

***The Platform***  
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**Editorial: Post-9-1-1**

From our New York office a few blocks north of the World Trade Center, the world looks more dour and unpredictable place than it did two months ago. Professional concerns seem rather flat when sandwiched between suddenly more pressing personal concerns and the geopolitical preoccupations. The arts community has, unsurprisingly, been much preoccupied with linking the personal, the professional and the geopolitical.

There has therefore been extensive commentary on the cultural causes of September 11 on its aftermath, on the impact on artists, on art, on audiences, on the organizations that sustain art and artists and on culture from the narrowest to the broadest interpretations of that baggy word. Some of it has inevitably been sententious – the prize here goes not to Karlheinz Stockhausen's thoughtless speculations on the aesthetics of the event itself but Dario Fo's comments immediately after the terrorist attack, for which it is impossible to imagine an appropriate context for them to be taken out of: "Speculators revel in an economy that every year kills tens of millions of people by reducing them to poverty...faced with that, what are 20,000 deaths in New York."

Much that has been written, however, is quite extraordinary, as if somehow, at some level many insightful people were subliminally already braced for a traumatic context in which to re-examine what matters and why – a sort of paradigm shift the many predicted the Millennium would precipitate but that in the event failed to materialize. Or perhaps it's 'incentivized hindsight', as people paid to have opinions publicly reposition themselves part of the next chapter of world history. Or, again, maybe every editor in the West has been scouring their databases for Minervas and Cassandras who have been waiting reading the wings for doofter times.

Whatever the reasons, practically every nook and cranny of cultural life has been revisited from the place of cultural organizations in sustaining civic values otherwise ground to a fine powder between the tectonic plates of fundamentalism and global capitalism (Benjamin Barber's dusted down *Jihad versus McWorld*); through to the shriveling impact upon the *soi-disant* 'luxuries' of post-modern moral relativism (Stanley Fish); to the me-

humdrum implications of the instantaneous cuts in contributed and earned income of art organizations (everyone who works in the arts).

So the territory is well covered, at least in first draft form. Unfortunately, as there does seem to be much good news on the horizon, there is plenty of time for these issues to be worked through and the implications refined. So we thought we'd take a break from the immediacies and focus on some of the longer-term stuff—culture on the world stage....

*Adrian Ellis*

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## **A case study in cultural diplomacy**

### **The *France Moves* Dance Festival New York, April 23 – May 6, 2001**

*France Moves* was a festival of French contemporary dance presented in New York from April 23 to May 6, 2001. It brought ten French choreographers and their companies – some of them already famous in the United States, such as Maguy Marin or Fred Bendongué, together with others presented here for the first time, including Philippe Decouflé and J Nadj. Six different theaters collaborated to present the French companies, including some of the best-established dance venues in New York: the Joyce Theater, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, The New Victory Theater and The Kitchen.

In addition to more than 40 dance performances, there were a number of other related events: films, video installations, photography exhibits and panel discussions, hosted by organizations like the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, PS1, the Guggenheim Museum and New York University.

The festival was a major event for the dance world, with a FF 13 to 14 million budget (11.7 million). About one third of the funding was provided by public subsidies, coming from the Ministry of Culture and from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs through the AFAA (*Association Française d'Action Artistique*), from the cultural services division of the French Embassy in New York, from regional and local government and from ADAMI, *Société Civile pour l'Administration des Droits des Artistes et Musiciens Interprètes*. Second tier funding came from private sponsors, firms and foundations, both French and American. A third tier came from tickets sales – the box office did well. The split among the three sources was about equal.

French Minister of Culture Catherine Tasca and a number of diplomatic and administrative officials came to New York for the occasion. The object was to present a specific generation of French choreographers – in a sense returning America's courtesy of bringing contemporary dance and artistic innovation to France in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Various events have nourished this dialogue between France and America in the past, including a series of French performances at the American Dance Festival in 1983 and a mini dance festival in Washington D.C. in 1993. French companies regularly tour in the States, but *France Moves* was an historic first in terms of scope, professional focus, budget and character.

The idea for the festival was conceived several years ago as an initiative of the AFAA, which then co-opted the Ministry of Culture. An Artistic Director was appointed and an *ad hoc* team formed, including production director, press and public relations officers, marketing coordinator, graphic and web designers. The programming evolved out of dialogue among the various partners. The American presenters were invited to France to see the works that France wanted to show, and careful attention was paid to pairing artists with appropriate venues.

A particular image of contemporary France clearly emerged from the selection prepared by Artistic Director Yorgos Loukos – with a strong emphasis on diversity, multiculturalism and assimilation. Most of the French choreographers were second-generation immigrants from a wide variety of backgrounds. Loukos himself is of Greek descent. The accent placed upon the mixture of ethnic origins, cosmopolitanism, openness to the world and *métissage* and “*France plurielle*” – a successful example of the melting pot and multi-lingualism – was similar to that celebrated when France won the Football World Cup three years ago. A quote from Edouard Glissant was cited in a panel discussion on the work of Montalvo-Hervieu: “*un des buts de l’art est de nous habituer à l’idée que l’autre n’est pas l’ennemi*”

Discussion inevitably focused on comparisons between France and the United States. Choreographers compared key figures and mentors. Alwin Nikolais deeply influenced French dance world, and while Merce Cunningham is part of the official syllabus in the French dance conservatoires, the US has been more inescapably exposed to Martha Graham. Working methods are different, too: in the US, for example, the predominant mode is “work with what you have at your disposal” – usually very little – whereas an American choreographer remembers hearing French technicians say, “Tell us what you want and we’ll work on bringing it to you.”

French dance aesthetics in general reflect this greater affluence: performances are very visual, if not theatrical, they have a distinct design quality, more extensive use of props and generally more lush production values... not to mention a characteristically French commitment to ideas, flirting with concepts and social awareness.

The discussion also addressed the issue of the impact of different funding regimes. At both conferences, Artistic Director Yorgos Loukos provided a short summary on the historic antecedents of French contemporary dance, and it was interesting to see how dance can be related to political issues. French dance until the 1960s was overwhelmingly dominated by ballet and the Paris Opera, but a conjunction of elements revolutionized the dance landscape in the late 1960s and early 1970s. American contemporary dancers’ and

choreographers' evangelizing to the French dance world had an impact. Perhaps more significantly, with Algerian independence and the social upheavals of May 1968, France acknowledged it had irremediably lost its colonial Empire. The French government moved to support contemporary dance and other forms of contemporary culture and mobilized them in support of decentralization. French central and regional government, cities and regions now cooperate in funding dance and especially the *Centres chorégraphiques nationaux*.

The discussion thus grew into a general "praise-fest" of the French system. Above all, American artists participating in the panel discussions paid tribute to the fact that culture in France is a more essential part of society, which acknowledges the contribution of artists whereas culture has a more minor place in education in the US. French financial public support, it was suggested, is liberating for choreographers, who can devote more time and energy to creating rather than to getting by. More resources also bring the opportunity to experiment with highly sophisticated scenography. An example cited was that last year money spent on dance by the city council of Lyon was more than the entire dance budget of the NEA. This is not necessarily the best way to compare the two funding systems, given the tax-deductible support in the US that is channeled through foundations, corporations, and individuals. (Nor was there any discussion parallel to that currently running in the visual arts world on the soporific effect on standards of creativity of high levels of direct financial support in France.)

France, like the US, has traditionally believed in the importance of having an external policy in cultural matters. In the panel discussions assembling Yorgos Loukos and his team of choreographers, there was a strong sense of representation and their role as diplomatic emissaries.

In fact, *France Moves* may be viewed as a case study in French cultural policy. France is still very much concerned about its "rank" and *grandeur* on the international stage. It continues to promote the "*exception culturelle française*" and to seek political, intellectual and artistic influence. *France Moves* constitutes an avowed example of "*politique volontariste*" in support of contemporary dance on the part of the Ministry of Culture and in support of French culture more generally on the part of the Department of Foreign Affairs.

Characterized by its short length, high intensity and consequent high visibility, *France Moves* was very much a high profile marketing event, successfully presenting a coherent and positive image, promoting economic interests and creating the buzz that is sought by every event organizer. At a time when French cultural diplomacy is being questioned along with the coherence and rationality of its network, a smooth and uncontroversial event such as *France Moves* was no doubt a useful boost (cf the *Rapport d'information n° 2924 sur les centres culturels français à l'étranger* by the French National Assembly <http://www.assemblee-nationale.fr/rap-info/i2924.asp>).

From the point of view of the organizers, the evaluation of such an event is three-fold. Financially, it was considered “sound” and satisfactory: the budget was balanced, thanks to private funds and direct income (tickets sales) – no Adelaide-type crises. Critically, *France Moves* was also a hit. It received wide press coverage in both the US and France. *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* covered the event extensively, along with other main press titles and critics were generally positive. The public provided the same support: Bianca Li’s performance was extended, Boris Charmatz was sold out, Philippe Decouflé was discovered with enthusiasm and Prejlocaj sold very well.

The third way of evaluating such a festival is through the reaction of professionals, namely American presenters. In addition to the general public events, *France Moves* included a behind-the-scenes, ‘for professionals only’ component. For four days, a group of 40 major American presenters were invited to attend performances and meet the French participants. A one-day conference explored such themes as the French *milieu*, its administrative and financial structure, and perspectives on the future of dance. It is too early to evaluate the outcome of such an encounter, although some discussions are already taking place between participating French companies and presenters for the 2002 to 2004 seasons. Other French companies that were not included in the festival are also setting up contracts, and this, too, may be considered as happening in the wake of *France Moves*. Last but not least, the organizers are now considering rolling out *France Moves* festivals worldwide, starting with Japan.

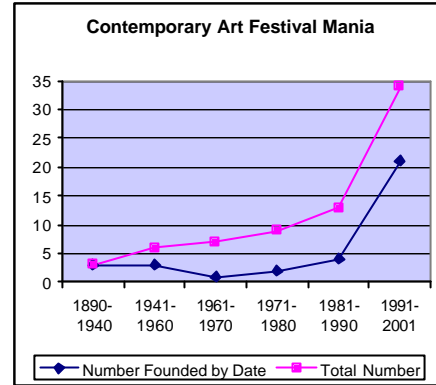
*France Moves* is an example of the increasing attention devoted by cultural organizers to festivals as an efficient way of bringing visibility and discernible results. It is the kind of event that is easily identifiable by audiences and journalists alike, creates a high-energy sense of happening, and satisfies both funders and organizers.

Contemporary dance in New York may not be the toughest of sells, but the event does seem to have reached or even surpassed its goals and underlined the efficiency of the festival as a well-honed tool for cultural diplomacy.

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### **Festival Mania – dramatic growth of a cultural typology**

One of the notable trends of recent decades is the remarkable increase in the number of contemporary art festivals around the globe that now compete for the so-called cultural tourist’s attention. With the help of like-minded contemporary art nuts, I recently constructed a list of festivals (biennales, triennials, etc.) specifically devoted to contemporary art and their founding dates. While the list no doubt remains incomplete, the general trend is clear. The last two decades have witnessed unprecedented growth in art festival activity.



In a recent article for *The Art Newspaper*, my colleague Adrian Ellis wrote of the probable unsustainability of the museum sectors' build out over the past two decades (<http://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/article.asp?idart=6557>). One wonders if many the recent entries on the global contemporary art circuit\* are similarly at risk given the vastly increased competition for the attention of the niche-specific destination tourist. Contract-curated contemporary art fests today risk repetition, faddishness, and, for better or worse, only a token relationship to their locale, so the answer is probably in the affirmative. The fate of short-lived Johannesburg (b. 1995, d. 1998) is a salutary lesson.

On the other hand, festivals offer a number of advantages as cultural forms in comparison to the high operating costs and systemic undercapitalization of the museums sector.

\* The chart above derives from the following.

Name	Date	Name	Date	Name	Date
Venice	1895	Istanbul	1987	Shanghai	199
Carnegie (International)	1896	Nagoya	1987	Montreal	199
Whitney	1932	Lyon	1991	Taipei	199
Antwerp (Middelheim)	1949	San Diego (InSite)	1992	Turin	199
Sao Paolo	1949	Brisbane (Asia Pacific)	1993	Berlin	199
Kassel (Documenta)	1954	Dakar	1994	Liverpool	199
Tokyo	1964	Johannesburg (RIP 1998)	1995	Melbourne	199
Sydney	1973	Kwangju	1995	Seoul	200
Munster (Skulptur Project)	1977	Santa Fe (SITE Santa Fe)	1995	Ghent	200
Cairo	1984	Manifesta	1996	Tirana [Albania]	200
Havanna	1984	Oslo	1996	Valencia	200
				Yokohama	200

Among other benefits, festivals:

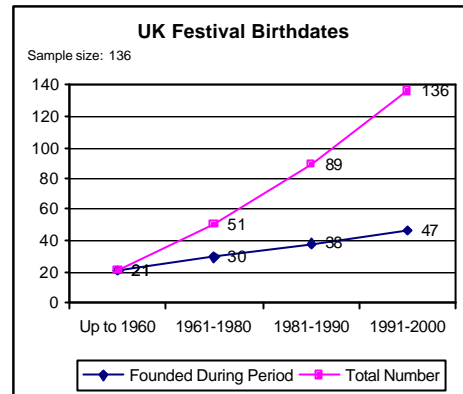
- generally have lower fixed costs because of their temporary nature (Venice is a bad example—it's heavy on buildings, dilapidated pavilions need work, and its five months of operation make it unusual);
- attract wider segments of the local and, possibly, the tourist audience (as they are often held in public spaces lacking the aura of exclusivity still attending to museums and other 'high' culture venues);
- provide a heightened impetus for event visitation within a compressed timeframe (similar in effect to temporary exhibitions in museums, for example, which can draw attention and resources away from languishing permanent collections);
- are highly visible and relatively cheap sponsorship opportunities for local businesses (or conglomerates seeking to extend their brand identity);
- are, once well-established, sites of pilgrimage for niche-specific destination tourists—nuts like me who will hop on a plane for a fix of their fetish objects, the more distant and romantic the locale the better.

The big beneficiary of these festival 'benefits' is clearly the hosting city. And that is undoubtedly why so many have recently attempted to put themselves on the map with some form of cultural offering that is sufficiently engaging and distinctive to provide identity both home (for the locals) and abroad (for the tourists).

Significantly, the trend in contemporary visual arts festivals is only one example of a similar expansion in every other cultural form. The aggregate level of festival activity globally has never been higher, and its impetus is the same that has fuelled both the museum and the festival build out over the past decades: the "Me, too! Me, too!" of destination tourism and the attraction of inward investment (i.e. the instrumental use of the arts).

The British Arts Festivals Association recently released a report entitled *Festivals Mean Business: The shape of Arts Festivals in the UK*, the name of which says it all. It's a study with lots of interesting statistical information, surprisingly robust given the range of typology and data collection methods of the target groups—festival planners and practitioners do not generally place a high priority on filling out surveys and researching historical trends in earned and unearned income ratios.

Most significant here is simply the quantum of UK-based arts festivals that were considered. Excluded from the study were "competitive festivals" – of which there are now more than 100 in the UK – as well as all of the one-off seasonal offerings promoted by venues as "festivals" (LIFT was included where, for example, a festival season at the Barbican was not). The researchers still had more than 300 independent festivals to blanket with their questionnaires.



Most festivals are not global attractions like the Venice Biennale (cf. the following article in this issue of *The Platform*), and many of the festivals established in the UK since 1980 are local in character. Where the local audience is the primary target for festival activity and gate receipts, the festival's market share is likely to be more secure, the longevity of the festival more sustainable. Where a festival's primary goal is the attraction of international cultural tourism, however, this global village is increasingly crowded with 'Me too!' cultural offerings, which suggests that the risks attendant to start up and lesser established festivals today are exponentially higher than they were two decades ago.

Many festivals, however, both established and new, would wish to strike an all-pleasing all-appealing balance between the two – the local and the international. It is a difficult balance indeed. Err toward the international and the risks are alienation of the local population and considerable deficits over an extended period while the brand is established. Err on the side of the local and the event will not attract the attention – and the tourist dollars – generated by established, much-envied competitors. In focusing on the local, however, the downside risk of over-investment is limited. The authenticity of site-specificity – uniqueness of place and of indigenous cultural forms – may also prove increasingly attractive as more and more similar festivals fill up the global calendar of cultural events.

The Venices, Spoletos, Avignons, and Edinburghs of the world are secure. But should festival build-out of the past two decades continue, we will likely see more losers along the way. If the same festival fare is everywhere and always on view, many of us may stay home for the culture and instead take our summer holidays on the beach just to get away from it all.

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## Reflections on the Venice Biennale

The Venice Biennale is the flagship of contemporary art festivals – the non-commercial equivalent of the Basel Art Fair, which was held conveniently this year just as the opening week party favors ran out in Venice. These two prime events in the art world calendar have a lot in common, however. There is a pronounced commercial bent to the festivities: curators, collectors, dealers, and other contemporary art types who turn up for the Biennale press openings in early June.

In fact, a round-table conference hosted during opening week by the London-based Wimbledon School of Art, Audio Arts Magazine, and the Venice-based Nuova Icona Gallery asked the questions: “Is it the case that the Biennale has become little more than an international Art Trade Fair for contemporary art?” And further, “What constitutes the continuing validity of national representations at the Biennale?” (Tapes and transcripts of the proceedings are available through Audio Arts, <http://www.audio-arts.co.uk/>.)

These are pertinent questions in our ‘global village,’ where cities as well as countries vie for high-income destination tourists, and the preservation and promotion of unique cultural heritage competes with the standardization of visitor services, access, and (too frequent) cultural product itself (Venice being exemplary in each case). And there are a number of reasons why the anachronistic but much revered national paradigm upon which the Venice Biennale is based is under strain. Here are five.

1. *There are too many countries clamoring for equality of representation in an already sprawling signature event and too little space left to give them.*

The palazzo rental is the standard means of allotting new space, given that Korea’s pavilion was, in 1995, the last to be built in the traditional, now-crowded Giardini. Where “new” countries’ legitimate demands for space exceed a limited supply, the model will be increasingly subject to impolitic practical constraints.

Mark Wallinger’s *Façade*, a full-scale photographic reproduction of the façade of the British Pavilion, mounted on the pavilion’s actual façade was a brilliant, though frequently-overlooked, acknowledgement of the conflicted relationship between symbolic physical space and the more transitory art housed within. Adding further irony, his signature Union Jack in Irish tricolor flew in front of the pavilion. (Ireland had its own space this year, but getting to it was a hike....)

2. *The ‘city state’ has emerged as a player.*

Hong Kong shares the mantel with China in its space behind St. Mark’s, and Taiwan’s nearby contribution is co-branded with the Taipei Fine Arts Museum. The house mixed-results group shows – an attempt to supersede the compressed square

footage aesthetically. But it is not just Far East politics that's responsible for the 'state' phenomenon. Even Manchester joined the match this year with a tongue-in-cheek foothold in a pub just down the canal from the palazzo plot allotted the Portugese. And at other locales, a peripatetic Liverpool rep was on hand to distribute a glossy promo mag about this city's Biennale of 2002, hoping to attract the destination tourists and cultural opinion formers that will help to secure Liverpool position on the global festival circuit. The Brits were more enterprising than most Venice this year, but others will almost certainly follow suit and hawk their own wares in years to come.

3. *Because of the speed of communication, the easy mobility of art and artists, and the network of relationships that fuel the sector, an examination of contemporary art along national lines is anachronistic.*

The production, distribution and consumption of contemporary art – and the dominant critical discourses attending it – are international in scope. While *cultural specificity* remains central to the work of many artists, *national identity* itself is increasingly footnote. Luc Tuymans' subdued paintings reflecting upon Belgium's colonial history and the independence of Congo are the exception. (Incidentally, these Gerhard Richter-inspired works provide evidence that the once-dominant genre of history painting can still pack a considerable punch—although the Cy Twombly confections included in Harald Szeemann's curated show suggested the opposite, despite Twombly's *Lion d'or* prize.) But explicit engagement with national themes as rare as painting itself in the Biennale these days.

Where primarily regional forms are celebrated in the national pavilions – the case of Egypt or Venezuela, for example – there is clearly greater merit in the national model and its invitation to diversity. The Catch-22 is that 'regional' isn't 'international,' and, for better or worse, there is risk of being marginalized as critically irrelevant in this comparative context.

4. *Artists representing established nations at the biennale are generally shown widely elsewhere, and the globe-trotting curatorial crew that orchestrates such spectacle will probably be bringing similar fare soon to a kunsthalle near you.*

Clearly, nations with less depth in the production and promotion of contemporary art have the opportunity to benefit from the visibility. And – if you could find them – there were less established countries with memorable, competitive showings. The Republic of Latvia topped my list with a series of poignant videos in the Chiesa di San Lio. Laila Pakalnina's contribution, *Papagena*, showed a variety of residents in the Latvian capital Riga listening to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* duet on clunky headphones, the *coloratura* of the music contrasting vividly with the restrained black and white cinematography. Another video was a lush, documentary-inspired scene of a burial and manual gravediggers at work, paced at the tempo of a dirge.

Works like these – locally inflected, historically resonant, deeply affecting, and largely unknown – are what one hopes to discover in such international exhibition

Such works are increasingly few and far between in this context where the well-marketed and widely distributed within the global contemporary art circuit reign. Equality of national representation hardly guarantees visibility, and sending the already internationally recognized is the predominant curatorial model. While hundreds waited in each of a variety of Giardini queues, less than a dozen viewers watched the Pakalnia in the commodious chiesa.

5. *The International Exhibition – rather than the national pavilion – is now viewed the real stuff of which the Biennale is made.*

Although critics were generally right this year in hailing the dynamism of many pavilions in comparison to Szeemann’s amorphous ‘Plateau of Humanity,’ the dominance of the International Exhibition recalls another question raised at the Wimbledon School round-table: “Should the over-all curatorial theme or vision of Biennale extend in future to the national pavilions?”

If one judges by the two serendipitous successes of this year, there is some evidence to support the idea, which might result in a manicured cohesion. Korea’s representative Do-Ho Suh constructed a room-sized glass floor supported by thousands of tiny plastic human figures and flanked by wallpaper of a related individual/collectivist theme—stunningly gorgeous and an amusing, literal embodiment of Szeemann’s ‘plateau.’ Suh’s Korean pavilion work was equally strong and of similar aesthetic logic and refinement. What Brazilian representative Ernesto Neto’s installations have to do with Szeemann’s theme, I’ve no idea, but I fragile web of drooping olfactory stimuli, expanded to fill a room of its own, was highlight at the Arsenale—particularly as it preceded the familiar heavy load of Beuys’ *Olive Stones*. (Szeemann must surely be tiring from his Sisyphean effort of hauling this work from one biennale to the next.)

Despite these successes, the curatorial union of the Arsenale and the pavilions as are programmed today does not seem practicable. Imagine curating 29 Giardini Pavilions (representing 32 countries) and 21 national spaces located elsewhere (in which some 34 countries currently appear, 14 in the space of the Latin American Institute)—in addition to the current Arsenale sprawl (150 artists this year). Further imagine requiring artists from more than sixty countries to make work in relation theme as vague as Szeemann’s—or any other chosen for them. Hubristic impresa would no doubt line up for the chance to orchestrate.

The relationship between the International Exhibition and the pavilions needs attention, as the curated show clearly impacts upon the vitality of the national

paradigm. As the Biennale has now branched into theater and music, too, there is further competition for the national pavilions.

For all of these reasons, the Venice Biennale would appear to be in a time of transition. MBA-speak, however, it's a first-to-market product with a strong brand identity backed historical tradition and an established customer base (which I am among—make no mistake!). Despite the obstacles to growth and the unwieldiness of its heritage, it will therefore probably continue very much as it has. And those countries that are best equipped to capitalize on the venue – at a time when a strong contemporary art commu is a cipher for strength in the wider “creative industries” – will continue to promote their national interests and the depth of their resources on this spot lit stage.

In this respect, the British Council (with the assistance of big-spending multinational Bloomberg—the eponymous company of New York's mayorial candidate) was a stunningly well-oiled machine—supporting not only the Wallinger pavilion, but also the exhibition by Turner Prize favorite Mike Nelson entitled *The Deliverance and the Patie* a disorienting maze of an installation on the Giudecca commissioned by the Peer Trust, several other media events. The Council's press kit provided an overview of the its glo reach via aggressive international exhibition strategies, and the setting of the Biennale v ideal to celebrate and showcase the organization's impressive work—particularly since Bloomberg footed the £250,000 bill for the wonderfully memorable Isola del Lazzarett Nuovo fete. By some way or means, the goal of this brand of cultural diplomacy (for b Britain and Bloomberg) would necessarily be the attraction of inward investment by a s of strength abroad. And what's £250,000 for a multinational that wants to be cutting ed Considerably more, I suspect, than the total Biennale budgets for many of the exhibiting countries.

Of course, this discussion is largely irrelevant to the general public of an estimated 800 daily that will continue to wander through the vast quantity of contemporary art on view Venice through early November. With these viewers in mind, one might limit admoniti to future planners to the following:

- Choose a less amorphous theme for the Arsenale exhibition.
- Quantity isn't quality and the show is already too big.
- Like America's political action committees, corporate sponsorship may require regulation if increasing numbers of smaller countries are to remain visible.
- Getting lost in Venice leads to enchanting experiences, but more detailed maps wi help the purposeful but bewildered find their way to locations off the beaten track
- A second pair of walking shoes, a pre-vacation stamina development regimen, and additional week should be recommended in tourist literature, particularly for those viewers with a predilection for video art.

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## Book Review

### **Art for All? Their Policies and our Culture**

Mark Wallinger and Mary Warnock, eds.

Peer, 2000.

ISBN 0-9539772-0-X

*Art for All?* is a fascinating, frequently scathing compendium of texts, images, and artist interventions relating to state subsidy of the arts, the role of the artist, and the instruments to which art is put – and by which it is measured – according to the priorities of the current UK Labour Government. The book is fascinating because of the high level of debate within, but also because it rails against the practices of the very organizations that would generally support the artist contributors. The Arts Council of England is the primary target, and *Art for All?* is a full-frontal attack – although ‘the other side’ is represented, if not necessarily *ex cathedra*.

The publisher/funder of the work is The Peer Trust, an independent charitable organization founded in 1998 and the same organization that the British Council assisted in its presentation of Mike Nelson’s installation at the Venice Biennale. Peer is primarily a commissioning rather than a funding body, and its mission is to foster critical debate and facilitate projects for which institutional support might otherwise be difficult to secure (from the British Council, Arts Council of England, etc.). *Art for All?* fits the bill brilliantly. Appropriately, the book launch was accompanied by a public debate at Shoreditch Town Hall this past January, the sequel to a panel discussion held at the RS last November.

*Art for All?* is made up of two sections, the first comprised of contributions by diverse contemporary critics, artists, and policy makers. The second provides an historical overview via key texts and extracts – from John Maynard Keynes’ 1945 reflections on the future purpose of the Arts Council, to Raymond Williams’ 1979 analysis of the failure of the Council’s purported ‘intermediary’ distribution system, to Chris Smith’s utopian-utilitarian “A Vision for the Arts”, a 1997 speech at the Royal Academy that was republished in his 1998 *Creative Britain*.

A vivid and poetic curatorial intelligence is in evidence throughout the book – kudos to Warnock and Wallinger. Chris Smith’s late ‘historical’ text, for example, ends with reference to Hazlitt who, writing of the Fine Arts, says “They do not furnish us with food or raiment, it is true: but they do please the eye, they haunt the imagination, they solace the heart. If after that you ask the question, *Cui bono?* There is no answer to be returned.” The following page – the last piece of the book – appears Gilbert and George’s 1969 *Portrait of Sculpture*, a postcard bearing the slogan “Art for All” at top and the statement ‘All my life I give you nothing and still you ask for more.’ The complaints of today’s artists remain

much the same thirty years later, but Chris Smith's erudite conclusion seems rather win in light of the recent policy that gave rise to this book.

Thanks are also due to designer Stuart Smith, whose typographical variations and layout images and texts, inspired by Wyndham Lewis' *Blast*, add both visual interest and 'between the lines' meaning. Chris Smith and the DCMS withheld one of his texts and substituted another late in production with the requirement that it be printed in full. A standard-size footnote provides reference to the originally desired material and apology for the Lilliputian typography of Smith's text, which is squeezed into the allotted two-pages above. Preceding Smith's two-page lecture is an amusing postcard from Bob and Roberta Smith, the front and verso of which are each placed in the center of an otherwise blank page. There is a seriousness of purpose in such egalitarian juxtapositions.

Debate about public funding and the instrumental use of the arts is longstanding, but the explicit prioritization of their extrinsic values in recent policy and under the aegis of 'ar elitism', 'accessibility', and the 'artist's responsibility' (all priorities in the US, too) were the *raison d'être* for the volume. The work presented in the first section ranges from the whimsical (the aforementioned Bob and Roberta Smith), to the naïve (an anti-institution plea by the artist duo BANK), to the ridiculous (Graham Higgin's proposal for revamping the Lottery distribution system), to the politic proposals of the great and the good (Lord Bragg, Gibson, Freyberg, McIntosh), to a number of direct hits at funders' literalism: David Bartholemew's "The Proposed Sculpture" (an extensively debated sculptural proposal the appearance of which we never learn); a funding application for Martin Cre *Work No. 203 – Portico Project* (shoed in to the 'community access' and participation requirements); a 5 September 2000 attendance chart from South London Art Gallery tallying 'black' and 'white' visitors (which more than anything brings perversely to mirror the "colored" and "white" drinking fountains of the segregated South, at least for the American reader).

Much of this collection, however, is impressive critical thinking – from Peer Trustee Andrew Brighton's revealing comparison of New Labour and Soviet Socialist Realist rhetoric and policy to Jean Fisher's update of Frankfurt School thinking to Mark Wallinger's rehearsal of developments in contemporary art and curatorial practice over last fifteen years. There are many such contributions in this engaging cornucopia.

Given the 'civilizing' role of the arts historically and contemporary pleas in both the UK and the US for the arts to lead the way in supporting democratic debate, public dialogue and the renewal of citizenship, perhaps the most succinct and cogent remarks are those of artist David Batchelor. Taken to task by François Matarasso for his 1995 article "Unpopular Culture" on the grounds that artists "who refuse to recognize any ethical, political and social ties of responsibility implicitly ally themselves with anti-democratic ideologies in which value... is determined by a self selecting group and imposed on the rest," Batchelor replies:

*In an interview, the artist Don Judd once said: 'Of course artists should oppose US involvement in Nicaragua... just as dentists should.' To my mind, this says pretty much everything that needs to be said on the subject of the political responsibilities of artists. It says everyone has responsibilities as a citizen, but that these are independent of one's responsibilities as an artist. It says that artists do not have a special relationship with politics that gives them greater or fewer responsibilities as citizens than anyone else. It also implies that a confusion of different responsibilities does nothing very much for art or politics.*

Something for all of us to keep in mind, regardless of our position in this ongoing debate and particularly during these difficult times.

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### **Site Reviews**

[www.501click.com](http://www.501click.com) and [www.nonprofit.about.com/careers/nonprofit](http://www.nonprofit.about.com/careers/nonprofit)

In Platform 1.4, there was a short review of three web sites run by organizations aiming to enhance the management capacity of the nonprofit sector. The general conclusion was that you should either run a site that is both timely and informative (as well as necessarily self-promoting) or leave well alone. [www.allianceonline.org](http://www.allianceonline.org) was the most interesting because of its ever-expanding resource reference section.

One of the more recent additions to the world of free Internet nonprofit management advice is [www.501click.com](http://www.501click.com). This US-based (of course) outfit is distinctive in a couple of ways. First, it is for-profit and, second, its *raison d'être* is the web-site. It has been founded specifically for the purpose of providing an on-line management resource. It offers office equipment for sale (presumably providing the profit), a management 'toolkit' (forms, checklists, baseline advice) and community pages for exchange and discussion (not up and running yet, but they look like they will be reasonably sophisticated).

There is an impressive staff and advisory team drawn from the public, philanthropic and nonprofit sectors, bringing IT, management and programmatic experience. At present, they are focusing the site on governance, human resources, volunteer management, technology and legal issues.

So far, the 501click site offers some useful tools and solid-looking baseline advice in a straightforward but professional manner. It has the potential to be both a good starting point for someone trying to solve a common management problem as well as a resource for the battle-weary nonprofit manager. As with all these sites (including AEA's), there is a bottomless pool of information that could be provided or referenced. Timeliness,

appropriateness and quality will always be critical. The focus, experience and resources of a 501(c)(3) mean that they have a good shot at building a flagship sector resource. That's where they can make money...

This must be in doubt when there are sites like [www.nonprofit.about.com/careers/nonprofit](http://www.nonprofit.about.com/careers/nonprofit), edited by Stan Hutton, a nonprofit lifer from the West Coast. It offers a sort of smorgasbord of nonprofit help covering all the usual territory of governance, fundraising, planning, budgeting, evaluation and getting a job in the nonprofit sector. It includes robust links to a wide range of sites, discussion groups, a bulletin board and a newsletter. The general tenor is measured and the editorial line is that of a moderate and undogmatic practitioner – a bit bland but you are not going to go seriously off the rails following the advice offered.

Of the six or seven general sites of this nature we have reviewed in the past eighteen months, this is one of the most solidly based. However, I look forward to finding some truly heretical extra-consensual, combative iconoclasm on one of them because these sites – and there are more out there – are beginning to blur into one another, huddled as they are so tightly around the common ground or prevailing orthodoxy.

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