



A MANIFESTO FOR THE ARTS

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## (I) PREAMBLE

In this we believe: That our life as a people should engage, embrace and involve culture and the arts more fully, more deeply and essentially. This is based on the view that living the good life in human society entails that emotional, intellectual and spiritual fulfillment and not material and financial gain alone, and such fulfillment should have a pivotal and central place in the hearts and minds of people.

Art epitomizes the irrepressible human need for the immaterial things that matter; love, friendship, home, family, ideals and the pursuit of knowledge and goodness.

Culture, of which the arts are the highest expression, is but a collective means of making meaning, of telling stories, of imagining and then believing what is real, who we are, what we are doing here and why. Our culture reflects us; how we see the world and how the world sees us.

AND THUS FOLLOWS:

## (II) THE MANIFESTO

1. Do not attempt to define Art for others

Art has no necessary and sufficient. What is artistically necessary and sufficient for one person or community may not be so for another.

2. Art is fundamental

Art is not a luxury to be enjoyed only when our other needs are met but is fundamental at all times to our being fully human. Learning about, appreciating and participating in art is primary, not secondary, to both our humanity and to the advancement of society. Art provides literacy that enables us to read, interpret and critique life with philosophical vocabularies, thus giving us insight and understanding to life. Exposure to art is the right of every child and access to art the right of every adult.

3. Art unifies and divides

Art draws us together and reveals universal truths. However, art can also unveil differences and contradictions. We should not just celebrate the former while demonising the latter. Art provides the canvas on which our diversity can be expressed and encountered, and our differences debated and appreciated. It is this process of conflict and contest of ideas that offers us alternatives.

4. Art is about possibilities

Art not only allows us to examine our way of life and to make sense of it but also to question, and to transform ourselves. It allows us to imagine new possibilities and to evolve or even re-make our culture. Art-making requires independent thinking, freedom of expression, risk-taking and experimentation. Art has no enemies except ignorance and prejudice.

5. Art can be challenged but not censored

Everyone has a right to be delighted by, indifferent to or repulsed by art. But no one has the right to deny another the right to decide for his or her self.

6. Art is political

Art comes from and speaks to life. It therefore should inform all aspects of policy and politics that affect our lives. Art enables perspectives and offers alternatives, keeps us uncertain and doubtful to our benefit, and warns us of the hazards of moral certainty.

Art is the seat of the aesthetic experience, but it is also an element of the human engagement with landscape, architecture, ritual and many other social and cultural formations.