
-NEW ART-

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Setting: a large, prestigious room with a high ceiling. A big oval table, solid as a rock, in the center of the room. Chairs neatly placed all around it.

The room has a faint, strange smell to it.

Members of the committee are sitting at the table, each with a stack of cheap A4 paper stapled together in front of them. Some distant chatter is heard as everyone settles into their seats.

E: (clears throat and looks through their stack of papers)

A: I have to say I find this absurd and, honestly, a waste of time.

C: And you are welcome to leave.

B: Order please!

C: This is not a court; it doesn't work like that.

B: Alright, do you then suggest we all just yell over eachother for the rest of this meeting?

C: Are you suggesting we can not aim to have a civilized discussion without policing eachother?

B: I am not suggesting anything...

E: Alright folx! Can we please centralise our focus?
(uncomfortable pause)

E: Thank you.
(Starts shuffling through notes)

E: Before we start, did everyone read version 4B of the provisional terminology draft?

C: I have 4A here.

B: Mine says redacted.

A: Mine is blank.

E: Actually blank?

A: Completely.

C: That should not happen.

A: It could be conceptual.

B: We agreed not to say that prematurely.

A: Well too late now.

B: I'm gonna ask you to please stop derailing the conversation.

A: What conversation?

E: Exactly! So if you would let me...

(clears throat and looks once again at notes)

E: There has been a request for terminological clarification between state-funded Art and...

B: Alleged Art.

F: Just, Art. Not Alleged.

B: That was the term used in the previous meeting.

F: Temporarily.

C: Is there anything that is truly not temporary?

G: Could someone remind me again why we need this clarification?

A: Well, we certainly don't *need* it. We need food, water, air, love- maybe...

B: Please!!! Are you doing this deliberately?

E: Order please!

C: Once again, this is not a court.

G: But my question was genuine. Why can't we keep calling both Art?

H (from the opposite side of the table): because one receives structural, biased support.

C: Many things receive structural support.

H: Such as?

I: The Arms Trade.

-An uncomfortable silence-

B: Well, lucky for us we are not in *that* line of business.

G: But so then you do admit it! You are in it for the business.

B: I was not aware that was something I had to admit to? How do you put food on your table?

G: I work at a ramen shop.

B: And you took the day off for this?

A: Order please! Who is derailing the conversation now?

E: I have to agree, can we focus? On the matter at hand?

G: I don't think it's completely irrelevant. I work as a cook and yes I did take the day off for this because I think this is important. It's relevant to me. I'm a cook and also an artist. And now you're telling me I can't be an artist if I make my money elsewhere?

C: No one's saying that.

H: Yet!

F: Aren't they though? We are already pointlessly calling some art "outsider art". Now they want to differentiate between art based on how the production of it is funded. What about the art itself? Is it soooooo important whether the government paid for one work of art and not the other?

A: Taxpayers.

F: What?

A: Taxpayers, not the government.

G: I don't think it's the taxpayers that get to judge the funding applications.

B: Well, it's not "*the Government*" either...

E: Well, public cultural funding bodies do receive direct financial support from "*the Government*".

B: I am well aware of that; what I'm saying is that there are qualified cultural professionals who run these things.

H: And you think there is not a national agenda of what definition of "culture" gets to get financially backed?

B: There's a national agenda for everything.

E: well thank you for confirming what we already knew. Now I'm sure we all want to get this over with and go home at some point, so if everyone could please-

I: If you are just wanting to get this over with and go home, then you should just go home. For the rest of us its actually our lives at stake.

C: It is not a matter of livelihood, its a question of ethics. Should an artist who wishes destruction upon the EU while living as an artist here still recieve money from the EU?

F: That is an absurd scenario.

E: This is a real scenario.

F: Does not make it any less absurd...

H: Why is an artist wishing destruction upon anything?

B: and why is this not reported to the authorities? We are normalising acts of cultural terrorism! NO OTHER NATION IN THE WORLD WOULD TOLERATE-

A: Alright now, Order please!

B: I thought we established this is not a court...

C: I like cultural terrorism. How about we call government-funded art cultural terrorism instead?

E: Can we please be mindful of the weight of words?

C: ...

H: Let's be pragmatic here. WHY do we need to differentiate, now, suddenly?

A: Because people are tired of seeing propaganda at the art galleries.

C: And what if we rename those propaganda galleries instead?

A: Haha

B: It would be much appreciated if we could keep things civil and respectful.

C: With all due respect... What did I say that you deem uncivilized?

E: I don't think many people appreciate being called propaganda-artists.

C: I never said they are artists.

I: HAH! So that's what the problem is.

C: I never said there was a problem.

G: Well you certainly hinted at it. And I must say I don't disagree. What if we kept calling all art, art; But change the terminology for the art maker based on income.

F: We want to create a caste system?

B: Is it not one already?

A: But the artists are not the problem here! Rebranding artists as something else isn't gonna solve anything...

E: Would you care to then clarify what exactly is the problem?

A: Why are we even here in this room together if we do not have a consensus on a problem?

-another uncomfortable silence-

H: (while looking at the stack of paper in front of them) I believe the point is to come to a consensus.

I: A consensus on the problem? Or a consensus of reality?

E: A consensus on what the problem is or a consensus that would resolve the problem? When you say "Consensus on the problem" you are confusing these two.

C: I'd settle for a consensus on language.

B: Is that what we are doing here? Only settling?

H: I'm afraid it wouldn't be the first time.

C: I wouldn't mind settling if that means we can make some progress here

I: I feel like we are regressing. And not only in this conversation. Funds and museums aren't after interesting art anymore... They are only after personalities. They want rockstars! Characters who would whore their vulnerability out at will. Trauma

stories and identity signifiers and forced communities. Communities these days only come to exist from suffering, from abandonment and gathering of hurt egos. It's not cherishable nor admirable. And certainly not charming to anyone other than these funding bodies.

E: (rolls eyes)

I: (turning to E) Excuse me?

E: I understand it can be hurtful when you are not picked. But there is no reason to attack everyone else. Art must serve the society in which it exists.

G: ... Are you serious right now?!

E: Very.

I: ... and what happens to art that does not serve society?

B: Well I would assume that *that* is no longer Art.

F: That is a very bold statement to make.

B: Not a statement but an assumption.

H: A very confident assumption.

B: And now that we have established the difference between confident assumptions and bold statements, could we put that same energy into the task we are here to attend to?

A: Statement Art as opposed to Assumption Art.

F: Which one is which?

E: That should be obvious.

I: Well, it's clearly not.

G: Industry Art, versus Definitive Art.

C: That's a lot of pressure.

G: For who?

I: Wait why are we suddenly capitalising Art?

A: Which art are we capitalising?

B: Clearly the official one.

E: That feels a little blasphemous...

G: Capitalisation feels blasphemous?

B: This can not be the first time you are encountering this.

E: Blasphemy aside, it still lacks clarity.

C: How about eligible and ineligible art.

I: Eligible for what?

B: The money.

H: Whose money?

E: The funding bodies.

B: The taxpayers.

A: Not the government's?

C: Well technically it belongs to the artists.

G: I have never received any of this money; how can it technically belong to me?

E: Because it doesn't belong to the artists. It belongs to the public.

I: That's just a blatant lie.

B: Order! Please!!!

A: Have you ever seen them?

E: Seen who?

H: The public.

E: Of course!

G: Where?

E: At all the public events I attend...

A: What about the public which is not at those events?

B: And who may that be?

H: The taxpayers

E: Aren't we all taxpayers?

G: I would hope so...

I: And what if we aren't?

B: That would be illegal.

I: Sure, but is that relevant to the discussion?

E: Legality?

H: I thought artists are exempt from taxes...

A: Taxable art and-

B: All Art is taxable.

F: That's just not true.

C: How about Legal Art?

H: (with a smile of disbelief) ...as opposed to illegal art?

G: No art should be illegal!

E: History has clearly proven otherwise.

F: What's that supposed to mean?

B: Alright! Everyone... let's gather our focus. Maybe we should return to version 4B of the provisional terminology draft.

A: Mine is still blank.

C: Were you expecting otherwise?

A: I guess not, but the conceptual aspect is less charming now.

I: I don't think it ever was...

E: Can we aim to adhere to some sense of order... Please...

(A not too long, not too uncomfortable silence)

G: I think I need some air.

B: I have to agree.

C: So we agree?

A: Yes, it's time for a break.

(Some nod. Some sigh. Others are already standing up)

E: (organizing the stack in front of them) Alright, great, see you after the break.

The members of the committee gather their belongings and exit the room.

The stacks of paper remain in front of each chair.