



KATY SIEGEL ON MANIFESTA 3 AND THE BIENNALE DE LYON 2000

Fringe Benefits

WIDESPREAD SNIPING AT MEGA-SHOWS THAT attempt to survey the contemporary moment doesn't seem to discourage arts organizations from putting them on, but it does make curators careful about setting their parameters. Two big European shows this summer promise (once again) expansive retakes on the familiar conceit. Both rely heavily on a metaphor or theme to embody the "problem" of internationalism; one is suspicious, the other celebratory.

Manifesta 3, dubbed "Borderline Syndrome: Energies of Defense," takes place in Ljubljana, Slovenia, June 23 to September 24. Curated by Francesco Bonami, Ole Bouman, Mária Hlavajová, and Kathrin Rhomberg, it is the third in a series of pan-European biennials and the first to take place in Eastern Europe. Not surprisingly, the theme—borderline syndrome—takes its cues from the site. The psychoanalytic overtones (Lacanian Slavoj Žižek is a shadow figure here) imply the desire, particularly in Eastern Europe, to assimilate into

the new European community but also the fear of losing national identity in the process. The curators concentrated on places where identity is in question, such as Northern Ireland, Portugal, Italy, and Armenia, to find the fifty mostly unknown artists

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included in the show. Some of the work is site specific, such as a piece by Stalker, a collective from Rome, which proposes to link Ljubljana with Vienna and Venice. Architectural projects and documentary film are emphasized, though painting and photography will also be on view. Still, Bonami refuses to categorize Manifesta as an art exhibition.

The Biennale de Lyon 2000 (June 28–Sept. 24), titled "Sharing Exoticisms," takes a considerably more upbeat, sensual attitude toward the idea of cultures in collision. Curated by Jean-Hubert Martin, best known for the controversial 1989 show

at the Centre Georges Pompidou "Magiciens de la terre," this biennial is decidedly international, drawing artists from five continents. If Manifesta relies on psychoanalysis, the fifth Lyons biennial takes its cues from anthropology, albeit of a slightly dated variety. The twist is that European art, as well as African and Asian objects, will be organized by anthropological categories of use value, such as body ornamentation (will tattoos never fade away?). Recovering rather than dismissing the colonial notion of the exotic, everything (à la Baudelaire) will be rendered strange. Emphasizing the experiential quality of the encounter, the installation will work to preserve and create context, effacing the exhibition space of the Halle Tony Garnier with elements of the works' native habitats,

including dirt, wooden boards, and huts. Nonetheless, the exhibition bows before the Western cult of the aesthetic fetish, promising minimal didactic material—more looking, less explaining.

Martin asserts that cultural homogenization is more a figment than a threat, and his biennial hopes to prove that cultural diversity is alive and well. The Manifesta curators insist on the positive and negative political realities of a "united" Europe. But both shows will work hard to defeat traditional expectations, dissolving exhibition conventions in favor of context. □

Spring Quartet

"This is Grand Central Station, not the Bates Motel," declares Philip Dodd, director of London's **Institute of Contemporary Arts**. Dodd's vision of the ICA as an open "network of relationships" will advance a step with his appointment of a semi-independent four-person team to curate the institute's exhibitions program (following the departure of Emma Dexter—exhibitions director from 1992 to 1999—for Tate Modern). Dodd wants the new associate directors to furnish a program that avoids a London-centric view and reflects the most exciting trends in the UK, central Europe, and the world; he hopes the team will test the institutional boundaries of fine-art exhibiting and anticipates plenty of exposure for new media. So, gearing up for the task are UK-based artist, curator, and writer **Matthew Higgs**; writer and Stedelijk Museum curator **Martijn van Nieuwenhuyzen**; new-media specialist and associate curator at the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, **Cristina Ricupero**; and Glasgow Modern Institute director **Toby Webster**.



Dodd stresses that "design by committee" is not his intention. All four curators will continue their present activities, and each will take responsibility for at least one show per year, with joint projects arising spontaneously. The new gang will by no means close ranks at four: Curatorial space will still be there for independents and newcomers. The team will release details of future programs this summer. Dodd's innovative strategy poses an inevitable question: Might the ICA's bid for a healthy institutional plurality descend into a curatorial identity crisis? On the other hand, would an identity crisis be such a bad thing? Despite the unknowns, the plan is eliciting murmurs of approval on the London art beat.

—Rachel Withers

Upper left:

Maja Bajevic, *Woman at Work*, 1999, still from a video, 25 minutes.

From Manifesta 3.

Upper right: Wenda

Gu, *Temple of Heaven*, 1998,

human-hair panels, tables, chairs, and

video monitors,

dimensions variable.

Installation view.

From the Biennale

de Lyon 2000. Lower

right, left to right:

Matthew Higgs,

Martijn van

Nieuwenhuyzen,

Cristina Ricupero,

and Toby Webster.