be designed by Thanos Kalamidas will be appearing for the occasion and that will be very remarkable because we will have the honor of this design, as we know that Mr. Kalamidas is the designer of our magazine and the person who developed the magazine and who was working for many well-known media companies in the world, and he was working to Nokia as a designer as well.

So we are in a better condition as said because we are moving in the right direction, but still we need all support that every one can give even some little advice can be a great support.

Amir Khatib



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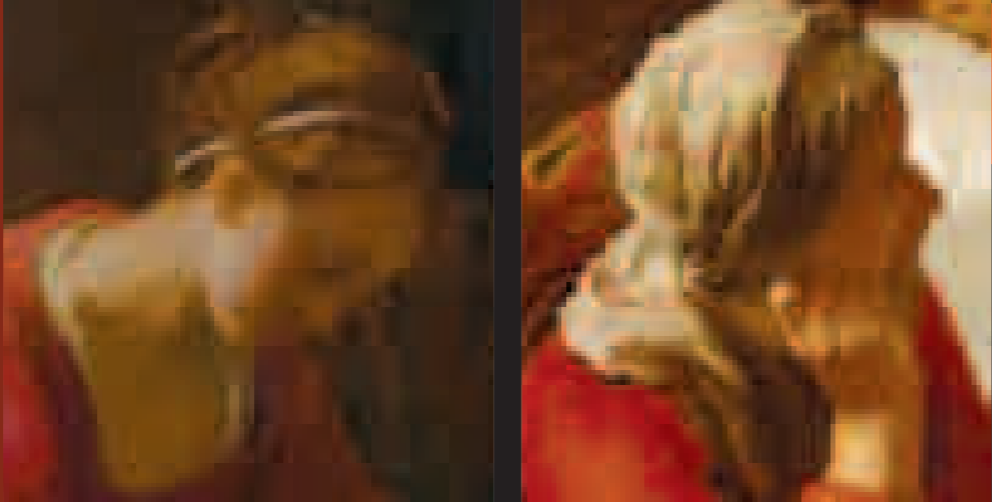
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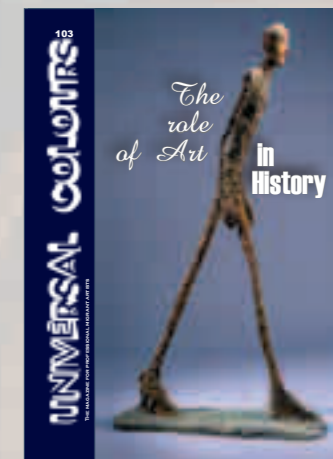
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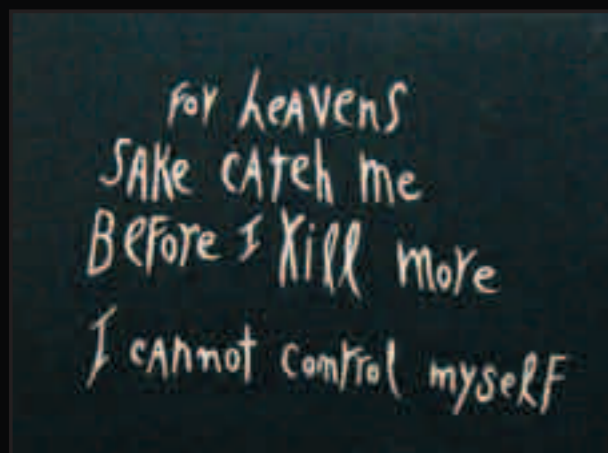
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Cover: Giacometti
Walking man

Pitzer Art Galleries Present WRIT LARGE

featuring: Marcus Civin, Hervé Constant, Patrick Hebert, Jane Mi



Curated by: Ciara Ennis
 Dates: July 29 – September 10, 2010
 Location: Pitzer Art Galleries, Nichols Gallery
 1050 North Mills Avenue,
 Claremont, CA 91711
 Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, noon-4:30
 and by appointment

Pitzer Art Galleries launches its first iteration of site-specific, text-based project Writ Large, with artists Marcus Civin, Hervé Constant, Patrick Hebert, and Jane Mi. Conceived as an annual summer project, Writ Large makes use of the 23 feet high ceiling of the Nichols Gallery. Monochromatic and thematically open-ended, Writ Large features four artists for whom language, ciphers, and symbols is a driving force. Stripped bare of artistic artifice, the works are stark and dramatic—opening vistas of meaning limited only by the viewer's imagination.

Los Angeles-based Marcus Civin's text is inspired by Stephen Crane's 1895 American Civil War novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*, and Woody Guthrie's folk song, *Ranger's Command*. Civin's work examines the topic of terrorism and the roots of American violence.

London-based French artist Hervé Constant's *For Heaven's Sake* echoes a desperate cry for deliverance. Inspired by French poet Arthur Rimbaud, Constant's work focuses on themes related to communication and the individual's journey toward self-discovery.

Los Angeles-based Patrick Hebert's *39 Synonyms for Search* takes the form of a monumental word search puzzle, a tease for word game aficionados.

Los Angeles and Boston-based Jane Mi's *RORSCHACH 0-9* are based on the symmetry of Rorschach's inkblot tests. The font considers symbol and perception. Familiar numbers have been bifurcated and mirrored to produce a character. Numbers were used in consideration of their universality across cultures.

Pitzer Art Galleries takes great pleasure in bringing the diverse perspectives of these accomplished artists in its new text art project. Writ Large is scheduled to take place each summer at Pitzer Art Galleries.

About Pitzer College

Pitzer College is a nationally top ranked undergraduate college of the liberal arts and sciences. A member of The Claremont Colleges, Pitzer offers a distinctive approach to a liberal education by linking intellectual inquiry with interdisciplinary studies, cultural immersion, social responsibility and community involvement.

About Pitzer Art Galleries

Pitzer Art Galleries exists to provide visually arresting and memorable exhibitions that promote the value and understanding of contemporary art within a local, national and international context. The Galleries, located on the Pitzer College campus, are comprised of two sites, the Nichols Gallery—committed to solo and group exhibitions by national and international artists both emerging and established—and the Lenzner Family Art Gallery—a space for risk and experimentation dedicated to emerging artists working in all media. Through curatorial creativity and visionary programming Pitzer Art Galleries seeks to provide context, support and a critical framework for artists and curators working today and by doing so inspire meaningful dialogue that fascinates, inspires and invigorates.

Turner and the Masters

Having already been seen in London and Paris, *Turner and the Masters* will now be shown at the **Museo del Prado in Madrid**. Its aim is to reveal to visitors the extent of Turner's links with other historically important artists and the profoundly original way in which he assimilated their influence. This comparison will assist in an understanding of how Turner's approach to and assimilation of other artists was intended not just as an homage to them but also involved a subtle and highly original type of transformation of their teachings.

Among the differences between this version of the exhibition and those already seen are the presence of a number of paintings not shown in London or Paris, including *Shipwreck of a Cargo Boat*, *Snowstorm: Hannibal and his Army crossing the Alps*, *Peace. Burial at Sea*, *Shade and Darkness: evening of the Deluge*, and *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory): the morning after the Deluge*, all absolute masterpieces by Turner.

The works by other painters to be seen in the exhibition include some particularly outstanding masterpieces that have never previously been exhibited in Spain, such as *Girl at the Window* by Rembrandt, *Les Plaisirs du Bal* by Watteau, both loaned from Dulwich Picture Gallery, London, and the latter only shown at the Prado, as are the major canvases by Claude Lorraine and Rubens, *Port Scene with the Embarkation of Saint Ursula* (London, National Gallery), and *Landscape with a Cart at Dusk*



(Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen). Also on display solely in the version of the exhibition at the Prado is *An English Ship in a north-west Gale trying to beat windward* (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London) by the 17th-century, English-based Dutch painter Willem van de Velde the Younger.

Changing times - New worlds

24 June 2010 - 14 November 2010

After the success of the exhibitions *Kandinsky & Der Blaue Reiter* and *Haute Couture* it is the turn of gems from the collection to dazzle, amaze and open the eyes of the visitor. Famous names jostle for attention: Egon Schiele, Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet, Pablo Picasso, Piet Mondrian, Paul Cézanne, Wassily Kandinsky, Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Jan and Charlie Toorop, Constant, Jan Schoonhoven, Louise Bourgeois, Francis Bacon and Marlene Dumas. It is rare to see so many art treasures displayed at once. These highlights – both familiar pieces and new discoveries – have now been brought together in the exhibition *Changing times – New worlds*.

Perhaps the truest thing that can be said about art is that it is above all the child of its time. As times change, new worlds are created. That has been true for centuries and it still holds true today. In the exhibition *Changing times – New worlds*, the Gemeentemuseum showcases the very best it has to offer. Each exhibition room presents a different world in images, from the wild Expressionism of Kandinsky to the soft, sweet hues of Monet's *Wisteria* and the underlying tension of Magic Realists like Carel Willink and Pyke Koch.

The exhibition consists of two parts, the first of which can be viewed through 19 August and the second from 31 July through 14 November.

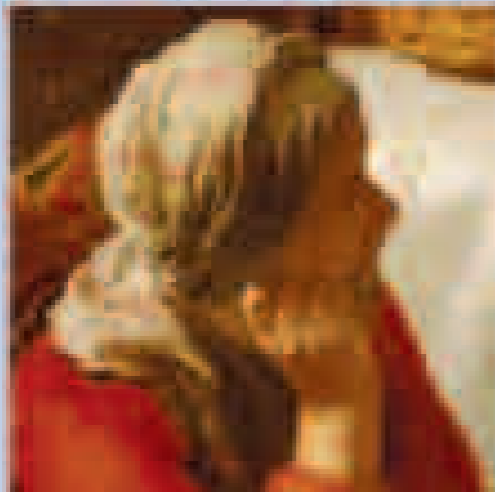
The Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Stadhouderslaan 41 2517 HV Den Haag Postbus 72



UNIVERSAL COLOURS 3 / 2010

The Young Vermeer

For this presentation (until 22 August), the Mauritshuis has brought together Vermeer's early work: one painting from Edinburgh, one from Dresden and one from the Mauritshuis itself. These early works are quite different from the richly decorated interiors with attractive women you might expect from Vermeer. Instead they depict a mythological subject, a story from the Bible and a brothel scene, and they are all surprisingly large. Nonetheless, they all reveal the master's hand and the seeds of his later style. They also show a young Vermeer already captivated by tranquillity and light, qualities that would later make him world-famous.



The presentation has been organised in close collaboration with The National Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh and the Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, in Dresden, where the paintings will later be exhibited.

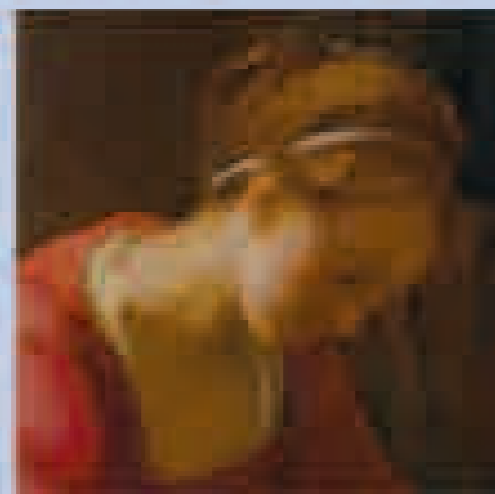
Vermeer's Early Years

Vermeer was born in Delft in 1632. His father ran the Mechelen Inn on the Grote Markt and supplemented his income dealing in art. It is not known with whom Vermeer studied painting. No documents on the matter have yet come to light and Vermeer's early work does not bear the hallmarks of any one artist in particular.



In 1653 the young Vermeer registered as a master-painter at the local guild. He began his career producing history paintings: scenes from the Bible and classical mythology. According to 17th-century academic theory, this was the highest form of painting. A history painter had to first absorb a story and then use his imagination, while a painter of still-lives, for example, 'only' had to imitate the real world.

The elevated status was likely to be another reason Vermeer chose to become a history painter. It seems, however, that other subjects held more appeal for him: he eventually switched to scenes of everyday life, which were probably also in greater demand.



After his death in 1675, Vermeer fell into obscurity, his paintings only beginning to resurface in the 19th century. The rediscovery of his three early works began with *The Procuress* in 1859. Thoré-Bürger, an art critic and Vermeer enthusiast, saw the painting hanging high on a wall in a Dresden museum and - standing on a ladder - recognised the signature.

The Mauritshuis's *Diana and Her Nymphs* followed 25 years later, when Vermeer's signature - today barely visible to the naked eye - was discovered under a layer of paint.

Any doubts about this atypical Vermeer fell away when in 1901 another signed early work with an unusual subject appeared at a London auction: *Christ in the House of Martha and Mary*. The young Vermeer had arrived.



TURKU – EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE 2011

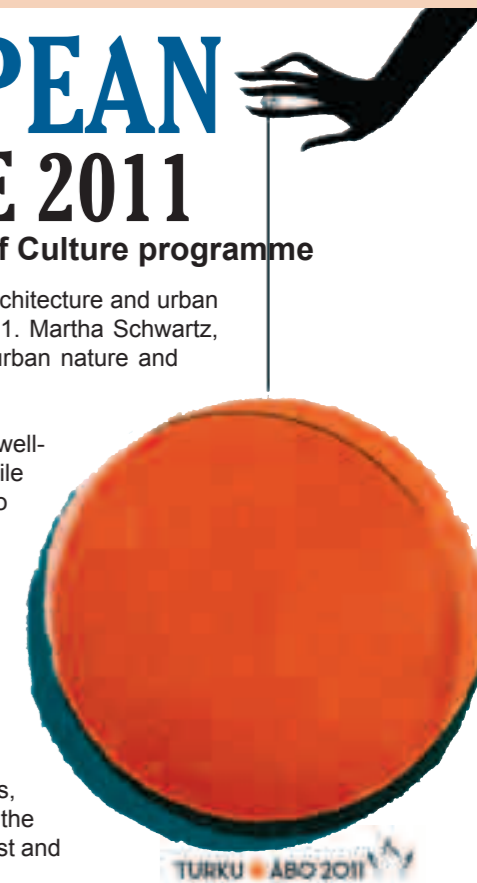
Urban Nature 2011 to include nature in the Turku Capital of Culture programme

The Turku 2011 Capital of Culture year programme intertwines contemporary art, landscape architecture and urban city planning together in an interesting way in the Urban Nature seminar 8-9 September 2011. Martha Schwartz, a renowned contemporary artist from the USA, is the keynote speaker for the seminar on urban nature and contemporary art that is organised by the Summer University of Turku.

Gardens, parks and other urban nature locations are currently seen as elements improving the well-being of people and the cosiness of the environment. In addition, they are forums for art. While expanding to areas that are more versatile, contemporary art is increasingly moving closer to environmental and urban city planning.

The goal of the seminar is to diversely examine the planning and research of parks, recreation areas and urban nature and their effects on the human psyche and wellbeing. The seminar also discusses current topics along with the future possibilities and challenges regarding the industry.

The Urban Nature 2011 seminar is targeted at professionals from various domains, artists, planners, gardening professionals, city officials and city residents. The seminar speakers include environmental artists, landscape architects, environmental psychology researchers, nature philosophers and gardening professionals from Finland, the UK, Denmark, Sweden and the USA. The keynote speaker for the seminar is Martha Schwartz, a well-known contemporary artist and landscape architect from the USA.



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Visiting Arts Strengthening

Intercultural Understanding Through the Arts

www.visitingarts.org.uk

Visiting Arts' purpose is to strengthen intercultural understanding through the arts.

What do we do?

- * Provide information and intelligence to help people engage in intercultural activity
- * Create opportunities for artists and cultural professionals to explore new connections
- * Expand the skills and knowledge of artists and cultural players

How we do this

Among other things we:

- * Produce and distribute our free monthly e-newsletter, help-sheets, targeted briefings and the latest advice through print, web and face to face meetings
- * Establish and foster opportunities for ground-breaking artist exchanges, and contribute to some of the world's biggest and most innovative festivals
- * Organise and run training programmes, in-country



workshops, overseas country-visits, networking events, work placements, residencies and collaborations

From Afghanistan to Zanzibar, we work with the most exciting next generation of artists and cultural players, inviting them to the UK, linking them with UK artists and organisations expanding knowledge and horizons and championing intercultural working.

Our recent consultation with the sector showed us that, on average, arts professionals and artists need: international intelligence, particularly on funding sources and visa information, opportunities for travel and research, and networking opportunities in order to enable their international working. These are areas of development core to our work.

With increasing migration across the world, globalised trade and issues related to cross-cultural, religious and national conflict entering into our consciousness on a daily basis, it is clear that society needs more intercultural dialogue, not less. We are acutely aware that our work needs to reflect the issues facing us in the 21st century while building on the good practice that VA has evolved over the last 30 years.



The context in which this dialogue takes place is important; in the face of a global economic downturn and the pressures of climate change to minimise our carbon footprint, we must regulate our emissions and make sure that our programmes are as environmentally and economically sustainable as possible.

We work with our partners to avoid duplication and maximise the value and impact of our activity across the UK arts sectors, and we strive to capture the inspiration, the learning and the good practice of our programmes to share widely.

We test all of our programmes against these principles and we are constantly devising new ways of delivering high quality, effective programmes, and to challenge traditional models of international working. Who we are

Visiting Arts is an independent registered charity set up in 1977, which is funded, by Arts Council England, the Scottish Arts Council, the Arts Council of Wales, the Arts Council of Northern Ireland and works with a range of partners including the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, British Council, Gulbenkian Foundation and Ministries of Culture across the globe. The Board is chaired by Robert Palmer. Other Board Members include Ajay Chhabra, Romesh Gunsekera, Sue Cambridge, Ann Harrison, Guto Hari and Nero Ughwujabo. We have a wide and growing group of associates with whom we work on one-off contracts. These associates represent some of the most experienced and diverse cultural operators in the UK (and beyond).

Visiting Arts was established in 1977 as a department of the British Council, working to bring international and culturally diverse work from overseas to UK audiences. Visiting Arts became an independent charitable organisation in 2001 and since then the organisation's role has developed into being a facilitator for high quality international relationships between artists and cultural professionals. We do this through three main strands of work: Information and knowledge sharing, Arts Project and Training.

Rasul AL-Murshidy

Colours movement and its inspiration in the artworks of Rasul Al Murshidy

By Mohammad Al-Bustanyi

Artist AL-Murshidy takes art as profession very early in his life compared to his generation, he also taught art when he was 16 years-old, set up many exhibitions in Iraq until he left his home-land at the early nineties. Then he made a series of exhibitions in San Francisco and N.Y. particularly in the memorable place of the United Nations. Followed with two more exhibitions at the Jurdanian-Amieran association and the cultural centre of the city.

Rasul continue his experience or better his “research” the same way he had started in his early years in Iraq, but when he settled down in the South Virginia he finally could get reed of the boring stylish goats of his past. However his works took an experimental dimension, and he could found a unique visual language to communicate with others through colours and mainly communicate long time personal experiences.

His art became deeper, more challenging and discovery... a language that colour become moveable, nothing limits its movement, unite shorthand to many clear meanings which he wanted it t be a bring and continue between him, his work and his viewers, to exchange the inspirations and its astonishment.

A strict language that he can reveal through his artworks, although it has a high transparent which hide between the stocks of the brush and the studded carefully techniques that need the spaces, viewer can see that figures communicate in an intense language includes all questions... depth is the ready dimension to his subjects so he takes out his extensions from that depth which is full of enigmas, inspirations and all riddles that we think of as if he wants to tell us that present time is inevitable result to far past ,or he tried to remind us of what we see is coming from many thick backgrounds flirting with our culture disturbing its resources but it give us a feeling of fullness.



Rasul trust his colours as an eternally expression of our different impressions, one of his characteristics that he loves colours and very early in his life as said, and he trusts deeply that colours have manifestations , he dare to dive in its depth as experiment discovering and as rebel I know him as academician as well imitating reality by a transparency at the early stage of his life, but when he moved to the USA, gradually he belongs to the new discoveries and try his best to get knowledge about the American pop art and other art experiences without leaving his tools and his culture that came already full of its details... but seems that he responded to the new reality spreading in his artworks the depth f his own experience. So he get rid of the traditional shapes immediately to fill some gap in the artwork

Rasul let the spontaneity play the role, he behaved as an adult child with his colours with the destiny of the artwork consciously he led his child to be creative and attractive he get advantages from many art worlds, the old Iraqi art world, the modern European world, the American world, which any viewer can notice carefully the mixture of the different cultures, ethnics and nations.

AL-Murshidy worked heard to achieve this point because he turns the colours to be tools, the lines to be tools, the light and shadow to be tools as well so we can see the all tools work together towards expressing the ideology of him. Colours are full of movements continues movements and spaces which some viewers see as empty but they have a deep relationship to the depth of the picture, there are always a hidden dimension to the figures which basically they made of colour areas.

Meaning that all those colour movements as I said coming from the depth of the picture not the contrary and we have to understand through our reading to the work and trough conditions of the colour and its movement according to an old and new memory, so we have to imagine the area as the Virginian land before that colour penetrate the whole scenery.

I can say that colour and its movement frames the experience of Rasul AL-Murshidy at least now, and he is a successful in this field but can this colour revolution continue to express his obsessions and his feelings in the future time. Perhaps but I know that he cannot do it because of our deep rooted friendship and my following to his process that he cannot stay on one style considering it as his unique ideology because he believes that one ideology impressing him as an artist.

I think that he is right.



ART AND HUMAN HISTORY

Editors' Note:

In the early 1980s, a line was put forward within the RCP that the social role of art should be simply characterized this way: "art is entertainment." This led to discussion and debate within the Party, and through this process the "art is entertainment" line was criticized and rejected. Since that time, there has been ongoing discussion among people, both inside and outside the Party, about the social role of art. The following comments, written a number of years ago by Ardea Skybreak, author of the book *Of Primeval Steps and Future Leaps*, were a contribution to this process.

In these comments Skybreak speaks to what is wrong with the notion of "art is entertainment" and raises a number of important questions related to this and, more generally, to the social role of art. These comments were not written for publication, and in fact were more in the nature of some initial and somewhat informal thoughts, musings, etc. But we feel that, in the context of the widespread distribution and discussion of the RCP's new Draft Programme, as well as in an overall and ongoing sense, the points raised in these comments remain very relevant and can help stimulate further wrangling, within the Party and among others, around these and other important questions. For this reason and with this objective in mind, we requested and received the permission of the author to publish these comments. It is our hope that their publication will indeed stimulate and--in the best sense--provoke further wrangling with and lively debate and exchange around the questions addressed, and we welcome and encourage correspondence that in this same spirit seeks to contribute to this ongoing process.

These thoughts for discussion will be serialized in the RW over the coming weeks. This week: Part 1: Art and Human History.

"Although man's social life is the only source of literature and art and is incomparably livelier and richer in content, the people are not satisfied with life alone and demand literature and art as well. Why? Because, while both are beautiful, life as reflected in works of literature and art can and ought to be on a higher plane, more intense, more concentrated, more typical, nearer the ideal, and therefore more universal than actual everyday life."

Mao Tsetung, *Yenan Forum*, Selected Works Vol. 3, p. 82

This statement by Mao remains one of the best formulations of the distinguishing characteristics of art. A few years ago, in the context of a very necessary struggle on the part of the RCP against the tendency to confound art with political agitation and propaganda, attempts were made to grapple further with the question of the social function of art. Having had the opportunity to review and reflect on some of the documents circulated within the Party as part of this process, I wanted to write up some of my own initial thoughts on this, in the hopes of contributing to further discussion and debate of the important questions involved.

One view put forward within the Party--which was ultimately rejected--is the formulation that "the role of culture in society under the present and foreseeable conditions,

including well into the transition to communism, can be summed up in one word. It is entertainment."

This characterization of the social function of art--"art is entertainment"--was presented as being essentially in keeping with Mao's view of art, and merely a further expression and development of our understanding of the social role of art, along the same lines. For instance, in defending the "art is entertainment" formulation, it was said that the very quote by Mao (cited above) "implies that people wish to escape everyday life (even sometimes when everyday life is a revolutionary upsurge, a 'festival of the oppressed') and that art is a means of doing so. This is the bottom line." This was the basis for an attempt to reconcile Mao's formulation with the "art is entertainment" formulation. But in criticizing this "art is entertainment" formulation, it was correctly pointed out that "to arrive at a correct understanding of the relation of art to politics it is necessary to have a correct understanding of the social function of art," and that the term "entertainment," even very broadly defined, "does not express the entire social function of art: it is not sufficient as an explanation of that social function, and if that is all we say about art's social function--that it is entertainment--we will fall into some significant errors (largely at the opposite pole from the error of treating art as agitation and

propaganda)."

I think this is indeed very true. What I will try to do in what follows is to develop this point and characterize some of my own exploration of the question of the social role of art--a process which has led me to conclude even more strongly that the attempt to capture the essential characteristics of the social role of art in the formulation "art is entertainment" is really quite wrong, and that in fact this formulation stands in very real opposition to the largeness of mind and sweeping view of art concentrated in Mao's formulation cited above.

It is useful to step back for a minute and think of history. What role has art played in different societies throughout the ages?

Art has always been a social activity, engaged in by social beings, in a social context. It has therefore been imbued with social meaning throughout our history. But social contexts (predominant modes of production and corresponding forms of social organization) have undergone profound changes in the course of human history, and these have no doubt been reflected in (and affected by) changes in the social role, the social meaning, of art as social activity. A study of these changes, and of the aspects of the artistic process which have not



changed, would greatly enrich any attempt to get a handle on the social role of art in today's world. While an extensive exploration of this subject is obviously out of the question here, a few things can be suggested from even a superficial look back in time.

Have human beings always engaged in art? I believe we have. I believe professional artists--occupying highly specialized social roles--appeared only with the emergence of strict hierarchies and class divisions in societies, but that art--as a social activity--goes back to a much earlier time. Interestingly, the Russian socialist Plekhanov criticized Bucher for suggesting that "play is older than labour" and "art is older than the production of useful objects." Plekhanov countered that one must recognize the ultimate "dependence of art on economics," rather than the "dependence of economics on art."* While it is indeed correct to point out that all human activities in the superstructural arena ultimately rest on society's base of human productive activity, and would not even be possible in the absence of such activity, the response given to Bucher seems marked by more than a little mechanical materialism. This actually obscures our understanding of the social role of art since its inception as human social activity.

I suspect human beings engaged in some forms of art from the beginning of human society, again, long before classes, or even the earliest hierarchical stratification of society, appeared. I base this belief on the fact that, as soon as the basis emerged for human beings to accumulate some kind of material surplus (perhaps simply through the storage of gathered food resources), the material

basis would have existed for the emergence of human activities not directly tied, in the most immediate sense, to activities aimed at procuring the basic requirements for the sustenance and reproduction of life. The accumulation of the slightest material surplus above and beyond what was needed for immediate consumption would have provided at least the basis for the earliest experimentations with a division of labor among human beings, and provided a qualitatively new basis for exploration and transformation of the external world.

This had to have a phenomenal impact on the development of social organization and consciousness as well! The material basis would now exist for human beings to engage in productive activities not related to survival in the most immediate sense--a wide variety of experimental forays and investigations which were not guaranteed to produce palpable results could be engaged in (such as perhaps going off on long hunting treks that might or might not produce a return in game animals, or experimenting with the fashioning of some tool, etc.).

As our ancestors increasingly moved away from the confines of a hand-to-mouth existence, the basis would also have existed for them to experiment with new ways of interpreting and analyzing the increasingly complex information provided by the external world (and human society itself) by engaging in forms of manipulation of the external world, again not so closely tied to immediate survival. There was therefore a basis for art in one form or another.

We can't say for sure that art as a social activity emerged as soon as the

basis for such activity presented itself, but does anyone seriously believe that there could long have been speech and language before there were stories and songs, for instance? Social life does not directly fossilize (at least not in the conventional archaeological sense!), so it will never be possible to exactly re-create the earliest artistic endeavors of our ancestors, especially given the fact that many of the products of such activity (made of perishable materials) would not generally be preserved much into the future.

We can however gain a few insights into artistic activity and its social function in pre-class-based societies by examining such activities in modern peoples living in societies characterized by very minimal development of productive forces and the absence of strict social hierarchies or class divisions, such as the few remaining foraging societies (gatherer-hunters) living in various parts of the world. Typically such societies don't have any specialized "artists," any more than they have specialized political or military "chiefs" or religious "priests," etc. Such specialized social functions historically have emerged when the further development and increased complexity of productive activities have demanded a more complex and formalized division of labor, as is evident in all pastoral, agricultural and industrial societies. But I don't think this means there is no "art" in foraging societies.

Some will protest that one really can't speak of "art" in such societies, as evidenced by the fact that it is quite common for such societies not

to even have a word for art in their vocabularies. So what? The Inuit peoples, of Alaska and elsewhere, have no single word for "snow," as far as I know, but no one would suggest they are not familiar with the stuff! In fact they have many different words in their language which refer to the many different kinds of snow which they distinguish, and which have very different social implications in relation to their various activities. Perhaps the analogy is a bit stretched, but I suspect that, in many cases, foraging societies don't have a single word for "art" (as a highly

specialized and highly circumscribed social activity) and certainly no word for "artist" (as a person primarily engaged in art), and yet may routinely engage in many artistic activities and have many and sundry words for the results of such activities. In following up this hunch (and perhaps all this is well known and understood by many people, but it was for me a new exploration), I turned to reports about the lives of the !Kung San people, whose traditional (although now fast disappearing) foraging societies have been extensively studied and described.

The Stories of the !Kung San People

The worldly possessions
a n d

productive implements of the traditional !Kung gatherer-hunters go little beyond such things as digging sticks for the collection of roots, etc., and they have no strict hierarchies or chieftains, living as they do in small mobile groupings in which social decisions can be arrived at through relatively informal struggle and consensus. They do, however, have a rich oral history--collections of tales and myths passed on from generation to generation and which clearly perform an important social function. In a way all !Kung are storytellers, since all will, on occasion, engage in the telling of stories. But on the other hand, their language has different words for different kinds of stories, of seemingly different social importance. For instance, the term n=wasi refers to "ordinary stories" (such as a b o u t



hunting, general historical stories, etc.) and these stories are told by many different people. But the term *n-wasi o n!osimasi* refers to the “stories of old people,” a collection of more important tales and myths which are passed on from generation to generation and which, while widely known, are told and retold almost exclusively by the older people. The younger people often assert that they simply lack the necessary experience to relay these stories.

There are in fact many different words for these “stories of the old people,” including “stories of long ago,” “stories of the beginning,” etc. And again, while there are many people in traditional !Kung society who “tell stories competently,” the young tend to defer to the elders in the telling of these special stories, while on the other hand “virtually every old person is able and usually willing to tell” these stories. Hence, “though there is no special priestly or otherwise distinct group entrusted with the stories in San culture, the old people do, in effect, have something of a monopoly” in this sphere. (Source: Megan Biesele, “Aspects of !Kung Folklore” in: Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers, ed. Richard B. Lee and Irvén DeVore, Harvard University Press 1976, pp. 306-308 especially). It is not completely clear why these stories are so much the province of the old people, but it seems to have a lot to do with the fact that they are considered to have accumulated enough social experience over the years to know about these things and to properly relay (and perhaps occasionally modify?) these stories which seem to play an important role in the preservation of a sense of social continuity among the !Kung. As one

old woman said: “The old person who does not tell stories just does not exist. Our forefathers related for us the doings of the people of long ago and anyone who doesn’t know them doesn’t have their head on straight. And everyone whose head is on straight knows them!”

“All Work and No Play Makes Jack a Dull Boy”

All this suggests to me that artistic expression has always been not only a means of entertainment (and yes, the traditional !Kung stories are apparently very entertaining and told and retold with a great deal of relish!), but a means of capturing, concentrating and communicating some crucial aspects of social experience, including such things as wonder at the unknown, preservation of what is known, and anticipation of the future. And it is not just in the stories. Think of all the songs, music, body painting and decoration, decoration of containers, tools, shelters, etc.... Think of all the dances produced in all the societies which have limited development of productive forces. Is all this really reducible to “entertainment”?

Again, even if one seeks to “reclaim” the word entertainment and rid it of its common connotations of mind-numbing distraction and frivolous amusement (the one-sided emphasis favored by pragmatic philistines everywhere, and particularly cultivated and promoted by the U.S. bourgeoisie), the problem with the formulation “art is entertainment” remains. The word itself does carry a double connotation of amusement or pleasure, and of being distracted or diverted (e.g. as in the French word

for entertainment, “*divertissement*”) from usual concerns.

But even this latter aspect has tended historically to have a connotation of diverting people’s attention not only from everyday concerns (perhaps the better to break the pull of spontaneity and drudgery and lift their sights!) but also from essential (cardinal) questions, which they should be concerned with! The 17th-century philosopher Pascal was said to have remarked that “*le divertissement nous amuse et nous fait arriver insensiblement a la mort*” (entertainment amuses us and leads us ever so gradually and painlessly to our deaths). While it would certainly be wrong to adopt a dogmatic and ascetic stance towards entertainment (which does in fact fulfill a very important social function), we cannot simply discount the aspect of the term which connotes distraction away from the more essential questions of life.

Just to be clear, the point is not that there is anything wrong with entertainment. People need entertainment, which is to say that we need to be periodically, momentarily, distracted from daily concerns, be they petty or lofty in character. We all need to play, to relax, to engage in many different forms of recreation, precisely in order to be able to recreate, to return to whatever it is that we need to be doing more rested, and perhaps with fresh perspectives. The old quip “all work and no play makes Jack a dull boy” is certainly true, and is something which even revolutionaries with seemingly boundless and limitless energy and determination have to take into account, often especially in times of the most intense struggle and activity.

Contrary to the viewpoints of dogmatists, the need for entertainment is not an inherent indication of social decadence or weakening resolve to carry on with social responsibilities! As with any other social activity, any particular form of entertainment occurs in a social context and has a social impact. Therefore both the content and the form of any particular means of entertainment at any given time are imbued with social meaning, which can be evaluated as relatively positive or negative (or perhaps even relatively insignificant) in relation to particular social interests and objectives. And the same evaluation can be made of any particular work of art.

But while art can be a very important form of entertainment (both for the artist and for the “audience” in the broadest sense), art and entertainment are not one and the same. The creation, and the appreciation, of a work of art can certainly be a welcome form of “*divertissement*” away from everyday thoughts and activities, even when the subject matter or theme is not particularly pleasant or amusing. A work of art which succeeds in being moving, challenging, provocative, etc., should certainly be deemed to be “entertaining” in the broadest sense, precisely as a result of these very qualities. In the final analysis, whether a particular work of art is deemed entertaining or not (in the broadest sense) is a measure of its “success” and is primarily a question of standards—both of the artist and of the “audience” in interpenetration with each other. A work of art will have little value as entertainment if the artist(s) has not met the essential criteria for art outlined in the quote by Mao cited earlier (criteria re

concentration, typifying, raising to a higher level aspects of life, etc.), and a work of art will also not be deemed entertaining (no matter how well it has objectively met these criteria) if the level of the audience is out of step with the level of the work (or vice versa) and no means have been found to bring the two into correspondence with each other.

In any case, the “entertainment value” of a work of art (or of the creative process) is far from encompassing its essential characteristics as art, and in particular in terms of social function. I cannot think of a single society at any time in history where the formulation “art is entertainment” would have applied in any kind of essential sense. The social function of different artistic expressions has often been complex, art having been used as a direct aid in production; as a way to represent the external world; as a means of recording and transmitting social history; as a means to anticipate—and often to “prepare”—the future (as just one example, think of all the dances “for the renewal of life” common to so many cultures). In all cases it seems that art as a social activity is intimately involved with capturing, and affecting, socially perceived contradictions in nature or society. How can this be termed essentially “entertainment”? How can “entertainment” explain the myriad stories, painting, songs and dances seeking to interpret and make known a people’s origins and place in the universe, the origins and histories of the plants and animals, or of various “spirit worlds,” or of existing social relations? How can this encompass the use of art when, with increasing social stratification, art is also used to ascertain an individual’s “place”

in society, to proclaim social identity, and to distinguish the rank and status of different social groupings (e.g., some of the earliest examples of this were probably the different “styles” of ornamentation of bodies, of tools, weapons, etc.), for proclaiming social intent (e.g., war paints or peace tokens), for recording genealogy and status (e.g., totem poles etc.). Aren’t all these creations art—and can any of them really be reduced to entertainment?

Of course, for most people throughout history (and continuing today, despite the advances of the materialist outlook!) the lines between fantasy and material reality have often been blurred. This explains the frequent intimate connection of art to ritual and religion in one form or another. Songs, dances, recitations, etc., have commonly been used to call forth, unleash, appease, or seek insight from, the imagined spirit world, be it peopled by plants and animals or by bearded old men and fat cherubs! Much of the great art surviving over the ages is testimony to people’s attempts to defend themselves against, or seek to influence, some of these supposed spiritual forces, in much the same way that art is also used to grapple with, and influence, real material forces, including social relations.

Art as an Expression of Worldview
Not every work of art stemmed (or stems) from a fully developed world outlook or seeks to promote such an outlook. But every work of art has contributed to doing just that.

This is true even where the connection of the art to the sphere of production is very tight, as in, say,

the decoration of a pot used to hold grain. How else could one explain the beautiful intricate designs of the painted clay pots of the Anasazi (ancient Pueblo) peoples and of their modern-day descendants? Or of the Pomono Indian woven baskets which involve much elaborate beadwork, the weaving of rushes with other natural materials for color, and intricate designs. One such basket I have admired through a photograph incorporates many repetitions of a complex horizontal design, which is interrupted in only one spot, “so that the maker wouldn’t be struck blind”! Yet another comprises 10,000 individual stitches and a pattern of stylized human figures. Its title: “We assemble to discuss the happy lives of our ancestors.” Does “entertainment” even begin to get to the heart of all this?! What is being recorded, concentrated, and transmitted, is part of a way of life, of a worldview. Or consider the famous cave paintings of Lascaux. It has, on occasion, been suggested that these cave paintings may have been essentially bookkeeping devices: records of animals killed, or to be killed, in the hunt. The implication has been that these should not, after all, be considered “art.” This has always struck me as ridiculous. It is not just the remarkable beauty (admittedly to my modern-biased eye) of the Lascaux cave paintings which makes me feel this way, nor even the observation that the careful stylization of people and animals, and the complex mixing of pigments for varied coloration, seem like an awful lot of trouble to go through to put together a mere laundry list of sorts. There is more. These ancient paintings of people and animals, in some way which we don’t fully understand anymore, express something about the way of looking

at things, about the worldview, of these long-ago peoples, and their attempt to communicate this view to others, be they people or spirits or whatever. And this would be the case whether the paintings of Lascaux did in fact comprise a listing of game, the chronicle of a particular hunt, someone’s idea of a bit of fun on a rainy day, an invocation for the future, a record of some elaborate myth, or any combination of such elements. In some way these paintings encapsulate part of the worldview of those times, part of the way some of those long-ago people sought to interpret, and affect, the world around them. And it is this--both what is left of this effort, and what is forever lost--which moves us still.

The Role of Art in Human Society
But what about art today? This is in fact what we need to grapple with more deeply. But hopefully some reflections about the past of art (even relatively brief and superficial ones as have been presented here) can aid us in this task by dislodging some of the ossified ways of thinking about art which are so commonplace, and so heavily promoted in bourgeois society.

Many modern artists (who unfortunately often seem to show little interest in history, even as pertains to art!) have lost sight of the fact that art is a social phenomenon occurring in a social context, which the art is both conditioned by, and in turn influences. Many artists express a quasi-mystical and very individualized view of the artistic process, tend to worship spontaneity, and seek the justification of their artistic activity only in the resulting work itself, and in their relation to it. This is in large part due to a problem brought out by Engels. In response to the stubborn resistance

of many of his contemporaries to the theory that human labor “is the primary basic condition for all human existence,” Engels argued that many people had lost sight of the intimate connection of art, science, complex social organization, laws, religion, etc., with their material underpinnings in the realm of human productive activity. He further argued that this was in large part because the increasing complexity of the social division of labor itself often masked this connection:

“In the face of all these creations, which appeared in the first place to be products of the mind, and which seemed to dominate human society, the more modest productions of the working hand retreated into the background, the more so since the mind that plans the labour process already at a very early stage of development of society (e.g. already in the simple family), was able to have the labour that had been planned carried out by other hands than its own. All merit for the swift advance of civilisation was ascribed to the mind, to the development and activity of the brain. Men became accustomed to explain their actions from their thoughts, instead of from their needs--(which in any case are reflected and come to consciousness in the mind)--and so there arose in the course of time that idealistic outlook on the world which, especially since the decline of the ancient world, has dominated men’s minds”. (Engels 1876, p. 289)

Unfortunately the history of the international communist movement has been plagued by a lot of mechanical materialism, including on the question of the relation of art to other spheres of social activity. This is evidenced in particular by

the frequent attempts to seek a one-to-one correspondence between art and production, or art and politics, in both cases completely missing the particularities of art as art, i.e., as a social activity with a distinct social role in its own right. Perhaps ironically, the formulation “art is entertainment” has a lot in common with this mechanical materialist trend, because it seeks to understand art as a social activity by stripping it of all its richness and complexity, and reducing it down to what might be practically termed “the lowest common denominator” of all artistic expression--its potential for entertainment.

Interestingly, while the proponents of “art for art’s sake” overtly proclaim the tremendous importance of art (if sometimes only to themselves!) and go on to put forward an idealist notion that sees art and artists as floating about in a social vacuum--and having little or no bearing on, or responsibility towards, the rest of the world--the “art as entertainment” view does place art and artists very much in a social context, but grossly underestimates the social import and influence of art as art--and ultimately the social responsibility of artists as artists--because of a mechanical view of art’s social function, here reduced primarily and essentially to entertainment. This ends up promoting the view that art is very social--and, all in all, not very important!

The position that “art is entertainment” can even end up feeding the “art for art’s sake” line. This is in part because “art is entertainment” is so far from appreciating the full scope of the objective importance of art, that it leaves the door wide open to

those who (correctly) feel that art is a great deal more than entertainment, but who at the same time are apt to deny the social/political implications of art as a social activity, and the attending social responsibility of artists as artists. Furthermore, the “art as entertainment” view promotes the view that, well, if the social meaning of art is in fact so limited (entertainment being its primary purpose), then it’s alright to strike a stance that “anything goes” in the artistic sphere. This is bound to fuel the petty bourgeois individualism of many artists in bourgeois society, while at the same time holding back attempts to make real innovations and really break new ground in the realm of art.

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Again, what even a brief look at history provides is an understanding of the fact that the essential function of art as a social activity goes way beyond the momentary pursuit of diversions, way beyond mere recreation, or even the salutary “clearing of cobwebs” from one’s routine way of thinking which can spur thought and action in other spheres as well, although this is certainly part of the effect art can have in society (of which more later). *Plekhanov, “Selections from Letters Without Address,” reprinted in *Marxism and Art*, edited with historical and critical commentary by Maynard Solomon, Wayne State University Press 1979, p. 142. First published by Alfred Knopf, 1973. Plekhanov was a contemporary of Lenin’s and a “leading light” of Marxism in Russia, although he ended up in the camp of the reformist socialists (Mensheviks).

**It is interesting to note that, in critiquing the way in which the debate in the artistic sphere has

historically been cast in terms of “art for art’s sake vs. utilitarianism” in the international communist movement, it was suggested that “Plekhanov should have gone on to ask: if it is true that art for art’s sake is an impossibility, then why were these the appropriate terms for the debate, the cardinal question of the debate?” The answer is of course that while there is no such thing as art for art’s sake, the line which promotes this view is very real, and prevalent, and exerts a material force on society. The problem was not that this was deemed a cardinal question, but that too often this view was combated with a narrow, economist, productive forces type of mechanical materialism--“utilitarianism” in the most narrow sense. But as suggested above, the “art is entertainment” approach doesn’t represent a correct alternative to mechanical materialism



Fashion designer talks role of art history in collection

<http://www.dailyorange.com/fashion-designer-talks-role-of-art-history-in-collection-1.1262266>

By Rebecca Saxon

Mary McFadden, an acclaimed fashion designer, found inspiration for modern fashion in ancient cultures, she told a crowd at the Warehouse Auditorium on Tuesday afternoon.

“My designs remain faithful to the classical,” said McFadden, who’s been lauded as an “archeological designer” for blurring the lines between fashion and history.

Her lecture, “Goddesses: Symbol of the Ancient World and the Mystery of the Creative Mind,” included a slideshow of her personal photographs taken all over the world juxtaposed with her modern reinterpretations. The presentation was followed by a Q-and-A session.

Throughout the slideshow, McFadden took audience members on a visual journey through Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Zimbabwe, Renaissance Europe, China and more historic cultures.

“I photograph peoples of the land, their feel for color and cloth,” she said. It’s these nuances in style that she has discovered all over the world that “removes man from the primordial.”

The lecture functioned as a history lesson and a lesson in McFadden’s artistic taste. She showed photos of horizontal bands elongating the body in Egyptian pharaohs’ tombs juxtaposed with her own contemporary interpretation, a draped white dress with elaborate ornamentation and banding.

McFadden went on to show how the fascination with the moon, the sun, the water and the land in ancient civilizations come into play in her collections. These abstract organic motifs present themselves in many of her evening coats and tunics. Another motif she examined was the pyramid, which exhibits itself in both her jewelry and clothing lines.

McFadden illustrated the inspirations for her different wedding gowns, which have a range of African, Roman and Celtic influences. She showed how nuances present in these ancient cultures manifest themselves in her silhouettes, fabrics and drapery.

McFadden was a self-taught fashion designer, and she said her study of anthropology enabled her to create her designs.

She majored in anthropology in college because the professor fell in love with her, she said.

“Current fashion design students have a much better chance than I had,” McFadden said. “You

have teachers. That’s a running head start.”

At the end of her slideshow and lecture, McFadden opened the floor for questions, though some thought she gave mostly half or unfinished answers. Sara Armet, a senior fashion design student, said she wished she could have heard the full answers to her classmates’ questions.

McFadden’s quirky personality came out after someone in the audience asked her to describe herself. She revealed she’d been married 11 times and was once a “play girl.”

“I tried cabaret. It wasn’t good enough,” she said.

Another audience member brought up fashionista Lady Gaga, who McFadden said she admires for straying away from casual fashion. Lady Gaga is one of the reasons why the “tables are turning from people dressing in prison costumes,” McFadden said.

Some students who attended the lecture said they were disappointed that McFadden did not show more of her eccentric personality.

“It was definitely unlike any lecture I’ve been to in college,” said Armet, the senior fashion design student. “Here she is, presenting artifacts on slides and reading a report. It was right out of the 1950s. It was an outdated way of presenting it.”

But Armet said she was able to see the beneficial aspects of the lecture as well.

“She blurred the lines between fashion and artifact,” Armet said. “People are so stuck on being innovative these days, but she brings new life to fashion without having to be over the top. She pulled so directly from history. She recreated it.”

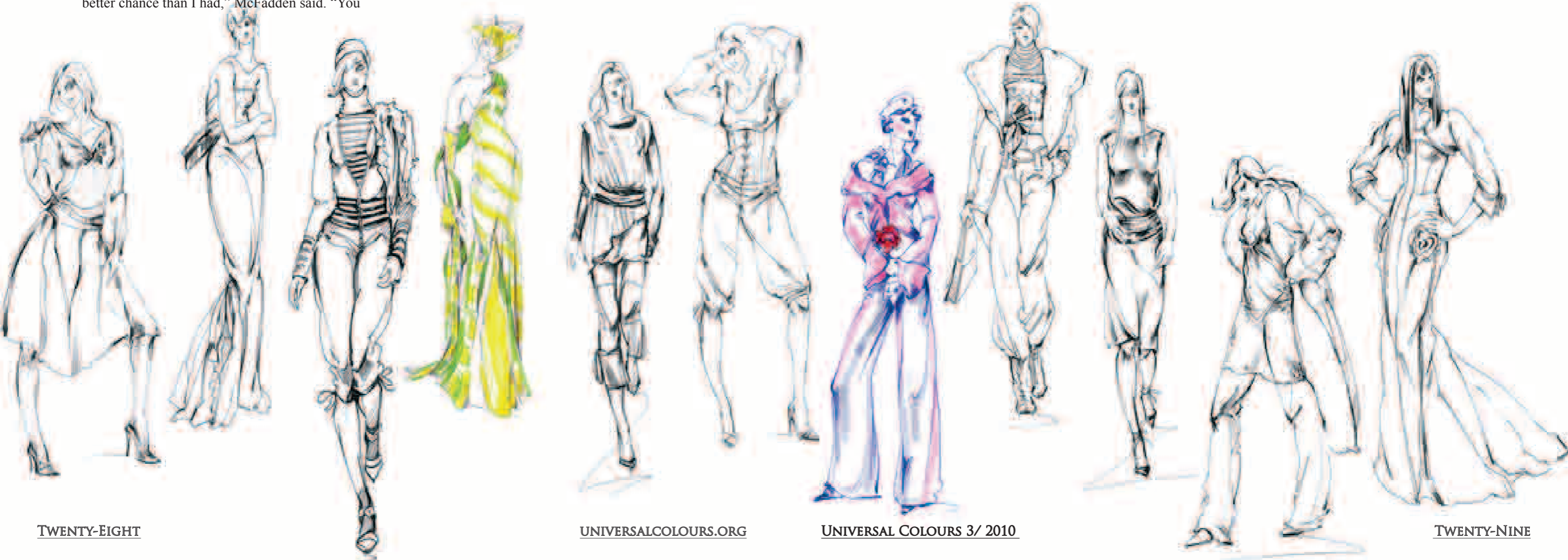
Laura Vientos, a senior fashion design major, said the lecture gave her a good idea of how McFadden would receive students’ work in the personal critiques that followed the lecture.

Vientos said she is also inspired by historical periods.

Both Vientos and Armet said they would have liked to get a little more personal background and details on McFadden’s process of getting into the industry and who she worked alongside to do so. Armet and Vientos said they thought the inclusion of these things would have benefited the seniors getting ready to try to break into the fashion world themselves.

Regardless, Armet said she enjoyed the presentation.

“I felt so privileged to be in the room with her,” she said. “You could feel the celebrity presence in the room.”





The Role of Art in Decolonization and Healing from History

By Deb Chansonneuve

On April 13th 2010 a dozen of Canada's most accomplished Anishnabe artists, curators, art lovers and their friends gathered in Paris to celebrate the opening of Paris/Ojibwa at the Canadian Cultural Centre. This event of major cultural and historical significance was conceived by visionary artist, writer and curator Robert Houle.

The Paris/Ojibwa exhibit is an imposing suite of four simulated classic French wall panels against a floor of simulated marble. Each panel depicts a painted figure: a shaman, a warrior, a dancer and a healer. Facing toward the horizon of home, their Indigenous roots connect to the landscape in each painting. Beneath each panel is a depiction of the smallpox which took many of their lives, derived from paintings on an 18th century buffalo robe now in the collection of the Branly Museum in Paris. Even so, the figures in the painting remain standing, symbolic of a deeply-rooted resistance, resilience and will to survive. Across the top of the panels, the names of the 1845 Ojibwa are painted in gold. Adjacent to this structure is a video installation by French artist and animator Hervé Dagois, commissioned by Houle as a visual celebration of the healing and optimism of the contemporary Jingle Dance.

The vision of Houle and his fellow collaborators on the Paris/Ojibwa installation was to create art as medicine in the telling of a new history. By 're-imagining' the feelings and experiences of a group

of Ojibwa brought to Paris in 1845 as 'exotically garbed' entertainment, Houle has not only bridged present to past/past to present; he has deconstructed history in order to bring integrity, honour and healing from what he terms, "the ravenous gaze of pending disappearance." As ceremonial lead-in to the formal opening of the exhibit and in homage to the Ojibwa of 1845, artist, curator and dancer Barry Ace performed a series of pow wow dances beginning at the Louvre, winding through the Tuileries Gardens, on to Cleopatra's Needle, and down the Champs-Élysées with his final dance in front of the installation. Like the Ojibwa of 1845 he too endured the pain of dancing on concrete, cobble stone, pebbles and marble in moccasins designed for contact only with the earth.

It's difficult to describe the myriad feelings of being part of such an unprecedented and almost surreal event except to say the whole experience was itself a sacred ceremony. Our journeys to Paris were monitored by Project Manager Paul Gardner through emails so that, even though traveling separately we felt a strong sense of collective

purpose and anticipation. Although the weather report for the 13th called for rain it held off and the moody skies provided a dramatic backdrop to the vibrant colour of Barry's regalia and the grace of his movements. Following him on his quest and bearing witness to each dance of homage I noted the reactions of people on the streets and in cars and buses passing by, just as must have happened in 1845. Houle's Paris/Ojibwa installation itself inspires the same sense of wonder, awe and delight as must have been felt by Parisians in the presence of the Ojibwa and the Ojibwa in the presence of Paris.

One hundred and sixty-five years later Houle has shown us the power and magic of art to forge a healing connectivity across constraints of time, space and the socially constructed colonialist divisions that have wounded humanity. His courage and the scope of his vision are evidence that healing happens on many fronts; the circle is stronger than ever.

The Role of the artists in the history

What is the role of the artist – the intellectual artist – in modern society? If the role of the artist is obviously and intrinsically tied to the role of art, then what is the role of art? In modern society? Or in any society?

Art reflects reality at the very least. Art is humanity's attempts to recreate reality, to create reflections of reality – and imagination & creativity are part of reality – thus also reflections of imagination; but then what is 'good' art? How is it separate & distinct from ordinary or 'bad' art?

The role of the artist then is connected to the role of art, in whatever medium – oil on canvas, watercolor, charcoal, pencil, colored pens, other canvas work, photography, computer art, sculpture, performance art, theater, movies, TV, poetry, novels, literature, music, dance, cave paintings,

The artist creates the art – but not out of thin air – but within a societal context, supported and buffeted by the conditions of the time – the resources, the technology, the intelligence, the knowledge, the economic, political, social, cultural and religious / philosophical conditions of the moment of the creation of the art.

What is art? Is everything the

artist creates art? Is there bad art and good art?

Why does art reflect reality? Is that all it does?

Art projects back to humanity knowledge and awareness of the reality – which in turn allows humanity to understand reality better – better than what? Better than it did before the art. The essence of good art then is that it does this in a qualitative different and higher level than bad art.

Within the context of the conditions of society at the moment of the creation of the art, the artist as a human then through the creation of his or her or their art creates something that if it is 'good' art is able to reflect the reality of the artist and the community and project back to that community communication about reality that allows the community to better understand that reality.

If the reality is not a good reality, then the art – the good art – is able to communicate more to the majority of the community than simply an awareness of the reality; it can project ways and

avenues to change that reality. Or at least project back to the community of humanity that reality needs to be changed for the good of the community.

What is reality? Is this beyond the question before us? If art reflects reality and can be used to change that reality then we must know what reality is? Art reflects the human conditions of the time – if those conditions or part of them are inhumane, then art can be instrumental in changing those conditions for the better.

Human conditions include the material objective context that humanity finds itself living in, the environmental conditions, the economic, political, social, cultural conditions of the moment, what humanity knows, the knowledge of the time. Of course, humanity does not live in a moment alone; conditions are constantly changing. But there are sufficient time-place equilibriums to be able to say there are historical moments.

The Role of the Artist

The artist then creates the art – in whatever medium – at a

historical moment; the art not only reflects that historical moment, it is a reflection of that reality, that historical moment. Through the creation and presentation and then absorption by others within the community of the art, the artist is able to reflect the historical moment and project into the community an awareness of the moment, an awareness of the humane or inhumane conditions of that moment, and an awareness that the inhumane conditions need to be changed for the better.

What about the artist who does not do this, who does not understand this, or does not try to do this – say, the artist who creates commercial renditions of an original purely for financial reasons? Is this an artist? Does one have to create original works of art to be an artist? Is this person not an artist or at least a bad artist who creates bad art?

The role of the good artist, then, is that of one who creates or helps to create good art, that reflects reality, projects an awareness of the inhumane conditions of that reality, and ways to change those conditions.

Is the Mona Lisa good art?

Now we have to qualify and quantify. How does the Mona Lisa project an awareness of “the inhumane conditions of reality and ways to change those conditions”? How can we say the Mona Lisa is not good art? In fact, isn't it great art that has stood the test of history?

The Mona Lisa is excellent art because it has stood the test of time, that it projects the awareness of the history of humanity, how an ambiguous smile is able to remain so over hundreds of years, projecting back to us an awareness of the history of humanity, that a smile was a smile five hundred years ago. Not all good or great art has to project back to us how to create barricades and topple governments.

If art to be great, only has to remind us of our humanity and our history, then wouldn't a lot of artifacts and daily instruments of former times amount to that ?

The more the art projects back to humanity its conditions, the more humanity is able to understand its conditions. And if they need to be changed for the good of humanity, then good art can instruct.

The role of the artist then when confronted with inhumane conditions of humanity is to create art that is instructive to humanity so the members of the community can change those conditions. One way to achieve that is to reflect an awareness and understanding of our own humanity, to remind us of our beauty, our fragility, our limitations, our temporal experience, our strengths, our fears, dreams. The Mona Lisa does this – despite a label of solely being a portrait of a ruling class woman – because it does these other things – reminding us hundreds of years of the ambiguity of life.

Why is a movie like “JFK” by Oliver Stone good art?

It reflects a reality back to us – the assassination of a well-liked president – and an awareness of the forces that conspired to pull it off without repercussion. No one ever went to prison for the assassination. Oswald was dead. End of story. Those responsible for the assassination got away with it. The movie delves into the controversy and helps to educate the American people as to who killed their president.

The role of the artist is to create art that helps us to understand our humanity and the historical conditions we live in, and to help us understand that we need to change those conditions and helps us understand even how to change those conditions.

But what about all the different kinds and types of art? How can a simple sculpture, for example, help us to understand that we need to change our conditions?

One object of art need not do all of those things. If a sculpture helps us have a deeper understanding of our own humanity, and/ or of our history, then it is good art.

The role of art is to remind us to reflect on our reality and history, and even to draw conclusions on whether our reality needs to be changed.

.....



The Cow is Sacred – Full stop

By Avtarjeet Dhanjal

The cow is sacred. If you are an ardent Hindu, you worship her; even use its picture as your political symbol. If you are an artist, paint her, everyone shall clap for you, hail you as a successful artist. This is how it is done in India.

IN THE VILLAGE, MY FATHER USED TO TELL A STORY of two friends, a Goldsmith and a Trader. In this story these two men lived in villages about twenty or so miles apart. The way story went: Goldsmith often visited the Trader; one day Goldsmith invited the Trader for a return visit.

On Trader's first visit, Goldsmith's wife prepared a special meal and served it on a large shiny plate made of solid gold. The Trader enjoyed the meal but liked the plate even more. A fleeting thought went through his mind, if he could steal it. The Goldsmith saw the greed in his friend's eyes, and understood his desire.

When Trader had retired to his room, the Goldsmith devised an ingenious way to protect his plate from his guest. He hung a basket over his bed from the ceiling, placed the golden plate in the basket and carefully filled it with water. He knew any one tried to take the plate would spill the water, which would surely wake him up, and he went to sleep.

The Trader waited until he was sure his host was asleep; he tiptoed into his bedroom, surveyed the clever device to protect the golden plate. After a little brainstorming, he found a wheat straw, carefully sipped all the water from the plate, while the host slept, then he removed the plate and packed it carefully into his personal bag and went to sleep.

Early morning, the Goldsmith woke up to find the basket over his bed empty; he immediately knew who could have taken the plate. Now it was his turn to tiptoe to his guest's room, who was sleeping like a log by now. He surveyed the changes; noticed Trader's bag was more inflated than it came in. He carefully removed the plate, replaced it with a steal plate and secured the gold plate in his kitchen.

Next morning, Trader looked at his bag, felt happy at his achievement; and wanted to leave for home as soon as possible. The host checked the gold plate was still in the kitchen and wanted to teach his friend a lesson. Goldsmith insisted that his guest must stay for breakfast; the host's wish prevailed. The host made sure that his wife served the breakfast in the same gold plate to the guest.

Trader was absolutely surprised and could not believe his eyes, asked his friend, how many gold plates he had in the house? The Goldsmith calmly replied, "My friend, I have only one gold plate in this house." They both looked at each other and smiled a knowing smile. The Goldsmith said

to his guest, "My friend, we know each other well over a decade; let's not play this game with each other." Both agreed to travel the world and try their skills on others.

This was the start of a long story, during their journey many times they become rich and then again tried to cheat each other, as a result they lose everything. At the end of the story, the Trader asked again, how many gold plates his friend had at home. The answer was only ONE.

Three boys, Gopal, Harjit and Gogi, were studying in a village school; Gopal, only son of a priest had big dreams. He wanted to make a lot of money without knowing how and he did not care either. Harjit, a quiet one, son of a simple farmer, also had dreams but kept them to himself. Gogi was the only son of poor widow, who worked hard helping a big landlord's family; and she earned enough to raise her only son.

Gopal, grew up into a trouble maker, had to leave the village suddenly, when one day the police arrived to arrest him as he had tried to rape his neighbour's daughter; and never heard again in the village for decades.

Harjit, also wanted to pursue his dreams and left village became a student of a portrait painter in the

hills, and ended up going to an art school in Delhi. Harjit saw a stage was set for him to fulfil his dreams of becoming an artist.

He started to daydream how one day he would become an internationally known artist. But in his dream image he did not like his name Harjit, which reminded him of his village background, decided to change his name to 'Gautam', more suitable for an artist in the capital.

Poor Gogi had to stay in the village to help his mother. After several years working as a helper to a farmer, he managed to buy a cow. The cow happened to be of a good breed and daily gave him enough milk for his family consumption and to sell a part to earn enough money for simple living. His life was a smooth progression of getting married having children and buying couple of more cows

Cows brought good luck to Gogi's life, provided him and his family everything they needed for a simple life in the village.

Gopal, whose name means protector of cows, became a Trader. Gopal's priest father who worshiped the cows chose this name for his son. Times changed so quickly that now his son exported cows to Bangladesh to be killed as long he made money.

Gopal, after he had made good money came to Delhi where set up a property company and made lots of money. His son, who had joined him, set up a new Property Company. While his son worked in the Company's Mumbai office, he met a film actress who played the role of goddesses in several Hindi movies and married her. Gopal took his son's marriage to this demi-goddess as his personal success and made sure all her wishes were fulfilled including building a new mansion for her in Mumbai.

Harjit re-branded himself as Gautam had established as a successful painter in the capital. Cow was his choice subject in his paintings, those sold like hot cakes.

His full size painting of golden cow was sold for Rs.50 lacs (approx \$100K), enough money to buy 200 best breed cows. But in this climate when only money counted, who wants to buy 200 living cows, it would need a lot of infrastructure to look after them and before one would see the money from their milk sales.

Delhi that had become part of the global market, Rs.50 lacs invested in one sculpture had the potential to doubling it in few years, without feeding the cow in this painting.

Who would have bought such a painting in India, of course a spoiled actress from Mumbai? The sale was celebrated in a five-star hotel, Gautam met the young husband of the demi-goddess, who introduced Gautam to an opportunity for him to invest in his new Property Company.

People in the city's art circles talk about the success of Gautam's recent exhibition. An art critic had written how Gautam's work had created awareness toward the plight of cows in the city. One review even mentioned Gautam was creating cow awareness as effective as the dissected cow of Damian Hurst. But the stray cows on the streets of Delhi were still feeding on plastic bags. Who cares in this global city? Cows are sacred.

Last year came the global financial crisis, the property company in which Gautam had invested all his money collapsed; leaving scores of other investors in the cold as stray cows of the city.

Gogi was sitting in his courtyard, enjoying the afternoon cup of tea, thanking his cows, those provided him his livelihood without leaving the village. One day while he was thinking about his two other childhood friends, both his friends Harjit and Gopal arrived one after the other.

Both of them were looking at each other trying to recognise each other's faces those were covered with layers of thick skin, a gift of city life.

Both had a look of someone when one who had lost the game of life. There was no need to say anything they both just laughed a hearty laugh.

Gogi was the only one knew how many brass plates he had in his house; other two had seen their gold plates disintegrate right in front of their eyes. My friends - cows are sacred and will remain sacred while noisy traffic of the city goes by them. ●

Sometimes I find
a place to sleep

But I never dream



UNIVERSAL COLOURS

Funding ...again

In the last two issues in the feedback section you keep repeating the problem with the funding and I have the sense that you are asking money from the state, what about private donations? No I don't like a magazine full of adverts but still some adverts can bring money.

Except that there are always other ways, such as subscriptions, perhaps a subscription campaign would help. Apart from that, promoting the work of immigrant artists is something missing from similar magazines around Europe and I sincerely wish you every success.

Mohammed K.
Holland

Distribution

I wonder how many people can see your magazine and all the effort behind it. I saw the magazine for the first time in a friend's place and I was hooked from the first page.

I tried to find the next issue but I had to return to my friend for his copy since the places I checked didn't have it. Could you publish the distribution places?

Roger Stern
Stockholm

Cinema

Congratulations on a magazine that has definitely improved radically over the last few months in quality and ...weight! I know that it might sound a bit stupid but ...it is a pretty heavy magazine. Otherwise I really enjoyed the special about Digital Art and I suppose in the future you will do more special themes like that.

And one suggestion: are you going to include cinema in your themes? I suppose cinema and video are included among the performing arts.

Thank you again, best wishes for the magazine

Sincerely yours

Ali M.
Warsaw

Social Issues

Congratulations for your last issue and the special on Digital Art, I enjoyed all the articles and I would like to see more society articles involved. As one of your writers writes in one of his articles, "Society inspires art." I think that should motivate you to add more social articles in your content.

B. J.
Austria

SOME ANSWERS

Dear friends, thank you once more for taking the time to write and send us your mails and letters. We do appreciate them and we always read them carefully taking seriously your suggestions. We thank you for your prayers, they encourage and motivate us. So let's start with some answers. Mohammed, funding is a very serious issue not only for our magazine and for the entire artistic world and sadly we live in really difficult times; you just need to have a look at Greece to get the idea. We try our best and with a lot of volunteer work we hope we can manage something positive. Subscriptions are an answer but unfortunately not the solution but we are working that way.

Distribution is something we still work with, at the moment we have more distributing places in UK and, yes, in the future we will try to put some more information about the distributing places around Europe. I think this issue is the best example on how aware we are on social issues and how much they influence our work, having an issue about art and politics is having a totally social issue. Ali, "cinema" and especially video have been part of our presentations, for example in the last issue the work of Bilal included a lot of videos. But this is a good idea, a special only for cinema and we will consider it for the future.

Please remember that we need to add more art news from all Europe and this is something you can help us and become our correspondents in the places you live by informing us for local migrant artistic events.

Please don't stop sending us your comments we need them now more than ever.

Thank you

Thanos Kalamidas
Helsinki

Do you have feedback for us? We welcome all of your opinions, thoughts, criticism, praise and suggestions. Send them to:

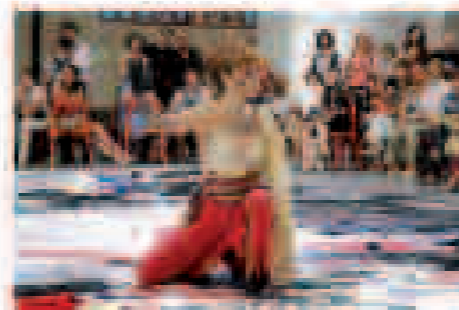
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VIII INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL ART

THE CENTRAL EXHIBITION HALL OF SAINT-PETERSBURG "MANEGE"

19-25 AUGUST 2010

19-25 AUGUST 2010



PERFORMANCE • INSTALLATION
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INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF EXPERIMENTAL ART in The Central Exhibition Hall of Saint-Petersburg "Manege" is a unique form of Contemporary Art. There had been performing large international projects with numerous participants from 1994 until today. Hundreds artists from more than 35 countries have taken part in this Festival. We invite all kinds of Artists and Art groups: young and old, well known and aspiring to come and show the different genres and tendencies.

CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

Participation free
"MANEGE" provides:
1. Catalogue (one page for artist)
2. Exhibition space
3. The best works will be awarded with Diploma of the Festival
4. PR and press promotion
5. Exhibition security services
Materials needed for the catalogue:
- CV & short description of the project
- Photographs of the project
By e-mail: JPG images (300 dpi)

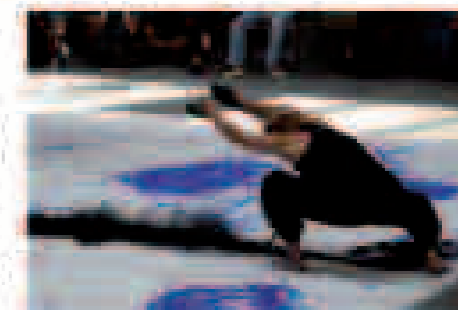
Deadline for submissions of catalogue materials - 25.05.2010
- Transportation and storage of art works (including the insurance and customs formalities) are to be taken care of by the artist.
The works should be delivered at "Manege" up to August 1.
Works must be picked up August 17

THE CENTRAL EXHIBITION HALL OF SAINT-PETERSBURG "MANEGE"

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Address: "MANEGE" / Spalovskaya sq. / 1, St-Petersburg, 190000, Russia

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