

YAWN

November 6, 1990

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. 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/>.

NEWSFRONT OFF THE WALL

Part curmudgeonly pranksters, part dead earnest activists against the intrusion of right-wing values on the art scene, those participating in the nine-month old Art Strike have had a hard time “enforcing” their call for a three-year moratorium on art.

But earlier this month, the Albany Art Strike Action Committee garnered the support of the state Office of General Services (OGS) and Gov. Mario M. Cuomo, however unknowing this support may have been given.

When OGS removed and covered up the art collection in the Empire State Plaza (ESP) concourse, Art Strike moved in, postering the plaza and surrounding communities with a handbill declaring:

“All of the art that lined the walls of the ESP underground concourse has been removed or covered up (and hopefully soon to be destroyed) to call into question the blank emptiness of history that was previously hidden by so many bright colors and squiggly lines.”

Actually, the art was removed to install a new security system, and OGS was not amused by the posters. Tom Tubbs, an OGS spokesman, said he was “awestruck” upon receiving a copy of the poster. He dubbed the poster a “terrorist note... an absurdity, filled with typographical errors and irrational charges.”

Tubbs wouldn't go into the specifics of the new-and-improved security system, but did say that it would involve “all kinds of camera surveillance, and several other devices.” He also said that he had never even heard of the Art Strike, nor did Dennis Anderson, curator of the plaza art collection.

All in good fun, said Neal Keating, one of three local Art Strike dis-organizers. “The intent was to suggest something so wild that, even for one moment, it would shatter the silent drone of constant alienation that permeates every aspect of life today,” he said in a prepared statement.

Keating, a writer who has recently relocated to Albany from Woodstock, said that “even people in high places, whether conscious of it or not, are supporting the Art Strike.” Keating challenged Cuomo to “go one step further, and never put the art back up.”

—Tom Gogola, METROLAND, Albany, N. Y., Sept. 20-26, 1990, p. 7

Governor Mario Cuomo
Executive Chamber
State Capitol
Albany NY 12224

Albany Art Strike Action Committee
P.O. Box 2256
Albany NY 12220

10/3/90

Dear Governor Cuomo,

Recently we have issued public commendations to both you and Commissioner Egan of OGS (Office of General Services) for your apparent participation in the noble, and global, Art Strike.

Obviously, you are more well-read than I had previously given you credit for. As things stand, precious few people seem to have any idea of what this Art Strike is all about. I am curious as to how you first became acquainted with the ideas and theories that have since come to represent the Art Strike in all its criticAl (albeit unknown) glory.

Do you intend to issue a public statement of alliance with the Art Strike? Would such a statement include a thorough denunciation of the elitist manipulation of humanity's creative energies—as practiced by the cultural arbitrageurs known as “artists”?

As part of observing the Art Strike, will you postpone the return of Art in the ESP (Empire State Plaza) concourse until January 1, 1993?

If not, can you tell me why?

Sincerely,
Neal Keating, for the AASAC

Albany Art Strike Action Committee (AASAC)



Statement of purpose re: ESP Concourse Action of 9/90

① We are a group of sensual creatures who occasionally embark on acts of poetic terrorism for the purposes of liberating the wondrous and propagating the extraordinary. We encourage fully conscious orgiastic participation in life.

≠ In particular, the ESP Concourse action was directly targeted at the walls of boredom both in and out of people's minds as they zombie their way through the monotonous underground cavern. The intent was to suggest something so wild that, even for one moment, would shatter the silent drone of constant alienation that permeates every aspect of life today, and perhaps drive the beholder to seek out some more intense mode of existence.

③ The Empire State Plaza, like the Pyramids of Egypt, is the mausoleum of a ruling class with a taste for death. Part shopping mall, part warren for state workers, the Plaza is the marriage of commerce and power and naturally shows us baby pictures of their offspring: Art—Art which returns

to us for a look, (*don't touch!*), the creative power we have only to reach out and wrest away in order to remake life as an adventure in fellowship, pleasure and play. By flaunting art, especially this collection of Art by the plutocrat Rockefeller's cocktail party cronies, the ESP mocks and insults everyone whose life is eviscerated by obedience and work. The Empire State Plaza, with its outdated modern architecture, already looks as if it were built to be excavated, truly, as the Parisian revolutionaries said in 1968, “soon to be picturesque ruins”—and the sooner the better.

√ That a successful Governor and probable presidential candidate would ever attempt to address the overwhelming horror—the ghastly totality of civilization, in any kind of honest and critical appraisal is, for the most part, beyond the scope of normal speculation. To put forth in a public manner such a suggestion is almost like declaring the existence of a parallel universe, only in much more human terms. Thus have we acted.

For the Art Strike, Neal Keating
Bob Black
Pir Fez Hafez Ad-Dajil

IF YOU DON'T VOTE,



there is much to be gained: your useful comprehension of the system's horror will remain intact. Refuse the system. Keep your anger from being syphoned off. Withhold the legitimacy of numbers. Don't Vote.

S T R I K E B A C K

To the Editor:

There is no cause to speak, as Tom Gogola does, of the Albany Art Strike Action Committee "enforcing" the Art Strike. In a city boasting a combination art gallery and real estate office, the mask has already slipped. Even before our Empire State Plaza action, voluntary compliance with the strike was almost universal. Our ideas are in everyone's heads.

Nor do we care to protect art against intruding "right-wing values." Right-wing, left-wing or art-for-art's-sake, *all* art is a source of social separation and serves a control function. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation.

If (unhappy day) the art returns to the plaza, swept by cameras and laced with censors, the class war will have returned on the electronic battlefield. The curator will be dismissed—he doesn't know his stuff anyway if he hasn't heard of the Art Strike—and replaced by an

electronics technician with a military background from the upper ranks of the Capital Police who have already paid us a visit. Henceforth we will visit museums to be looked at by the art.

Our challenge to Gov. Cuomo stands. Get rid of the art. Without such fantasies and distractions, the concourse architecture will quickly become unbearable. The empty walls will be so irritating as to require their immediate removal as well. After the art is gone, after the walls themselves have been removed, comes the concrete construction of momentary ambiances of life and their transformation into a superior passional quality. This *is* our entire program, which is essentially transitory. Our situations will be ephemeral, without a future: passage-ways. The permanence of art or anything else does not enter into our considerations, which are serious.

Bob Black, Neal Keating
(AASAC)

Tom Gogola replies: I don't know how Keating and Black can claim that "voluntary compliance with the Strike was almost universal," when Keating himself told me in an interview that "the Art Strike has pretty much been a failure." When I said "enforcing" it was meant as irony, to illuminate the failure of Art Strike to achieve its aim of an artless world.

METROLAND, Oct. 4-10, 1990, p. 4

YAWN adds: Mr. Gogola obviously has little comprehension of what little Art Strike material he has apparently read. The Art Strike's aim is *not* "an artless world," which is a patent absurdity. The Art Strike aims to build a better world by dismantling the power-reinforcing element of art and returning creativity of all kinds—not just that validated by art "experts"—to a position of worth in culture.

In addition, it is *certainly* the case that compliance with the Art Strike is nearly universal: most people do not make and have never made art. It is only when the true poverty of content of daily life in our culture is widely recognized that a humane world will be realized. Art creates the illusion of humanity where only horrors abound.



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