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 FRODO BAGGINS
 FACTORY GIRL
 Jimmy Miller (Ray Frank 1907)
 STONES
 BEYONTS
 PIGLE
 MUSIC FROM BIG BROWN WHY
 NO EXPECTATIONS!!
 RENT-A-COP
 THANKS, NICKY
 Street Fightin' Man
 Sympathy for the Devil
 WOT NO PAPER!
 STRAWBERRY BOB FOR PRESIDENT
 THE SALT OF THE EARTH.
 Jim Sloane
 W/S/S NOTG.

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MUSIC FACTS
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RENT-A-COP

St. Christopher

THANKS, NICKY

Dear Doctor
Street Fightin' Man

Sympathy for the Devil



NOT NO PAPER!

THE SALT OF THE EARTH

STRAWBERRY BOB FOR PRESIDENT

Jim Sloane
WSS HERE

LENNY YOUNG'S GREAT

A HORSE A HORSE MY MUM DIED FOR A HORSE

The Rolling Stones's Beggars Banquet cover

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WIDE AWAY GOLD



THE ART WORLD IS A BEGGARS BANQUET

The art field is a beggars banquet, but who are the beggars, who are the donors and what, or who, is being consumed?

The Rolling Stones album *Beggars Banquet* dropped in 1968. “Beggars banquet” sounds like an old phrase that must certainly have been coined by a literary giant of the past. But surprisingly, it seems not to have appeared in the literary canon prior to the release of this album. The Rolling Stones never defined the phrase. And as much as it seems to have obvious connotations, there has been much debate over the past half century about exactly what it means. Some say it describes people who have nothing suddenly being invited into a lavish world where they have access to everything. Others say it describes people with few resources offering what little they have to each other in order to assemble a shared feast. A third view of the phrase is that it describes that strange class of citizens who seem not to do much work, who do not produce or invent anything, who yet somehow constantly find themselves participating in a lavish, never ending gala.

Whichever definition one chooses, “beggars banquet” feels perfectly suited to describe the contemporary art world. Every day, some artist somewhere who can barely make rent and who has been struggling to make their art while working one or more side hustles is plucked out of obscurity by some well-connected tastemaker and thrust into a world of fame and riches. That formerly poor beggar is now hoisted into an exorbitant world where the plunders of high society are theirs for the taking. Somehow they are still expected to keep making art. This type of beggars banquet is the rags-to-riches variety. It is something every artist realises might happen to them. It is something the rich

and powerful of the art field love to manufacture, because it makes them feel even more rich and powerful to lift someone who has nothing into the stratosphere of privilege. Like fresh lava spilling into a cold sea, interesting things happen at this beggars banquet because of the volatility that inevitably occurs when two opposite worlds collide.

Let’s explore this type of beggars banquet through the lens of a global art event that has long shined an over-bright spotlight onto the careers of working artists. We are talking about the Venice Biennale [see p.16]. When an artist is invited to represent their nation at this event, it is as if the entire country is saying, “this is the best we have to offer the world.” Some countries do right by the artists they select for this tribute: they foot the entire bill for what the artist creates for the biennale; they pay the artist a stipend; they pay for the artist to travel to Venice and pay their expenses while there. Some even fund acquisition of the artist’s work for a public museum. In other cases,

the so-called sponsoring nation pays only a fraction of the expenses for the artist's participation in the biennale. The artist is then expected to beg for the rest from private donors, collectors, art dealers and any other supporters they can wrangle. They are the guest of honour at this banquet and yet they are also the central beggar. Many artists who find themselves in this situation go bankrupt in their attempt to represent their nation in Venice. Meanwhile, whatever they create for the exhibition may not be sellable. It may end up in a garbage dump. The artist gets their name in a history book, but at what cost?

The second definition of beggars banquet, where people with few resources share what they have to assemble a mutual feast, perfectly describes the world of artist-run galleries, collectives and nonprofit art organisations. By the numbers, more artists associate themselves with this part of the contemporary art field than any other. They put their own time and money into everything they do. They share physical spaces and material resources in order to put together pop-up exhibitions, short-lived galleries and experimental aesthetic interventions. They build community and push the limits of what contemporary art can be. This is the beggars banquet where everyone seems to be having the most fun most of the time. The artists are sharing ideas and debating the value of everything; the art is guided by concepts and visions instead of dollars and likes; and the rest of society is made to feel welcomed by the goings on rather than intimidated by them.

An example of such a beggars banquet is contemporary art gallery Troppus Projects [\[see p.26\]](#) established by a working artist in a small American town. The challenges, victories and ultimate demise of the gallery reveal a multitude of important lessons for anyone thinking of starting their own similar venture [\[see box p.31\]](#).

Performance art also falls into this category [\[see p.54\]](#). Performance artists typically offer nothing commodifiable to the art market. Their performances tend to be one-off events that you either witness or do not. Documentation exists and that can be bought and sold or exhibited at a later date. But the true artwork only exists once, temporarily, in person. Performance artists are by nature forced to be beggars. They must fund their preparations, find venues to support their performances and support their own lifestyles while they are developing their work. In the end, what they are creating is not like a typical type of performance that one can charge admission for. It is not like a concert or a play. It is an ephemeral artwork. Performance artist does all this knowing they will very likely not be compensated for it at all. Yet, there is some funding for their efforts. Wealthy donors sometimes support it because they like how subversive it is. Organisations sometimes fund it because they believe it is somehow important. Some art dealers even support it, perhaps because they believe in it... or perhaps simply to round out their rosters... or perhaps because once in a while performance artists make something that ends up in the history books and that makes their gallery equally relevant.

The third type of beggars banquet is the type that most often plays out in the world's art museums, foundations and government institutions. At this beggars banquet, huge sums of money are directed towards the arts in order to build legacies. This is a realm where you are prized because you are wealthy. Or, you are prized because of your connections to wealth, or your ability to convince wealthy people to shower their wealth upon whatever you can convince them is a worthy cause. When someone posts a job opportunity for a "development expert", the type of development they mean is the type that develops connections to wealth. They are looking for someone who can have drinks with a rich person and talk them into pouring money into the coffers of a museum, a foundation or a public cultural institution.

This beggars banquet has a special name: philanthropy. If you have ever been invited to a museum gala, you have literally been part of this beggars banquet. It might involve a rooftop gathering, perhaps at a major art museum. A DJ or a string quartet is playing, depending on the age of major donors. Maybe these donors contributed to the purchase of a major artwork or an installation or perhaps they gave money to start a new programme to give art supplies to inner city children or to support research into democratising the museum's collection. The artist who made the acquired work might be there. There might even be one or two marginalised people at the banquet. Meanwhile, mingling amongst the handful of wealthy donors and the handful





The Rolling Stones

Photo Mark Hayward. Colleen Hayward



of representative receivers of their charity, are dozens or even hundreds or other people who go to these things all the time, who are not artists, are not major donors and are definitely not marginalised. They make their living off of the subsidiary industry that thrives off of exchange of wealth from privileged people to institutions and from institutions back to privileged people.

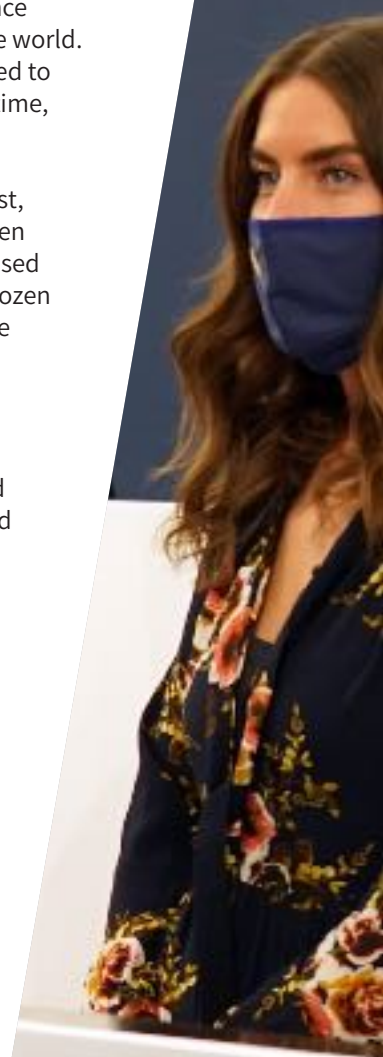
An example of this is the International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia, also known as the Chaco Biennial [see p.34]. This civic philanthropic project has transformed one of the poorest regions on Earth into a place that simultaneously owns the world's largest collection of public artworks. This raises questions on the value of such a project for both artists and the general population.

Another question is "who should pay for public museums?" Should institutions be seen as a public good offered to the world or as a service provider for consumed experiences? A British public official recently advocated in favour of UK charging tourists from other countries admission fees to enter British museums [see p.60]. This would be a notable change from past practices and there is some debate about whether in the end it would raise enough money to make a difference for these institutions. If museums are already supported by public funds, why ask for additional money from the public? Tourists are already paying for their visit in numerous other ways, including taxes. Who are the true beggars at this banquet? Museums? Government officials? The public?

A similar analysis can be made of art schools [see p.48]. These institutions are ostensibly dedicated to furthering human creativity. Sometimes they are funded by the state, other times they are funded by private foundations or individuals. Wherever their funding comes from, the question often being asked today is whether the art students themselves should be asked to pay. Should art education be free? If it is, are we simply creating a new class of entitled beggars who will expect to continue being supported after school? Is there even any way to quantify the value to society from what university trained artists do? Who are the real beggars in an art school? Students? Instructors? Donors? The state? What is being begged for in the end?

In addition to these three main beggars banquets, the art field also accommodates a whole ecosystem of side banquets that each support their own particular species of beggars. For example, there are the thousands of artist in residence (A.I.R.) opportunities that continually pop up around the world. These appointments typically involve artists being invited to associate with an organisation for a temporary span of time, during which they are expected to engage in some type of project that benefits their host and/or the public. They sometimes provide living arrangements for an artist, sometimes with a salary. They can last for months or even years. One such artist, Alan Nakagawa, a sound artist based in Los Angeles. Nakagawa has completed more than a dozen A.I.R.s [see p.40]. He has participated in so many of these programmes that he recently published a book about his experiences, titled *A.I.R. Head: Anatomy of an artist in residence*. Nakagawa's A.I.R. opportunities rarely if ever result in the creation of commodities that can be traded in the art market. Rather, they result in shared experiences, shared exchanges of knowledge and shared appreciation of the value of aesthetics to everyday life.

Are we all just beggars working for whoever will pay for our little banquets? If so, why should that bother us? Beggars banquets help sustain the art field as a place where people can work and play and build communities and have extraordinary experiences. There are, though, a lot of participants who do not seem to know who the beggars and who the donors are, who or what the banquet is supposedly celebrating and who or what is being consumed. To paraphrase the song *Sympathy for the Devil*, the most famous single from *Beggars Banquet*, what is puzzling us is the nature of the game.



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The space in which to place me (2024), Jeffrey Gibson
Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

MARCEL



WHO REALLY PAYS FOR THE VENICE BIENNALE?

An analysis of the Venice Biennale reveals how artists and their host nations pay for the exhibitions that put their national pavilions in the headlines.


The world's most prominent biennial takes place in Venice Italy. It is the ultimate international showcase for nations to place their most skilled fine artist on the global stage. Producing work that will be seen and judged by the world on such a scale is daunting enough without the difficulty of allocating the budget to make and transport it. Even at this echelon bankrolling big art ideas requires savvy, skill and legwork to get it all paid for. There are multiple roads to funding, some bumpier than others.

Whatever else may be said for it, the Venice Biennale is an expensive affair. The host nation of Italy reported a budget of 19 million euros in 2024, which does not cover the participating nations' pavilions. The sweep of international expenses for what is commonly called the Fine Arts Olympics ranges from a reported \$5.8 million for the United States, which presented its long overdue first Indigenous artist Jeffrey Gibson this year, to Tanzania's 6,000 euro first-ever showing.

Funding sources vary from nation to nation and are often not reported well nor fully, as there is little incentive for the participants to declare their expenses publicly. In the case of Jeffrey Gibson, his visionary installation was titled *The space in which to place me*. It completely occupied and transformed the US Pavilion. The structure was fully dressed, coloured in Gibson's radiant patterns, aggressive colour fields, hyper-saturated flags and massive sculptural takes on updated traditional indigenous artworks. The entire work felt overwhelming. It was a go-big attitude that was fitting for a paramount event.

The mix included United States federal funding of \$375,000, a drop in the nearly six million dollar bucket. Gibson raised more funds by selling sixty cashmere blankets through Sotheby's at \$7,600 a pop, which added up to \$450,000. For the rest, Gibson fundraised through the Portland Art Museum as well as various other supporters and private donors. Considering the prestige and stakes associated with the Venice Biennale, it is observably hardscrabble to find the funding if you are only meeting a fifth of your budget with art auctions and federal funding. There is what appears to be a real risk of debt accrual for Gibson.

The US model is contrasted starkly by the model adopted by Australia, whose representative artist Archie Moor won the 2024 biennial's most prestigious award, the Golden Lion, with his installation *Kith and Kin*. Mikala Tai is the Head of Visual Art at Creative Australia, the group that organised the sponsorship of the Australian Pavilion. The strategy they used is sound: a singular organisation representing a coalition of interests. Tai explains,



View from the German Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency



“The Australia Pavilion is primarily supported by Creative Australia with a suite of generous and engaged philanthropists, foundations and private businesses.”

The path laid out by Tai feels thoughtful and robust with an understanding of the difficulty that was inherent in securing money for an enormous work like *Kith and Kin*, with its sprawling handwritten white-on-black chalkboard notes across the room documenting 65,000+ generations of the artist’s ancestry.

“Financing in the arts is always complex,” says Tai. “But we have a series of anchor donors across the country that act as Ambassadors for the project and help secure the donations we need. The team also approaches foundations and private businesses that align with the artistic vision for both financial and in-kind support to realise the project.” Within the greater process Creative Australia had to undertake, it seems that Moor was well insulated to do his work. “We do not release the final costing for producing the work but can confirm the artist receives a \$100,000 fellowship and is not required to use any personal funds for the production of the work,” Tai says. “This forms part of the production budget that we at Creative Australia fundraise for, but in the case of this work, it was all built on-site in Venice.”

The organised coalition gives the artist the room to focus on the production of work while leaving the fundraising leg work to professionals. It seems like a healthy compromise between national interests and private

funding. “Co-investment and visionary support of donors is critical to large-scale projects such as the Australia Pavilion,” says Tai. “Artists need assurance that their vision can be met when working on something as high profile as the Venice Biennale and the co-investment model is a robust way in which to support artists.”

Other pavilion funders oscillate between large national programs like Slovakia’s full coverage by the Ministry of Culture, to others that cobble together a mixture of private donors, investors and funds from museums and galleries. Tanzania is one of the most notable counterpoints to the more exorbitant European pavilions. Curated in collaboration between Enrico Bittoto of Italy and the Tanzanian government, the 6,000 euro pavilion was paid for by donations and with the curator’s personal income. The final result was a simple yet savvy pavilion that hosted a selection of works by three Tanzanian artists. If this is truly an art world Olympics, then smaller less funded nations have an important role to play in the voice of the Biennale and even a more meagre contribution is extremely valuable. Without all of the enormity of some western pavilions, Tanzania possessed presence at a very low expense to the nation, curator and artist.

When looking at its sport counterpart the Olympics as a comparative model, the differences are acute. The 2024 Olympics in Paris were produced with roughly 10 billion dollars (considered a low cost for the event) with massive corporate sponsorships and little if any

financial return for the host nation. Olympic USA teams are funded almost exclusively by the private sector. Other nation’s teams are funded by their government under military or cultural departments. Participating team members may never experience a greater moment in their athletic careers. The event spaces are rife with advertising and everything is televised. Most Olympics operate at a financial deficit for their host cities/nations with the installation of athletic facilities both permanent and temporary, which become redeemable long-term investments.

In contrast, the Venice Biennale does provide financial uplift for the city of Venice and its surrounding region. Many of its pavilions date as far back as the event’s inception in 1895. As a repeat event in the same city for over 100 years, it does not require the same massive budget to produce new sites. Artists in the biennale tend to be at various points in their careers, though being in one of the pavilions is a pinnacle event and will most likely become a definitive moment, yet not the ultimate moment of their artistic careers. The Biennale is not heavily marketed to the general public. Maybe that is why, in respect to funding, the biennial diverges from the Olympics and does not seem as much of a priority for some of the represented nation-states. But in the global arts community, it becomes a calling card for artists, curators, museums and private galleries, a less than subtle way to get everyone talking.

Both the Olympics and Venice Biennale are geared towards expanding dialogues between nations and establishing the



View from the German Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency





Kith and Kin (2024), Archie Moore

Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency

MARKET

world's perception of different cultures. Both become definitive touchstones for how participating nations are perceived moving forward.

It is interesting to observe that at an artistic pinnacle like the Venice Biennale, whatever the arrangement, providing support for visionary projects at such a large and prestigious scale requires multiple sources of support. The wide variety and oscillating budgets of each pavilion seem like they could be tamed into a more standardised system. To each their own, at the end of it all.

We could imagine a more equitable Biennale, with a sort of general fund contributed to by all of the represented nations and interested parties; where each budget was set and the selected artists were completely funded at the start with the caveat of all artists working with the same budget. A pooled funding that capped at a specific point would lead to a more resourceful Biennale. For nations like Tanzania, it would be quite a boon. Such a scenario is bound to produce a kind of egalitarianism. For wealthy countries it would level expectations. Having to work within a set assured budget would simplify the process and allow the artist to focus on the art they can produce inside of their financial constraints. Pure fantasy in an art market built around exponential grandeur and competition, but it would surely be closer to the spirit of a global dialogue.

View from the Korean Pavilion at the 2024 Venice Biennale
Photo Mickaël Pijoubert. © Art Media Agency



TROPPUS PROJECTS

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PROJECTS



Troppus Projects
Courtesy Troppus Projects



“YOU PROBABLY WON’T MAKE ANY MONEY”

The story of Kelly Dietrick’s Troppus Projects in Kent, Ohio, reveals the highs, lows and bitter truths of running a small contemporary art gallery.

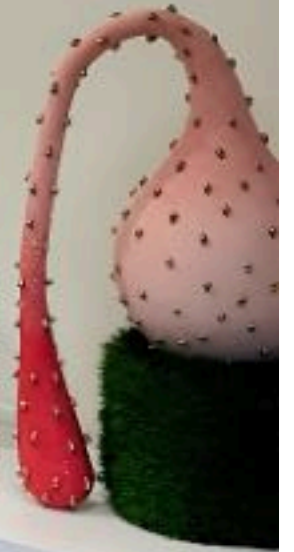
Opening a contemporary art gallery is among the riskiest business ideas ever. Consider the proposition: you fill an otherwise empty space with new art in the hope that members of the public will leave their comfortable homes and travel to this strange space to spend time in the presence of this new art; and that enough of those people will enjoy that experience enough to buy enough of that art that you can do this again and again. It's a shaky plan, even if you intend to open the gallery in the most beautiful building in the hippest neighbourhood in the biggest art market capital in the world.

Kelly Dietrick knew this when she founded Troppus Projects in Kent, Ohio. Located about 700 km west of New York City, Kent has a permanent population of around 28,000 people. That population roughly doubles when school is in session at Kent State University, where Dietrick is a longtime adjunct teacher of 2D and design foundations. A trained artist with a mature sense of what it takes to succeed in the market, Dietrick did not open her gallery because she wanted to make money, although it sometimes did. She also did not open it because she thought it would make an impact on the broader contemporary art field, although it did. She had more personal reasons. She felt disconnected from her own art practice. She had started to feel oppressed by her adjunct schedule and the part-time pay it offered. Her kids were getting older. “I thought, I do not want to get stuck,” she says. “I want to do something.” Her husband suggested starting an art space. “It seemed like a crazy, out of the blue idea,” Dietrick says, “but I could not stop thinking about it.”

With little knowledge how to begin, Dietrick made an appointment to see a shop for rent in downtown Kent. It was a former jewellery store that had more recently been used for storage by the owner, who ran a music shop next door. It had disgusting carpet and green paisley wallpaper. It was anything but a clean, white box. But it had a big storefront window with a busy sidewalk outside. And there was a little room in the back with a bathroom and sink, which Dietrick thought could be an art studio, which could help her justify renting the space. Even though it was the first place she looked at and was in no condition to show art and she had no business plan whatsoever, Dietrick told the owner she was interested.

The owner shocked her by saying he was willing to do a one-year lease instead of the usual multi-year commercial lease. As a small business owner, someone in the arts and someone who lived in the community, he said he wanted to support what Dietrick wanted to do. “He even lowered my rent in the winter months,” Dietrick says. After







Kelly Dietrick
Courtesy Troppus Projects

Eight lessons

You probably will not make money, so do not do it unless you are obsessed.
 Make sure you have an empathetic landlord.
 Do not expect banks to give you a loan.
 The space cannot survive on art sales alone.
 A gallery is defined by its messaging.
 Curation is about making something feel whole.
 Remember the mission.
 You can figure most things out when you have to.

stayed and engaged with whatever was currently on view in the gallery.

This taught Dietrick about the different ways art galleries message that they either are, or are not, trying to be part of their community. “People feel intimidated by art galleries,” she says. “They think they have to buy something and they assume the art is expensive.” If your gallery is meant to only attract the rich, it makes sense to send a message of exclusivity. But Dietrick wanted her gallery to be part of the fabric of society. Offering inexpensive things to buy and offering free programming like public talks or screenings, sent the message that there are other reasons to come into the space besides buying expensive art. That messaging broke down the barriers that usually exist between art galleries and the public, which helped Troppus Projects become part of the Kent community.

As for the larger community Dietrick wanted to connect with, the global community of contemporary artists, she knew she had to expand beyond her personal network. She started posting open calls for submissions on whatever exhibition websites allowed curators to post for free. She would come up with themes that were specific, but sufficiently broad, such as The Greenery Show; The Poster Show; or Total Design, which she figured could relate to many different concepts and aesthetic approaches. These calls, she said, generated their own tentacles, with artists letting other artists know to submit. Her network quickly expanded and a lot of work came to her attention that she never would have otherwise seen. This led to her next lesson learned: curation is about making an exhibition feel whole.

Most submissions Dietrick received from open calls came in at the last minute. She was so excited to see what was coming in, however, that she opened every submission as it

the first lesson of having a personal reason to do it, this, Dietrick says, is the next lesson she would share with anyone wanting to open an art gallery: make sure you have an empathetic landlord.

After signing the lease, Dietrick thought she could procure a small business loan to help with the expense of renovating the space. That is when she learned the next lesson about opening a contemporary art gallery. “Banks will not give you a small business loan when you do not own any equipment,” she says. The whole point of an art gallery is that it is empty space. Not only did Dietrick have no equipment, the inventory she hoped to carry, which would rotate constantly, was so esoteric and difficult to market that even she was not sure she would know where to start.

Undeterred, Dietrick enlisted her family to help with renovations. Her father donated some flooring materials he had laying around, which Dietrick and her husband installed. Dietrick’s kids helped paint the walls. She did a deep dive into the science of gallery lighting, piecing together a lighting package that was affordable and could do justice to the work. During this time, she decided on Troppus Projects as the gallery name. “Troppus is ‘support’ backwards,” she says. “It also relates to the word troupe, because even though it was a solo project, marching forward required a group effort of sorts.”

On 15 June 2017, seven weeks after getting the keys to the space, Dietrick opened her first exhibition. Titled “44240 (The Kent Show)”, it featured the work of ten artists who were all part of Dietrick’s personal network. The show generated about \$1400 in sales. After the 40-60 split she had with the artists, with the gallery taking 40%, there was enough to cover about half of the expenses for that first month. “From the start, I was confident that the space could not survive on art sales alone,” Dietrick says. “I also knew that I did not want to limit what I was exhibiting to ‘saleable’ work. Some of my favourite shows included work that was not even for sale, much less ‘saleable’. One of my challenges was going to be getting people to understand that consuming art and supporting artists happens in more than one way.”

Taking a cue from museums, Dietrick dedicated a small section of the space as a sort of gift shop, where people could buy smaller artworks and artist designed products. Not only did this create the potential for another income stream, it reconnected Dietrick with her own art practice. She used the studio in the back to make sets of 20 small artworks every month that she sold in the gift shop for \$20 each. She called it “Troppus 20/20.” The gift shop also became a magnet for a lot of people from the community who otherwise never would have stepped foot in an art gallery. The gift shop was a comfortable entry point, after which they sometimes

came. For one exhibition, one of the first submissions was a video piece from an artist who was new to her. Dietrick loved the piece and decided it was going to be in the show. But as the rest of the submissions rolled in it became clear that the video piece made no sense with what else was submitted, even though it was the strongest work. "That video piece was great, but it would not do it justice to include it with a bunch of miscellaneous work," she said. "As a curator, I learned that it is important to build shows that feel like something holistic, not just a bunch of individual pieces." That experience also taught Dietrick that as an artist you should know there are a lot of different reasons you might not get selected for something that have nothing to do with the quality of your work.

Over the months, the strength of Dietrick's curatorial concepts and her ability to create successful conversations between artworks resulted in a lot of high level exhibitions, which she photographed beautifully and posted online. On social media, Troppus Projects looked as sophisticated and culturally relevant as any gallery in any major city. The level of artists submitting work to Dietrick's shows increased and serious collectors bought work from the shows. But Troppus Projects was still basically a one-person operation. Her curatorial goals precluded prioritising commercial potential with the work, which meant the gallery would likely never generate enough profit to enable her to hire more help. Even though she was having success, Dietrick was beginning to see that the project was unsustainable.

That reckoning was exacerbated in 2019 when Dietrick got divorced. The divorce brought certain financial realities into focus. It also got Dietrick thinking about other goals she wanted to achieve in life, some of which she anticipated would take

her away from Kent, Ohio. She also, however, refused to allow circumstances to be the reason the gallery closed. She was creating community and learning a lot about curation and being an artist. She promised herself that even though it was clear it would end one day, she would keep the gallery going until she had the agency to close it the right way, on her terms. That resolution came in handy a year later when COVID hit. The pandemic did not affect her business the same way it affected restaurants or other businesses that relied on heavy, daily foot traffic, but it did put a crimp in people's art spending. It was also when Dietrick learned how much the gallery had become woven into the fabric of the town. "I am not a super social person, but people knew I was there so they would pop in and talk," Dietrick says. "It was something I needed and people felt safe coming there."

The back to back challenges of a divorce and a pandemic taught Dietrick another important lesson about running a contemporary art gallery: remember the mission. "People experience art as if it's this special event thing," she says. "My mission was to make art a regular part of everyday life and not this field trip where you have to go to a museum to see it." Even with her strong sense of mission, operating the gallery was never easy for Dietrick. But that never meant it was not worth it. "In some ways my kids saw me working hard and not making money and thought I was crazy," she says, "but it modeled for them that money is not the only reason to do things. You can't just wait for things to happen. If you want art to be part of your community, then sometimes you just have to make that happen."

As the pandemic subsided, it became clear that Troppus Projects was a survivor in a sector where many more well connected and heavily resourced galleries had crumbled. Dietrick had

curated 42 exhibitions, exhibited the work of more than 200 artists and built two simultaneous communities for herself, one in Kent and one in the global contemporary art field. She had proved she could make it through anything and was under no pressure to close. But she had also grown significantly as a curator and was feeling more and more like it was the right time to move on to something else. Almost without realising it, she says, she started putting together what she knew would be the final show. She scheduled the opening for 7 April 2024, the evening before the total solar eclipse. The "path of totality" was predicted to pass right over Kent.

Dietrick called the show "SUBTRACTICA". The timing and the theme suggested this was both an end and a beginning. "I was inspired by Mathematica, the Ray Eames and Charles Eames show," she says. "I was thinking about the moon cancelling out the sun and the exhibition cancelling out the gallery and also the idea of cancelling something in an exciting, momentary way." It ended up being the biggest show the gallery had ever done, featuring the work of 25 artists. And thanks to a massive influx of eclipse tourists, it was also the best attended opening. Dietrick said it gave her a feeling of awe. "It felt momentous, like the world was going to stop for a moment," she said. Dietrick admits she was scared at that moment. But she was also scared when she started the gallery. She was scared every time there were bills that could not get paid and every time it seemed a show might not come together. She was scared when got divorced and when COVID hit. She just kept moving forward despite those fears. That is the final lesson she said she would share with anyone thinking of opening a contemporary art gallery. "Do scary things that you do not know how to do. I learned you can figure most things out when you have to."



Troppus 20/20
Courtesy Troppus Projects

FOCUS

Chaco Biennial

© International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia





FIGHTING POVERTY WITH SCULPTURE AT THE CHACO BIENNIAL

The International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia, also known as the Chaco Biennial, is mobilising public art to transform one of Latin America's poorest regions.

As we know them, biennials are large international exhibitions with national representations held every two years. Since this tradition started in 1895 in Venice [see p.16], the concept and form of this cultural event has evolved and grown in scale and quantity, reaching a total number of more than 300 biennials around the world today.

In Latin America, São Paulo's Biennial is perhaps the most well known. It has been expanding and growing in the last ten years, attracting attention from the world's most significant artists, collectors, and institutions. But there is another Latin American biennial that has quietly been earning an avid following: Chaco's Biennial in the North East of Argentina. The International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia, also known as the Chaco Biennial, has developed a unique model dedicated to artworks shown in the public realm. Over the course of a single week, ten invited sculptors who were selected from more than 150 applicants work in the open air to create an original work. In the end, their creations are judged by a professional jury, as well as by members of the public, who also get the chance to choose their favourite artwork.

After the event, all of the pieces created over the course of the ten days are relocated into the public space of the city, becoming part of its cultural heritage. Since the biennial was established, it has resulted in the creation of more than 700 public sculptures that have subsequently been distributed between the streets, boulevards and parks of Resistencia city.

It is a unique format, having artists working in the open air while citizens interact with them and keep them company. Members of the public and artists alike have noted that observing and accompanying the artistic process brings people and artists closer, while also facilitating a sense of respect and responsibility for the artworks among members of the public.

Another way the Chaco Biennial is unique is that each edition contemplates different contest regulations. Specifically, each year's regulations describe the exact materials that will be provided by the sponsoring Urunday Foundation for the artists to work with, as well as the scale preferences that will be required that year. Since 1988, when the first edition took place, the materials that have been used so far have been: wood for 11 editions, marble (both travertine and Carrara) for 9 editions, smooth metal sheets for three editions and stainless steel in one edition. This aspect of the biennial privileges the application of artists who have



Poster of the 2024 edition of the Chaco Biennial

© International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia

mastered the treatment of the different materials on each occasion. Additionally, alternating materials each time is thought to diversify both the techniques and the forms of the works that will later become part of the city's heritage. It also enriches the experiences of the visitors who get to observe the mastery of artists in different mediums and techniques.

Moreover, every ten editions, the Urunday Foundation also organises a special competition between the previous ten winners of the event. These artists participate for an honorary award. On these special occasions, artists are able to choose their material preference, as they probably differ in their specialty.

History of the Biennial

The Chaco Biennial was created in 1988 by sculptor Fabriciano Gómez (Resistencia, Chaco Province, Argentina, 1944-2021). Gómez was born in Chaco, and graduated from the province's Academy of Fine Arts as a Master of Visual Arts in 1968. After earning his degree he moved to Europe, living for a time in both France and Italy. Then in 1980 he was selected to represent his home country of Argentina in the Venice Biennale. After the biennial concluded, Gómez returned to his hometown and engineered a national open air sculpture competition with the intention of leaving a legacy to the cultural heritage of the city.

In the beginning, Chaco's competition did not have an international projection nor was it contemplated that it could transform into a larger exhibition. It began to take on a bigger life in 1989, when Urunday Foundation was born with the purpose of continuing the development of the project as a cultural tradition. In 1998, the competition evolved into the Biennial format. The interest at first was mainly from

continental sculptors, but because of its unique format it quickly garnered attention from sculptors all over the world. It also grew in size and in its footprint, eventually relocating to its current location in the natural area of Rio Negro's river bank, which has an extension of almost 10 hectares.

Thanks to the professional commitment and hard work of the Fundación Urunday and the Government of Chaco, the Chaco Biennial has become informally recognised by its participants as The Sculpture World Cup. It has brought together international sculptors from Poland, Latvia, Turkey, New Zealand, Peru, Kosovo, Romania, Spain, United States, Chile and France, among other countries. This year, celebrating 36 years from the first edition of the competition, it brought together more than 400 artists and 1,200,000 visitors.

Art in a struggling economy

Those who are familiar with the city of Resistencia and the province of Chaco ask how an art biennial can succeed in a place known for having a struggling economy. While the whole country of Argentina has been harshly affected by the recession, 76.2% of the people in Resistencia live below the poverty line.

José Eidman, Urunday Foundation's President, explains the virtuous mixed financing system the institution has developed for the biennial over the years. "This system is articulated with private and public funding through different resources," he says. "On the one hand, the Province's Patronage Law allows projects declared to be of cultural interest, such as the Biennial, to receive up to 10% of the provincial tax from private companies. On the other hand, the Federal Investment Council supports strategic projects for the development of the provinces and provides them access to financing.

Moreover, international cooperation from the embassies supports travel costs from their national representatives. And lastly, there is municipal, provincial and private funding for the performing art activities, and financial support from Universidad del Nordeste's Faculty of Arts and from Chaco Province's Chamber of Deputies for other special activities."

All these areas of support come together to finance the complete programme of the Biennial, which includes the International Sculpture competition, as well as side programmes including the Meeting of Invited Sculptors, a sculpture competition for art students and International Arts Congress, a Seminar on Art, Law, Heritage and Urban Planning, The International Congress on Art Law, The Philharmonic Festival, the Crafts programme, the Performing Arts programme, and a number of solo and group exhibitions.

Within its expansion, Urunday Foundation worked together with Universidad del Nordeste in order to measure the impact the Biennial has on the regional and provincial economy. They determined it is a model for the growth of cultural industries. For the third consecutive time, Resistencia ranked between the first 15 destinations picked by Argentines for winter school holidays. Results also show that 90% of the budget from private and public institutions are related to local goods and services contracts associated with accommodation, gastronomy and other consumption activities related to the traffic generated by the event. Urunday Foundation executives are convinced that this phenomena, as well as the effects of involvement between local citizens and the artists, are transformational forces with the power to improve the economic and social reality of Chaco's community.

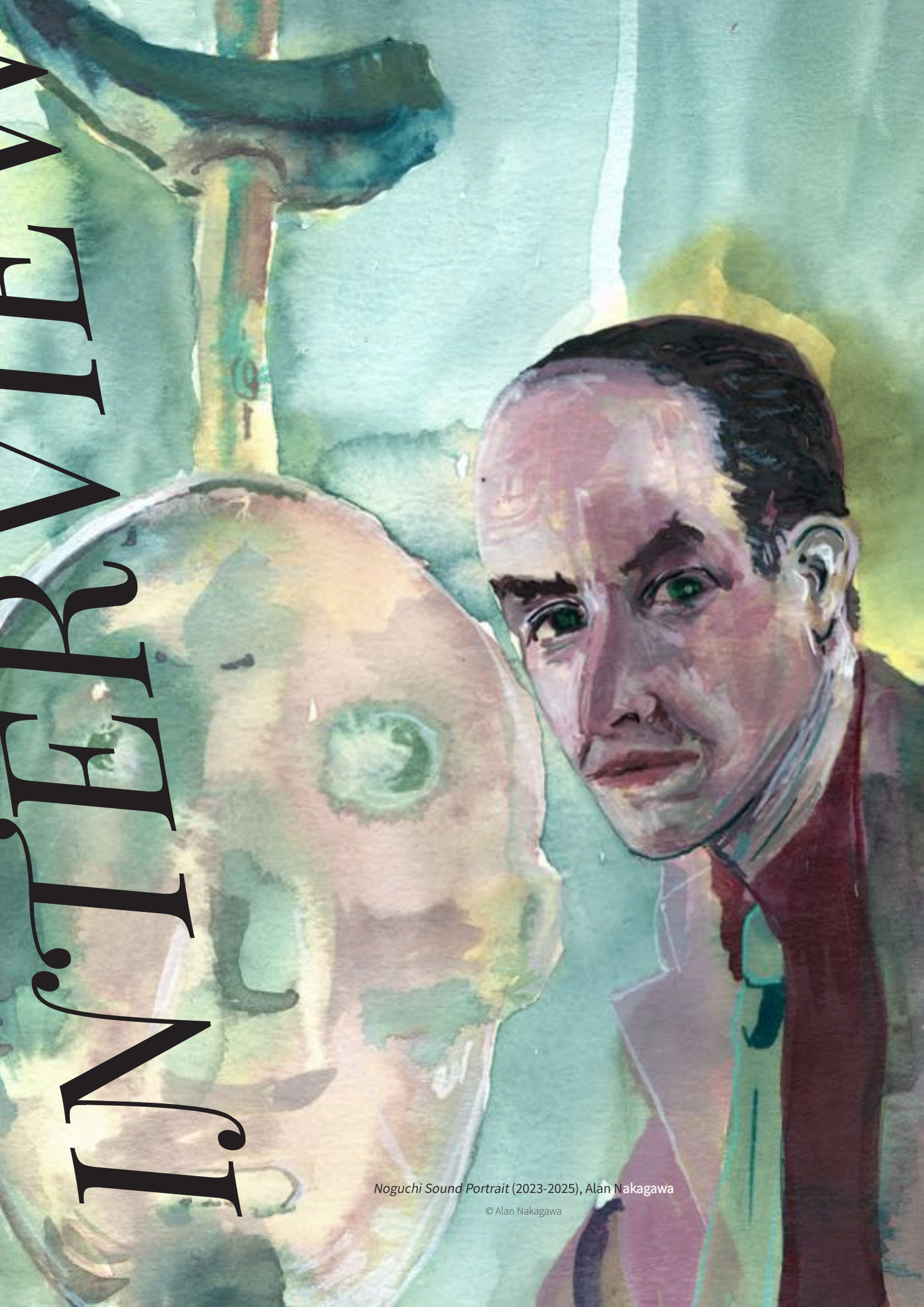


The 13th Chaco Biennial in figures

36th edition of the Sculpture Prize, and 13th edition of the Biennial in 2024.
1,200,000 visitors participated at the event.
10 sculptors were invited out of 157 applications from 55 different countries.
5,000 \$ budget for each sculptor participating in the open-air competition.
400 artists participating in the biennial, including sculptors, actors, dancers, craftspeople and musicians.

Chaco Biennial
© International Sculpture Biennial of Resistencia





NOGUCHI

Noguchi Sound Portrait (2023-2025), Alan Nakagawa

© Alan Nakagawa

CATCHING A.I.R.

Alan Nakagawa literally wrote the book on being an Artist in Residence.

In 2016, sound artist Alan Nakagawa left his job as the Senior Public Arts Official at the Los Angeles Metro, a position he had for nearly 25 years and became the first artist in residence (A.I.R.) at the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (DOT). Since then, Nakagawa has completed about a dozen stints as an A.I.R., including four years at the Pasadena Buddhist Temple. Nakagawa's work is informed by his deep belief in working with communities, oral histories and listening. His residencies all involve projects that allow him to pursue those interests. His recently published book, *A.I.R. Head: Anatomy of artist in residence*, includes not just descriptions of his A.I.R. positions and what he did during them, but poems, photos, sketches and personal reflections. In this interview, he opens up about what it really means to be an A.I.R. and shares some of the experiences he has had along the way.

What drew so much attention to your DOT A.I.R.?

The tagline, first of all, is interesting. "Sound artist gets first artist in residency for the city of LA." Their first question is, "What is a sound artist?" Then the second would be, "What is a sound artist going to do at LA DOT?" Especially if they read that it was supposed to decrease the fatalities in transportation in the city. I think that kind of piqued interest. Then everyone goes to my website and they start to understand that I do not just work in sound. They look at all the stuff I have done because they do not know how old I am. When they got the press release, it did not say I was fifty-something. Usually, people assume that the artist is young, like a 20-year-old, or possibly a 30-year-old. So, when they look

at my work, then they go, "Oh, my God, he has been working for like forty years." My former boss at Metro said, "The thing about your work is you do it quietly. They are these large-scale pieces, but you do not get a lot of press. You just get it done and then you go on to the next project and you have been doing that for decades." My job is not to market myself. My job is to help people with my work.

Do most people think an A.I.R. lives at the place?

Most people understand that you are the staff artist, basically. I think the biggest misconception when I arrive is that I am going to do a mural or they want an artwork that uses all the kids' handprints or something like that, all these little cliché public art projects that you see. Usually, I do not want to do anything like that.

Did you know your first A.I.R. would lead to more?

No, the LA DOT thing was the first one and as far as I knew, it would be the last one. But it was such an opportunity. Not to be cliché, but

it was an opportunity of a lifetime. It kind of melded all of these interests and all of these experiences I had up to that point and I just ran with it once I got hired. I have been working with communities since the mid-1980s. In the book, I talk about being trained by Judy Baca at Social and Public Art Research Center (SPARC). Did I know what a mural was before I met Judy? No. Did I know what consensus building was before I met Judy? No. She taught me so much. In 1984, I was in the first mural training program at SPARC. I was like 17 years old. Two years at SPARC was like boot camp. In the parallel of that, my friends and I had this nonprofit organisation called Collage Ensemble. Every year we would pitch something. Basically we would get together and we would bitch about something and then make an art project about that. Then we would find a grant, write the grant and we usually got a grant each year. It was not a lot of money, but it was enough to not have to pay for the project. That went on for 30 years. It was dissolved in 2011. Most of the time we were working in communities. We were so young and naïve and we did not really know what we were doing, but we were always, for some reason, getting these little grants from various foundations or the government.

Why do you think you got the grants?

I felt like I explained I am not just an artist. I worked in government and nonprofit organisations. I am not just some kid who only went to art school. I was not really interested in the gallery thing where you kind of make the same thing and you market that and if it sells then you

get to make a different version of that next year. I was not into that. All my professors who were represented by galleries did nothing but complain about them. Why would I want to work my butt off with this thing where sometimes you get ripped off by the gallery director and you only get 30 to 40% of the actual selling price and then once you sell it, that is when it appreciates so you never see that money? The thought of the internal hardship of having to come up with something that is marketable and then having to make a bunch of those things year after year after year and only getting 30 or 40% of the original net value, seemed to me totally messed up.

How do oral histories factor into your A.I.R.s?

Usually, I am working with somebody who is never been asked to talk about their history. The tradition of oral history is getting the first-person witness to the events of time, of human history. And up to maybe, I do not know, 40 years ago, it was primarily the white perspective, usually white men's perspective. It is us learning about our past and what is been hidden and then being empowered to unhide it. That is what oral history is. You are talking to the source and you are getting first-hand information that otherwise most likely would not have been documented. When I talk about this in workshops and lectures, I always say I am really not interested in doing a history of somebody who is famous. That is the last person I want to talk to because usually they have already documented their history and then a lot of their answers will be canned. It is like,

completely a waste of my time and their time, really. So who wants to do that? I want to interview the person who says, "Oh no, I do not have anything to say. My story is not important." That is the first person you want to talk to because they have been brainwashed into thinking that they do not matter.

What is one community your A.I.R. work has helped?

When I was the artist in residence for the Pasadena Buddhist temple, the first thing they showed me was where their Japanese tea house used to be. There was a sign for the Japanese tea house, but the actual tea house was gone. So I asked them, "Where is your Japanese tea house?" They said, "Oh, we gave it to the Huntington Library and Gardens." I said, "Wow, you must have gotten a lot of money for that." They said, "Oh, no, we just gave it to them." Wait a minute, you are telling me you got this from Kyoto in 1964 and it is the first time a Japanese tea house from Japan is erected on US soil and you just gave it to the Huntington? And they did not give you any money or anything? They said, "No, we were not using it and they wanted it. At first we wanted to keep it, but then we thought we are never going to use this thing and they really want it, so we gave it to them." I was like, I will be your artist in residence and I would like to first research this story. What I found out from the tea ceremony community was that there was a tea ceremony teacher named Matsumoto Sensei. She passed away, but she is the one who introduced or flourished the Japanese tea ceremony after World War II in the United States. The Pasadena Buddhist Temple



Bite Hear (2023-2024), Alan Nakagawa

Photo Wendy Wert

INTERVIEW

is the first place she teaches. The reason that the tea house was there is because the head of the tea ceremony school from Kyoto came to visit and he loved the Pasadena Buddhist temple community so much that he gave them this amazing tea house that was made in Kyoto by this family who had been making them for centuries. Nobody at the Buddhist temple knew this. I am the one who informed them about it. That is why the Huntington wanted it. They did not want it because they were looking for a tea house. They wanted it because this is a historically important tea house and it is connected to the 1957 US Japan cultural treaty, the reason all those cherry trees are in Washington, right? That is that treaty. The teacher from Kyoto, he was on a tour and he wanted to see his pupil, who was Matsumoto sensei. The Huntington spent a million dollars on the whole project because they sent it back to Kyoto and refurbished it and then they did a massive landscaping thing to make an area for it in their gardens. But the temple does not get a penny from any of that. Erecting that history was a gateway to a rabbit hole of all this information that often only one person knew or just a family knew about it. Generally, the people at the temple today were too young when most of this happened and none of it was passed on. So for four years I accumulated these stories and all these facts and I did a lot of oral histories. At the end of it, I was able to get the State of California archives in Sacramento to take all the data and the studies and the recordings and put it into the California archive. That would not have happened if I had not been their A.I.R. and all of those stories would have probably gotten buried at some point and could never be found again.





Green Truck Recall Pedora (2022), Alan Nakagawa
ARR

Green truck recall Pedora (2022), Alan Nakagawa

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Alan Nakagawa

Photo Elizabeth Withstandley. Courtesy Cleveland Museum of Art

SCHOOL

Black Mountain College

ARR

SHOULD ART SCHOOL BE FREE?

As college tuition inflates worldwide, Cooper Union, a renowned university with firm standing in the arts, edges closer to a return to free-tuition.

Cynicism has become a near constant state. During this period ridden with all manner of turmoil, it feels somewhat naive to trust progress, as behind each step there always presents a glaring compromise, be it ethical or other. Particularly working within the arts, a field whose labor is notoriously complex to measure and subsequently undervalued, it is tempting to simply brace for the flip-side prior to processing the positive.

Eleven years following the instatement of tuition at Cooper Union, this September the school announced that for the next four years, students would attend senior year tuition-free. This was made possible following nearly \$6 million in donations and coincides with the Board of Trustees' 10 year Plan to Return to Full-Tuition Scholarships established in 2018.

Industrialist Peter Cooper, designer and builder of the first American steam locomotive, founded the school in 1859. Modeled in part after the *École Polytechnique* in France, a publicly funded institution, Cooper Union did not initially offer free tuition for all. Students who could afford to pay, paid. But no student was turned away for lack of funds. What eventually became the school's free-tuition-for-all model was historically supported by a more than a half-billion dollar endowment fed to a large degree by CU's real estate holdings, including the land on which New York's Chrysler Building stands.

Cooper Union's prestigious alumni roster is frankly too long to list. While within the sciences, it notably includes Thomas Edison,

the art school has been attended by Eva Hesse, Alex Katz, Lee Krasner, Augusta Savage, Tom Wesselmann and Jack Whitten, to name a few. Aside from the prestige of the school's alumni and faculty, the prospect of free tuition is considered the key reason the school has a reputation for being highly competitive, with an acceptance rate of around 12%.

When the school broke from its "open and free to all" credo in the 2010s, CU appeared to be succumbing to today's standard of business-centred higher education. Overviews of the administration and Board of Trustees' fiscal mismanagement can be found *via* the Committee to Save Cooper Union, with notable blunders including the construction of a \$175 million building prior to adequate fundraising.

It goes without saying that this fall's announcement was a major achievement. Impressive progress has also been made *via* scholarships, with an average of 80% of tuition being covered

by 2023. Within the confines of what often feels like hyper-capitalism, Cooper Union stands out as an institution appearing to truly strive for equity.

“Free education for all” is not much of an eyebrow-raising statement amongst the standard readers of arts journalism. It is more the “how” that feels like running into a sliding glass door.

Assistant Professor, Mary Eisendrath served as Administrative Director and later Assistant Chair of the Sculpture department for a total of 14 years with an additional 1.5 as Interim Chair before her resignation in January of 2021. Eisendrath cites her departure as largely due to the university’s shift to an RCM budget and an ensuing administrative restructuring.

preparations for the academic year. These changes signalled to Eisendrath an upper-level administration that prioritised revenue and compliance over education. “Great, you now have a solvent art school that has nothing to do with the arts,” she says.

So here we are, head-first into the glass door again. Perhaps this is one of the key issues with operating art

The first thing people tend to point out is just the grotesque levels of administration, but I think those exist because we are in a culture of accountability and record keeping.
— *Mary Eisendrath*

When reflecting upon CU’s revenue increases, which are largely the result of contributions, it makes sense to have hesitations regarding sustainability and ethics in donor-based dependence. To remove the obstacle of tuition is undeniably a huge step forward in positioning education as a right, however to have this balanced in the palms of the wealthy can give pause. In what is, to clarify, a hugely idealistic world not at all reflective of the one we live in, it seems more sensible to lean towards a model that provides free tuition *via* state funding.

It must be noted that although state support for public universities in the US has increased in recent years, with a 10.2% uptick in 2024 alone, these numbers have experienced an overall decline since the early 2000s. According to an analysis conducted by the National Education Association, state spending per student decreased an average of \$1,150 from 2008 to 2020, adjusted for inflation.

The School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University currently ranks at #4 amongst private and public art programs in the US. In addition to her role as an

RCM, or “Responsibility Center Management”, is a common budgeting system amongst universities. The superficial purpose is to allow for departments to have complete oversight of their budget and revenue, empowering department-level administrators and educators to make the financial decisions that best support their fields. The underbelly of this model however, especially for art programs, is directly linking budget to revenue or enrolment. While other departments may be able to pack a lecture hall with 200+ students, over-enrolling courses within art programs significantly mars the quality of education, placing art departments at a disadvantage.

Some years following the implementation of RCM, VCU announced an administrative restructuring, which included the dissolution of the singular department chair position. In lieu of this role, the core function of which was to advocate for program needs, faculty were expected to rotate the responsibility for 2-3 year periods. The yearly contract also shifted from 12 to 9 months, cutting not only compensation, but critical time for end-of-year reporting and

schools within public universities: a fundamental lack of understanding of the arts on an administrative level. However, it is worth noting that amongst those currently holding non-student positions on the Cooper Union Board of Trustees, only two have degrees in studio art.

Or rather maybe the issue is a consequence of inflated administration in higher education. Amongst the criticisms of Cooper Union in the wake of its instatement of tuition was a rise in non-full-time faculty wages (including administration) from \$12.5 to \$17.5 million from 2005 to 2010 while compensation for full-time faculty remained flat during the same period. Similar trends have been observed at institutions across the country, with some citing administrative bloat as a culprit for rising tuition. Eisendrath observed this at VCU and attributed it to a potential consequence of digitisation. With the technological capability to track every action and break down education into a spreadsheet of data, accountability becomes prioritised over trust. “The first thing people tend to point out

Institute for Contemporary Art
at Virginia Commonwealth University
© Steven Holl Architects



SCHOOL

is just the grotesque levels of administration,” she says, “but I think because we are in this culture of accountability and record keeping; that all of that requires a lot of administration.”

Perhaps Cooper Union sits as the most illustrative example of the potential of contemporary arts education: equally in its successes and failures. And with this, CU functions in a singular context, reaping the benefits of its enduring academic reputation in addition to being situated in one of the wealthiest cities in the world. The strategies that are currently succeeding in one institution likely cannot be replicated at another and there is no guarantee for how long they will continue to succeed. What can be looked upon as an example or rather a beacon, are groups like the Committee to Save Cooper Union; artists and educators diligently monitoring and holding institutions accountable as contexts shift with each day. There is seemingly no static solution; only to endlessly keep watch and adjust.

As with almost all structures in this increasingly upended time, an exhausted yearning for collapse is beginning to feel commonplace. To melodramatically shove the Jenga tower and stack from the ground up; or ignore the rules entirely and assemble something that just feels right. Maybe the most expansive form of arts education cannot exist within a formalised structure, but should instead be shapeless, endlessly malleable. Something akin to Black Mountain College (placing aside their own closure for the sake of idealisation); a school born from a similar period of fear and precariousness. While to claim a straightforward solution at this point in time can feel practically delusional, the only thing that feels certain, in fact glaringly obvious, is that true excellence and equity in education can only be brought about in tandem.





Cooper Union
© Zahner

A. WALLS



PERFORMANCE ART AN ANTI-CAPITALIST MONEY PIT

Almost impossible to market and often misunderstood, performance art is more popular and more poorly funded than ever.

Performance art is finding greater investment from organisations like the MAP fund, influential galleries and institutions, but why fund something that rarely cuts a profit and cannot be bought? The medium is in many ways the problem child of the fine art world, despite notable luminaries like Nick Cave, Genesis P-Orridge and Laurie Anderson, and filmmakers like David Cronenberg giving us a saucy apocalyptic body horror take on the discipline (*Crimes of the future*, 2022). More often than not, performance art takes a back seat to object-making, immersive spaces and any manner of digitised or technologically buoyed work.

Frequently incorporating the most intense elements of the performing arts, with dance, song, dramatisation and ceremony commonly used in their tool kit, performance artists rarely garner the traction and attention of more traditional acts. Perhaps it is the nature of the work itself, birthed from sociological discontent in 1916 Europe. It grew as a movement that is capable of decrying inequities and challenging hegemonies, by removing the core tenants that theatre requires structure and art and object are intrinsically related.

With a nonexistent bar for entry in skill or experience and the sum-total required materials for making performance art being the self and whatever else the artist may want to bring along, the medium is universally accessible at any level of income. Its legacy is arguably as impactful on popular culture as rock and roll yet it remains a side note in most cultural histories. One must remember, Yoko Ono is a performance artist.

Its major rebirth in the sixties and seventies coincided with the rise, bloat and fall of the hippie movement. Major groups like Fluxus broke incredible ground with affiliated members like Alison Knowles, John Cage and Joseph Beuys turning their attention to ideas of how time, sound and space can be manipulated and reinterpreted. Seminal pieces like 4'33 trickled through into popular social movements. "Happenings" brought art and everyday life together through large live participatory art events in a way that is now commonplace in modern life. Interactive art spaces are all the rage and "immersive" events in theatres, galleries and restaurants generate an experience economy. The groundbreaking work of the past is the date night of the present.

We witness dozens of "artist performers" dipping their toes in the techniques of performance art to buoy their creative lives. Figures like Lady Gaga and Chapell Roan owe major aspects of their personas to performance art. Even

Beyoncé has borrowed from Pipilotti Rist to establish a dialog of jubilant feminine rage.

For the purist, performance art is smaller, more communal and frequently completely grassroots. With avant-garde leanings, a legacy of disruption, political action and dynamic relational aesthetics, it remains a difficult discipline to grasp, let alone support adequately. There are networks of support and online communities of global citizens showing their work, talking theory and engaging in various types of praxis. Vast archives exist as well. But inevitably we come to the quandary of commerce. Ingrained in performance art's methodologies is a disdain for product. Historically anti-capitalist yearnings often provide little room for acquisition. Objects and remnants can be presented in the aftermath, but the performances remain acts of ephemera, left to future audiences in photo stills, video clips and soundbites. The skin of a snake is still beautiful and reflective but not the live writhing creature.

Michael Barrett, Director of the Stillwater: Performance art Library and Refuge, one of the few PhDs in the field, says, "History suggests that performance art originated as an act of resistance against traditional art, commercial gain and the financial market. Today, this push for institutional validation continues to overshadow its roots. Furthermore, the pursuit of financial support has, in many ways, muted what was once an extraordinary way of experiencing the world. In other words, the knife of authenticity has become dulled. The future of performance art may not rely on institutional support; instead, it will depend on small acts of kindness from everyday people. The sustainability of our performance art community hinges on our willingness to learn and grow together through sharing

and fostering hope. Our rewards cannot be measured by financial gain but rather by the higher levels of consciousness we achieve and the greater effectiveness we attain."

Performance art is not contingent on patronage (not that any discipline truly is). It requires only the most nominal of audience and the body. Dr Barrett's astute pronouncement, valid as it is, should be questioned. Building bolder, broader, more expansive practices with raised awareness should have a more profound effect on the practitioner and the audience. Would not institutional help and some funding benefit the field? It is a hard line to walk between authentic grassroots work and some kind of institutional show pony trotted out for audiences and investors to promote a museum or gallery's relevance and equity.

We have excellent examples of private galleries supporting performance art — long-term practitioners like Paul McCarthy with his upcoming 2025 work for Hauser & Wirth come to mind. Nonetheless, hand-picked performance artists with lengthy careers supported by deep-pocket galleries remain the exception, not the rule.

Certainly in Europe, some public programmes help provide financial backing that includes performance art, but in the United States, public funds for more esoteric practices are few and far between. The MAP fund presents a solution to American woes. Birthed from the Rockefeller Foundation in the late eighties, MAP is now an independent organisation that has been providing millions in grants for performing artists in various fields. MAP fund goes further by providing infrastructure and support for individual artists. Scaffolding for Practicing Artists (SPA) is another program that gives practitioners mentorship

and support through a 12-month mentorship program and a 2-day coaching conference with all participants. Other organisations like the National Endowment for the Arts help finance performance artists. But MAP is special in its exclusive dedication to the art form. Financing expansive ideas of cultural presentation and enhancing diversity in a stochastic field that consistently presents art over profit, to the tune of \$2.88 million through 93 projects as MAP has done in 2024, is a stepping stone to greater innovation.

Performance art as a discipline is Promethean. It thrives outside of the marketplace by design and that gives its practitioners a manoeuvrability not often seen in other mediums. The medium has consistently, for decades, given emotion and expression to underserved communities and under-regarded ideas that have a difficult relationship with the primary cultural narrative. And performance art is a place where even art must confront its inequities. In capitalism *ad infinitum*, beautiful works have been scuttled for financial reasons, while millions of sellable projects receive praise and support.

Greater funding and expansion of performance art might be the most reasonable response to a marketplace with 6 million dollar conceptual bananas. To invest in performance art is to fund a generator of social divergence, one of the greater proclaimed purposes of the arts. It is an investment in future culture, like putting money into some turntables for your friend in Brooklyn in the 1970s gets you hip hop. Performance art being older than hip hop's now 50-year reign as America's most important musical art form, ultimately it presents us with answers and questions about identity, self and culture that can only be addressed with the body in the moment.



John Cage

Photo Ben Martin





WORLD

British Museum
Photo Mark Stuckey





IS IT TIME FOR ART TOURISTS TO PAY UP?

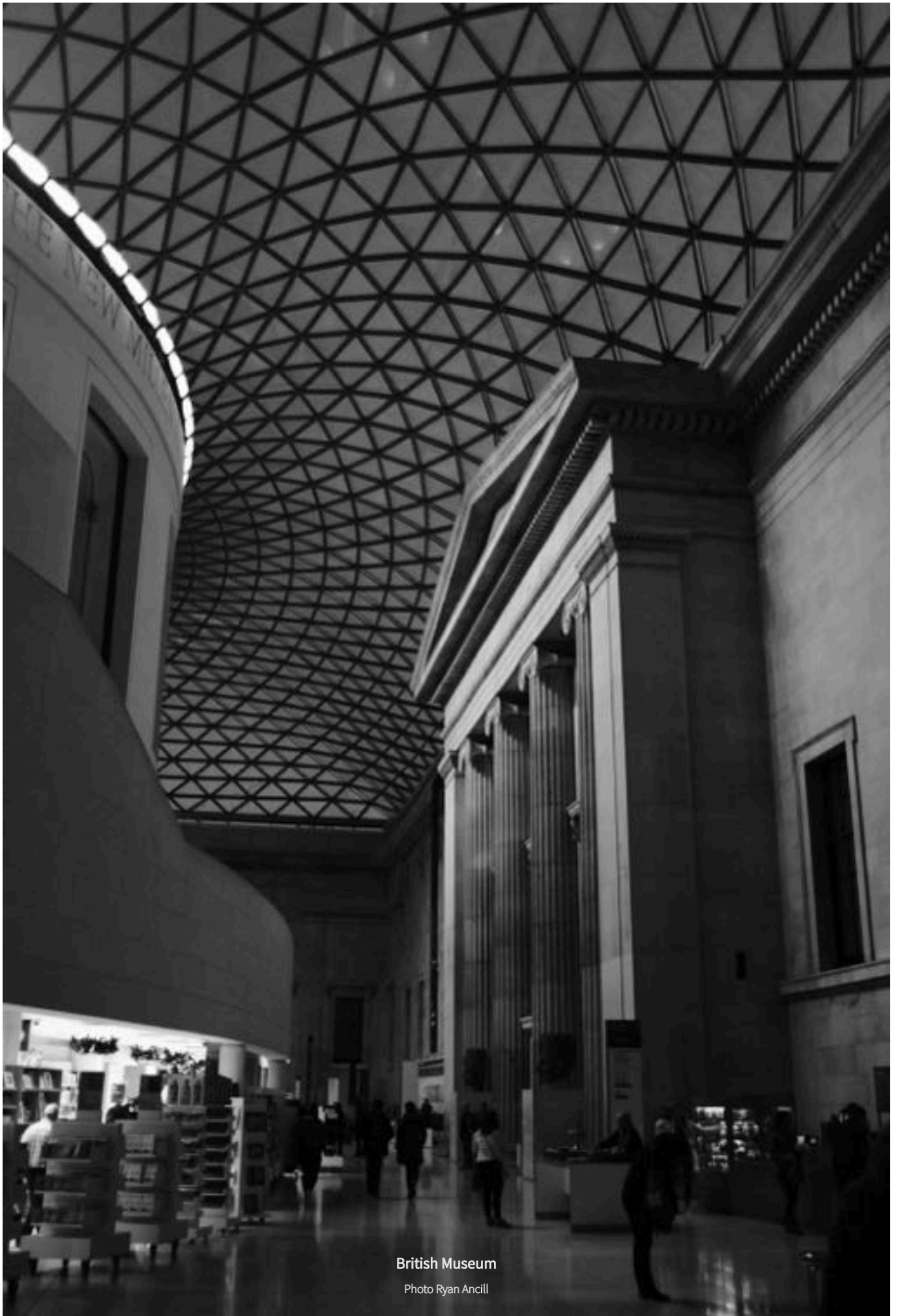
Sir Mark Jones, former director of the British Museum and the Victoria & Albert Museum, defends his position that it is time for foreign tourists to start paying to enjoy the UK's cultural assets.

It's late afternoon on a rainy Monday afternoon in November and the queue outside the British Museum snakes all the way from Great Russell Street past the caramel nut sellers and the Falun Gong stall into the historic courtyard. Anyone hoping for a quick glimpse of the newly reopened library at the centre of the museum's Great Court, where Karl Marx once sat and wrote and which everyone seems to be talking about, will have to wait for a less busy time. One could try the old Londoner's trick to skip the line by slipping in through the Islamic galleries around the side but they would surely be foiled by the new bag check and thus another queue.

The trouble is that in this age of "overtourism", London is full to bursting and the British Museum is among the most visited attractions in the city. Entry to the world's oldest national public museum may be free, but you pay with your time. The wait for the bag search (which is not done with machines — that would be very un-British) feels especially bittersweet since it was revealed last year that the real danger to the museum's collections was not a weapon, explosives or even a can of tomato soup, but one that lurked within its walls, when two thousand artefacts were discovered missing and for sale online. The theft scandal forced director Hartwig Fischer to step down, after which Sir Mark Jones, former director of the V&A, was appointed interim director of the museum.

As Sir Mark in turn handed over the reins to new director Nicholas Cullinan in July, he suggested in a press statement that it might be a good idea for London's museums to start charging for visitors

who are not British taxpayers. Sir Mark elaborates on his comments, explaining why he thought the time had come to start charging for the UK's famously free museums. "Well as I am sure you know it is a nightmare getting into the British Museum at the moment," he said. "So obviously something needs to be done. I do not think anyone could be satisfied with the current situation. Getting into the museum has become a ghastly experience. And one way of ameliorating the situation would be to have longer opening hours. The British museum is only open from ten to five. And why should not it be open, say, from eight in the morning to eight at night? And the answer is because it is hugely expensive and it would cost millions of pounds to move from the present system to another one and there would be quite a lot of foregone income. So you have to raise extra money to do that. And thinking about that, it seems to me and it has actually seemed to me for a long time, that it is not really equitable, that no contribution to the running of the tourist infrastructure is made by the



British Museum
Photo Ryan Ancill

people who benefit from it, in this case the tourists. I mean that is a general point, not just about the British Museum.”

Just recently, the British Museum announced a £1 billion refurbishment scheme that will last ten years. In that time the museum will remain open. In 2023 it was announced that the museum had accepted £50 million in sponsorship from BP for the overhaul, one of the largest corporate sponsorship deals in museum history, a move that campaigners against fossil fuels said showed the museum to be “astonishingly out of touch” and led to protests. The problem with philanthropy, according to Sir Mark, is that, “it raises the question, are firms wise to be philanthropic? It seems as though taking any philanthropic action these days makes you a sort of target. It would be fine if the firms that did not give were targeted first and those that did give were targeted second but it is not that way round! It is the giving that makes you vulnerable. That has to be bad news for any part of the cultural sector that hopes to sustain itself with corporate sponsorship. People can give anonymously but they do enjoy the recognition that comes from giving.”

Sir Mark asserts that between 65% to 70% of all visits to the British Museum are made by people who have come from overseas, but, as he states it, make no contribution to its running costs. “So what I am saying is, why is that fair?” he asks. “It does not seem fair because when we go to other countries, we pay to go into museums and make our contribution. And so would it not be fair to ask people coming from overseas who would not otherwise contribute, to contribute through paying an entry fee?”

Sir Mark further asserts that there is a question of equity regarding what he calls “the selection of those who

pay.” While museums are currently funded by general taxation, that burden falls on a large number of people in the UK. Most of those taxpayers, he argues, are less well off than a typical overseas tourist. “The people coming to London have a reasonable income, otherwise they would not be able to come,” he says, adding, “that might not be true for students, but then why not have a system that makes it free or cheaper for students?”

Sir Mark has suggested in the past that £20 would be a reasonable amount to charge visitors who do not pay tax in the UK. One question about this approach would be the mechanics of administering such a scheme. Other questions also linger. While an entry charge might raise funds for the museum, will it also help reduce the queues without reducing visitor numbers if the museum can afford to open later? Will it feel less crowded as a result? Or is there a danger that the British Museum will become one of those tourist attractions (Madame Tussauds springs to mind) that Londoners never visit?

Sir Mark mentions the Tower of London as a similar point of warning. “What can happen is that if the proportion of tourists going to a particular tourist attraction exceeds the number of locals, there is the danger that the attraction comes to be seen as something that really is for tourists and we [Londoners] do not go there,” he says. “We just need to have a proper rethink of these things and the only way of tackling these problems is asking overseas visitors to pay. If we did ask them to pay, museums could open first thing in the morning and be open in the evening. Which was very much a nineteenth century idea. The V&A for example, when it was a young museum, was open three evenings a week so that working people could come and enjoy the museum. It would make a huge difference if museums could open for twelve hours instead of seven.”

Another issue Sir Mark points out is how the British Museum is becoming something that can only be visited with forethought and planning and not as an everyday thing, maybe even on a whim. He refers to what he says is the current system of having people go online and order a ticket in advance. “It is a real shame because people feel inhibited about popping into the British Museum for half an hour to see something that they remember or to meet a friend or whatever,” he says. “The thing is, it is become rather off-putting for people who live in London who like to think of the British museum as their museum which they can visit whenever they like.” (Sir Mark may not have used the British Museum’s normal entrance recently, as visitors entering there are not currently required to acquire a ticket to access the museum.)

The tourist industry is worth roughly £16 billion to the UK every year. In 2023, London welcomed 20.3 million international visitors. The British Museum is among the city’s top free attractions visited by international tourists, alongside the Natural History Museum and the Science Museum. It is no wonder, when the London Eye charges between £29 and £42 for a ticket (depending on when it was booked) and tickets for the Harry Potter experience at Warner Brothers Studio (also very popular) start at £53. The bounce after the Covid-19 pandemic has been interesting: visitor numbers to the British Museum and the Natural History Museum are higher than pre-pandemic, but visitor numbers to the city’s free art museums such as the Tate and the National Galleries are actually lower.

So why does the United Kingdom continue to keep its public museums free of charge even in an age of budget cuts? And why does it not close one day a week like the Louvre, the

ZOOM

Metropolitan Museum of Art and many major world museums? The answer may be its shorter daily opening hours (10 am-5 pm) as opposed to that of the Louvre (9 am-6 pm). In the case of the British Museum, the answer dates to its founding in 1753. Hans Sloane, a physician who had amassed a large collection of coins, medals, books, prints, manuscripts and a herbarium, bequeathed it all to the state on condition that a new and freely accessible public museum be built to house it. An Act of Parliament established the museum to do just that in 1753 and it opened its doors in 1759. Since then, along with the Tate and the National Gallery, it has resisted pressure to charge for entry. In 2001, all public museums in the United Kingdom were officially made free of charge by the Labour government.

Meanwhile, Sir Mark notes that the British Museum faces a bill of hundreds of millions of pounds for refurbishment of its building. There is also a shortage of funds at regional and local authority museums. Acknowledging that charging tourists an admission fee will not solve all of the problems, but if the London museums shared their tourist income with museums in other parts of the country there might be a benefit there. "It is a rather undramatic proposal to be honest," he says. "I am very much in favour of free admission. I think it is great and I would hate to see it taken away from people who are resident in the United Kingdom. But I do not think that we really resent paying when we go to museums elsewhere in continental Europe or indeed in the United States or Australia. So yes, if we are quite sure that we are so comfortably off that we can do without the contribution of overseas visitors then fine. But I do not think that is the real experience of the museum at the moment. Actually they are very short of money."





Sir Mark Jones
Photo Myung Jung Kim

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THE STATE OF GREEN ART CONSERVATION

Art conservation professionals recently met in Slovenia to discuss sustainable practices within their field.

On 27 November, a public event was held at Ljubljana's Gallery of Modern Art, Cankarjeva, to discuss green conservation practices in museums, libraries and archives. During the event, Antonio Mirabile, a valued partner of the GREENART Project, shared the results of a questionnaire surveying hundreds of professionals within the French art conservation field. The results included 193 responses received from individuals represented by AFROA, APRéVU and FFCR — three professional associations in the collections conservation area — and offered insights into the current state of ecologically sustainable practices within the sector.

The survey emerged out of a moment at the end of 2023 when members of AFROA, APRéVU and FFCR questioned the adequacy of their professional practices in the face of the challenges posed by the climate emergency. Working in partnership, they established the questionnaire in order to take stock of the entire range of professional practices in which they are involved, including packaging, transport, conservation and climate and waste management. Of the 193 respondents, 48 percent were conservators; 36 percent were registrars; 15 percent were preventers; and one percent worked in other areas. Fifty-six percent were employees of an institution involved in art conservation; 46 percent were freelance.

The first round of questions measured the current level of commitment to sustainable practices within the industry. When asked about their personal level of action in their daily professional life, 1.6% responded that it was non-existent,

35.8% said it was weak, 53.4% said it was average and 9.3% said it was excellent. Similar levels were reported when asked how committed the respondents' workplaces are to responsible ecology, with 6.2% responding not at all, 34.7% saying their workplaces do almost nothing, 47.7% saying they do a little and 11.4% saying their workplaces are very committed to sustainable practices.

Respondents were asked what they believe the obstacles to change are. The most significant obstacles listed were doctrine or the weight of habit, lack of time, lack of proper equipment, difficulties related to administrative functioning, lack of financial means; and realities associated with their current building or facilities. Other answers included a general lack of competencies and difficulties related to hierarchical management structures.

The survey measured the number of loans made by museums and institutions each year and whether the institutions assessed the

environmental impact of those loans. Of the 93 respondents to these questions, more than half made between zero and 50 loans per year, with 14.6% making more than 500. Ninety-two percent of respondents reported that they were not currently working on reducing loans and 90% responded that they did not currently do anything to assess the environmental impact of their loan process. About half of the respondents said that they take environmental issues into account when engaging in the public procurement process.

In two thirds of cases, respondents reported that the institutions they work with send people to personally accompany loaned objects either “often”, “very often”, or “systematically”. The measures currently being taken by those institutions to limit the carbon footprint of such convoys include transportation sharing, traveling by train, virtual accompaniment, utilising hybrid vehicles and limiting the use of air conditioning in the vehicles.

In general, travel of service providers is considered an area of potential ecological reform in the sector. When asked if they knew the environmental impact of their business and professional travels, 70% of 193 respondents said no. When asked how they felt they could reduce the environmental impact of their travel, the most common responses were utilising low carbon transport, limiting travel, carpooling and choosing methods of mobility that do not consume fossil fuels.

The use of packaging crates is another area identified for potential ecological consideration. These crates are predominantly used for the internal movement of objects and for loans. Of 77 respondents to a question about acclimatisation of insulated crates: 18% said they acclimatise empty crates, 46% said they employ acclimatisation of 24h, 20% said they employ acclimatisation of 48h and 16% said they employ no acclimatisation. Eighty-eight percent of respondents said they do not get their crates painted. More than half of respondents reported that their institution does not maintain an internal storage area for packaging crates. Of those who do maintain an internal crate storage area, 44.2% say that storage area is smaller than 10 m² and 38.5% say it is smaller than 50 m². In 62% of the cases, there is an individual who has a dedicated responsibility to these storage areas. In most cases that person’s job title is registrar.

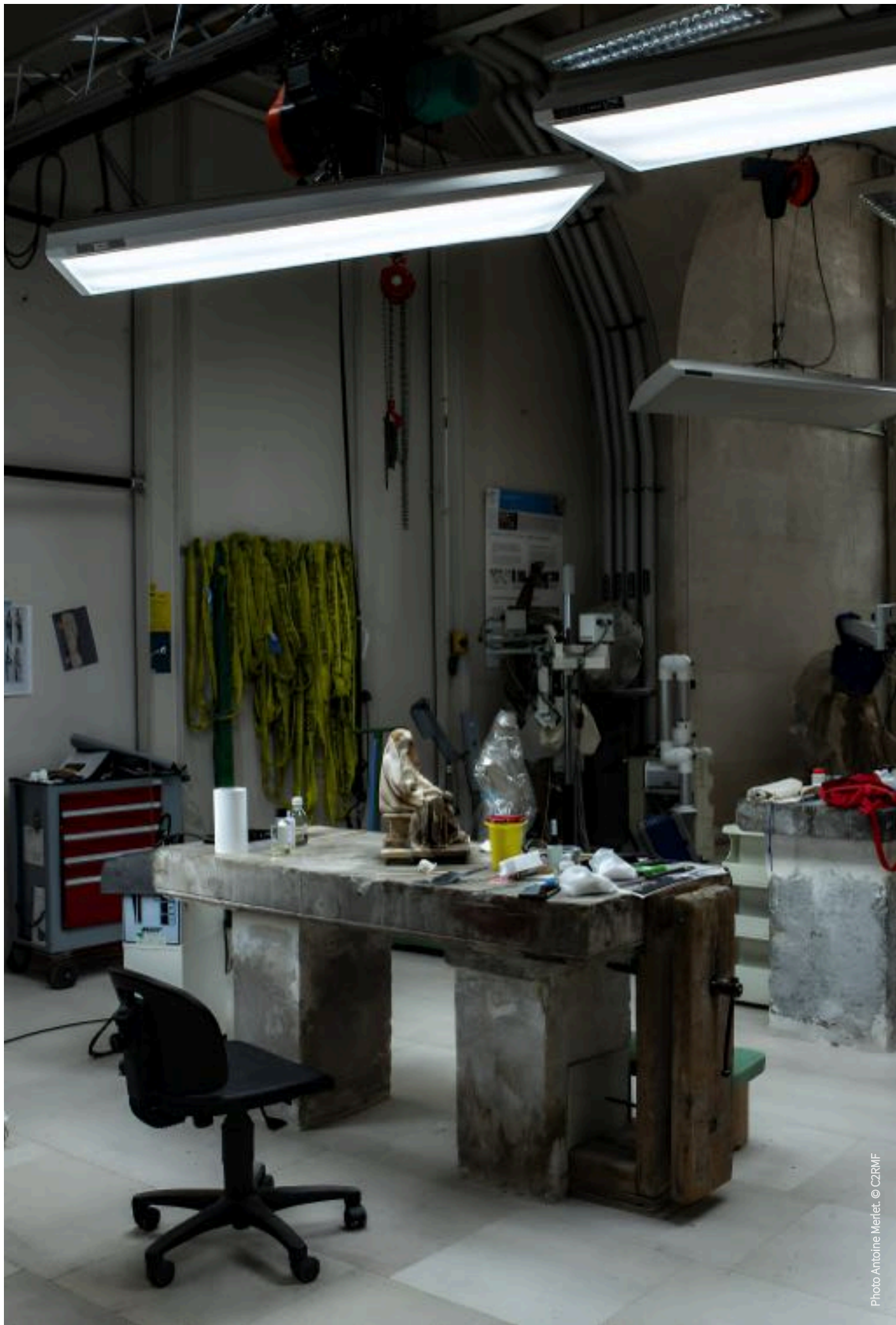
The next round of questions related to energy consumption within cultural heritage institutions. The first question addressed the imposition of energy restrictions. Although about a third of respondents reported that their institution is not subject to any energy restrictions following the increase in energy prices, two thirds reported that they are subject to restrictions when the temperature drops and nearly half are subject to restrictions in the summer. Of 113 respondents, 84% responded that they do not currently know how much energy their institution consumes, although 39.4% actively carry out assessments to obtain

data about energy consumption and 15.2% delegate such assessments to a service provider.

Eight out of 106 respondents reported that a climate control specialist was in charge of prescribing climate guidelines within their institutions. That responsibility mostly falls on registrars, conservators, curators and preventers. Around two-thirds of respondents reported that their institution does not propose microclimate management systems. Nearly 70% of respondents said that they do not have enough information to support more sustainable climate prescriptions, while 73% said they do not currently seek advice from a national institution to validate their prescriptions. Asked if they would be willing to give up control over their own climate systems in order to achieve different results, an equal number (16%) said either yes or no unconditionally; one third said yes, conditionally, such as when the institution is closed; another third said they do not know.

The next round of questions assessed the concerns and actions of freelancers within the field. Of the freelancers who responded, the majority reported that their interest in ecological sustainability began after 2016. Their current efforts included conducting survey analyses, going on consultancy missions, site monitoring, supplying equipment, observation, diagnosis, health assessment after leaks and ensuring the proper management of collections according to the climate recorded.

The freelancers reported that in most cases they had to do their own







climate measurements, without the help of institutional surveys. In two-thirds of the cases, they reported that their efforts to convince the institutions they do work for to adopt ecologically responsible practices in terms of climate management have failed. Similarly to individuals employed by institutions, the vast majority, 88%, of freelancers reported that they did not consider their knowledge of sustainable development regarding climate to be sufficient. When faced with questions, 61% of freelancers report that they consult experts in the field, including experts from national institutions and climatic specialists.

Waste management was a major area of concern for many respondents. Many reported that they have reduced the use of certain materials due to their environmental impact. The top materials listed as having been reduced were plastic materials and solvents. Other materials listed were synthetic paints, adhesives, resins, cotton, fillers and biocide. However, 77% of respondents reported that they do not know how much waste they produce.

When asked whether they would be prepared not to carry out certain interventions because of their environmental impact, 74% of respondents said yes, but 63% said they have never actually defended that position with a client or partnering institution. When asked if they would be willing to increase their fee in order to be able to implement eco-responsible approaches that generate an additional cost, 79% said yes.

In terms of energy consumption, the most common areas where consumption reduction currently takes place in the sector are electricity, air conditioning and water. Electricity reduction is mostly achieved through low-energy light bulbs, replacing neon lights with LEDs, turning off lights when not needed, installing motion-detecting lights and unplugging unused appliances. Reduction in air conditioning, ventilation and heating is mostly achieved by lowering the ambient temperature (heating), conducting administrative work at home where less air conditioning is needed, using programmable thermostats, regulation of relative humidity and management of sunlight. Reduction in water use is mostly achieved through recycling wastewater, checking tap leaks, using rainwater and recovering water from dehumidifiers.

The top materials respondents reported recycling were cardboard, paper, plastic, wood, metal, solvents, PPE and cotton. Those same materials were reported as being reused, in addition to glass and water. The systems most often reported as being used to recycle waste were municipal sorting bins, waste collection centres and external service providers. Respondents also reported a number of materials that they use in large quantities for which they do not currently have a recycling solution. Those materials include pallets, wooden crates, impregnated cottons, certain plastics such as bubble, film, polystyrene and polyethylene, mylar and tyvek, film and anoxic absorbers, plastic syringes, nitrile or latex pants, contaminated water from stabilisation treatment, oxygen absorbers, canvas scraps, adhesive leftovers, epoxy resin residue, solvent and resin-soiled hand towels, acids and bases, solvents, lime grout and screed, certain PPE, damaged art frames and lighting.

Most respondents replied that they have changed their purchase habits in response to concerns about eco sensibility. The most popular changes include making purchases from local suppliers, purchasing more sustainable materials even if the cost is higher, making group orders, requesting delivery to a relay point if possible and purchasing materials in bulk.

In conclusion, respondents were asked the overarching question of whether they considered their own professional practices to be in line with their personal commitment. Of 193 respondents, 13% said “not at all”, 33.7% said an unqualified “yes” and 50.8% said “a little.” All respondents felt that they could use more training, especially in the areas of climate management and eco-responsibility, waste management, carbon footprint and green solvents.







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