

of the street signs missing in the area of midtown New York designated for the performance of *Street Works*. The signs read E 42 St, E 51 St, E 49 St, E 45 St, E 44 St, and W 51 St, and might be considered as a discontinuous literary work with six lines.

The second *Useful Art Work* consisted of painting the subway station at 42nd St. and Fifth Ave. on the Flushing line.

These art works were intended to attack the myth of the lack of utility of the arts, while being in themselves a modest contribution to the improvement of city living conditions.

Both *Works* were performed – with the help of Scott Burton – between 2:30 and 7:00 a.m., to avoid any problems involving the municipal laws. The second *Work* could not be finished.

E. C.

M37 The Casablanca School

Manifesto (1969)

In the early 1960s a group of artists in Morocco set about reforming the École des Beaux-Arts in Casablanca. Led by the college's director, the painter Farid Belkahlia (1934–2014), and inspired in part by the Pan-Arabist movement – a generally secularist ideology devoted to the modernization and unification of the Arab-speaking world (see M41) – they became known as the Casablanca School. They opposed the Western art curriculum in schools, and sought to replace it with a new style that incorporated time-honoured elements from North African art, such as bold colour and Arabic and Berber calligraphy, and experimented with traditional natural materials like henna and leather.

Since Morocco gained its independence in 1956, the country had suffered political repression, human rights abuses and economic hardship. There had been little state support for the arts, either economically or politically. As a result, there were few exhibition venues available to artists in the country, other than the lobbies of predominantly Western-owned banks and hotels, or, as the manifesto below argues, spaces run by foreign embassies to further their own post-colonial agendas. None of them were easily accessible by the general public. In protest, the Casablanca School began, in 1966, to boycott the country's exhibition venues and display their artworks in local high schools and public squares.

In 1969, the group published a manifesto in the May–June issue of the radical leftist French-Moroccan journal *Lamalif*, in which they criticized the Moroccan government for the lack of public galleries and demanded better support for the arts. The 'organizers' the artists refer to in the first line of the manifesto are the Ministry

of Culture in Morocco, with whom the artists met to articulate their case for better investment after the success of their outdoor exhibition in Marrakech's Djemaa el-Fna square. The group's ideological commitment to public engagement, which also saw the introduction of an annual arts festival in Asilah, continues to influence artists, like Yto Barrada, who are working in Morocco today.

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The fact that the organizers deem it necessary to unite artists around a body of work mirroring the current state of the arts in Morocco is an initiative which deserves our consideration. Beyond mere mundane dealings with the administration, never in the past have artists as a whole been recognized as a credible partner when reviewing the difficulties encountered by art in Morocco. In the aftermath of independence, a few painters sought to make contact with officials responsible for the fine arts, armed with proposals, but their ideas never took hold with the administration. Equally, the creation of the Society for Fine Arts could have brought to life an influential connection between artists and official policy makers within the fine arts administration, but this was in vain. We regret that the creation of the society came too late. That the fate of Moroccan art should continue to be in the hands of individuals who were incompetent, and that not a single panel including the artists most concerned should be involved, was aberrant enough. Throughout the existence of the fine arts administration, management errors and anomalies could also be observed – such as the annual exhibition of Moroccan painters, short-lived due to its poor management, which suffered from an absence of the sort of advertising campaign that typically goes hand in hand with such events, from a lack of the public relations that would have provided a rationale for its existence, and finally from the poor quality of the works exhibited.

Besides, a good number of artists chose not to take part in national and international exhibitions after their works were lost or simply disappeared. Officials never deigned to respond to complaints or compensate artists whose work ought to have been

insured as is common practice. For a lack of galleries and exhibition halls, artists were forced to exhibit in the buildings of foreign cultural missions, where the paternalistic approach to art that had defined the protectorate era was only reinforced. Worse still, in order to reach their audience at home as well as abroad, artists often had to accept the patronage of cultural missions.

Those cultural missions mostly favoured naive painting, which held sway in the aftermath of independence. This was essentially an extension of previous colonial policies which intended to impose on Morocco this form of painting as the sole artistic expression fit enough to represent local mentalities and sensitivities, thereby asserting/reinforcing that an underdeveloped country could only produce underdeveloped art. The fine arts administration followed suit, almost fostering this art form by providing a wide range of facilities to painters of naive art.

It should be noted here that the organization of exhibitions destined for abroad was deeply flawed: there was no proper panel to select the work – hence the poor representation of Moroccan art; hastily improvised preparations took no account of the actual location of those exhibitions; and, furthermore, no real contact was made with prominent international artistic bodies (such as biennales).

Whereas the above relates to the relationship between organizers and painters at the time, in terms of educating the youth and the masses at large through the medium of art, the management of the fine arts administration did not, in our opinion, assume all of its responsibilities.

Undeniably, education underpins any development of the arts and the achievements of pupils who have had no exposure to art are very low. Art and painting in schools must hold their own place alongside the teaching of history, and not be a recreational activity on the margins of the curriculum. Education in Morocco is patchy. Nothing prepares the Moroccan people to grasp the country's artistic creations or appreciate our artistic heritage. Young people's visual perception is not developed. The schools of applied art and academies of fine art were inherited from the colonial education

system and no review of the curriculum has ever taken place, resulting in a syllabus that is alien to the culture of our country. Unfortunately, the only state academy dedicated to art education (the École des Beaux-Arts in Tétouan) has been following the very same curriculum since the days of the protectorate, and is biased against our needs. The École des Arts Nationaux (Tétouan), which ought to play a crucial role in safeguarding traditional arts, suffers from being poorly managed.

The administrative departments regulating the fine arts have yet to provide those educational institutions with a curriculum that mirrors our current circumstances, our traditions and the need to decolonize our teaching. Nor have they tackled the issue of the training needed in order to improve the teaching. Indeed, several students who needed to complete their art-training course in schools abroad have been denied grants, which in turn has resulted in a tangible gap in competent leadership.

Since the protectorate, the establishments we call 'museums' have been turned into storage depots. No attempts have been made to grant them their true function: to inform and educate. We feel that museums should be places where vibrant programmes allow for a better diffusion of the arts. The popular arts are currently depreciated, misunderstood, known only superficially and often confused with poor quality handicrafts. Museums could play a part in raising the profile of popular art, and the presence of artists would facilitate this.

A great proportion of historical monuments in our national heritage need protection and maintenance. Making an inventory and saving our patrimony (both monuments and exhibits) has now become an urgent need. The fine arts administration will have to take effective steps to regulate the export of works of art – such laws are commonly enforced in most countries.

These national issues demand the creation of a dedicated council for the arts. This council would comprise experts, historians and critics, painters, sculptors, architects and town planners, sociologists and writers. The council's mission would be to:

- devise and ensure the application of a policy of the arts
- write up an inventory and ensure the protection of our national heritage, past and future, and its preservation
- monitor the quality of art
- create new policy for art galleries and national museums
- consider creating a museum of modern art in the future
- organize and deliver all national and international artistic events
- devise and monitor a policy on the teaching of art in high schools and art colleges
- ensure the application of a policy aiming to give Moroccan artists a stronger voice in both public and private sectors (in architecture, graphic design and advertising).

In organizing an annual national exhibition, we should not discard the criticisms and considerations entertained above.

With regards to the creation of a new institute of modern art, we propose that a commission be authorized to carry out the project, following consultation.