

Strategies for Survival (1986)

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

[Strategies for Survival \(1986\)](#) is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness in 2023, funded by the BC History Digitization Program at the University of British Columbia.

[Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists](#) was organized by the Vancouver Artists' League, as a component part of *Vancouver: The Place, Vancouver: The People*, a City of Vancouver centennial project for 1986.

Find the rest of the project linked at unitpitt.ca



TABLE OF CONTENTS











































	QUOTE
	INTRODUCTIONS (1986)
	DOCUMENTS AND ACCESS
	DAY 1, INTRODUCTION
	BIOGRAPHY (1986)
	INTRODUCTIONS (1986)
	OF COLLECTIVE ACTION
	FIGURES AND FACTORS
	THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL
	CULTURAL INDUSTRIES
	AN INTERESTING WORD
	INSERT
	PATRONAGE, CONTINUED
	A CRUST OF PAINT
	ARTISTS' ORGANIZATIONS
	SLIDE PRESENTATION
	Q&A
	CLOSING REMARKS (1986)

TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS

				
			00:00:00	
			00:00:21	
			00:00:49	
			00:02:00	
			00:03:04	
			00:04:31	
			00:09:18	
			00:12:59	
			00:21:39	
			00:30:50	
			00:32:07	
			00:34:18	
			00:34:32	
			00:36:57	
			00:38:34	
			00:39:59	
			01:01:50	
			01:20:23	
				

CLOSING REMARKS (2023)



[The [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) is linked at the end of each section.]

01:21:35



[The [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS](#) is linked at the end of each section.]

→ 12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

QUOTE

“

We want a percentage of advertising spaces on hoardings, public transport and other spaces, to be set aside for artists and a levy on advertising on hoardings throughout the city to be implemented to a central fund, to finance artists' works on the above projects.

”

[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

00:00:00

Margaret Harrison, Britain:

“

“We want a percentage of advertising spaces on hoardings, public transport and other spaces, to be set aside for artists and a levy on advertising on hoardings throughout the— throughout the city to be implemented to a central fund, to finance artists' works on the above projects.”

”

[Tone.]

[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

INTRODUCTION (2023)

Strategies for Survival (1986), is an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

00:00:21

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Welcome to *Strategies for Survival (1986)*, an archives project produced by UNIT/PITT Society for Art and Critical Awareness, re-presenting the partial proceedings of *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League at the Commodore Ballroom in Vancouver, June 9, 10, and 11, 1986.

[Tone.]



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

DOCUMENTS AND ACCESS

For expanded access, this document presents textural and lightly edited transcripts of the presentation.

On the right is the timestamped textural transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, meant to be read with the audio, linked [here](#).

This column on the left provides the lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript. This can be read with or without the audio, and subject headings from the original conference papers, or added for this project, are linked in the [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#) above; matching the timestamps at right.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

00:00:49

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

If you've already listened to the 2023 introduction (track 00, linked [here](#)), you may wish to skip ahead in this text [to [00:02:00](#)] and then skip ahead in the audio to match the timestamp.

[All the timestamps are linked in the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS](#) above.]

If you haven't listened to the introduction, or any of the other recordings, you'll want to know that this is a multi-part project, presenting archival audio recordings alongside textural and lightly edited transcripts, for expanded access.

On the left of each transcript document is a lightly edited, easy-to-read transcript that, in some cases, directly excerpts the original conference papers; this can be read with or without the audio.

(By the way, if you're listening to the audio recording, and wondering, "where are the transcripts?" you can find links to those documents in the audio description!)

This column on the right presents the textural

edited transcript
textural transcript
12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



edited transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

transcript, with all the *ums*, *ahs*, pauses, and grammatical idiosyncrasies of the spoken word, to match the archival audio as close as possible—it may be difficult to read this side of the page without the relevant audio recording, [linked [here](#)].

[Tone.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]



DAY 1, INTRODUCTION

Margaret Harrison, an artist and activist from Great Britain, opened the third day of the conference, rescheduled from her flight delay on the first day. The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives provide almost a complete document of her presentation, including introductions and Q&A, but just a few lines were missed in the changeover of cassette tapes, mid-way. These lines are inserted from the original conference paper in the UNIT/PITT archives.

After the conference, Margaret Harrison's paper was published in English and in French translation, in volume 12, number 1, of *Parallelogramme*, along with another paper from the conference—Gilles Arteau's "Tacticiens Parasitaires Habiles," from the Artists' Summation Panel.

 1986 /  2023 /  1986

[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

00:02:00

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Margaret Harrison, an artist and activist from Great Britain, opened the third day of the conference, rescheduled from her flight delay on the first day. The cassette tapes found in the UNIT/PITT archives provide almost a complete document of her presentation, including introductions and Q&A, but just a few lines were missed in the changeover of cassette tapes, mid-way. These are read in 2023 by Sydney Koke, a musician and artist from Vancouver, now living between Savary Island, Paris, and Leeds.

After the conference, Margaret Harrison's paper was published in English and in French translation, in volume 12, number 1, of *Parallelogramme*, along with another paper from the conference—Gilles Arteau's "Tacticiens Parasitaires Habiles," from the Artists' Summation Panel. Les deux articles sont cités dans la liste "further reading," de ce projet.

After the tone, I'll read Margaret Harrison's biography from the original conference papers.



edited transcript



After another tone, we'll join the conference in 1986.



[Tone.]

1986 / ● 2023 / 1986



textural transcript

[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



BIOGRAPHY (1986)

MARGARET HARRISON Britain

Margaret Harrison has an extensive background as an arts administrator, teacher and working artist in Great Britain. She completed her education in the sixties at Carlisle College of Art, Royal Academy Schools, and the Academy of Art in Perugia, Italy. She has worked in Administration for the Greater London Arts Association, Organization of Art Spectrum and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and has taught at a host of art colleges throughout Britain, including Norwich, Manchester, Newcastle and Thames Polytechnic. She has had solo shows in London, New York, Australia, and Nova Scotia and has shown in group shows throughout Great Britain, New York, Berlin and the Netherlands. More recently her paper with Conrad Atkinson on the visual arts was delivered at the [conferenc for] Cultural Industries and Cultural Policy in London for the Greater London Concert. Ms. Harrison will provide us with a knowledgeable background

00:03:04

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

Margaret Harrison has an extensive background as an arts administrator, teacher and working artist in Great Britain. She completed her education in the sixties at Carlisle College of Art, Royal Academy Schools, and the Academy of Art in Perugia, Italy. She has worked in Administration for the Greater London Arts Association, Organization of Art Spectrum and Arts Council of Northern Ireland, and has taught at a host of art colleges throughout Britain, including Norwich, Manchester, Newcastle and Thames Polytechnic. She has had solo shows in London, New York, Australia, and Nova Scotia and has shown in group shows throughout Great Britain, New York, Berlin and the Netherlands. More recently her paper with Conrad Atkinson on the visual arts was delivered at the [?] Cultural Industries and Cultural Policy in London for the Greater London Concert. Ms. Harrison will provide us with a knowledgeable background of working in the visual arts in the British Isles.

[Tone.]

of working in the visual arts in the British Isles.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

INTRODUCTIONS (1986)

Marion Barling, conference host:

I'd like to ask people to pick up their receivers now, so that if we have any English French switchovers you have got them ready to hand, instead of having to break every time somebody wants to address a speaker in French. So, could all the English-speaking people, who don't speak French, pick up their receivers now?



[Marion pauses.]

Particularly the group at the back, laughing loudly.

[Off-mic:

"They don't even hear me...

Okay, I'll get a real nasty tone in my voice."

]



00:04:31

Marion Barling, conference host:

I'd like to ask people to pick up their receivers now, um, so that if we have any English French, um, switchovers you have got them ready to hand, instead of having to break every time somebody wants to address a speaker in French. So, could all the English-speaking people, who don't speak French, pick up their receivers now?



[Marion pauses.]

Particularly the group at the back, laughing loudly.

[Off-mic:

"They don't even hear me...

Okay, I'll get a real nasty tone in my voice."

]



edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

[Loudly:

“Okay, could people please sit down? We want to start the conference. That includes all the people at the back— the ones who are totally ignoring me.”

]

Just to remind you the left side of the room is the non-smoking area, my right side of the room is the smoking area. Left non-smoking, right smoking. You’re on the right side, Francine.



[Inaudibly, Francine speaks from the audience, and Marion replies directly, “Oh, your lungs!”]

Welcome to the third and final day of the conference. As usual, I have a few announcements.

There is a charge for tea and coffee, so please do not forget that.

The copies of the artist speakers’ papers that you have all put your names down to receive, will be here by noon. So, please make sure if you have asked for papers, that you do pick them up, and



[Loudly:

“Okay, could people please sit down? We want to start the conference. That includes all the people at the back— the ones who are totally ignoring me.”

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Just to remind you the left side of the room is the non-smoking area, my right side of the room is the smoking area. Left non-smoking, right smoking. You’re on the right side, Francine.



[Inaudibly, Francine speaks from the audience, and Marion replies directly, “Oh, your lungs!”]

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edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

don't expect them before noon. Our posters are not exactly hot numbers selling, so we will take the sign off and if you wish to pick up a poster to take home, please do so. They're also on the right-hand side.



Today I'm going to be really bossy, because we do have to get out of here by 5:15 p.m. Now Drew Burns, who is the head person here at the Commodore has been very accommodating and has let us run an hour and a half over each night. But tonight, he has another gig coming in. So, we have to end on time. So, I'm going to ask all the speakers and everybody here to respect that—if you have something to say, please do say it, but know that we do have to be out on time so that the other group can come in.



And that's the end of my announcements, I'd like to introduce Wilma Needham from Halifax, who in turn will introduce our first speaker, Margaret Harrison from Britain.

Thank you.

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And that's the end of my announcements, I'd like to introduce Wilma Needham from Halifax, who in turn will introduce our first speaker, Margaret

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Wilma Needham, introducing Margaret Harrison:

Thanks, Marion. I'm very grateful to the Vancouver Artists League for the privilege of being able to introduce Margaret Harrison, who will speak to you this morning.

I would like to refer you to the biography section in your folder which can only touch on Margaret's accomplishments, including her work as a cultural producer, as an artist who has worked with a number of different community groups, as a critic, as a curator, as a teacher, as an administrator, in England. Her work on women's labour and visual arts issues, including craft work, has made her one of the most respected producers in England.

If you know Halifax, you will know what a great relief it is to see her coming. Since most of you are from BC, after you hear her speak, you'll also know that kind of relief.

Margaret Harrison is a survivor in many respects, but especially of Thatcherism, but more than that, I prefer to refer to her as a resistance worker, because I think that's the kind of strength that she has and has developed, working in England.

Harrison from Britain.

Thank you.

Wilma Needham, introducing Margaret Harrison:

Thanks, Marion. I'm very grateful to the Vancouver Artists League for the privilege of being able to introduce Margaret Harrison, who will speak to you this morning.

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edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Without further ado, I'd like to pass the mic on over to Margaret Harrison who will talk to you about the tactics she's developed in the course of surviving. Margaret—

[Audience applauds.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]

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[Audience applauds.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Margaret Harrison:

Thank you, Wilma. I'm going to talk more about tactics of survival—not really of my own survival, but of collective action, which has emerged during the '70s into other ways of working in the '80s.

I want to begin with a quote from Marx, which I hope is not going to label me a communist or frighten anyone.

“

“Bourgeoisie erected statues to the great writers of the past, if they'd actually read their books, they would have burned them.”

”

This notion that culture, art, or cultural production is important and can be powerful is an important idea because politicians and philosophers who believe this at this time are few and far between. Although we should be careful not to set up competition for funds for other cultural forms— theatre, literature, music, etc.—in Britain, the visual

00:09:18

Margaret Harrison:

Thank you, Wilma. I'm going to talk more about ah, tactics of survival— not really of my— my own survival, but of collective action, which ah— has sort of emerged during the seventies into, um, other ways of working in the eighties.

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“

“Bourgeoisie erected statues to the great writers of the past, if they'd actually read their books, they would have burned them.”

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This notion that culture, art, or cultural production is important and can be powerful is an important idea because politicians and philosophers who believe this at this time are few and far between. Although we should be careful not to set up competition for funds for other cultural forms—

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

arts are the lowest in the cultural pecking order and are constantly marginalized by more favoured forms. Thus, in Great Britain, for example, a number of art centres have grown from galleries set up by visual artists, but when the centre grows, visual artists are pushed into corridors, or used as cultural wallpaper to other forms.



The visual arts are the arts with the least developed theory and practice in Britain and it may surprise you when I say that, because there seems to have been a lot of material produced. But a lot of that material has come from France. This is partly for social and partly for historical reasons. Unlike the French who threatened to imprison painters like Jacques Louis David and Courbet, and then terrified the life out of Picasso over the Mona Lisa affair, the British tend to arrest poets like Shelley, for his Irish involvement, or threaten Milton; William Blake, I suppose, was in between a poet and a painter, and was when he was arrested for sedition.

Visual artists are the last group of cultural workers

theatre, literature, music, etcetera—in Britain, the visual arts are the lowest in the cultural pecking order and are constantly marginalized by more favoured forms. Thus, in Great Britain, for example, a number of art centres have grown from galleries set up by visual artists, but when the centre grows, visual artists are pushed into corridors, or used as cultural wallpaper to other forms.



The visual arts are the arts with the least developed theory and practice in Britain and might— may surprise you when I say that, because there seems to have been a lot of material produced. But, in essence, um, a lot of that material has come from France. This is partly for social and partly for historical reasons. Unlike the French who threatened to imprison um, painters like Jacques Louis David and Courbet, and then terrified the light— life out of Picasso over the Mona Lisa affair, the British tend to arrest poets like Shelley, for his Irish involvement, or threaten Milton; William Blake, I suppose, was in between a poet and a painter, and was when he was arrested

to be organized; they are the least likely to act collectively; they are often the most isolated of cultural workers; they and their work are most subject to the distortion of a market system. They operate in the most mystified area of cultural production because what has been called “commodity fetishism” seems to affect the visual arts more than any other area.



Yet, one could argue that the visual arts and their practice are a keystone of the “consciousness industry,” surrounded as we are by a basically visual culture, as we watch one thousand images an hour on TV, drive our styled and designed cars, public transport filled with adverts, built environments, looking at visually designed magazines, walking past billboards selling us not only objects but, more questionably, values. When levels of literacy in school leavers seems in question, the visual production of meanings seems paramount.

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Visual artists are the last group of cultural workers to be organized; they are the least likely to act collectively; they are often the most isolated of cultural workers; they and their work are most subject to the distortion of a market system. They operate in the most mystified area of cultural production because what has been called “commodity fetishism” seems to affect the visual arts more than any other area.



Yes, one could argue that the visual arts and their practice are a keystone of the “consciousness industry,” surrounded as we are by a basically visual culture, as we watch one thousand images an hour on TV, drive our styled and designed cars, public transport filled with adverts, built environments, looking at visually designed magazines, walking past billboards selling us not only objects but, more questionably, values. When values [levels] of literacy in school leavers seems in question, the visual production of meanings seems paramount.



I've just actually visited New York where I noticed that there seems to be a kind of cynicism through the galleries there, not just by the galleries, but by the actual cultural producers themselves.

[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

edited transcript



And, um, I've just actually visited New York where I noticed that, um, there seems to be, um— a kind of cyn— cynicism through the galleries there, not just by the galleries, but by the actual cultural producers themselves.

[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

FIGURES AND FACTORS

In Great Britain, over the past decade, there has been a move towards privatization—which has a parallel with what has been going on here—of culture combined with a search for business sponsorship, and this has been the main thrust of government policy. The first is clearly a government policy which ties in with its policies in other sectors of the economy, and it is as such unremarkable. Its effects seem overall to reduce the amount of public funding for the arts, and generally have led to cutbacks in art school teaching posts, most clearly in the part-time sector, and this has radically affected women artists who are mainly employed on part-time basis. I believe that employment of women members of staff to male members of staff at this point is 2% to 82%, which is a national scandal.



The available figures on artist income are extremely sketchy. Figures published in September of this year, based on an extract from

00:12:59

In Great Britain, over the past decade, there has been in essence to— a move towards privatization—which has a parallel with um, what has been going on here—of culture combined with a search for business sponsorship, and this has been the main thrust of um— of government policy. The first is clearly a government policy which ties in with its policies in other sectors of the economy, and it is as such unremarkable. Its effects seem overall to reduce the amount of public funding for the arts, and generally have led to cutbacks in art school teaching posts, most clearly in the part-time sector, and this has radically affected women artists who are mainly employed on part-time basis. I believe that employment of ah— women um— members of staff to male members of staff at this point is two percent to eighty-two percent which is a national scandal.



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

the Gulbenkian Foundation document, “Enquiry into the Economic Situation of Visual Artists”—and the bulk of this document was actually compiled in the years 1977 to ‘80, by three researchers, and is still unpublished—suggest that the majority of artists are engaged in dual careers. For example, in the age group of 25 to 34 years, 72% have dual careers; 35 to 44, 83%; and 45 to 54, 63%. The majority of these are engaged in some form of teaching, the highest being in adult education.

In all, 70% of dual-career artists are engaged in teaching. It also indicates that artists’ incomes are well below those of comparable professions. It was mentioned yesterday that Canadian artists are somewhere near pension-type incomes—I think we’re probably below that, in many cases.

The average income for artists in the age group of 45 to 54 years and 55 to 64 years—that’s the highest income group—are £7,669—I think you have to double this up for your— your currency—and £8,364 for dual-career artists respectively, and this drops considerably for women to £3,911 and £2,532. In the same age groups for single-career artists, ie., 14% and 37% of all artists in that group, the averages seem to be higher for a

The available figures on artist income are extremely sketchy. Figures published in September of this year, based on an extract from the Gulbenkian Foundation document, “Enquiry into the Economic Situation of Visual Artists”—and the bulk of this document was actually compiled in the years 1977 to ‘80, um, by three researchers, and is still unpublished—suggest that the majority of artists are engaged in dual careers. For example, in the age group of twenty-five to thirty-four years, seventy-two percent have dual careers; thirty-five to forty-four, eighty-three percent; and forty-five to fifty-four, sixty-three percent. The majority of these are engaged in some form of teaching, the highest being in adult education.

In all, seventy percent of dual-career artists are engaged in teaching. It also indicates that artists’ incomes are well below those of comparable professions. It was mentioned yesterday that ah— Canadian artists are somewhere near pension— um— type incomes—I think we’re probably below that, in many cases.

The average income for artists in the age group of forty-five to fifty-four years and fifty-five to sixty-four years—that’s the highest income group—

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

small number of men, of £9,693 and £4,320 per annum. But for women, this drops considerably to—would you believe it?—£492 and £1,514.

Now these figures include bursaries and awards, which are crucial factors, because the average income from sales and commissions in the same groups are £2,403 for men, 45 to 54 years; and £1,196, 55 to 64 years of age; and for women £604 and £1,381, consecutively.

This survey on income does not include artists who earn over £15,000 and they compose about 0.6%.



A second factor occurs whereby multinational corporations, like United Technologies or Mobil, fund exhibitions, and they're clearly doing this to "launder" their image, using cultural Brillo pads such as the contemporary British sculpture exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, which was massively advertised as enabling the public to go in free, ignoring the fact that the Greater London Council had put massive funds into that, and did

are seven thousand six hundred and sixty-nine pounds—I think you have to double this up for your— your currency—and eight thousand three hundred and sixty-four pounds for dual-career artists respectively, and this drops considerably for women to three thousand nine hundred eleven pounds and two thousand five-hundred thirty-two. In the same age groups for single-career artists, ie., fourteen percent and thirty-seven percent of all artists in that group, the averages seem to be higher for a small number of men, of nine thousand six hundred ninety-three and four thousand three hundred and twenty per annum. But for women, this drops considerably to—would you believe it?—four hundred and ninety-two pounds and one thousand five hundred fourteen.

Now these figures include bursaries and awards, which are crucial factors, because the average income from sales and commissions in the same groups are two thousand four hundred and three pounds for men, forty-five to fifty-four years; and one thousand one hundred and ninety-six, fifty-five to sixty-four years of age; and for women six hundred and four and one thousand three hundred eighty one, consecutively.

not give much publicity to it.

There are other examples of many exhibitions now at the Tate being funded or sponsored in this way, and quite significantly, an exhibition on Victorian art was sponsored in such a way, tying in with the Thatcher notion of bringing back Victorian values.

For example, when we look at Mobil, they have clearly expressed that they aim to use culture to “identify the company with the increasing national self-awareness in the less-developed nations.” Involvement in local arts projects also provides non-political access to the nation’s political and cultural leaders. And one could actually cite the Saatchis as not only having an impact on visual culture in Britain but an enormous impact on culture in the USA. The stamp of approval of the purchase by the Saatchis means that you’re in line to be bought.



Funding affects the kind and type of art we produce, as well as the kinds of artists we have, and the conditions under which art is made and

This survey on income does not include artists who earn over fifteen thousand pounds and they compose about point six percent.



A second factor occurs whereby multinational corporations, like United Technologies or Mobil, fund exhibitions, and they’re clearly doing this to “launder” their image, using cultural Brillo pads such as contemporary— the contemporary British sculpture exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, which was massively advertised as enabling the public to go in free, ignoring the fact that the Greater London Council had put massive funds into that, and did not give much publicity to it.

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For example, when we look at Mobil, they have clearly expressed that they aim to use culture to

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

distributed. What a culture inflected with the values of multinational companies can be like is occasionally glimpsed when we visit airports or “international” hotels.



Thus there are dangers implicit in privatization, and although one isn't blind to the problems of public funding of the arts, I think that any move towards public funding of the arts is a progressive one, insofar as it moves away from a privatized culture. However, the aim must be the building into the community of the artist/cultural producer, rather than by haphazard grant-giving. And this means a strong lobby for the arts—in other words, collective action.

In Conrad Atkinson's words:

“

“Culture can become the high ground of politics in the next two decades.”

”

“identify the company with the increasing national self-awareness in the less-developed nations.” Involvement in local arts projects also provides non-political access to the nation's political and cultural leaders. And um, one could actually cite the Saatchis, um, advertising company here, who—not only having an impact on visual culture in Britain but an enormous impact on um, culture in the USA. The stamp of approval of the purchase by the Saatchis means that you're in line to be bought.



Funding affects the kind and type of art we produce, as well as the kinds of artists we have, and the conditions under which art is made and distributed. What a culture inflected with the values of multinational companies can be like is occasionally glimpsed when we visit airports or “international” hotels.



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

And the reason for saying this in Britain is contained in some material factors about our society, which give some fascinating pointers for speculation, which bring new perspectives for visual artists. We are all—in the developed world—conscious of the almost cliched technological revolution and concurrently, the problems of unemployment. In Britain, the official figure's around the 4 million mark, but I would reckon it's now about 5 million. Evidence recently issued by the Musicians' Union in Britain stated:

“

“The music industry has a gross value of a thousand million per annum and, the copyright industries as a whole—in which music plays a considerable role—represents 2.6% of the gross domestic product. Now that's larger than either the motorcar or the food manufacturing industries.”

”

If one was to apply that to the visual arts, then it also has resonances within that.

A recent research study at Warwick University

Those— this— there are those dangers implicit in privatization, and although one isn't blind to the problems of public funding of the arts, I think that any move towards public funding of the arts is a progressive one, insofar as it moves away from a privatized culture. However, the aim must be the building into the community of the artist/cultural producer, rather than by haphazard grant-giving. And this means a strong lobby for the arts—in other words, collective action.

In Conrad Atkinson's words:

“

“Culture can become a high ground of politics in the next two decades.”

”

And the reason for saying this in Britain is contained in some material factors about our society, which give some fascinating pointers for speculation, which bring new perspectives for visual artists. We are all—in the developed world—conscious of the almost cliched technological revolution con— and concurrently, the problems of unemployment. In Britain, the official figure's



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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



estimated that the only industries in Great Britain predicted to grow at a rate of 30% per year—which is fairly rapid—between 1980 and 1990, were in the cultural field. They stipulated here: film, video, television, publishing, and also included sport as a cultural activity. It's significant that the visual arts was left out of that—as I said before, it's the one that's marginalized. When these facts are considered, it seems clear that some sort of cultural resonances are being worked through, and this will inevitably affect visual artists. And if they collectively fail to deal with it, then it will collectively deal with them—
—it could alter, distort or even bury them.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

around the four million mark, but I would reckon it's now about five million. Evidence recently issued by the Musicians' Union in Britain stated:

“

“The music industry has a gross value of a thousand million per annum, and the copyright industries as a whole—in which music plays a considerable role—represents two point six [percent] of the gross domestic product. Now that's larger than either the motorcar or the food manufacturing industries.”

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And if— if one was applied— to apply that to the visual arts, then it also has resonances within that.

A recent research study at Warwick University estimated that the only industries in Great Britain predicted to grow at a rate of thirty percent per year—which is fairly rapid—between 1980 and 1990, were in the cultural field. And they— they stipulated here: film, video, television, publishing, and also included sport as a cultural activity. Um, it's significant that the visual arts was left out of that—as I said before, it's— it's the one

that's— that's marginalized. When these facts are considered, it seems clear that some sort of cultural resonances are being worked through, and this will inevitably affect visual artists. And if they can [let?] collectively fail to deal with it, then it will collectively deal with them

[Not spoken, from the original paper: “—it could alter, distort or even bury them.”]



[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

THE GREATER LONDON COUNCIL

In opposition to these factors in the British context during the '80s, a remarkable phenomenon began to develop through the metropolitan authorities—these are the middle tier of government, between national government and the boroughs. For example, the most remarkable metropolitan authority, the Greater London Council—which I'll call the GLC after this—had a catchment area of 15 million people. I'm told that Cana— Canada has something like 17 million people, so you can see the scale of it, no? And a £2 billion budget—the size of a medium-size country. And what made this authority remarkable was its espousal of a cultural politics, which foregrounded practitioners, giving them a huge say in the way in which its budget for arts activities were dispersed.

It formed a women's committee, a community arts committee, and an ethnic arts committee—all composed of arts workers. They decided in public the responses to grant applications—that horrified a number of people but it actually worked—and considered both the structures of organizations, in

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In opposition to these factors in the British context during the eighties, a remarkable phenomenon began to develop through the metropolitan authorities—these are the middle tier of government, between national government and the boroughs. For example, the most remarkable metropolitan authority, the Greater London Council—which I'll call the GLC after this— had a catchment area of fifteen million people. I'm told that Cana— Canada has something like seventeen million people, so you can see the scale of it, no? And a two billion budget—the size of a medium-size country. And what made this authority remarkable was its espousal of a cultural politics, which foregrounded practitioners, giving them a huge say in the way in which it— its budget for arts activities were dispersed.

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

terms of race and gender, as well as the content and participation balance. So, this was quite a shift in the way that grants were awarded. And, I also should mention that, as far as working conditions and wages are concerned, groups were more likely to be refused a grant if, in fact, their workers were not paid a reasonable wage, and they stipulated at one point, about £9,000 as a minimum wage.



The first chairperson of the GLC was Tony Banks, a politician who clearly recognised that culture had political muscles. And through his committee—and particularly the Community Arts subcommittee, which had two practicing visual artists, Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, on it—he moved the arts to a central position, initially doubling its funding, and in its third-year spending £2.5 million on the arts from this one committee. Because the GLC was a socialist metropolitan authority administration, in a “Thatcherite” monetary national government, it became a centre for public funding of culture, and transformed

terms of race and gender, as well as the content and participation balance. So, this was— was quite a shift in the way grants uh— were awarded. And, I also should mention that, um, as far as working conditions and wages are concerned, um, groups were more likely to be refused a grant if, in fact, their workers were not paid a reasonable wage, and they stipulated a wage in— at one point, of around about nine thousand pounds, as a— as a minimum wage.



The first chairperson of the GLC was Tony Banks, a politician who clearly recognised that culture had political muscles. And through his committee—and particularly the Community Arts subcommittee, which had two practicing visual artists, Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, on it—he moved the arts to a central position, initially doubling its funding, and in its third-year spending two point five million on this— on the arts from this one committee. Because the GLC was a socialist metropolitan authority administration, with a “Thatcherite” monetary

many of our ideas about culture.



As its larger powers—

—I ought to mention that in April of this year, the Greater London Council was abolished—it had, in all, been there for five years. It was abolished on the grounds that this middle tier of local government was not necessary and actually was a waste of public funds. This was fought against over a period of five years, and in the meantime, they were implementing their cultural policies, as well as fighting the removal of this tier of government. It went out with a huge party on April Fool’s Day.

[Brief chuckle from the audience; Margaret sighs.]



So, as its larger powers—transport and housing—was stripped away, it put much of its energy into culture, and gave the marginalized and the minorities, and the dispossessed, a voice and identity through grants to the voluntary sector, as

national government, it became a centre for public funding of culture, and transformed many of our ideas about culture.



As its larger powers—

—I ought to mention that ah—in April of this year, the Greater London Council was abolished—um, it had, in all, been there for five years. It was abolished on the grounds that this middle tier of ah— local government, was not necessary and actually was a waste of public funds. Um, this was fought against over a period—as I say—over a period of five years, and in the meantime, they were implementing their cultural policies, as well as fighting um, the removal of— of this tier of government. Um, and it went out with a— a huge party on April Fool’s Day.

[Brief chuckle from the audience; Margaret sighs.]



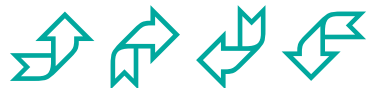
So, as its larger powers—transport and housing—was stripped away, it put much of its energy

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textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

well as arts groups. And it was perhaps in this way that a possibly more liberating form of culture and socialism began to emerge, from gays, lesbians, the disabled, women's groups, ethnic groups, to the advantage of all forms.



I think I've lost a piece of paper—at this point, I ought to mention some of the activities, that were funded by the GLC, to give you some idea of the range of activities. At one point, there was a huge scandal in the papers because the GLC Arts and Recreation Committee wouldn't give the usual automatic grants to the National Opera and Ballet Companies, unless they would perform in factories, and other workplaces.

[Some laughter from the audience and speaker.]

☆☆

And this was resisted for some time, but they finally did it and actually began to alter their own notions of audience and perceptions of practice. And I've mentioned the idea of wages

into culture, and gave the marginalized and the minorities, and the dispossessed, a voice and identity through grants to the voluntary sector, as well as arts groups. And it was perhaps in this way that a possibly more liberating form of culture and socialism began to emerge, from gays, lesbians, the disabled, women's groups, ethnic groups, to the— the advantage of all forms.



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[Some laughter from the audience and speaker.]

☆☆

and conditions of work, but this was very much a priority within that whole program.



This authority, as I said, had about a five-year span, but it took them two years to understand the bureaucracy, who were in fact the same bureaucracy inherited from the previous Tory administration. Most of the officers who were there at that time didn't agree with the new policies, and they could lose many grants. So entangled was the bureaucracy that they could lose grants, and then say it was too late, that they couldn't be awarded retrospectively. Finally, this work was actually got over, but it involved a legal battle to do so. And these kinds of activities—I'll give you some idea—were, for instance, the creation of a Black art centre at the old roundhouse building—a huge building—in the Camden area of of London. This, I think, will continue, through borough funding. The GLC set up what they call a "stressed boroughs fund," to enable those those boroughs to carry on some of the work. I think it was at the meeting to decide

And this was resisted for some time, but they finally did it and um, began to— actually began to alter their own notions of audience, and uh— and perceptions of practice. And I've mentioned the idea of wages and conditions of work, but this was very much a priority within that— that whole program.



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that, that they had lined up outside the GLC, motorbikes revving up waiting for the checks to be delivered, before the government could find a way of making it illegal.



The Women Artists Slide Library, which I'll show you a little bit of... The *See Red* poster collective, which is a women's poster group. *Sourcream comics*, which is a women's comic group. ACAA [Association for Cultural Advancement through Visual Art], an artist-run studio, which operated art activities within the community as well as housing artists within the studios. They were assisted to purchase this whole building so that they could survive. Some of those people who are working in there, are now working on committees within the borough. So, although the GLC is gone, it's set up a network of people who are now working within local government structures.



The GLC opened up the foyers of the Festival Hall, because as you probably know, it owned the

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the Camden area of ah— of London. This, I think, will continue, um, through ah— borough funding. And— what happened with that was that the GLC set up what they call a “stressed boroughs fund,” to enable those those boroughs to carry on some of the work. And it— I think it was at the meeting to decide that, that they had lined up outside the GLC, motorbikes revving up waiting for the checks to be delivered, um, before the government could find a way of ah— making it illegal.



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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Festival Hall—it no longer owns it, of course—to exhibitions and free performances, from opera to reggae festivals, to children’s exhibitions, artists’ exhibitions. I actually curated two exhibitions in there. One was called *The Other America*, an exhibition of the American labour movement seen through artist’s eyes, and a retrospective exhibition of an artist called Ray Walker, who was a muralist who died in that year.

It also had craft exhibitions, which raised questions of the divisions between craft and fine art. They opened a craft centre beneath the Festival Hall, in a space under the arches, and a literature centre in the Festival Hall itself—which is now, I believe, being removed—but it very quickly became an international focus for literature, and held many events. One thing that entirely shocked the Arts Council of Great Britain, was that they said they would take back the Hayward Gallery from them. The Hayward Gallery was owned by the GLC and again this was a total scandal in the newspapers—they were called Stalinists, and everything else.



within local government structures.



Um, the GLC opened up the foyers of the Festival Hall, because as you probably know, it owned the Festival Hall—it no longer owns it, of course—to exhibitions, free performances, from opera to reggae festivals, to children’s exhibitions, artists’ exhibitions, and I actually curated um, two exhibitions in there. One was called *The Other America*, an exhibition of America— of the American labour movement seen through artist’s eyes, and an exhibition of an artist called Ray Walker, who was a muralist who died in that year, and it was a— a retrospective to his work.

It also had craft exhibitions, ah, which raised notions of the divisions between craft and fine art. And they opened a craft centre beneath the Festival Hall, in a space under the arches; a literature centre in the Festival Hall itself—which is now, I believe, um, being removed—but it very quickly became an international focus for literature, and held many events before, um, the new organization. Um, and one thing that entirely

[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

shocked the— the Arts Council of Great Britain, they said they would take back the Hayward Gallery from them. The Hayward Gallery was owned by the GLC and um, the— again this was ah— total scandal in the newspapers, and they were called Stalinists, and everything else.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

Another important thing that they did in that period was to hold a cultural industries conference. And this was important because the use of the word “industry” projected the notion of cultural production, and that culture is a job, and not a marginal occupation. It was for this conference that myself and Conrad Atkinson wrote a paper on the visual arts. Many of the recommendations have now actually found their way into the visual arts policy document of the Labour Party, as Conrad Atkinson was the coordinating person to pull together that paper for them. It apparently has been approved at executive level, and it’s going to national conference, for ratification, this summer.



And I think that actually is an important factor, that a number of people, like the previously mentioned Tony Banks, is now in Parliament, and actively pushing cultural policy within the Labour Party, and foregrounding that. [So, it’s surprising

00:30:50

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



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[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]



edited transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

in Parliament, and actively pushing cultural policy, ah— within the Labour Party, and foregrounding that. So, it's surprising that someone who's— who comes from rather a poor area of the world, rapidly becoming a third world country, that I'm— sound a little hopeful here.

[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]



AN INTERESTING WORD

I want to now talk a little bit about patronage—and that's an interesting word. The patronage structures in Great Britain have undergone some interesting changes over the last decade.



The organization perceived as the main patron of the arts in Britain is the Arts Council—the ACGB—which is a national body and relates most clearly to the national institutions and regional arts associations of differing structures. The Arts Council of Great Britain has a budget of approximately £105 million, and the Sports Council £30 million. I say this is perceived because, in fact, the source of funding for the arts in the UK—and I suspect in many other countries if you looked into it—local government is spending some £1,300 million on the arts and recreation provision this year. In other words, the organization that has been perceived as the one that artists should mostly lobby, it is fast becoming realized that spending on the arts is actually within the democratized structures,

00:32:07

Um, and I would just actually want to now talk a little bit about patronage—and that's an interesting word. The patronage structures in Great Britain have undergone some interesting changes over the last decade.



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like local government, and is, as such, more accessible. I don't know if you know, but the Arts Council of Great Britain has what they call a Royal Charter, which means that it doesn't come into any of the usual democratic structures. So, if, for instance, you wanted to raise a question in Parliament about the Arts Council of Great Britain and its funding policies, you couldn't do it, it's not allowed. You can do it in the [House of] Lords, but not in Parliament.



Now clearly, this local government expenditure and this conference are, in one sense, not in correspondence, but I draw your attention to it in order to point out a seemingly fundamental contrast and contradiction between—

[Tone.]

[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

edited transcript

fast becoming realized that actually spending on the arts is within a democratized structure, like local government, and is, as such, a little bit more accessible. Um, I don't know if you know, but the— the Arts Council of Great Britain, um, is a body which has what they call a Royal Charter, which means that it doesn't come into any of the usual democratic structures. So, if, for instance, you wanted to raise a question in Parliament about the Arts Council of Great Britain and its funding policies, you couldn't do it, it's not allowed. You can do it in the Lords, but not in Parliament.



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[Tone.]

[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

INSERT

[From the original paper in the Unit/Pitt archives:]

—our specialised concerns as visual artists and the way in which it and culture are both marginalised and contained by the kinds of societies which we have created and those popular/state structures—

[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]

00:34:18

Sydney Koke (Savary Island, Paris, Leeds):

[From the original paper in the Unit/Pitt archives:]

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[Tone.]

[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

PATRONAGE, CONTINUED

Margaret Harrison:

—which have in one sense been outside our considerations. As I've just mentioned, it's to these structures that visual artists are turning their attention to lobby.



However, if a future scenario is one of high unemployment and I think it is, then we have to begin to question ideas of professional/ amateur. Central to these ideas are questions of identity, power, access, production, distribution, participation. And this is what makes the situation of our visual artists interesting over the next few decades.

In the words of a document produced by the British Labour Party last year:

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00:34:32

Margaret Harrison:

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In the words of a document produced by the British Labour movement, uh, Labour Party last year:

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

part of the superstructure, but part and parcel of the very basis of our industrial and economic life. The arts, therefore, cannot be ignored.”

”

In other words, the arts are now moving into a central position.

[Harrison clears her throat.]



Put some of these factors together to produce a meaning for culture, and it seems that to some extent the energy is running out of the kinds of traditional cultural structures we have recognized mostly as 18th and 19th century concepts: academies, parks, museums, theatres, and libraries.

I don't want to overestimate this, but the global shifts in employment patterns, changes in technology and information, and the lessons drawn from Third World cultures, perhaps started by Gauguin and Picasso, seem to relate to a bank

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[Harrison clears her throat.]



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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

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[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

shifts in employment patterns, changes in technology and information, and the lessons drawn from Third World cultures, perhaps started by Gauguin and Picasso, seem to relate to a bank or treasure house of cultural practices. A little like the loss of rainforests for the notions of gene banks for the future. In other words, if we ignore all these cultural practices, and so on, we can lose a lot— immensely, a lot for the future, as far as culture is concerned.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

A CRUST OF PAINT

It seems to me that a number of factors have been submerged by a kind of spurious activity in the visual arts in the eighties, which has been compared—mistakenly, in my view—to the kind of cultural explosion of the '60s. The resurgence of the object of painting in the '80s seems to me not to be a liberating explosion—linked to notions of unlimited growth and expansion, as well as a kind of youth-inspired egalitarianism which was characteristic of of the '60s cultural revolution—the '80s seem to be a siege resurgence, a panic measure to a degree aimless through disillusionment.

The questions raised in the '70s cannot be ignored in this cynical manner by sprinkling a crust of paint over everything and calling it style. You can't bury these ideas and there are signs that this is being realized even by those people who coined and invented almost simultaneously the words postmodern, post-political, and post-feminist.

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textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

practices—particularly in the women’s movement, through ethnic groups, through small producers of culture, especially recording studios on housing estates, in visual artists’ workshops, and so on, contain the seeds of some powerful force, which will emerge in the ‘90s to pick up some of the creative impetus lost at the end of the ‘70s.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

practices—particularly in the women’s movement, through ethnic groups, through small producers of culture, especially recording studios on housing estates, in visual artists’ workshops, and— and so on, contain the seeds of some powerful force, which will emerge in the nineties to pick up some of the lost impetus in a creative way— lost at the end of the seventies.



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

ARTISTS' ORGANIZATIONS

in terms of artists organizations, the official one in Britain is of course, the Royal Academy, which is a self-perpetuating oligarchy, with no real power except in the organization of exhibitions. The newest grassroots organizations relevant to this session, are the Artists' Union, which is now a registered trade union, although that's now taken up to 10 years and has taken so much energy to actually be registered that I fear that the Artists' Union is really in a low state of activity at the moment. I actually was a founder member of this, and its first secretary in 1972.



And the more recent and possibly more active, National Artists Association, which has been in existence for just over a year, and claims a membership of 500 artists. Many of its aims are similar to those of the Artists' Union, such as contracts, tax, copyright, wages, social security, and visibility and a voice in consultation processes with the regional arts associations, the Arts

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

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[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)



edited transcript



such as contracts, tax, copyright, wages, social security, and visibility and a voice in consultation processes with the regional arts associations, the Arts Council of Great Britain, and so on.



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



SLIDE PRESENTATION

That is the main part of the paper. What I would like to show you now are a few of the activities in London. And, I'm sorry I'm not showing you regional work, but I've been working in London for some time now.

[Margaret Harrison clears her throat, continues to do so at intervals.]

Slide projector is readied.]



This is probably the most conservative of the organizations that I'm going to show you. This is work that has been organized and enabled by an organization called the Public Art Development Trust, and they have benefited in some of those schemes from GLC funding. This is a hospital project, and these are by women artists. This is Hannah Collins—she collected favourite items belonging to patients and reworked them for English spaces.

00:39:59

Um— that is the— um— the main part of the paper. What I would just like to show you are a few of the activities that have been taking part in London— I'm sorry I'm not showing you regional work, but I've been working in London for, ah— some time now.

[Margaret Harrison clears her throat, continues to do so at intervals.]

So, if we could, um,—

[Slide projector is readied.]



Um, this is part of a scheme— probably the most conservative of the organizations that I'm going to show you. This— this is some work which has been ah— organized and enabled by an organization called the Public Art Development Trust, and they have actually benefited in some of those schemes from GLC funding. And this is a hospital project— these are by women artists, and this is Hannah

This is Marta Rogowska, and these are their biggest success in the organization which has been in hospitals.



This is possibly the most radical of the groups to receive funding from the GLC. This is the Docklands Community Poster Project. It was initially begun by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, when they produced posters for the east London house cuts. They were asked to do a poster about what was happening in Docklands by some of the communities there.

After the Thatcher government set up a non-elected quango called the London Docklands Corporation to develop the now-redundant Docklands area, it removed all local authority powers. This was so complex that one poster was inadequate, and [Leeson and Dunn] embarked on a series of posters in conjunction with local tenants' associations, which were federated into larger bodies, such as the Association of Ireland Communities, and campaigning bodies such as the Joint Action Group, and Democracy for Docklands. The initial funding came from the local

Collins— In which she— she collected items of patient— belonging to patients, favourite items belonging to patients and reworked for English spaces.

This is Marta Rogowska, and these are their most— their biggest success in— in the organization, and this organization has been in hospitals.



This ah— this is possibly the most radical of the groups to be— to receive funding from the GLC. This is the Docklands Community Poster ah— Project. It was initially begun by Loraine Leeson and Peter Dunn, when they produced posters for the east London house cuts. They were asked to do a poster about what was happening in Docklands and, um, by the— some of the communities there.

After the Thatcher government set up a non-elected quango called the London Docklands Corporation to develop the now-redundant Docklands area, and it removed all local authority powers. Now this use was so complex that one poster was inadequate, and they embarked on

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

authority court which is called Tower Hamlets. Later, with GLC funding, they expanded to six workers.

This is the first poster. They negotiated billboards throughout Docklands area—about 18 by 12 feet high—in conjunction with those organizations.

In other words, they were billboards that weren't imposed, they were actually worked and put there with the consent and ideas of the community.

So, gradually, these bits of this poster were removed to reveal other things that were happening. It's big moneys moving in.

And they had these people spilling out, which represented local people as being expendable.

From that, they moved into planning things. And started to use other techniques such as drawing.

They wanted to promote the idea that it wasn't all pessimistic, that actually there was possibility for change, and I think that's quite important, to promote positive things, as well as to reveal things that are happening to people.

Alongside this, they organized temporary exhibitions, to go with the posters. If a poster went up at a certain time, then they organized a

a series of posters in conjunction with local tenants' associations, which were federated into larger bodies, such as the Association of Ireland Communities, and campaigning bodies such as the Joint Action Group, ah— and Democracy for Docklands. Um, the initial funding came from the local authority court which is called Tower Hamlets. And later, with GLC funding, they expanded to six workers.

And this is the first, ah, poster, and what they did was to negotiate billboards throughout Docklands area—they're about eighteen by twelve foot high—and they did it in conjunction with those organizations. In other words, they were billboards that weren't imposed, they were actually, um— worked, ah— and put there with the consent and ideas of the community.

So, gradually, this— these, um, bits of this poster were removed to reveal other things that was happening. So, it's big moneys moving in.

And they sort of, had these people spilling out, um, which represented local people as being expendable.

And then from that, they moved into sort of— um, planning— planning things. And started to use



edited transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



small exhibition to go on for a few days.

A new airport is to be placed in the centre of Docklands, and it's absolutely horrendous for the people living in this densely populated area.

This is part of the armada where the Collection of Ireland Communities and, all the different tenants' groups got together and floated an armada of boats down the Thames. They've done it twice, I believe. This was quite an incredible occasion, ending up in Jubilee Gardens in London with a huge festival.

These are the later ones that they've done on housing, to identify some of the histories of the area, and what struggles had gone on previously, and what was going on now.

They started to resort to the kind of graphic work which would be appropriate to the period that they were describing.

Some of the sections of these hoardings included the different peoples that had gone into Docklands, and passed through the area, and showed that there's a history of a whole number of cultures there.

And we have the suffragette movement in there

other techniques such as um, drawing.

[Margaret, off-mic: "Can we sharpen that a bit?"]

They wanted to actually promote some idea that it wasn't all pessimistic, that actually there was possibility to— for change— and I think that's quite important, to actually promote positive things, as well as reveal things that are happening to people.

Alongside this, they um, organized, um, running exhibitions— temporary exhibitions, to go with the posters. If a poster went up at a certain time, then they organized a small exhibition to go on for a few days.

Um, a new airport is to be go— is to be placed in the centre of Docklands, and it's absolutely horrendous for the people living in this densely populated area.

This is, um, part of the armada where the Collection of Ireland Communities and, um, all the different tenants' groups got together and floated an armada of boats down the Thames. Um, they've done it twice I believe. Um, and this was quite an incredible occasion, ending up in Jubilee Gardens in London with, um, huge festival.

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

too.

This poster also changed as it went on, they went static, they changed, and they moved—I think there were eight locations throughout Docklands.



This is a section from an exhibition organized by the Women Artists Slide Library, an organization which for the last two years has had GLC funding, and has now got one full-time worker, and two part-time workers. Prior to that they used to manage on voluntary help, mainly through the efforts of a person called Pauline Barrie who was absolutely tireless, and we were really pleased that she was able to have a wage at last. This is a record or an extract from some of the Corset Library, which is the library of the suffragette movement, of the cultural manifestations that came out of that, and include things like banners, and fine embroidery, plus posters, and so on.

They also have affiliate groups, including the Quilters' Guild. They're not normally thought of as artists, so this kind of connection has been really interesting.

edited transcript

And these are the later ones that they've done on housing... which was to actually identify some of the histories of the area, and what— what the struggles had— had gone on previously, and what was going on now.

And they— they started to resort to the kind of graphic work which would be appropriate to the period that they were describing.

And the— some of the sections of the— of these— of the mural of the— these hoardings actually— did include the different peoples that had gone into Docklands, and passed through the area, and actually showing that— actually there's a history of a whole number of cultures there.

And we have the suffragette movement in there too.

And this poster also changed as it went on, they— they went static, they changed, and they moved into— there— I think there were eight locations throughout Docklands.



This is um, a section from an exhibition organized by the Women Artists Slide Library, um— an

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



This is from an exhibition on women and textiles, and this is a section of Chilean work which was sent over for the exhibition.

These are patchworks from Soweto.

This was put together by the Birmingham Women's Identity Group in the same exhibition.



This was produced by an artist called Kate Walker, who, in the early 70s, formed a group called the Women's Postal Collective. So, it's good to see some people still hanging in there.



I don't know how to describe this one, it's just a woolly garden.

[Laughter from the audience.]



This is a banner for the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship.

These are actually seen as having a lot of

edited transcript

organization which— prior— for the last two years has had GLC funding, and has now got one full-time worker, and two part-time workers. Prior to that they used to manage on voluntary help, mainly through the efforts of um, a person called Pauline Barrie who— was absolutely tireless, and we were really pleased that we— she was able to have a wage at last. And this— this is a record or an extract from some of the Corset Library, which is the library of the suffragette movement, um, of the cultural manifestations that came out of that, and include things like banners, and fine embroidery, plus posters and— and so on.

They also have affiliated groups to them, and they have affiliated to them the um, the Quilters' Guild. Um, they're not normally thought of as artists, so this kind of connection has been really interesting.



[Someone speaks out from the audience.]

Sorry?

[Repeats.]

It would— definitely. So would Miriam Schapiro.

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

importance actually to the direction of feminist practice right now.



This organization that I'm moving on to now is called the Artangel Trust, and it was established two years ago after fundraising from several sources. It aims to present contemporary arts in unorthodox public locations, and it supports work which is ephemeral and not commodity-based, and encourages artists working in a politically or socially interventional context. This particular one is by an artist called Andy Goldsworthy and it was carried out in relation to the London Ecology Centre. Again, which is an organization which was able to set itself up with grants from the GLC. So, as you see, the interlocking of all these things have been very important. This was on Hampstead Heath.

What Andy Goldsworthy says is he wants to be sensitive to the changes in nature and work with that. I must apologize for the men's things coming at the end—I was hoping to have a women's thing, but it didn't work out that way.

These are some fly-posting projects by Lawrence

[Laughter from the audience.]



This is from an exhibition on ah— women and textiles, and this is um— a Chilean— a section of Chilean work which was sent over for the exhibition.

And these are patchworks from Soweto.

Um, this was ah— put together by the um, Birmingham Women's Identity Group in the same exhibition.



And this was produced by an artist called Kate Walker, who, um, in the early seventies, formed a group called the Women's Postal Collective. So, it's good to see some people still hanging in there.



I don't know how to describe this one, it's just a woolly garden.

[Laughter from the audience.]



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Weiner, carried out in conjunction with an exhibition of his work which was drawn from the Nova Scotia poster archive.

And this is a project by Ian Hunter which is in the process of being realized. He's an artist who has lived in New Zealand, originally from Northern Ireland, and is now living in London again, for a few years. This is a joint project with Artangel and Greenpeace, to promote the idea of a nuclear-free zone in Europe, and will involve the use of models of outrigger canoes, based on designs used by children throughout the Pacific area. The canoe being a commonly held symbol of island peoples and cultures, a survival symbol. They will be launched on the Thames on the 10th of July, to coincide with the anniversary of the sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.

I don't have any more of this because this is literally in the process of being set up.



The last set of slides I'm going to include are by Conrad Atkinson and are slides of his work which he carried out on a residency jointly funded by the Borough of Lewisham and the Greater London

And this is a— a banner for the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship.

And these— these are actually seen as being much as— as having a lot of importance actually to the direction of feminists' practice right now.



Ah, this organization that I'm moving on to now is um— is the— is an organization called the Artangel Trust, and it was established two years ago with sort of multiple funding, after fundraising from several sources. It aims to present contemporary arts in unorthodox public locations, and it supports work which is not commodity-based, and ephemeral, and encourages artists working in a politically or socially interventional context. This particular one is by an artist called Andy Goldsworthy and um, it was carried out in relation to the London Ecology Centre. Again, which is an organization which was able to set itself up with grants from the GLC. And so, as you see, the interlocking of all these things have been very important. Um, this was on Hampstead Heath. Um, what Andy Goldsworthy says is he wants to be sensitive to the changes in nation— nature and

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Arts Association. This is generally regarded as one of the better residencies, as it has a realistic wage structure for the artist, as well as a materials grant. During his period in Lewisham he established in the borough—in principle—a percentage for art scheme, where a percentage of all building works would go for an art product, in one way or another. He also, established an artists' slide library, which has formed a core of affiliations and groupings of artists.

I don't know if you can read some of the things that are on there. This is a print that was produced and is going to be incorporated into one of the Artangel projects—it will be reworked for the city underground. It's based, as you can see, on the front page of the Wall Street Journal, only it's changed a little, it uses the style, but different wording. And one of the things reads:

“

“Fra Angelico utterly opposed to Star Wars”—

[Laughter from the audience.]

★

“—defines the plan as unethical, unworkable,

work his work with that. I must apologize for the men's things coming at the end— I was hoping to have a women's thing, but it didn't work out that way.

Um, these are some fly— fly-posting projects organized by the same organization of Lawrence— Lawrence Weiner's. And it was carried out in conjunction with an exhibition of his work which was interestingly drawn from Nova Scotia poster archive.

And this one is one— a project by Ian Hunter which is— has not been realized, but it's in the process of being realized. He's an artist who has lived in New Zealand, originally came from Northern Ireland, and— and now living in London again, for a few years. This project is a joint project with Artangel and Greenpeace, to promote the idea of a nuclear-free zone, free Pacific in Europe, and will involve the use of um— models of outrigger canoes, based on designs used by children throughout the Pacific area. The canoe being a commonly held sym— symbol of island peoples and cultures, a survival symbol. And they will be launched on the Thames on the tenth of July, to coincide with the anniversary of the



edited transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



and ungodly.” And at the top there is a thing called “Art Yields.” And on the left-hand side it says: “Chiefs of staff in discussion with Artemisia Gentileschi— notions of stereotyping questioned by statuesque brunette from Italy”—

”

[More laughter from audience.]

*

Shall I give you more?

[Audience agrees.]

“

“Cruise missiles aesthetically pleasing, says head of art school”—

[Faint laughter from audience.]

*

“Reagan tax plan at odds with the Divine Spirit, alleges William Blake”—

[More laughter from audience.]

sinking of the Rainbow Warrior.

I don’t have any more of this because this is literally in the process of being set up.



The last set of slides I’m going to include are by Conrad Atkinson and are slides of his work which he carried out on a residency, which was jointly funded by the Borough of Lewisham and the Greater London Arts Association.

This is ah— generally regarded as one of the better residencies, as it actually does have a realistic wage ah— structure for the artist, as well as materials grant. Um, during his period in Lewisham he um— established in principle, in the borough, a percentage for art scheme— that’s a percentage of all building works was to go for an art— um, ah— product, in one way or another. And, ah, he also, um, established an artists’ slide library, which has sort of formed a core of affiliations and groupings of artists.

I don’t know if you can, um, read some of the things that are on there— um, but this is a print that was produced, but also isn’t— is going to be incorporated into an— one of the Artangel



“Call me sentimental, esthetical, formalist if you like, but I like to see a nicely painted missile”—



[More laughter from audience.]



“Tender boneless chicken chief argues, national environment enhanced by beautiful missiles”—



“IBM and third world representatives discussed the complexity of meaning in the inverted figures of [?]”—



“The mayor to attend [?] talks”—



[More laughter from audience.]



This was as you can see it there,



“Matisse says Thatcherism fails to recognize



edited transcript



projects, and will be reworked for the city underground. And it’s based, as you can see, from the front page of the Wall Street Journal, only it’s changed a little, it uses the style, but different wording. And one of the things reads:



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



“Fra Angelico utterly opposed to Star Wars”—

[Laughter from the audience.]



“—defines the plan as unethical, unworkable, and ungodly.” And at the top there is a thing called “Art Yields.” And on the left-hand side it says: “Chiefs of staff in discussion with Artemisia Gentileschi— notions of stereotype— typing questioned by statuesque brunette from Italy”—



[More laughter from audience.]



Shall I give you more?



the pleasure principle”—

[Loud laughter from audience.]



“Da Vinci hustles NASA on general philosophical principles,”



—and so on.

This is going to run and run because it’s now going to be made into a huge billboard going into the city Underground in London.

And this one which is the Financial Times—of course, the Financial Times is pink.

[More laughter from the audience.]



High quality brushstrokes at the bottom.

This is a piece that went into the libraries in Lewisham, they created [peace] sections, and this was based on *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Goya, and on the bats are all the deployment of missiles throughout Europe.

edited transcript

[Audience agrees.]



“Cruise missiles aesthetically pleasing, says head of art school”—

[Faint laughter from audience.]



“Reagan tax plan at odds with the Divine Spirit, alleges William Blake”—

[More laughter from audience.]



“Call me sentimental, esthetical, formalist if you like, but I like to see a nicely painted missile”—

[More laughter from audience.]



“Tender boneless chicken chief argues, national enhanced— and— national and enhanced— national environment enhanced by beautiful missiles”—

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

The media's there as well. This is a painting which is called *The Seductiveness of the End of the World*. It takes the idea that these things that we buy, like ghetto blasters, and and televisions, which we think we're consuming, are consuming us. Because it seduces one into thinking in words rather than in reality.

This is *Some Light on the Matter*. It's a black lightbulb with the headlines, the titles of international newspapers. In other words, there are new barriers to confront, and we can't see things because it's disguised through these mediations.

This one's *Feed the World*—

This is *Media Aid*—

I can't remember the title of this one—

This is a postcard for the Arts Council. It says,

“

“who said art and politics don't mix?”

“It must have been: ITT, IBM, GE annex [?], MGM, MGM, CBS, BBC, [I, CIA distillers], and the Arts Council of Great Britain because it certainly wasn't...”

“IBM and third world representatives discussed the complexity of meaning in the inverted figures of [?]”—

“The mayor to attend [?] talks”—

”

[More laughter from audience.]

*

This was ah— as you can see it there,

“

“Matisse says Thatcherism fails to recognize the pleasure principle”—

[Loud laughter from audience.]

*

“Da Vinci hustles NASA on general principles— philo— philosophical principles,”

”

—and so on.

This is— this is going to run and run because now that it's a painting it's now going to be put into—



edited transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



and then he lists: Bertolt Brecht, Lillian Hellman, and so on and so on, Lenny Bruce— Can you read them? Isadora Duncan, and it ends with Conrad Atkinson.

It uses the quote at the bottom, from El Lissitzky:

“may the overthrow of the old order be imprinted on the palms of our hands.”

This is a thing for the front cover of *Sanity*, the magazine for anti-nuclear disarmament in England.

I thought I'd use this as the final slide because it says,

“don't buy pentagrophy from the Pornagon.”

[Enormous laughter from the audience.]

made into a huge billboard going into the city Underground in London.

And then, this one which is the Financial Times, and of course, the Financial Times is pink.

[More laughter from the audience.]

High quality brushstrokes at the bottom.

This is a— this is a piece that went into the libraries in Lewisham, they created [peace] sections, and um, this was based on *The Sleep of Reason Produces Monsters* by Goya, and now to the bats— on the bats are all the deployment of— of missiles throughout Europe.

The media's there as well. Ah, this— this is a painting which is called *The Seductiveness of the End of the World*. And it takes the idea that um, these things that we buy, like ghetto blasters, and um— and televisions, which we think we're consuming, are consuming us. Because it's now set up to— um— it seduces one into thinking in words rather than in reality.

This is *Some Light on the Matter*. It's a black lightbulb with the headlines, the titles of

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



—It was done in Nova Scotia when he visited, I think it was two years ago. I think he was actually arrested. It was when the pornography issue was being raised, but also Nova Scotia was being visited by Pentagon people to encourage businesses to get a slice of the pie in the armaments industry.

I think I'm going to end now, but I just want to finish by giving you a quote, not from Karl Marx or Simone de Beauvoir, or even anyone I know—but from your toilet downstairs. It somehow seems appropriate to the conference, although a little pessimistic. It says:

“

“the problem with people is that they see the past better— better than it was, the future brighter than it will be, and the present worse than it is.”

”

I hope this conference does in fact, begin to

edited transcript

international newspapers. In other words, there are new barriers to— to confront, and these other media— we can't see things because it's disguised through these mediations.

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and then he lists: Bertolt Brecht, Lillian Hellman, and so on and so on, Lenny Bruce, um... Can you read them? Ah— Isadora Duncan, and it ends with Conrad Atkinson.

It uses the quote at the bottom of the El Lissitzky:

“

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

address the future of artists in Canada, so that the future is indeed a bright one. Thank you very much.

[Lengthy applause from the audience.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]

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I thought I’d use this as the final slide because it says,

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“don’t buy pentagrophy from the Pornagon.”

”

And it was ah—

[Enormous laughter from the audience.]



—it was done in Nova Scotia when he visited, I think it was two years ago— I think he was actually arrested. And it was the time when the pornography issue was being raised, but also Nova Scotia was being visited by Pentagon people to



edited transcript



textural transcript



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



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“the problem with people is that they see the past better— better than it was, the future brighter than it will be, and the present worse than it is.”

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I hope this conference does in fact, begin to address the future of artists in Canada, so that the future is indeed a bright one. Thank you very much.

[Lengthy applause from the audience.]



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

edited transcript

textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)



Q&A

Question 01, from the audience:

I was interested in the power of your artists' union that actually is in the trade union movement.

Margaret Harrison:

You want me to say some more about the Artists' Union?

Question 01, from the audience:

Well, we have our artists' unions, and although they haven't been properly accredited, we have zero power.

Margaret Harrison:

Well, I must confess that our Artists' Union also has zero power right now.

01:01:50

Question 01, from the audience:

I was interested in the power of your artists' union that actually is in the trade union movement.

Margaret Harrison:

Uh huh. You want me to say some more about the Artists' Union?

Question 01, from the audience:

Well, we have our artists' unions, and although they haven't been properly ah— accredited—

Margaret Harrison:

Right...

Question 01, from the audience:

...we have zero power.

Margaret Harrison:

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Mainly because energies were somewhat lost in the efforts to get into the trade union movement, and the trade union movement as a whole is in a very poor state. Union-busting, as you might term it, has been one of the main focuses of attention of the Thatcher government. So in parallel with that, there has been more attention to the industrial unions.

But, there are signs that the new Artists Association, which has new energies, will actually join up with the Artists' Union, and we're hopeful that more activity is going to happen. That will partly come about by some of the proposals that have gone into the Labour Party documents, such as a national registry for artists, which would enable a bigger recruitment and building in the community of artists. In other words, they will actually be within the structures, rather than at the end of a market system.

Question 02, from the audience:

I'm interested in the artists' studio and housing co-op that you mentioned that has been getting funding from the GLC. Could you elaborate a little bit more on it? Does it still exist? Does it still get

Well, I— I must confess that our Artists' Union also has zero power right now.

Mainly because— energies were somewhat lost in the efforts to get into the trade union movement, and the trade union movement as a whole is in a very poor state. Ah, union— union-busting, as you might term it, has been one of the main focuses of attention of the Thatcher government. And so in parallel with that, um, there have been more attention to— um, to the industrial unions.

But, there are signs that the new Artists Association, which has new energies, will actually join up with the Artists' Union, and um, we're hopeful that more activity is going to happen. But we see that that will partly come about by some of the proposals that have gone into the Labour Party documents, such as a national registry for artists would— which would enable a bigger recruitment, and the building into the community of artists. In other words, they will actually be within the structures, rather than at the end of a market system.

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

funding? Are there more of them? How much do these things cost the artists themselves? How is that generally set up?

Margaret Harrison:

Well, there are a variety of schemes in London. Some are more democratic than others. I suppose the largest one is Space Studios.

Some artists organize themselves, and ACAVA was one of those groups who actually organized a building. It was going to be taken off them at one point, and they negotiated with the GLC for the purchase of the building. Now that was negotiated on the grounds that they just didn't plunk themselves down in the community, that they actually held activities which related to different groupings there, and so on. There's a restriction on resale of the building, it has to be kept as an artist studio. In other words, it can't be used as a way of gentrifying an area, as artists are often used. There is also a group of studios in the Barbican. They unfortunately have not been able to purchase their building, and they're having a few problems right now.

Question 02, from the audience:

I'm interested in— in the artists' studio and housing co-op that you mentioned that ah— have been getting funding from the GLC. Um, could you elaborate a little bit more on it? Ah, does it still exist? Does it still get funding? Are there more of them? How much do these things cost the artists themselves? Um, how is that generally set up?

Margaret Harrison:

Well, there are a variety of schemes in London. Um, some are more democratic than others. Um, the— I suppose the largest one is Space Studios. Um, some artists organize themselves, and ACAVA were one of those groups who actually organized a— covering a building. It was actually going to be taken off them at one point, and they negotiated with the GLC for the purchase of the building. Now the, um— that was negotiated on the grounds that they just didn't plunk themselves down in the community, that they actually held activities which related to different groupings there, and so on. Um, there's also a restriction on resale of that— of the building, it has to be kept as an artist studio. In other words, it can't be used as a way

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



Question 03, from the audience [Joyce Mason]:

I'd like to hear you elaborate a little bit, on something that you said, I think it was in terms of the Arts Council of Great Britain. And you referred to it as being rather undemocratic, because there was no access through government to criticize it.

I'm interested in hearing you expand a little bit on that, in terms of the kinds of structures for funding that you might advocate that would be more democratic, because here, of course, arm's length funding as it is often referred to—which basically means that the elected government can't interfere—is one of the sacred cows or, well-loved ideas of the arts community.

So, I'd like to hear you expand a little bit on that, and what you see as an ideal in terms of democratic structures of funding.

Margaret Harrison:

Right, the arm's length principle has also been

edited transcript

of— um, gentrifying an area, as artists are often used. Um, and there is also a group of studios in the Barbican. They unfortunately have not been able to purchase their building, and they're having a few problems right now.



Question 03, from the audience [Joyce Mason]:

I'd like to ah, hear you elaborate a little bit, on um, something that you said in reference to the greater, ah— well actually, I think it was in terms of the Arts Council of Great Britain. And you referred to it as being rather undemocratic, because there was no um, access through government, say through Parliament, to criticize it.

I'm interested in hearing you expand a little bit on that, in terms of the kinds of structures for funding that you might advocate that would be more democratic, because here, of course, arm's length funding as it is often referred to—which basically means that the elected government can't interfere—ah, is one of the sacred cows or, well-

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

a sacred cow in Great Britain. There was much alarm in the '70s when the Working Party on the Arts proposed to actually have a Ministry for the Arts.

In countering that, the Arts Council of Great Britain, in conjunction with the Gulbenkian authority, produced a document, out of which was this famous arm's length principle of keeping government away from the arts.

Now, in recent years, that is totally gone by the board, because not only is the government in arm's length but it's got its arms 'round the Arts Council very tightly, and the artists can't even reach the fingers! The appointments of the Arts Council are direct appointments. In this case, it has been very much, in line with government policy of business sponsorship for the arts.

So, the Director General is now Michael Lugritna, who runs an organization dealing with those things. Individuals within the Arts Council, are finding lots of problems actually dealing with that issue. The idea at the moment is that it's far better, in fact, to put the arts alongside all the other structures of housing and education and health, and so on, and have it in there, so

loved ideas of the arts community.

So, I'd like to hear you expand a little bit on that, and what you see as an ideal in terms of democratic structures of funding.

Margaret Harrison:

Right, the arm's length principle has also been a sacred cow in Great Britain. Um, it was— there was much alarm in the seventies when the Labour Party, ah, Working Party on the Arts proposed to actually, um, have a Ministry for the Arts.

And in um, countering that, the Arts Council of Great Britain, in conjunction with the Gulbenkian, um, with the Gulbenkian authority, produced a document, and out of which was this famous arm's length principle of keeping government away from— from the arts.

Now, what's happened in recent years, that is totally sort of gone by the board, because not only is the government in lines but it's got its arms 'round the Arts Council very tightly, and the artists can't even reach the fingers! Um, the— the appointments of the Arts Council are direct appointments. Ah, and in this case, it has been very much, um, um, in line with government policy



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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



at least it can be debated. Through that it would foreground culture so that it wouldn't be so marginalized, and it would have links through local authorities and so on, where lobbying actually could take place.

At the present time, there's no way you can lobby the Arts Council. I mean, you can but actually, it's really a difficult problem. So, the move has generally been towards the other areas of democratization. I suppose the GLC model was a good one, in fact, and the ideas that are floating around now are again to put cultural producers in as advisors, in concert with government.

Okay, does that answer that?

Question 04, from the audience:

I wondered, you showed some slides from the feminist art community and you mentioned that some of the work, particularly the work that crossed over into craft was having a big impact on theoretical discussions, within feminism about art making.

of business sponsorship for the arts.

So, the Director General is now Michael Lugritna, who run an organization dealing with those things. Um, individuals within the Arts Council, um, are finding, you know, lots of problems of actually dealing with that issue. The idea at the moment is that as get again returned to the idea that it's far better, in fact, to put the arts in— alongside all the other structures of housing, and so on and education and health and have it in there, so at least it can be debated through that it would foreground culture that it wouldn't, would emerge not been so marginalized. It then have links through local authorities and so on, where lobbying actually could take place.

And at the present time, there's no way you can lobby the Arts Council. I mean, you can but actually, it's really a difficult problem. So, the move has generally been to— towards more— um, the other areas of democracy— democratization. And I suppose the GLC model was— was a— was a good one, in fact, and the ideas that are floating around now is again to put in cultural producers as advisors, in— in, ah, concert with government.

Okay, does that answer that?

This is a bit of a big question, but I wonder if you could give us a sense of some of the sort of directions that art making has taken, given the political context, because it seems to me that over the course of the conference we've seen different strategies, as when artists and the work we saw from El Salvador, where realism-oriented and abstract work was seen as not serving political issues or interests. What you showed us was much more variety. And I wondered if there are fairly major theoretical debates taking place within the community or whether it's the question of structures and democratization.

Margaret Harrison:

There are beginnings of theoretical discussions, I think, around this area because it actually can't be ignored, these things which would have been marginalized otherwise. So that is actually being worked through. I can't really detect in what way yet except that ideas filtering through about education, and the breaking down the barriers between craft, design and art and are being debated.

In other words, we're not leaving design alone.

Question 04, from the audience:

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

Because design has been pushed by the touch of government into square pegs for square holes. And there's a notion of looking at craft and design in relation to need.

And actually, this links into a quite important activity which wasn't an art activity, but came out of a high technology factory, and what's called the Shop Stewards Combine, and they'll be worked through. And, yes, I'm sure there's going to be some good theoretical work is going to emerge in the next few years. We are, at the moment, sort of desperate for a theory to tell us what we've done.

[Harrison laughs.]

Just in the way that say, the Manchester workers, when they were involved in practice of their organization, they needed to be told exactly what—not exactly, but to show them what they'd been done. We need that too.

Thanks.



Question 05, from the audience:

Margaret Harrison:

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And actually, this came this links into a quite important activity which wasn't an art activity, but came out of out of a factory, a technology factory, a high technology factory, and what's called the Shop Stewards Combine those ideas from there and they'll be worked through into the areas and the links. And again, that's rather important because the idea of technology for need as well. And, yes, I'm sure there's going to be some good

Could you give us some indication of how it was that artists came to be taken seriously at the civic level with the GLC? Because in this country, as you may have heard, our organizing efforts are always the other way 'round from the democratic process.

Most of our input happens to go into the federal level, and then the provincial level, and finally at the civic level. The GLC example with artists was exactly the other way around.

Margaret Harrison:

Well, there's a number of factors and I think that a lot of the activities of the '70s of collective action and dialogue filtered through into local branches of councils and local organizations, and through to the other council structures.

The other thing was that Tony Banks, was persuaded that actually, culture was important. And he set about foregrounding it. And not only did he set about doing that, but he also brought in cultural producers and from a variety of areas. Once that was done, the whole thing began to take off.

I don't see any way of just trying to persuade things, I think artists have to get themselves into

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

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those structures—some way.



Question 06, from the audience:

I'd like to come back to a question that Joyce Mason asked about the arm's length principle. And I know that there could be a lot of debate around the question of the arm's length principle. I do want to say that the Canada Council is structured in a somewhat different way than the British Arts Council, in that the Canada Council does answer to Parliament through the Committee for Broadcasting in the Arts. And that, certainly, artists who would be dissatisfied with the Council could lobby to their MPs. I think the other thing is that, as I said yesterday, the Canada Council has consulted artists and does have disciplinary advisory committees which are made up of artists who consult on our policies.

Margaret Harrison:

Yes, I do believe that the Canada Council is more liberal than our arts council, but I also believe

example with artists was exactly the other way around.

Margaret Harrison:

Well, there's a number of factors and I think that the— a lot of the activities of the seventies of collective action and dialogue, ah, filtered through into local branches of councils and local organizations, and through to the other structures of the council structures.

The other thing was that this person Tony Banks, was persuaded by all these, these activities, that actually, culture was important. And he set about foregrounding it. And not only did he set about doing that, but he also brought in cultural producers and from a variety of areas. Once that was done, the whole thing began to take off.

Um, I don't see any way of just trying to persuade things, I think artists have to get themselves into those structures—some way.



Question 06, from the audience:

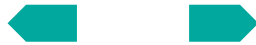
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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

that that depends quite a lot on individuals, and I would hope to see the structure set up so that it doesn't feel so flimsy.

I obviously don't know much about Canadian situation, but we have seen things which have been set up through the Arts Council going very quickly, and it's very disturbing. And we don't want that to happen.



Question 07, from the audience:

One of the things we've seen in this country in recent years is a plethora of studies of the arts, and task forces, and committees. Everyone wants to study us and see what makes us tick. I know in Britain, you've had some things like that, and I wonder if you could say something about the whole *Glory of the Garden Report* and what its current status is and what that strategy revealed about the government in Britain, what they were trying to do with that report—

Margaret Harrison:

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I actually can't hear you very well—

Question 07, from the audience:

Oh, I'm sorry! I'm saying in this country we've had a lot of reports on the arts recently, task forces and committees and everyone's studying us very closely—

Margaret Harrison:

Right, right...

Question 07, from the audience:

I know that's happening in Britain, too. And I wonder if you would talk about that, and the *Glory of the Garden Report* and what that meant, and what's happening with that now...

Margaret Harrison:

Right. Yes, I mean, we're always having reports. The idea of the *Glory of the Garden Report*, which was brought by the Arts Council, in essence was a good idea, in that it aimed to spread the arts more into the regions. But it operated from a different premise that it was taking art of quality into the regions, which was a little resented, actually. But

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

there have been some good things have come out.

The other problem was that it hadn't an increased budget to do that. And so actually, quite a lot of the London venues began to sort of feel a pinch. The population of London is enormous, so you can't really do it in those kind of terms. Thank goodness, the GLC was there to pick up some of the tabs. So, it was not just local groups that began to be affected but part of the National Theatre, the Cottesloe, had to close for a time until it was rescued by the GLC. Sadler's Wells Ballet was in dire straits at one point, and so on. The Institute of Contemporary Arts was extremely worried, at one point, and I think they have received some continuing funding. But there are many reports. The Liberal Party's produced a report, and the Conservative Party haven't, but they've stated what they've done. But so far, I think the greatest move has come not through the reports, but actually embedding those cultural activities in the structures.

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Thanks.

Marion Barling:

Thank you very much, Margaret Harrison.

[Applause.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]

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Thanks.

Marion Barling:

Thank you very much, Margaret Harrison.

[Applause.]



[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)

CLOSING REMARKS (1986)

Marion Barling:

We will now break for a 10-minute coffee break, but I will make a couple of announcements for people that weren't here earlier. The papers that you have ordered, will be here by noon. So please go to the right-hand side at noon. A lot of people have brought in new information, general information, which is on the balcony at the right-hand side. So, please go up and check what's there. The Department of Communications paper, "Status of the Artist," is here and there's plenty of copies for everybody in English and French, and if you'd like to pick those up in the coffee break, they are at the back of the building, on my left.

And again, I want you to make special note that there is Art Comms forms on the balcony up here, that the Assembly of BC Artists' Councils has brought for us.

And, I have to tell you again, we do have to ask you to pay for the coffee and tea. Otherwise, we are going to have a big debt! So please put the money in for the coffee and tea.

01:20:23

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12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



Thank you very much. We'll be reconvening in 10 minutes—



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[Return to the [TABLE OF CONTENTS.](#)]



edited transcript



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[Tone.]



textural transcript



12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)



**

[Return to the [TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.](#)]



CLOSING REMARKS (2023)

Thanks for reading. This was just one part of a multi-part project documenting *Strategies for Survival: State of the Arts / The Art of Alternatives: An International Conference for Artists*, organized by the Vancouver Artists' League in 1986—if you're following along, all of the transcripts and audio recordings are linked directly [here](#), or can be found at unitpitt.ca

You may have noticed that, like most archives projects, this one is in progress. If you have any recollections or information that you'd like to share about the 1986 conference, or new thoughts in 2023, send us a message at info@unitpitt.ca



[\[Return to the TABLE OF CONTENTS.\]](#)

01:21:35

Francesca Bennett, project coordinator:

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[\[Return to the TABLE OF TIMESTAMPS.\]](#)

edited transcript

textural transcript

12: Margaret Harrison (Britain)