

Third Text

From: "Third Text" <thirdtext@kalapress.freemove.co.uk>
To: <Sarah.Weir [REDACTED]>
Cc: <Peter.Hewitt [REDACTED]>; "Kim Evans" <kim.evans [REDACTED]>; "Marjorie Althorpe-Guyton" < [REDACTED]>; "Sarah Wason" < [REDACTED]>
Sent: 21 August 2005 18:14
Attach: PROJECT MRB.doc
Subject: Re: The Future of INIVA

Dear Sarah Weir

Thank you very much for your response to my 'Letter to Stuart Hall', and I am glad that you are also concerned with the issues I have raised. However, you should also know why are we so concerned with the failure/future of INIVA; I therefore attached here a brief history of our work since 1982, and its relationship with INIVA.

What has really bothered us is not the failure of INIVA, but the nature of this failure. If INIVA had failed because of a lack of cooperation or resistance from the mainstream organisations and venues, without whose collaboration it would have not been possible for INIVA to undertake its work, then I would understand this failure and my sympathies would have been with INIVA. But that is not case. I am not saying that there was no lack of cooperation or resistance from the mainstream, but did INIVA approach the mainstream with any project? How? You can't just go to others and demand that they should follow your agenda and programmes. You have to do your homework first to convince others the validity of your work. Did INIVA do this work? How many projects it did develop, and where are they?

In order to understand this we must see what were the aims of the Arts Council in establishing INIVA. These aims, along with the agenda and programme, were outlined in the Arts Council's report of December 2001, particularly on page 10:

'There has been little research undertaken to date to support "new internationalism" as art history departments in universities and polytechnics tend to be Eurocentric in their reference and teaching. Hence there is a need **to establish a research unit** which will support, consolidate and help make visible, the work and achievement of artists obscured by the prevailing histories of western modernism.' [emphasis added].

The report goes further to emphasise the need for a research work:

'the research will be effected by offering a number of bursaries to academics, writers and curators, inviting them to come and work within the space and participate in the programme of the institute'.

Did INIVA established a research unit? who were the invited academics? and which artists were researched? It should be clear that these questions are fundamental in understanding the failure of INIVA. INIVA did not fail because there was a resistance to its research work, or no academic wanted to participate in this work, but because INIVA did not pursue what it was established for. And if INIVA did not pursue what it was established for, why was it allowed instead to go on doing things which were of little significance? Not only that INIVA didn't do what was fundamental to its work, its establishment prevented others undertaking this work. It will in fact not be an exaggeration to say that the establishment of INIVA in 1994 not only aborted the work which had already been initiated and was being pursued but hijacked and undermined what was and is fundamental to the understanding of 'institutional racism' and 'cultural diversity' in art. . .

INIVA not only thus betrayed its own aims and objectives, it also proved itself to be extremely incompetent and inefficient. It has of course done a lot of small and insignificant projects (whose list it issued last year to celebrate its 10th anniversary), but at what cost? It has so far spent about seven million pounds of public money, without a single research project, without a single monograph on a historically important artist, without a single major exhibition, without making any intervention in art teaching...It has done some publications, but we have published more books. You can look at our work for a comparison, and then make your own mind:

As compared to INIVA's 7 millions (excluding its building project), our total cost of everything we did is just about over one million, including the cost of 'The Other Story' at the Hayward. Examine the following

1. Research work initiated in 1982, and as a result we organised two major exhibitions; 1) 'The Essential Black

Art'; 2) 'The Other Story: Afro-Asian Artists in Postwar Britain'. Both the exhibitions began in London in the major venues and travelled nationally. [INIVA has done no comparable work]

2. Publication of 80 issues of **Third Text**, which is equivalent to thirty (30) 290-page books, in addition to the catalogues of 'The Essential Black Art' and 'The Other Story' and six books published under Arts Council's franchise which include two major monographs [no such monographs produced by INIVA]. In total, we are responsible for 38 books [compare them with the few books INIVA has produced]. And, a major **Third Text Reader** was published by Continuum.

3. Initiated, and now being undertaken a research project into the inclusive History of Art in Postwar Britain [this project should have been the first priority of INIVA]. Twenty academics are taking part in this project, as a result of which the history of art in postwar Britain is being re-written. It will be ready for publication in 2006.

Finally, I (as a tax-paying citizen) want to put the following questions to the Arts Council England:

- 1) Why was INIVA set up when it knew that the important work it was assigned with was already initiated and was being pursued by others?
- 2) Why was INIVA allowed to carry on when it was clear that it had no ability to pursue the priorities outlined by its REMIT?
- 3) Shouldn't the Arts Council now accept the responsibility for INIVA's colossal failure?
- 4) Shouldn't the Arts Council now investigate the whole matter before it continues its support and funding for the incompetent and inefficient organisation of INIVA?

Yours sincerely

Rasheed Araeen
Director, Black Umbrella

CC: Prof. Christopher Frayling, Peter Hewitt, Kim Evans, Marjorie Allthorpe-Guyton, and Sarah Wason

NB: I have not received any response from Prof. Stuart Hall.

----- Original Message -----

From: Sarah Weir [redacted]
To: thirdtext@kalapress.freereserve.co.uk
Cc: sarah.wason [redacted]; Graham.Phillips [redacted]
Sent: Saturday, August 13, 2005 3:04 PM
Subject: RE: The Future of INIVA

Many thanks for your emailed letter to myself and many of my colleagues at Arts Council England. Please accept this email reply on behalf of all of us. Your letter was of course to Stuart Hall and he will no doubt be replying to you direct. You raise important and pertinent issues which we would be delighted to discuss further. I am now on holiday and will ask my colleague Sarah Wason, Head of Visual Arts in London to take this forward when she returns from leave next week.

Sarah Weir
 Executive Director
 Arts Council London
 Direct Line +44 (0) 20 7608 6157
 Fax +44 (0) 20 7340 1083