

**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 may be considered for inclusion in a future issue without specific prior notification. Submissions are welcome and encouraged. It is our policy not to attribute work, unless the content benefits from such attribution. **YAWN** is a collective, mostly anonymous, effort. Contributors receive a copy of the **YAWN** in which their work is used. Monetary donations are requested to help defray the costs of publication. Subscriptions are available for \$10 (cash or unused stamps) for 25 issues. Archive at <http://yawn.detritus.net/>.

## Proletarian Posturing and the Strike which Never Ends

*Censorship is a more populist form of subjectivity than imagination because it does not require the construction of alternative ("imagined") possibilities, only familiarity with existing ones.*

CENSORSHIP LEAFLET

For some time now, there has been a momentum of dissident culture, strengthened by conformity, and organized around a series of *attacks* on various subjects. The "material" side of this process has been the creation of events and materials<sup>1</sup> which transmit, in a relatively conventional manner, a collection of attitudes towards various aspects of dominant culture. These attitudes can be simplistically summed up as distaste for work, production, originality, "high" and "low" culture, and received identities. These elements of social relations are added to the usual list of exploitations in capitalist society. A variety of experiments have been proposed to investigate the negations of these "abstractions." "Multiple names," anonymity and explicit plagiarism have been used to undermine the idea of identity or ownership in culture. At the same time, participants have been hell-bent on historicizing themselves and their activities, partially in order to insert these discourses into mainstream politics and culture, and perhaps also for reasons which are more unpleasantly in contradiction with their stated aims.

The so-called "Festival(s) Of Plagiarism"

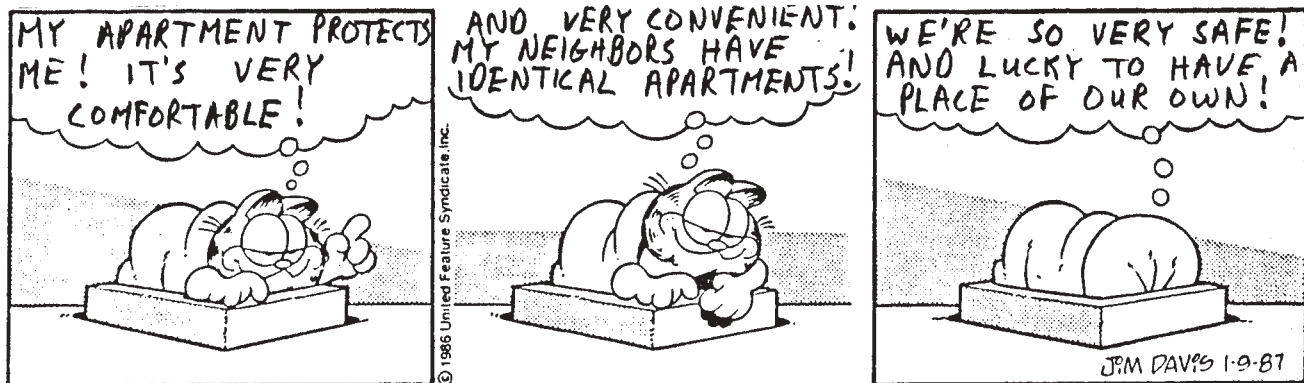
were essentially an outgrowth of the Neoist Apartment Festivals, collective events which themselves plagiarized the Fluxus festivals of a few years before. The primary difference between the Festivals Of Plagiarism and the Neoist festivals were the Plagiarists' intention to focus on a single set of ideas; plagiarism and so forth. Plagiarism had been an element of Neoist activity, but Neoist festivals had and have an omnidirectional character and involved an assortment of experimentation and exotica in presentations, politics and habitation. During the "Festival Of Plagiarism" in London, a repetitive critique of "ownership" and "originality" in culture was juxtaposed with collective events, in which a majority of participants did not explicitly agree with the polemics. Many of the participants simply wanted to have their "aesthetic" and vaguely political artwork exposed, and found the festival a receptive vehicle for doing so.

Throughout much of these ideas loomed "abstract" questions of power, even at the level of event organization. In a very obvious way, "activists" were structuring events and language to give weight to a programmatic agenda of ideas. At the same time, there was considerable dissent as to what those ideas consisted of. In partial response to this *ironic crisis*, a participant from the London Festival organized a Festival of Censorship in Baltimore, during which participants would make presentations in support of censor-

ship and against the idea of the sanctity of information or expression<sup>2</sup>. Support of censorship logically followed a critical understanding of questions of autonomy and power in culture. In the same way that explicit plagiarism undermined the distinction between production and consumption, explicit censorship attacked the distinction between the creation and destruction of possibilities. The Festival was short and poorly attended, and again, only a few of the participants completely supported its ideological bent. Many of the events were advertised but did not occur. The "value" of either festival was primarily "academic"—feeding discussion around various *issues* rather than creating militant engagement.

A related project is the "Art Strike of 1990–1993" (and related "strikes") which centers around the refusal of the "creative identity." In the time before the Strike, activists have staged disruptions, pickets, interviews and publications. Participants in the Strike refuse to be identified as "creative individuals" in order to investigate the received attitudes in their own identities and to create political polarization within the "art world." The Strike is also intended to propagandistically demoralize those members of the ruling class who justify their attitudes through culture, by exposing the possibility of "militant" opposition to them from the usually supportive art world. The Strike is voluntary self-censorship, attempting to expose some of the possibilities which are socially suppressed by the existence of the "art" context. The Strike is full with contradictions in that it tends to draw attention to those individuals who are organizing it in a way which detracts from its overall purpose. It has been particularly difficult to avoid having individual strikers identified by the media. Many of the sup-

## We are in the Post-apocalyptic Era. Post-politics,



## post-religion, post-art, post-philosophy. All meaning

## systems are crumbling. A revolution is not a comic

porters of the Strike will cease their activities though they have never considered them art, generalizing the strike to include a total refusal of "creativity." This recognizes the extent to which it is the social perception of the identity rather than some "real" absolute identity which is in question. Though the questions surrounding the

Strike will continue after its inception, for the most part they will have practically ended for participants, who will no longer engage in discourse about culture at all. [ASAC-MD

1. Though these activities *claim* to be open to all, it is apparent that they tend to attract "individuals" who

have a particular intellectual orientation. Beyond the exclusivity of specific ideas, the milieu in which these activities take place has fairly limited appeal to most people.

2. A Festival Of Non-Participation took place concurrently in Scotland, concerned primarily with "Revolution, Unemployment and Suicide."

## book. We analyze existing forms so we can trans-

### Stop the Art Strike

The 1990-1993 Art Strike, which is currently being proposed by an international consortium of petty egomaniacs, needs to be shot dead, summarily executed without delay. The reasons for this conclusion are perfectly clear, as Richard Nixon would say, and I shall outline them in this brief paper.

The theoretical Marxist gobbydygooke (Middle English spelling) that is the fountain from which this proposal ejaculates is logically unsound, although fascinating in its dire lack of intelligence. This is clearly evident when one examines the main Art Strike argument, which is that somehow Art is a tool, a "commodity" used by an elite to "repress" the masses. I hereby challenge the organizers of this mess to find ten seriously impoverished people willing to sign an affidavit to the effect that their condition is due to the business practices of Art galleries! Imagine Geraldo Rivera crawling through the streets of East Oakland, asking street philosophers to recount personal episodes of terror at the hands of Piedmontian curators! Of course the outcome would be that of an empty television well, with a greasily handsome Geraldo wringing his hands. He

would be lucky to even find a downtrodden person who gives an Albanian hoot about Art, or Artists, or their picayune opinions. Art simply doesn't matter to the vast majority of indigents. But to this, the smug Marxist would retort: "But the masses have yet to be enlightened as to the cause to their condition!" What sanctimonious, pig-headed borscht! The man pushing a shopping cart down the street would much rather have a T-bone steak marinated with Narsai's Special Sauce than a thousand tickets to performances at Artist's Television Access [a San Francisco establishment that sponsored an Art Strike event!] And rightly so, for his survival is, and should be, paramount. Whether or not there are Art geniuses has buggerall to do with the immediacy of his condition. If the self-satisfied organizers of this bird-brainish strike were really interested in helping the masses, they'd be proposing a TV-dinner round-up for the homeless! They'd be putting their money where their fat mouths are, so to speak.

It is also clear that the instigators of this foolishness are bent on being famous, and that they are insanely jealous of financially successful artists. This is a case of sour Bulgarian grapes, under the guise of proletarian revolt. It is usually the case that when revolutionaries seize power, they become just as repressive as

their former masters; if the organizers of this effort were actually to stop Art production, they would be in the best position in terms of financial gain. Fortunately, I feel confident that this little temper tantrum by a collective of spoiled-artistic-brats can be nipped in the bud, castrated from the consciousness of creativity. But only if you follow my instructions, and act now. If you agree with this analysis, you'll do the following:

1. Mail the letter [below] to:  
Artists' Television Access  
922 Valencia Street  
San Francisco CA 94103  
Attention: Bird-brained Artist's Strike
2. Refuse to participate in the strike, if it ever really materializes.
3. Encourage others to create works of Art. Creativity is good for people.

(Text of the letter:) "Dear ATA:

**"I refuse to participate in the 1990-1993 Artist's Strike. As a matter of fact, I pledge to do everything in my power to encourage more Art production.**

**"I also think that the organizers of this effort are just a bunch of cry-babies trying to feather their nests and make a mess on the floor."** (Signed,) [Anatoly Zyyxx

## form them. Communication starts with having

### Results of Art Strike (YAWN Nº 15) Survey Are "In"

Of those who responded to the survey, 80% were male. 75% of males claimed to be "straight," while 25% claimed to be "celibate." All the females (25% of respondents) were "straight." There were no homosexual respondents. 80% graduated high school, and of those, 75% had at least begun college with 37.5% of these holding or pursuing a graduate degree. The average age of respondents was 28.6 years. 100% of respondents were of European (Caucasian) extraction; all resided in the United States, with 60% living in the Boston, Massachusetts

area. The remaining 40% live within 200 miles of Chicago. The average yearly income was \$9,060, with at least one respondent claiming no income at all and 40% claiming less than \$2,500. Only 20% of respondents claimed to be "participating" in the Art Strike—60% "refused" to participate, with the remaining 20% offering "partial support" to the idea. This survey is not scientific. In all, 5 persons responded.

The questions appeared in YAWN Nº15 at the request of a reader. We're still collecting data: write for details.

## something to say. What do you want to say?

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