

YAWN is a sporadic communiqué which seeks to provide a critical look at our culture in all its manifestations. We welcome responses from readers, especially observations of a critical nature. Be forewarned that anything sent to **YAWN** may be considered for inclusion in a future issue without specific prior notification. Submissions are welcome and encouraged. It is the policy of **YAWN** not to attribute work, unless the content benefits from such attribution. **YAWN** is a collective, mostly anonymous, effort. Contributors receive 3 copies of the **YAWN** in which their work is used. Monetary donations are requested to help defray the costs of publication. Subscriptions to **YAWN** are available for \$10 for one year. Archive at <http://yawn.detroit.net/>.

Broken Promises

My position on the Art Strike (i.e.: one white boy's knee-jerk materialist analysis): it seems to me that easy access to the *means of artistic (re)production* (photocopiers & cassette tapes) altered the *material relations* between some cultural workers & the commodities they produce. This results in (or co-occurs with) a changed set of *social relations*. Since access to the means of production is no longer necessarily controlled/mediated by a hierarchical class of "owners" (including editors/galleries/critics, via their "ownership" of cultural validation), a network of cultural workers has evolved, producing & exchanging their work amongst themselves, and creating a *sub-culture*: that of mail art and "Networking."

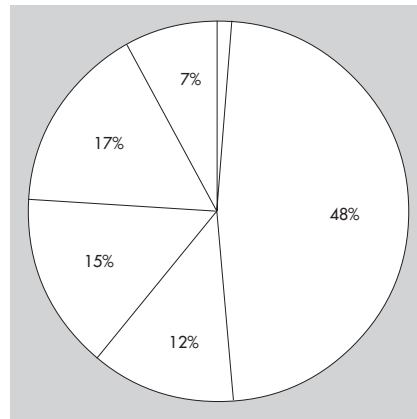
In reaction to the hierarchical control system in the mass-mediated dominant "art" culture, some confused ideas appear in the mail art sub-culture. One is that all participants have equal access to the "network." We are all affirmed as creative beings, and offered a completely open venue of expression, to be judged only on the merits of our work. A similar idea is that all product of the "network" are in some way of equal value—the perennial "no rejections/documentation to all" mail art show. Ideally, this would put the responsibility for critical response on each individual viewer; but in reality, the role of cultural consumer hasn't kept pace with changed roles of cultural producer. Folks still seem to wait for validation of their work by some outside arbiter—*Factsheet Five*, for instance. Hence the endless bitch when your favorite 'zine pans your latest cassette. The situation is self-imposed, though—by complaining about unfavorable reviews, the artist gives the power of validation to that reviewer. I believe that folks must learn to make their own critical judgements, and that intelligent reviews by other folks can help with that, if folks can read them as only one person's opinion instead of gospel.

I think of that process (people learning to think for themselves) as revolutionary. Likewise, it's revolutionary when folks try to break out the mold of "received culture" and act (as in "take action," not as in "pretend") creatively and freely. The unfulfilled promise of the "Network" as one venue for that kind of activity is something that should be addressed and criticized—but just because much of what is produced is shit doesn't mean that the process is a failure. We fail if we aren't critical enough in our judgements (of self and others), if we don't take responsibility for doing good (honest, relevant, communicative, fun) work. So, I'm happy to spout Art Strike propaganda as an excuse to provoke discussion of all these issues, even as I continue to "make art." Pretty consistently, these discussions are honest, relevant, communicative and fun.

[Cleveland, Ohio]

PRETENTIOUS DRIVEL STRIKE (1990–1993)

In a subjective survey conducted by **YAWN**, the following data were collected from 67 letters, notes, and postcards sent to this address, each by a different correspondent. In a follow-up, each was asked their opinion about the Art Strike (1990-1993). **YAWN** has determined that:



- 15% approved of the Art Strike
- 12% approved of its goals, but not the means
- 7% approved of the means, but not the goals
- 48% didn't know
- 1% were indifferent
- 17% disapproved

This survey is not scientific.

Social revolution

contains all the possibilities of culture, realized rather than depicted. Culture, in its current forms, serves either to oppress and stupefy the "lower" classes, or to glorify the personalities and mystifications of the ruling elite. Art which criticizes the establishment is reintegrated into it, defusing useful comprehension of its horror. The *impossible Class*, open to all, which lives outside the moralisms of work, speech, art and participation, refuses the world of appearances. Goals are unmediated criticism, sabotage, and the establishment of *impossible* utopias. The separations which deny life dissolve in non-participation.

[ASAC

Dear **YAWN**: I think the Art Strike should be extended to include all ideological discourse, especially such overworked figurative phrases as "class struggle." Then—who knows—we might start talking with each other.

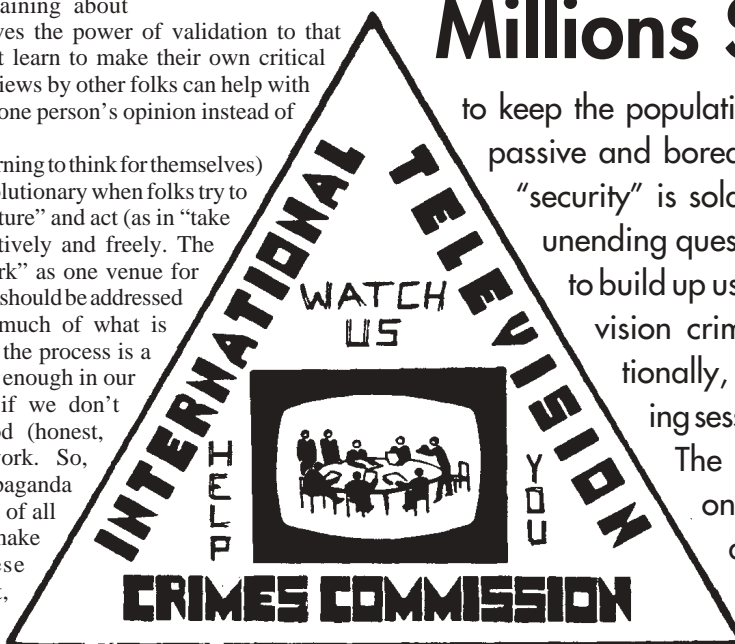
But that's too radical...

Dallas, Texas

YAWN says: You're right, Dallas. We should talk to each other. Next time you have something to say, try sending a letter with some substance instead of a sarcastic postcard.

Millions Spent

to keep the population of the Western Alliance passive and bored. In the arena of opiation, "security" is sold by the uneasy state in an unending quest for greater public sacrifice to build up useless military arsenals. Television crimes are committed internationally, with ideological conditioning sessions occurring unrelentingly. The end result: a culture based on waste, a people pathetically apathetic. Cut the eye-chains. Pop the tube. Cool the cathode. Shut it off.



Last Gasp of the ASAC East Coast USA

This text was drafted immediately before 1990 and is being distributed from P.O. Box 22142, Baltimore MD 21203. The Art Strike Action Committee which operated from this P.O. Box has ceased to "exist" with the beginning of the strike and will suspend its actions of public agitation and debate over "political" and "cultural" questions. The P.O. Box will remain open and revert to use by its former owners who will mail one copy of this text and one Art Strike flyer to anyone who writes concerning the Art Strike. This is basically to get such correspondents off their backs. The primary functions of the Art Strike, as formulated by the various groups involved, were to increase the presence of critical political attitudes in certain sections of the political and art communities, make the cynical positions of certain careerist hacks less tenable, and to demoralize any naive "artists" who might otherwise go their entire lives without having the content of their religious/ruling class attitudes called into question. On all these counts, the pre-strike response has shown hilarious success. On the other hand, there has been an unfortunate momentum, internal and external, to mystify the strike by comparisons with other cultural events (of course, in a certain sense the strike is a "cultural event," albeit one which reverses the values put forth by nearly all other "culture"). The most typical formation is to see the Strike's primary organizers as "Artists" for whom the public strike is a "conceptual art piece." The mystifying actions of some organizers have tended to promote this reading, most notably those who have acted without anonymity and those who have "aesthetically elaborated" the Strike, fetishizing it. It is apparent that the socially constructed attitudes which surround "Art" are well reinforced in certain populations and many people find it difficult to shift away from them.

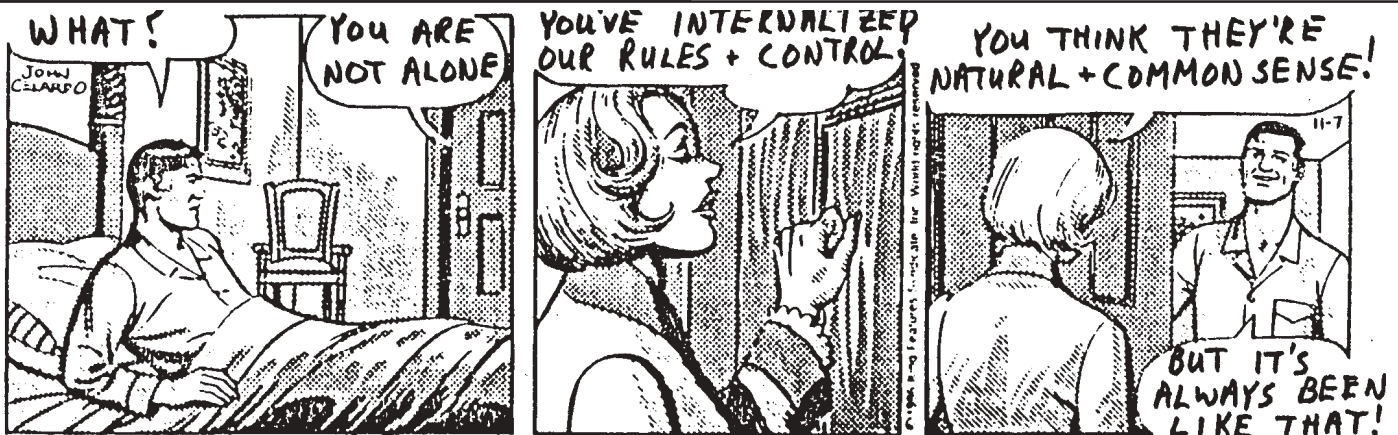
USE NON-PARTICIPATION

What Would Be the Role of the University?

Education in general and the university in particular are part of the web of domination and have to be destroyed if we are to be free. As technology, the systematic science of relating to the world through artifice, has developed, artificial "knowledge" has come to replace experiential knowledge. We "learn" by reading or listening to the words of experts or performing a set of prescribed rituals called experiments in a totally artificial environment called a laboratory (and this only after we've taken in enough of the words of the experts). In fact, we are taught to believe that what we "know" is what authority tells us is true and that this is more trustworthy than our own experience.

So the university is nothing more than an indoctrination center for training us to accept authority and the dominant ideology. There may, indeed, be material in a university that can be used in the undermining of authority, but it has to be used in a way that utterly undermines the university itself, a way that counters the dominant ideology with the knowledge that comes from direct lived experience. And ultimately, that means destroying all universities and schools along with the rest of the web of domination.

[Karen Eliot



A Sentence for the Culture Industry

We cannot get out of your shadow and we know that; and we know that we love the shadowy pleasures of your dominion—not the way you do, taking your own products as omens of liberty, but loving helplessly, entranced, loving the levers of your control; also, we know that we are the same as you because we are *of* you, born of your rib, inconceivable without you, that is, we know that we are corrupt, paranoid, and parasitic; and finally we know that we want more than anything else to oppose you and that is why we are creating this conceptual suicide, this passionate act of love. [ASAC-CA

GIVE THE ART WORD TO THE ART WORLD

GIVE UP



From January 1, 1991 to December 31, 1993, don't say "art" unless you mean "money."
Write: WORD STRIKE ACTION COMMITTEE PO Box 1500 New York, NY 10009 U.S.A.

Suppose you could take away the tics, what would there be left? I consist of tics—there'd be nothing left

A sufferer of Tourette Syndrome

Art Strike Action Committees (ASACs)

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 ASAC (Eire), c/o Tony Lowes, Allihies, Bantry, West Cork, Ireland
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