

Reprinted from the *Cork Free Press*, Cork, Ireland, November 1989

# No Shoes—No Shows

From 31st December this year all “cultural workers” will be asked to “put down their tools and cease to make, distribute, sell, exhibit or discuss their work until 1st January 1993. This request comes from the organisers of “Art Strike 1990–1993,” an international campaign that allies the necessity and possibility of social revolution with the elimination of aesthetic values.

Art, they say, is an international commodity which has replaced religion as the opiate of the people and is marketed by a self-perpetuating elite. The Art Strike will address a series of issues, most important amongst these is the fact that this socially imposed hierarchy can be actively and aggressively challenged.

## Revolutionary ideas

The strike itself is not necessarily out to destroy art. The machinery of the art culture is seen as taking precedent over our responsibility to real fundamental change. The challenge is to set this machinery in total contradiction with itself by replacing “artistic” production with the production of revolutionary ideas, forms and techniques. Nor is it necessary that the strike’s success be dependent on mass participation. It is, however, essential that the minority advocate the necessity of going on an active art strike, as the credibility or the art culture is only maintained as long as it remains unquestioned.

## Indispensable tool

When first reported in the June issue of this indispensable tool, [ *illegible* ] the idea that art as a concept could be challenged at all was mixed with disbelief, anger and delight. In any case, emotions were aroused. The organisers see this reaction as proof positive that the very mention of an organised assault on the art world would be the first pinch to awaken our drugged consciousness. In order to spare this reporter a repeat of the unenviable task of facing more hostile inquisitions, the following set of premeditated questions and answers have been supplied:

### What is the Art Strike?

Art Strike is the total withdrawal of all cultural production for a period of 3 years. It is the ceremonial mast of a movement away from competitive art making and towards a culture without curators.

### Why 3 years?

Three years is the minimum period required to cripple the system. In the first year the world will be a field of undifferentiated experience. In the second year figures will emerge from a background. In the third year new perceptual methods will arise.

### Is this a joke?

Absolutely not. How can you have shows when some people don’t even have shoes?

### What’s wrong with being an artist?

To call one person an artist is to deny another the equal gift of vision.

### Who’s behind it?

Better a thousand movements fail than one leader succeeds. Anyone can organise the Art Strike, many have.

### Will sex be better in the years without art?

It goes without saying.

### Why must we stop making art?

Because the refusal of artistic identity is the only weapon left to us and the demolition of serious culture the only way ahead.

### What will be achieved?

A great calmness will settle over the world. Former artists will have more time to cook, correspond. Creativity, freed of traditional constraints, will be channelled into relationships, work environments, community activities. People who never thought of themselves as creative will no longer be intimidated by talented bullies. Life will become increasingly delightful and unpredictable. The rich will be forced to relinquish their cultural superiority and their sense of status will grow more desperate and ironic with each passing day.

## Art Strike: Out of culture and into the World.

ART STRIKE ACTION COMMITTEE  
P.O. BOX 73025  
ALLIHIES, CO. CORK  
IRELAND



Dear Fellow Artists;

November 15, 1989

I'm enclosing materials that I hope you will read and consider—materials concerning life and death.

I write to ask your support for the Global Art Strike 1990–1993. This strike, first suggested by Gustav Metzger in London's *Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA) Journal*, calls on:

*"...all cultural workers to put down their tools and cease to make, distribute, sell, exhibit, or discuss their work from 1 January 1990 to 1 January 1993."*

Please join us and support the Irish branch of the Global Art Strike.

While many, if not all, of you could not give up art even if convinced to do so, I know that if you study the arguments carefully, you'll understand why an Art Strike is necessary to assess accurately the position of art in our society today.

All we do ask is that you help us to spread the word—to raise the level of debate and consciousness in our society by donating 0.7% of your income from art. We also request that your galleries, publishers, and associates of all kind remit 0.7% of their commissions. (This sum represents the sum the Irish Nation recommends states give in foreign aid and so forms the benchmark of our consciousness. Ireland gave .18% of her GNP in 1988.)

Art Strike Committees exist in many countries as well as here in Ireland; any of them will be happy to supply more information about how you can help.

I know that you represent an imaginative and caring part of our society, and that you do not want people to starve in famines or be born to die in poverty. Please devote a little of your time and consideration to your responsibilities as an artist. Help your fellow workers help the world. Give up art. Save the starving.

Thank you for your consideration,

T. Marvin Lowes  
Irish Art Strike Action Committee

P.S.: Give me a ring on the Art Strike "Hotline" if you want to talk it out. Telephone 027-73025 — day or night!

ART STRIKE ACTION COMMITTEE (IRELAND), P.O. BOX 73025, ALLIHIES, CO. CORK