

# Blick ins Ausland

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## 11. BLICK INS AUSLAND

### The egyptian art scene

- 01 *Fatma Hendawy* The struggle between the government represented in the ministry of culture, the independent art spaces and galleries and the big institutions (the Bibliotheca Alexandrina for instance) has no end.
- 02 For years – mainly starting in 2000 – the independent spaces and galleries didn't stop criticizing the governmental art spaces and even their ideology in showing a conservative and old fashioned art, vice versa, the governmental art spaces didn't stop accusing the independent places of getting funds from unknown foreign bodies that targeted certain thoughts which the government considered non conservative with poor quality and content. Although most of the independent places were the outcome of personal investments, the few collaborations – before the revolution – between the ministry of culture, independent places and big institutions paved the way for a limited mutual understanding.
- 03 After the revolution most of the art and culture places closed their doors and paused any activities, they even turned it to few talks (probably political).
- 04 A huge fear of losing the revolution spread like wildfire, documenting every detail of what happened was like a national duty, not only documenting but also spreading as widely as possible.
- 05 Big institutions and independent places launched their documentary projects on the next day of the step down. Without a change in the ideology or system, they kept their events as they are but with a change to the content to fit with supporting the revolution in a way to announce their solidarity, on the other hand we see the independent places working with the same smart ideology – producing fewer with high quality – with a balanced production between the revolution and the professional content they are used to.
- 06 Now, everyone is looking forward and cautiously to the parliament and presidential elections. Independent places fearing the reduction of free conceptual production, big institutions waiting for the new budget cuts and squeezing their selves to get the EU funds and the ministry of culture is waiting for a new minister, ideology and system to follow, putting in consideration the financial situation and the big expectations from the audiences and the artists for a real change.

### Arts funding cuts – a Canadian comparison

- 07 *April Britski* Funding for the arts in Canada has never been an easy sell – not with governments or the public. In the last three years, funding cuts have come from all levels of government at a continuous pace. In some instances, budget cuts have



been overturned or were relatively low, but even the smallest of cuts have a devastating impact for organizations that already struggle to survive.

- 08 In 2008, the Canadian government cut \$61 million in arts funding, including nearly \$15 million from programs which assisted artists with international market development and touring. They were cut completely and have never been replaced. A recent report reveals that over 175 international tours were cancelled, amounting to nearly \$16 million in lost revenues to the sector. At the provincial level, the status of arts funding in BC is at considerable risk. At one time, cuts were projected at a shocking 82–90%. In reality, most have experienced 50% cuts across the board. Several organizations closed their doors while Vancouver played host to the Olympics, and little public attention was paid to the diversion of federal and provincial funds from permanent cultural programming to this two week event.
- 09 In May, the federal Conservative party was re-elected to a majority government. Their election platform called for \$17 billion in cuts to public spending over five years, across all sectors. Potential cuts to the Canada Council are rumoured to be in the 5 to 15% range and other national arts programs will likely be cancelled in the immediate future. The government is expected to pass amendments to copyright legislation which will undoubtedly result in a loss of income for artists. Lobby groups such as the Canadian Arts Coalition are aggressively defending the maintenance of what remains. The last three years have taught us to become savvy at organizing ourselves, and solid research has primed us for making the case for support. We continue to find creative ways to engage with the public and politicians, and learn from the experience of the challenges faced by artists elsewhere, in an effort to find a way forward.

### **Artists and politics**

- 10 *Susan Jones* Here in the UK we are often told we are very lucky because our art is not tainted by politics, this because of the "arm's length principle" – our Arts Councils are seemingly independent thus our arts are not at the mercy of government departments and political change. But as the state's reliance on certain kinds of organisational structure – the quango – that operate outside of the democratic process – and with in-built paternalism – creates an inherent problem in that the function and purpose of the visual arts remains unclear amongst the very people they are supposed to serve.
- 11 When Arts Council England (there are separate ones for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) consulted on the public's attitudes about the arts they found few actually wanted to take part in the consultation and amongst those few who did, there was little generosity amongst them for the principle of state funding for the arts, least of all for artists who they felt were untrustworthy and self-seeking.
- 12 State funding for the arts back in 1850 was designed solely as subsidy for fine art to uplift the lives of the working classes – giving them free museums and drawing



classes. At the turn of the century such support was seen as an essential way to minimise the bad influences of the commercial art market.

- 13 Our Coalition Government made swingeing cuts to arts within reductions across the public sector. New Labour's neo-liberalism that previously relied on new Lottery funds to create more, bigger and better buildings run by yet more quangos. With their jobs on the line, arts organisations simply don't recognise that "without artists there is no art". The result is an increasingly impoverished artists' community at one end and a few carefully selected art stars commissioned and nurtured by big galleries at the extreme. Some argue – maybe because of this – that there are too many artists, although university arts and humanities courses are amongst the most popular. So is the arm's length so successful or even desirable in the politics of art and the lives of artists?

#### **Italy is in a bad shape**

- 14 *Stefano Pasquini* Italy is in a bad shape, and the art world reflects Italian politics and stagnation in the same way. Corruption, power games and mafioso way of doing business are making Italy one of the most difficult countries in which to build an art career. Within this frame the artist's role has lost its prominence and it's now the least important part of the food chain. Have you ever wondered why there are no Italian art stars? The only three Italian artists who made it to world fame (Maurizio Cattelan, Vanessa Beecroft and Francesco Vezzoli) did so on their own legs by leaving the country at once and built their career in the United States. Our most intriguing and funny conceptual artist, Gianni Motti, in Italy is considered as Swiss on all accounts, only because he lives in Genève. When this type of politics mix with so called "cultural affairs", the result is a total disaster, as seen by the Italian pavilion in this year's Venice Biennale. Galleries and businesses are closing, collectors don't pay off their debts to galleries, gallerists don't pay off their debts to artists, and artists turn their career elsewhere. Helping institutions are few and far between, and will probably close down after the latest cut in resources of Berlusconi's government. A whole country is waiting for the next elections to see if anything might change, a little.

#### **Zwischen Lichtblick und Kahlschlag: die Förderung von bildender Kunst in Deutschland**

- 15 *Thomas Weis* **Die Kulturhoheit liegt in Deutschland bei den Bundesländern. Und den größten Teil der Kulturfinanzierung tragen die Kommunen.**
- 16 **Seit 1998 das Amt des Kulturstaatsministers eingerichtet wurde, hat jedoch auch die Bundeskulturpolitik in Deutschland ein Gesicht. Dies macht sich nicht zuletzt finanziell bemerkbar. Unter dem seit 2005 amtierenden Staatsminister Bernd Neumann (CDU) hat der Bundeskulturretat Jahr für Jahr minimal aber stetig zugenommen.**



- 17 Insbesondere die vielfältige Kunst- und Ausstellungsszene im klammen Berlin wäre ohne die jährlich über 350 Mio. € Bundesmittel undenkbar. Mit diesem Geld werden unter anderem Institutionen wie das Haus der Kulturen der Welt, die Akademie der Künste oder der Martin-Gropius-Bau finanziert. Auch der Hauptstadtkulturfonds, der bedeutsame Einzelprojekte und Veranstaltungen in Berlin fördert, wird aus Bundesmitteln gespeist.
- 18 Eine weitere Finanzierungsquelle ist die Projektförderung der Kulturstiftung des Bundes. Davon profitieren deutschlandweit auch Projekte aus dem Bereich der bildenden Kunst.
- 19 Darüber hinaus hat der Staatsminister in der Regel ein offenes Ohr für die Anliegen bildender Künstlerinnen und Künstler, wenn es um bessere Rahmenbedingungen für künstlerisches Schaffen geht. Beispiele dafür: die Stabilisierung der Künstlersozialkasse oder die Debatte um einen besseren Urheberrechtsschutz in der digitalen Welt.
- 20 Demgegenüber stehen die zum Teil verheerenden Einsparungen in den Kulturetats insbesondere auf kommunaler und auf Landesebene. Viele Kommunen bewegen sich am Rand der Pleite, und die Länder sind nicht in der Lage oder nicht willens, ihnen die notwendige Unterstützung zukommen zu lassen. Die kulturelle Infrastruktur wird vernachlässigt. Vor allem kleine Zuwendungsempfänger auch aus dem Bereich der bildenden Kunst werden durch die Kürzungen der langjährigen institutionellen Förderung ins Ausmanövriert.
- 21 Um zwei Beispiele zu nennen: In Köln drohen dem Bildungswerk des BBK – und damit einem umfassenden Angebot an sozialen, rechtlichen und wirtschaftlichen Beratungsleistungen für Künstlerinnen und Künstler – Existenz gefährdende Kürzungen. Und im Stadtstaat Berlin hat die Förderung der zeitgenössischen bildenden Kunst in den letzten 20 Jahren praktisch keinen Zuwachs mehr erfahren. Darunter leiden unter anderem die soziale Künstlerförderung, die Kunststipendien oder auch der Ankaufsetat der Berlinischen Galerie.
- 22 Nicht nur die öffentliche Hand kürzt die Ankaufsetats, auch private Sammler halten sich in wirtschaftlich schwierigen Zeiten zurück, was die ohnehin prekäre Einkommenslage der bildenden Künstler weiter verschärft. Die in der Künstlersozialversicherung versicherten Künstlerinnen und Publizisten verdienen seit Jahren nur rund die Hälfte des Jahresdurchschnittseinkommens von Arbeitnehmern und leben damit oft an der Armutsgrenze.