

Comment

"Most biased choices in the media arise from the preselection of right-thinking people, internalized preconceptions, and the adaption of personnel to the constraints of ownership, organization, market, and commentators who adjust to the realities of source and media organizational requirements, and by people at higher levels who are chosen to implement, and have usually internalized, the constraints imposed by proprietary and other market and governmental centres of power."

'Manufacturing Consent', Chomsky. p. 300

"In the media, as in other major institutions, those who do not display the requisite values and perspectives will be regarded as 'irresponsible', 'ideological', or otherwise aberrant, and will tend to fall by the wayside. While there may be a few exceptions, the pattern is pervasive, and expected. Those who adapt, perhaps quite honestly, will then be free to express themselves with little managerial control, and they will be able to assert, accurately, that they perceive no pressures to conform. The media are indeed 'free'—for those who adopt the principles required for their 'social purpose'. There may be some who are simply corrupt, and who serve as 'errand boys' for state and other authority, but this is not the norm. We know from personal experience that many journalists are quite aware of the way the system operates, and utilize the occasional openings it affords to provide information and analysis that departs in some measure from the elite consensus, carefully shaping it so as to accommodate to required norms in a general way. But this degree of insight is surely not common. Rather, the norm is a belief that freedom prevails, which is true for those who have internalized the required values and perspectives."

'Manufacturing Consent', Chomsky. p. 304

An analysis piece in the *Guardian* by David Miller of Stirling University ('The domination effect', 8/1/04) succinctly spelt out the development of the US government's strategy during the Iraq conflict from managing the media for propaganda purposes to one of information dominance, where little distinction is made between propaganda and journalism; it is all seen as "weaponized information" to be deployed by the military command structure, part of achieving "full spectrual dominance". Miller explains that it is not only domination of the media which is the focus, but also the denying, degrading and destroying of "unfriendly" media. To this end, the embedding of journalists within Iraq was a clear means of building up "friendly" information — an MoD commissioned analysis shows 90% of embeds' reporting was either "positive or neutral". Miller points to the setting-up of the Pentagon's TV service for Iraq, IMN; the shutting down of Iraqi-run newspapers, radio and TV stations; and the attacks on the independent TV network al-Jazeera's offices as evidence of the latter.

Having developed its embedding strategy in Iraq, it is now being carried through in the US itself.

James Ridgeway writes ('The Martial Plan: Police State Tactics Transform a Nation—Our Own' 24-30.12.03 <http://villagevoice.com/issues/0352/mondo1.php>) that "the most recent crack-down [in the US] seems to be on the foreign press—the source of much of the substantial critique of its policies.

"U.S. immigration authorities are detaining foreign correspondents on grounds they have not obtained special visas permitting them to operate here... There is a law stipulating a special visa for journalists, but few have ever heard of it and it is seldom enforced... No one ever told the visiting journalists it had suddenly been revived. As a result, immigration officials aren't allowing reporters from abroad to come in under ordinary 90-day tourist visa waivers. Peter Krobath, chief editor for the Austrian movie magazine *Skip*, was seized and held overnight... with 45 others who landed without visas... He is guilty of flying to the

U.S. to interview Ben Affleck. Thomas Sjoerup, a photographer for the Danish paper *Ekstra Bladet*, had to give the American authorities fingerprints, a mug shot, and a DNA sample, and was promptly sent back home anyway. Six French journalists were marched across a terminal at Los Angeles International Airport in handcuffs, having had their belts and shoelaces removed. The International Press Institute, based in Vienna, along with the International Federation of Journalists, headquartered in Brussels, is protesting this treatment."

Prior to such conspicuous censorship of international reporting, other assaults were taking place on independent media networks within the US.

During the week of demonstrations against the Free Trade Area of the Americas in Miami, Nov. 19-22 2003, protesters were met with a massive show of state repression, backed by \$8.5 million in US Government funding. Police using batons, rubber and plastic bullets, pepper spray, tear gas and other chemical agents attacked demonstrators. Over 100 demonstrators were treated for injuries—2 hospitalized. There are estimates of more than 250 arrests. People have been denied access to attorneys, visitation rights, and access to essential medical attention.

In a Znet report by Jeremy Scahill on the Miami protests ('The Miami Model Paramilitaries, Embedded Journalists and Illegal Protests. Think This is Iraq? It's Your Country'), the producer and correspondent for Democracy Now!, recounts being stopped by a group of police cyclists. One of the 'police' had on a Miami police polo shirt, a Miami police bike helmet, the only detail that separated him from the others being a small badge around his neck identifying him as a reporter with the *Miami Herald*. That reporter was one of dozens who were embedded with the Miami forces during the protests. Scahill writes: "Watching the embedded journalists on Miami TV was quite entertaining. They spoke of venturing into Protesterland as though they were entering a secret al Qaeda headquarters in the mountains of Afghanistan. Interviews with protest leaders were sort of like the secret bin Laden tapes. There was something risqué, even sexy about having the courage to venture over to the convergence space (the epicenter of protest organizing at the FTAA) and the Independent Media Center. Several reporters told of brushes they had with 'the protesters'.

"...a colleague from Democracy Now!, Ana Nogueira, and I got separated in the mayhem. I was lucky to end up on the "safe" side of the street. Ana was in the melee. As she did her job—videotaping the action—Ana was wearing her press credentials in plain sight. As the police began handcuffing people, Ana told them she was a journalist. One of the officers said, "She's not with us, she's not with us," meaning that although Ana was clearly a journalist, she was not the friendly type. She was not embedded with the police and therefore had to be arrested. In police custody, the authorities made Ana remove her clothes because they were soaked with pepper spray. The police forced her to strip naked in front of male officers. Despite calls from Democracy Now!, the ACLU, lawyers and others protesting Ana's arrest and detention, she was held in a cockroach-filled jail cell until 3:30 am. She was only released after I posted a \$500 bond. Other independent journalists remained locked up for much longer and face serious charges, some of them felonies. In the end, Ana was charged with "failure to disperse." The real crime seems to be "failure to embed."



Tramway Letter November 2003

Dear,

Bridget McConnell (head of Cultural & Leisure Services, Glasgow City Council) Graham Berry (Director, Scottish Arts Council) Frank McAveety (Minister of Culture, Scottish Parliament)

We are pleased to see that Scottish Ballet/Scottish Opera have responded to public opinion regarding their proposed takeover of Tramway and altered the terms of their Lottery bid so as to retain the visual arts space, Tramway2. However, while this change of heart is welcome it is not, in itself, a solution. It will only be made worthwhile as the beginning of a process of consultation and consideration that leads to a strategic commitment on the part of the City Council and the Scottish Arts Council. Any solution for the future of visual arts at Tramway must be well-supported, thought through and in place for the long term.

Glasgow has a major success on its hands, in the shape of what Tate Magazine recently called "the most vibrant, concentrated, successful group of artists in the world". Tramway, "one of the UK's most ground-breaking art spaces of the 90s" (*The Guardian*, 30/5/00) and "one of the leading contemporary visual and performing arts venues in Europe" (Glasgow City Council), has been instrumental in creating and supporting this success. It is a unique, free art space that offers the opportunity to engage with the best of new, local and international visual art, an engagement that is both a key part of contemporary cultural life and also now forms part of Glasgow's international identity.

Yet, currently, there is no clear strategy for the visual arts within Glasgow City Council, little coordination across the city or between the City Council and the Arts Council in respect of visual arts policy and priorities, and there has been no public or professional consultation regarding the Ballet/Opera proposal.

Tramway's Visual Arts Officer Alexia Holt remains suspended, apparently for simply bringing the existence of this Lottery bid to public attention. In the light of the decision to rethink this bid once the issues involved were publicly considered, it seems clear that conducting it in secret was a mistake and that Ms. Holt's suspension is unjustified and indefensible.

We draw attention to the recommendations made by the Scottish Parliament's Education, Culture and Sport Committee in their Report on the Inquiry into Scottish Ballet, released November 2001. The Parliamentary Committee states, on the handling of the reorganisation of Scottish Ballet, that "the encouragement of wide

Comment
(continued)

public consultation on issues of importance such as these is central to the Scottish Arts Council's role", and recommends to both Scottish Ballet and the SAC that "decisions should not be finalised until there has been a period of genuine consultation and debate and the Arts Council should insist upon such a period."

We believe that the SAC Lottery Capital Committee, made up of voluntary members, would be greatly assisted both by the existence of a genuine, in-depth consultation process and by the considered development of a visual arts strategy within Glasgow City Council, on the basis of which they might make an informed judgment - if indeed it should be their responsibility to do so.

The Lottery Capital Committee meets in January to make its decision. It seems possible that, due to the large amounts of money involved in the context of limited Lottery funds, a decision in favour of Scottish Ballet/Scottish Opera might well also see the proposed development of visual arts premises in King Street (and the ensuing improvement of provision offered by no less than eleven separate organisations) being cancelled due to lack of funds, an outcome that would also endanger Glasgow City Council's proposed strategy for the development of the Merchant City. Also, in the context of the revised Ballet/Opera bid, it has not been made clear why additional funding for a new build workshop is seen as the solution when other, perhaps more cost-effective, workshop spaces could be found in the city.

Meanwhile, the City Council has commissioned the consultants Bonnar Keenlyside to "identify options for the future development of Tramway", a positive move. Yet this review, itself Lottery funded, has no remit to consider the implications of the Ballet/Opera bid and would be made irrelevant if the bid is successful. We suggest that this review should look at all options that can develop Tramway2 as a major international gallery space offering public arts provision of the highest standard - integrated into a clear and well-supported cultural strategy.

We the undersigned represent artists, galleries, art schools, studio groups and other arts organisations across Scotland. We call for a genuine process of consultation and debate, leading to strategic action that takes into account all of the points made above. We believe that this is the time for intelligent, inclusive development to invest in and capitalise on what has been achieved so far.

We would like that process to bring together representatives of the arts community and Scottish Ballet/Scottish Opera, and officers of Glasgow City Council and the Scottish Arts Council as soon as is mutually convenient, certainly before the Lottery application in question is taken any further.

Yours sincerely,

Will Bradley: Board of Directors, The Modern Institute, Glasgow

Professor Klaus: Jung Head of School of Fine Art, Glasgow School of Art

Richard Calvoceossi: Director, Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art

Guyan Porter: President, Scottish Artists' Union

Nick Evans, Kate Davis, Charlie Hammond, Lotte Gertz and Jane Topping: Committee of Transmission Gallery, Glasgow

Graham McKenzie: Director, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow

Fiona Bradley: Director, Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh

Toby Webster: Director, The Modern Institute, Glasgow

Mick Peter: Glasgow Project Room / Glasgow Independent Studios

Katrina Brown Curator: Dundee Contemporary Arts

Amy Sales and Lucy Gibson: EmergeD, Glasgow

Leigh French: Co-editor, Variant magazine

Lorraine Wilson: Co-ordinator, Glasgow Sculpture Studios

Malcolm Dickson: Director, Street Level Photoworks

Sam Ainsley: Head of Master of Fine Arts Course, Glasgow School of Art

Deidre McKenna: General Co-ordinator, Stills Gallery, Edinburgh

Paul Nesbitt: Director, Inverleith House, Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Robb Mitchell: The Chateau, Glasgow

Sorcha Dallas and Marianne Greated: Switchspace, Glasgow

Susanna Beaumont: Director, Doggerfisher Gallery, Edinburgh

Saving Private Tramway

Whispers and rumours aside, the first confirmation that Scottish Ballet were putting in a Lottery bid to annex Tramway2 as a fabrication space was when Alexia Holt, Programmer at Tramway, confirmed the decision after requests from the media to do so. Having cleared it with her Glasgow City Council (GCC) overseers to talk to the press, she was subsequently 'locked out' of her office. Holt has now quit Tramway for pastures afresh, but her dedicated post of visual arts programmer has been axed.

The initial whipped-up reaction of a cluster of students and artists to the Ballet revelations wasn't much more than flailing, placard waving and T-shirt sloganeering at Tramway and the Gallery of Modern Art. This resulted in two artists who happened to be Tramway casual staff effectively being sacked—one had simply signed the above letter. (Glasgow School of Art were also told to 'back off' from the issue.)

Following pressure from press coverage of the Ballet's plans, there was a meeting between GCC Culture and Leisure Services Dept. and artists' representatives. It became clearer that GCC's prime concern lies in offloading the responsibility of maintenance of the building onto someone else—pretty much anyone it would seem—which the Ballet's bid would do.

GCC still have no Cultural Policy for the Visual Arts, despite this being a core requirement emanating from their Best Value Review of museums and galleries. Maybe that's a blessing in disguise.

I suppose writing a Cultural Policy strategy right now would be a waste of time—especially if you're Bridget McConnell and your Executive spouse, Jack, is busy ushering in a review of Scottish Opera (co-joined twin of Ballet) and overhauling the very foundations of public sector funding for what is deemed appropriate cultural activity in Scotland.

For the time being, Scottish Ballet's Lottery bid has been withdrawn but is expected to re-emerge in October, no doubt with Executive recommendations. However, under the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, local authorities now have a statutory responsibility to implement Community Planning as part of their service delivery. The legislation addresses three key areas: Community Planning; Best Value; and Well Being. In essence, Community Planning recognises that the needs of individuals and communities must be addressed collectively by a range of organisations. Emphasis is given to involving relevant partner agencies and sectors in the planning and development of local services. Genuinely engaging people and communities in decisions about public services is also prioritised. To achieve this, local authorities are charged with developing local Community Planning Partnerships made up of a range of different representatives and organisations. Partnerships are expected to produce a Community Plan in consultation with local people and partner agencies. These plans outline a joint vision and outcomes, allocate resources and monitor progress. All of which doesn't square with the closing of Govanhill pool, just around the corner

from Tramway, and subsequent criminalising of the local community.

When the above letter appeared in the media there were the expected flurries of playground name calling, mainly one sided it has to be said from Opera/Ballet aficionados—by and large the visual arts' criticisms were of the Ballet's plans and steered clear of attacking the art form itself.

One article in the Scotsman by Duncan MacMillan did stir up a bit of vitriol in the "Visual Arts Community". MacMillan claimed the Save Tramway2 campaign was a storm in a teacup, slated the exhibition that was on at the time ('it is simply very bad'), and concluded that Tramway is so full of such rubbish that there is no effective defence against Scottish Ballet's plans. It's not surprising then that the article attracted "much hostility" in visual art circles—however overly familiar the territory. The defensive response comes from an insecure, fragmented 'sector' (division and competition being the rule of the day) that has virtually no political representation and operates on what are tantamount to feudal principles. (No wonder new Labour plugs the condition of the artist as their great new occupational model.)

In the absence of any real political representation or public platforms for exchange of opinions, what endures in the visual arts is largely internal sniping that revolves around caricatures and stereotypes. The lack of meaningful exchanges, or independent platforms for dialogue, simply serves to reinforce this alienation. (And yes, the SAC Visual Arts Dept. has to take much responsibility here and their tendered magazine is not going to be any antidote.)

That it was not considered 'constructive' to criticise the Tramway2 show 'at that time' is the exact same form of self-censorship that's been propagated for years. It's always the wrong time, it's always too fragile, always a constant crisis to which the reaction to any line of criticism is always don't rock the boat, especially when you're being told (obliquely of course) it's not really your boat to rock—so whose is it? To broach these very questions is seen as distasteful, or uncouth at best.

We should be openly discussing how we arrived at this juncture and what outcome we want—what model do we want for Tramway2, who/what should it represent/support and how? Just what do we want for the visual arts in Glasgow, in Scotland? What might be considered to constitute this elastic field? Perhaps the problem, the very fragility, is a direct result of the unwillingness to address the lack of public discourse and the lack of political representation of the visual arts? Or perhaps this fragility is now too easily alluded to so as to stifle discussion—a convenient if not aggressive line of defence?

As Critical Art Ensemble underscore in Variant no.15 ('Collective Cultural Action'), there is a strong myth of the universality of a visual arts community, and with it an assumed or compelled affinity. But there is not a community of visual artists, rather a number of overlapping, though relatively closed social constellations. Within and between these social/economic groupings there are antagonisms and competitions over the interrelations of cultural consecration. There are also points of common interest, and retention of Tramway2 may be one—perhaps. A Coalition (rather than the construct of a familial Community) would be the bringing together of hybrid groups to focus on one or two common characteristics, putting potentially conflicting (and acknowledged) differences aside—which is about finding, rather than assuming, mutual ground.

The 'failures' of the political representation of the visual arts (in: GCC, SAC, Scottish Executive, the media) always seem to be burdened onto someone else, and in this instance over Tramway2 Transmission gallery have tolerated accusatory whispers from some quarters of the so-called visual arts community. Maybe this is because as one artist-run space, Transmission as a membership organisation can hold some claim to represent a

body of practitioners—even if this is a familial grouping constructed as much on similar tastes and concerns as generationally. Rather than it simply being opportune to amass a body of people, if the model of Transmission as accountable to a membership is seen as constructive in this current 'crisis' then shouldn't we be looking towards adopting a similar model for other bodies? If the problem over Tramway2 lies with the fact that the visual arts are finding it hard to claim representative authority then we have to be asking why, not looking for scapegoats in voluntary, artist-run organisations. It's not a question of how many students people can muster to wear "Save Tramway2" t-shirts—as no-one else is really looking. The very problem is that there is limited external representation. The question we need to address is how we achieve real representation, not a distractive image of it amongst ourselves? In particular, we need to see and treat individuals as more than simply a force to be brought to a field of contestation for our own personal benefit—whether that be students, artists, or a broader public.

In this climate of hostile careerism, visibly aligning yourself to a Save Tramway2 'cause' also serves to flag-up otherwise unspoken ambitions, for lack of direct lines of communication or clearly defined structures of 'advancement'. I'll go so far as to say it's important for some people to 'be seen' to be protesting—their words not mine—which is not to say it's not sincere. Ironically, you can be in a space with groups protesting potentially the same thing and never the twain shall meet, the same old social divisions remain as concrete as ever—despite the situation, there is still limited interaction between these relatively closed social constellations and a tiresome snobbery prevails in some quarters.

Well, drastic changes to state support for the visual arts are actually taking place, right now. It's something else we're not being consulted over, but ultimately something that's going to have a far more wide reaching and fundamental affect on all cultural activity in Scotland than the Ballet's proposals for Tramway2.

The Scottish Arts Council (along with other National cultural bodies) is undergoing 'review'. In September last year, Bryan Beattie was seconded from his 'arts and cultural consultancy company', *Creative Services*, and appointed as 'expert adviser on cultural issues' to Frank McAveety, Minister for Tourism, Culture and Sport. Beattie was Chairman of Eden Court Theatre, Director of Scottish Youth Theatre, a Councillor in the Highland Council during which time he was Chairman of the Cultural and Leisure Services Committee, and a board member of Scottish Screen. He gave up the task of leading the Inverness and Highland bid for European Capital of Culture to be Director of Cork's efforts to mark its year as Culture Capital in 2005, then prematurely left that post. According to *Creative Services*, they "are one of the few dedicated arts and cultural consultancies in Scotland and the only one that specialises in working closely with community organisations." Commenting on his appointment McAveety said: "This is an important time for the development of cultural policy in Scotland. We are committed to a review of the governance structure of cultural bodies and this is now getting under way."

(Incidentally, new members of the Board of the Scottish Arts Council include Annie Marris, 19, "the youngest ever member of such an organisation", who is studying Fine Arts at Duncan of Jordanstone. Marris decided to apply for the unpaid post after working on... the Inverness and Highland bid for European Capital of Culture. She says: "Because of that I had a lot of contact with James Boyle, the chairman of the Arts Council, and I just decided to go for it.")

Expectation is that the SAC's gesticular "arms length" relationship to the Scottish Executive is not going to exist for much longer and nor is the organisation in its current form—it's as much as

assured. In its place speculation is that we are to have a single Executive agency overseeing 'Culture' in Scotland—meaning direct political control of all that is said to constitute 'Culture', where 'Culture' has to demonstrate tangible social gain in relation to the Executive's wider public policy framework, with a distinct focus on social impact. Welcome to the 'Ministry of Motivation'.

One likely source of inspiration can be found in Comedia's document 'Saturday Night or Sunday Morning?', 1989: "...the existing division of responsibilities between the Office of Arts and Libraries, the Department of Trade and Industry, and the Home Office needs to be urgently rationalised by the creation of an integrated Ministry of Arts and Communications...Such a Ministry would be responsible for overseeing the development of the sector as a whole...directly funding national arts institutions, museums and galleries, overseeing broadcasting regulation... It will require a shift towards understanding how the modern popular arts as commodities are produced, marketed and distributed by industries dependent on skills, investment and training, and a development away from older pre-industrial ideologies of art that emphasises personal development and the sacrosanct value of individual self-expression (but for only a few)."

Mike Watson of the Scottish Labour Party said as much at the Centre for Cultural Policy Research, University of Glasgow, 'Question Time on Cultural Policy in the Second Scottish Parliament' on 31/3/03:

"...responsibility for translating the objectives and key priorities into working practice and programmes of course lies with Scotland's various cultural institutions and bodies, not least the Scottish Arts Council.

The concept of an arms-length body such as the Scottish Arts Council was designed to distance decisions from government and to serve the constituency of the arts, giving primacy to the needs of the creative artists which, it was felt, politicians would have difficulty in associating with. That relationship has endured for some years but the shape that it takes after the election and the future has attracted quite a lot of public attention recently. I think every speaker so far has referred to it. I believe there is a need to examine the contributions made by the various sectors, from the Scottish Arts Council to Scottish Screen, the national companies and national institutions and embracing, where the links are mutually beneficial, the creative industries. It should also take account of the formation of EventScotland this year, which will develop a portfolio of sporting and cultural events. Of course, I wouldn't want to forget the important contribution made by local authorities in delivering much cultural activity.

Labour does believe that a single cultural agency for Scotland could be the most effective means of linking art and culture with the creative industries. But recent reports that this would necessarily mean the dismantling of the Arts Council and Scottish Screen are wide of the mark. I stress no decisions have been taken as to the form of such a body and I would want to encourage the widest possible debate about the future structure for delivery of cultural policy and the distribution of the resources available..."

If no decisions have supposedly been made regarding the future structure of SAC, Scottish Screen, et al, how could speculations of their dismantling be wide of the mark?

What is out in the open is in contradiction to the long held, if far-from-accurate, belief that the arts should be free from governmental political interference. What is being disavowed is the traditional "above-it-all" ethos of the cultural gatekeepers and purveyors of good taste, who more often than not fail to acknowledge their own political stance. There certainly needs to be an address to the current framework for delivering support, but these expected "reforms" or "modernisations" of the state apparatus would effectively centralise power and tighten the Executive's

grip on state funded agencies and those reliant on them. No doubt, the Executive's portrayal will be one of cost-cutting and meeting public expectations, which will play well with a public attuned to the ideology of efficiency and technocracy. But the real focus of attention should be on the reconfiguration of power within the state apparatus that these proposals will represent.