

# **ALL THAT IS BANNED IS DESIRED**

**World Conference on Artistic Freedom of Expression**

**25-26 October 2012**

**Conference report by Robin Denselow**

**FREEMUSE**



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BANNED  
IS DESIRED**

**World Conference on Artistic Freedom of Expression**

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World Conference on Artistic Freedom of Expression

Organised by Fritt Ord & Freemuse

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Conference Rapporteur and Report Writer: Robin Denselow

Published by Freemuse

Editor in Chief: Marie Korpe

Graphic design: Hothorse Design Bureau | [www.hothorse.net](http://www.hothorse.net)

Proofreading by Julian Isherwood

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Report no. 10/2013

ISBN: 978-87-988163-4-8

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This conference report was made possible through the generous support of Svenska PostkodLotteriet.

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# 04

## Preface

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### BANNEDESIRE

All that is Banned is Desired – the first world conference on artistic freedom of expression took place on October 25-26, 2012 at the Oslo Opera House. The conference was organised by Freemuse and Fritt Ord.

Over the two days of the conference, more than 50 artists and individuals involved in the arts addressed vital and complex issues concerning artists' freedom of expression.

To honour the histories of the struggle to advance the freedom to make and use art, we placed the artists at the centre of this gathering. Artists shared both their experiences of censorship and the many strategies developed to claim, defend and advance their freedoms as well as the freedoms of other artists.

It is our hope that the conference was the beginning of a concerted effort to enhance the monitoring of and defense against violations of artists' freedom of expression worldwide. In recent years, hundreds of artists have been attacked, persecuted, imprisoned and even killed because they insist on expressing themselves through their art. Many have become symbols of resistance against dictatorial regimes, religious extremists, corporate greed, and oppressive cultural, gender and sexual norms.

The entire conference was filmed by VIMAGO and each session, as well as interviews with artists, can be found on [www.artsfreedom.org](http://www.artsfreedom.org) and [www.fritt-ord.no](http://www.fritt-ord.no)

We would like to thank the artists for contributing and sharing their experiences and artistic expressions through statements, speeches, dialogues, film screenings and live performances.

The programme committee

**Marie Korpe and Ole Reitov, Freemuse**  
**Bente Roalsvig and Rune Eraker, Fritt Ord**

## INTRODUCTION

This was unlike any conference I have ever attended. Taking its title from the Arab proverb 'All That Is Banned Is Desired', and described as the first world conference on artistic freedom of expression, this was an historic, wide-ranging and often emotional gathering of musicians, writers, painters, photographers, dancers, film-makers or publishers who have all suffered from censorship, but have been determined to carry on, despite imprisonment and torture, or threats that ranged from financial ruin to physical violence and even death.

Held over two days in one of the halls of the National Opera in Oslo, it involved over 50 very different artists from around the world, with very different stories to tell, but each of them providing reminders of the varied restrictions on freedom of artistic expression that currently exist around the world. Many conferences are dominated by lengthy discussions or academic papers, but this one was bravely different. There were a series of 22 very different sessions, some of them very brief, lasting just fifteen minutes, and others that were longer, but each of them examining a specific theme with one or two artists appearing either alone or with a moderator. The result felt at times like an almost overwhelming, non-stop barrage of crucial and personal information, as speaker after speaker discussed their aims, work and experiences.

Each of these sessions left me asking for more, and often feeling humbled by the bravery of those taking part. And as soon as one session ended, another immediately began, always on a completely different topic. Conferences are sometimes predictable affairs, but that was never the case here. The focus of attention constantly changed, highlighting different issues and problems from around the world, from the take-over by extremist Islamic groups in northern Mali to new problems that exist in the West, such as the growing power of major international corporations. Then there were discussions on the

meaning of 'tolerance', and the dangers of self-censorship. This was a conference that constantly raised questions, and constantly surprised, and the powerful personal stories were cleverly and entertainingly interspersed with reminders of the different art forms under threat.

So while it was important to hear a discussion on the banning of the ancient musical culture in northern Mali, it was equally important to hear an example of the music that has now been outlawed by the fundamentalist Islamic groups that currently control the region, with a stirring performance from the Terakaft band. Likewise, it was important that the session on Tibet should include music from the traditional singer and exponent of the *Dranyen* lute, Tenzin Gönpo. And that the continuing problems in Zimbabwe should be addressed through the bravely original songs of a rapper and spoken word artist best known simply as Outspoken, who believes that it is crucial to "use art to find a solution". It was also right that one of the sessions dealing with the Arab Spring, and the continued problems facing female musicians in Egypt, should include a rousing demonstration of the work of the rock singer Sherine Amr.

Many of the sessions challenged and questioned the audience. So while most of those taking part argued for artistic freedom and the right to pursue their artistic goals without hindrance from the state or any other bodies, there was also one voice questioning the limits of free speech. One of the most thought-provoking, if frustratingly brief, sessions came from Adam Fischer, the former Music Director of the Hungarian State Opera, who has battled against intolerance, xenophobia and the rise of anti-Semitism in his country. Here, he argued that there are times when censorship is necessary, as he discussed his campaign to prevent the staging of what he regarded as being an anti-Semitic play, *The Sixth Coffin*, in Budapest early in 2012. Having argued his case, he then moved to

the piano for an unexpected, exquisite performance of a section from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*, in which he accompanied the Norwegian National Opera soloist Silvia Moi, whose company is based in the building. It's difficult to think of any conferences that could deliver surprises quite like that.

Daniel Barenboim has said that "music is much more powerful than words" because it "attacks the brain, and the heart and the stomach, the temperament". The participants at this conference provided proof of the way that music - and the other arts - have the power to change the world, either by attacking or ridiculing those in authority by bringing overlooked issues to public attention in an unusual and memorable way, or by helping to uplift and support those who are struggling for a particular cause.

It is this strength that makes artists so dangerous - and why there are so many attempts to suppress the arts by those desperate to hold on to power, using political ideology or religion as a means to maintain control and impose their views of the world. As the conference so successfully showed, censorship today exists in many different forms, from state controls to religious intolerance and the censorship by large multi-national corporations desperate to fight off any perceived threats to their brand image.

Governmental attempts to suppress artistic freedom were powerfully demonstrated in the stories we heard from Russia, where the jailing of the highly political and thoughtful feminist punk group Pussy Riot has caused international outrage, but in many ways has backfired on the authorities by highlighting the strength of the opposition to Putin.

There were other reports of state repression and protest from elsewhere across the globe, from Burma to Zimbabwe and Cameroon, Turkey, Cuba and Korea. But the stories of repression were always matched against reminders of the work of artists involved in fighting back.

One of the most dramatic presentations of the conference came from the Korean artist Sun Mu, who appeared with his face hidden by a mask - for his own safety and that of his family. He has used the political art in which he specialised in North Korea to portray the problems of the country from which he has escaped, though in so doing he has faced threats of censorship in South Korea.

Along with the stories of state censorship, there were worrying reminders of the continued and growing threat of religious intolerance around the world, from fundamentalist Christian as well as Islamic groups. One of the most chilling sessions dealt with the situation in Mali, where music has traditionally played a pivotal role in daily life and the national identity, but where music was banned in those vast areas of the north of the country that were under the control of Islamist rebels at the time the conference took place. There were reports of censorship and intolerance from elsewhere in the Islamic world, from Pakistan and Afghanistan, and also from women fighting to win greater artistic freedom in countries that have seen the changes brought by the Arab Spring in Egypt and Tunisia. And there were reminders too of the intolerance that exists within minority communities in the West, where there can be a clash between the traditional values of an older immigrant community, and the more westernised ideas of freedom of expression expressed by younger generations.

But none of this means that there is room for complacency in the West, for as Svetlana Mintcheva of the National Coalition Against Censorship in the USA pointed out, "we may have the First Amendment, but there is still subtle censorship". She went on to describe the way in which the Christian right and others have placed pressures on art galleries and other institutions, that now the fear of the loss of funding, or an aversion to upsetting others, as a reason to self-censor their work. The dangers of self-censorship in the West, and the idea of tolerance now being seen as a way of avoiding issues,



along with the desire to avoid causing offence, rather than the acceptance of new ideas, was a theme addressed by other speakers during the conference.

Another often over-looked form of censorship in the West, and one that led to one of the most lively and unexpected sessions of the conference is Corporate Censorship. Three very different presentations outlined the way in which artists and film-makers can find themselves facing hostility, and potentially enormous legal fees, if they try to stand up for themselves against major international corporations that have wealth, Public Relations machines and highly-paid lawyers on their side. As we learned, artists can easily find themselves in conflict with corporations, if the corporations fear that the artists are involved in work that could involve them in controversy or more importantly damage their image and financial interests. But we also learned lessons on how corporations can be vulnerable to public pressure, and how PR can be turned against them when artists act together in solidarity.

The conference ended with a brave and experimental dance sequence in which France-based choreographer H la Fattoumi explored her fascination with the veil, and used dance and elaborate lighting to explore her ideas of women's freedom, restriction and constraints. There were no closing speeches, and no summaries of what we had all witnessed, and those in the hall were left to draw their own conclusions from what they had seen and heard.

One remarkable aspect of the conference was the way in which almost all the participants, apart from those with busy work schedules who were forced to leave, remained in the hall through the sessions, listening in fascination to what other contributors had to say, and learning from their experiences. One of those taking part, who had suffered from censorship and orchestrated public outcry at a work she had written, told me that she had gained enormous strength from the proceedings. She had felt very alone, she told me, and it was important for

her to come into contact with others who had suffered in the same way. Another participant said that the event was part of the healing process. They clearly drew enormous strength from being together.

There were so many issues and ideas discussed in such a brief period of time, that the experience seemed at times to be almost overwhelming. But certain themes did clearly emerge. Some were bleak and depressing: the nature of the very real threats of censorship that artists around the world face today and the way that dictatorial states, a variety of different religious groups, corporations, and those determined to impose their views of society on others, have all attempted to censor artists whom they regard as a threat to their views of the world.

But despite all this, the mood of the conference was powerfully uplifting and positive, rather than depressing. For every story of censorship and suffering, there were stories of resilience, defiance and survival, and reminders of the importance of art in the constant battle for freedom of self-expression. The fight-backs were as varied and often as original as the work of the artists themselves, and in many cases, the attempts at censorship had back-fired.

All those who attended will have drawn their own conclusions from what they saw and heard over the two days, and I found myself breaking the experience down into two main categories - the nature of censorship around the world today, and the many devices used by artists in surviving these challenges and fighting back, aware of the importance of the work that they are undertaking.

After all, if art didn't present a threat to the censors and their ideas, there would be no reason why they should try to move against it so brutally.

### **Robin Denselow**

Robin Denselow is a British writer, journalist and broadcaster.

## 08

## The Nature of the Threat: Government Censorship

THE NATURE OF THE THREAT:  
GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP

Over the past year, one of the best-known bands around the world has been a group of women who have never released hit records, never toured or performed on national television – though their videos have been posted on the internet – and who have arguably done more than anyone else to draw attention to the opposition to Russian President Vladimir Putin, and highlight the consequences for those who oppose him.

On February 21, 2012, five members of the Russian feminist punk-rock collective Pussy Riot staged an unauthorised protest performance at Moscow's Cathedral of Christ The Saviour, saying their action was intended to highlight the support for Putin by leaders of the Orthodox Church. The event was turned into a music video *Punk Prayer – Mother Of God Chase Putin Away*, and widely viewed on the internet. The authorities were furious, and the musicians found that they faced the full force of Russian law.

They were charged under laws designed to provide protection against 'inciting hatred' and 'hooligans', though the same legislation that can be used against Islamic terrorists or neo-Nazi gangs can also be directed at political activists, bloggers, and artists. Nadezhda Tolokonnikova and Maria Alyokhina, two of the three Pussy Riot members who took part in the church action, were sentenced to two years in jail for hooliganism, and sent to two of Russia's notoriously harshest prison camps, far from their children in Moscow. They have argued that their conviction was part of a growing crackdown on free speech since Putin was returned to power.

Alexander 'Sasha' Cheparukhin, who has organised an international campaign in support of the jailed Pussy Riot members, gave his bleak view of the current situation in Russia. An award-winning music producer,

well-known for his music festivals in Russia and work on environmental causes, he agreed that the media campaign surrounding Pussy Riot had been successful in publicising the situation in Russia, but not in winning their release. "It would have been successful if it had a result," he said adding "and not just world impact".

Cheparukhin argued that violence and lawlessness in Russia are worse now in the Putin era than they were under Leonid Brezhnev in the days of the Soviet Union, adding darkly that "at that time, no-one thought they were in danger of being murdered". Charting the changing situation since the Soviet era, he said that "at first, the restrictions were black and white – any practice of capitalism was prohibited in the country. Then there was a period when you could do as you wished, and make as much money as you wished, so long as you didn't touch the power of the state. When Putin came to power, it changed – protesters could now be charged as terrorists – it was scary and people became very afraid". He described the period between 2008-2012, when Dmitry Medvedev was president as "promising – he even gave an interview to opposition newspapers". But since Medvedev's move to the position of Prime Minister, with the return of Vladimir Putin as Russia's president, the situation had changed.

As for the jailing of the Pussy Riot members, he argued that this was "a black and white case – they are not criminals but violated the Code of Administrative Offences – and insulted President Putin and the Patriarch. They should have got a small fine, and be told to clean the streets. But the offence was criminalised – they had to invent something to show it was dangerous".

He said that the Pussy Riot case had two effects. It had shown that there were the beginnings of the new ideology in Russia, and had also highlighted the links

between the Orthodox Church is tied in with Putin. “It’s a monarchy – let’s forget about democracy. Pussy Riot shows that the Orthodox Church is tied in with Putin – and their message was ‘Mary, mother of God, get rid of Putin’”. And he concluded that “Russia is getting to be a gangster state, that’s obvious”.

There were no direct contributions from the Pussy Riot collective themselves, though one of them was in Oslo during the conference and made a brief appearance at a party at the end of the event. But there were further reminders of the political role being played by artists and musicians in Russia today from Nikolay Oleynikov, a visual artist, musician and “street politician” who is co-founder of the May Congress of Creative Workers, and a member of the collective *Chto Delat* (What Is To Be Done?). They took their name from a Lenin pamphlet, he said, and were a group of writers and philosophers who were “trying to work out how art can be affiliated with political agenda”.

He, too, talked of the harsh climate in which politically-motivated artists now struggle in Russia, and the “anti-extremist laws” that can be used in any cases of “extremist activities”, from terrorism to the Pussy Riot demonstration. He discussed the workshops and protests organised by his group, and examples of actions taken by the authorities, from the arrest of a group simply because they were watching the film *Sympathy For The Devil*, to the case of Alexandra Dukhanina. An 18 year-old Moscow student, she joined the mass demonstrations on May 6, 2012, the day before President Putin’s inauguration, and was placed under house arrest after being accused of ‘assaulting police’. Pictures of her being dragged away by the neck by a burly police officer featured prominently on Russian news sites and blogs after her arrest.

Oleynikov also discussed his work with the Arkady Kots Band, with whom he sings and plays harmonica and percussion. He said they were working to re-discover examples of protest songs from all over the world, from the work of Russian anarchist poets to anthems of trade union solidarity from the Franco era in Spain. He said that a concert by his group had been banned “because we are Pussy Riot supporters”, and described the situation in Russia as “the worst censorship in 20 years”.

There were further stories of harassment – and a courageous and potentially perilous fight-back – from an arts project operating in a refugee camp in the north of the West Bank, an area nominally under the control of the Palestinian National Authority, but where there have been continued Israeli incursions. The Freedom Theatre opened in 2006 as a theatre and cultural centre in Jenin Refugee Camp, and is described on its own website as ‘developing a vibrant and creative artistic community in the northern part of the West Bank’, with one of its aims being to ‘empower youth and women in the community and to explore the potential of arts as an important catalyst for social change’.

It has not been easy. The theatre’s founding member Juliano Mer Khamis was murdered in April 2011 by unknown killers, and according to co-founder and administrative manager Jonatan Stanczak, “over half the theatre’s employees have been arrested by the Israeli army”.

Stanczak began by paying tribute to his colleague and said that since his death there has been new harassment as “the Israeli army started coming in and attacking, but the Palestinian Authority have also caused us problems”. He said that the idea of the Freedom Theatre was to create

a safe space, but “with the Israeli attacks, that safe space diminishes. Israelis take people in for interrogation, and get them to trade information”.

“Half of those who work here have been taken in for interrogation”, he said, “and that leads to staff insecurity, and people not wanting to come in for film and theatre training.” This also causes financial concerns for the project, as donors don’t like to hear about trouble. “It creates insecurity – and insecurity for our donors – we’re a slave to our funders, and they don’t want to be connected to problems. And it takes focus away from the work we are supposed to do – and maybe that’s the aim, to cause insecurity”.

There were further stories of government-imposed censorship, and fight-back, from Africa. For centuries, ever since the beginnings of the *Griot* tradition in West Africa, African musicians have traditionally used their work to tell stories of their peoples’ histories, sing praise songs to great rulers – but also offer criticism and advice if they feel that their country’s leaders are making serious mistakes. The leaders sometimes hit back. Africa’s most celebrated recent musical rebel was Nigeria’s Fela Kuti, whose outspoken attacks against a series of his country’s military regimes led to beatings, lengthy terms of imprisonment, and an army attack on his compound that led to the death of his distinguished mother.

Musical criticism of oppressive and non-democratic rule continues across the continent, and the conference heard about the musical fight-back against two of the continent’s longest-established leaders.

In the West African state of Cameroon, President Paul Biya has been in power since 1982, and over the past thirty years he has won a series of presidential elections – in 1997, 2004, and again in 2011 – but he was only able to stand in that election after a clause in the constitution limiting the number of presidential terms was removed. Not surprisingly, there are many in the country who have argued that enough is enough, and their spokesman and

hero is the songwriter Lapiro de Mbanga. Singing in the local pidgin language, mixing English, French and Douala, he proved to be a constant scourge of President Biya with songs chronicling the daily injustices of life in Cameroon.

But it was his 2008 song *Constitution Constipée* (Constipated Constitution) that really infuriated the authorities, and especially the president, with its furious and witty attack on the amendment to the constitution that had allowed Biya to stand for an extra seven years. The lyrics said that the old man was tired and had outlived his usefulness, and though it was banned on TV and radio, the song became a massive popular hit, sung by the thousands of workers and students who took to the streets in February 2008, rejecting the constitutional changes and protesting at the steep rise in the cost of living. Lapiro de Mbanga has described his style by saying “the most serious things in humanity must be said with a laugh and not with bitterness. I say serious things with lightness. With a laugh, things stick in your mind”.

He was arrested two months after the demonstrations, accused of inciting violence and arson, and sentenced to the notorious New Bell prison near Douala, with a threat of an extended term if he refused to pay a fine. Three years later he was eventually freed, after surviving harsh conditions in the prison, following an international campaign for his release staged by Freemuse, during which he was declared to be a Prisoner of Conscience, just like Fela Kuti. Maran Turner, the Executive Director of Freedom Now (USA) described how the campaign was organised, and the tactics that were so successfully used, arguing that his arrest “was a violation of his freedom of expression, because they had censored his music”.

Further south in Africa, music has been used in another attempt to persuade Zimbabwe’s veteran President Robert Mugabe that it is time for change. Mugabe came to power when the country achieved its independence in 1980, at a ceremony that included a memorable appearance by Bob Marley. As Mugabe clung

to power, the initial euphoria of the independence years began to fade, and so did the musical scene led by artists such as the Bhundu Boys, who had found considerable success in the West. Now, there's a new music scene in the country and artists in Harare who are daring to confront the political stalemate in Zimbabwe. Tongai Leslie Makawa, better known by his stage name Outspoken, is the co-founder of Magama, a cultural activist network set up to fight social and political injustice. Wearing black jeans and trainers, he gave the conference a condensed history of Zimbabwe from 1980, from independence to the current threat of "abductions and killings". Describing his own approach, he said that he was "using art as a vehicle to find a solution, through spoken word and hip hop". He followed up with two highly original pieces that made use of both the spoken word and song, and which both dealt with what he called "the journey that is Zimbabwe".



Outspoken. Photo by: Monica Larsen

As several speakers at the conference were to remind us, the danger of censorship and restrictions on the freedom of artists is a world-wide threat that also exists in those countries deemed by the West to be improving. There have certainly been changes in Turkey since its government decided to apply for EU membership, becoming an EU candidate in 1999. In line with EU requirements, Turkey introduced human rights and economic reforms, abolished the death penalty and

introduced tougher measures against torture - while also promising further reforms regarding women's issues and Kurdish culture, language, education and housing.

Asli Erdoğan has a very different experience of the realities of Turkish life. A distinguished physicist, she is also an award-winning writer, whose seven books have been praised around the world and translated into 11 languages. From 1998-2000 she was the Turkish representative on the International PEN Writers In Prison Committee, and she then started writing a column titled *The Others* in the respected newspaper Radikal, dealing with topics that the Turkish government would prefer to be ignored - prison, torture, the Kurdish question, and women's issues. It made her a highly controversial figure in Turkey, and she was fired by the newspaper, and then faced what she called a "lynching campaign" from the Turkish media.

"I had written about Kurdish girls raped by paramilitaries, and children who had been tortured, and supported a prisoner hunger strike", she said, "and they called me an immoralist and a terrorist". Describing the campaign against her in the media, she said "rape is nothing compared to a mass lynching like this. My eyebrows literally fell out. They called me immoral, and even discussed my pubic hair, just because I'm a woman". Despite her distinguished history as a novelist, she said that she became so hated by the authorities "that for seven years while I was in Turkey I was never invited to give a TV interview".

In 2010, she was invited to return to Radikal, and was fired from the newspaper once again. She now infuriated the authorities even more by moving on in 2010 to write for the Kurdish paper *Özgür Gündem* - until the pressure on her became so great that she was forced to leave Turkey to live in exile in Austria.

"80 of their journalists have been killed", she said "and I began to suffer from '5AM syndrome'. That's the time when the police come to arrest you, dozens of them,

and so I found that I could never go to sleep until after 5 a.m. You wait up that long before going to bed. And I was afraid - I didn't want to be sent to jail for 18 years". Under the Turkish anti-terror laws, she said, "you can be treated as a terrorist just for defending the idea that Kurds should have education in their mother tongue - if the same cause is being promoted by a 'terrorist group' (the PKK)". Describing the situation in the Kurdish South East of the country, she said that "people are taken to court for listening to Kurdish songs", and listed the numbers currently in prison.

She estimated that 6-8,000 people had been arrested, including members of legal Kurdish parties, along with 68 union men, 740 students, 30 mayors, 30 lawyers, and 77 journalists including 63 from the Kurdish press.

Pelin Başaran, who followed, discussed the censorship of the arts in Turkey, citing a cultural centre that had been accused of providing propaganda for the PKK, and explaining how a song that has been officially approved, and played on the (legal) Kurdish radio stations can suddenly be banned if it is sung at demonstrations. "Turkey's constitution says the state should protect art and artists", she said, "but the line between critical judgement and censorship is unclear".

There were also warnings from other countries where there have been encouraging signs of change. In the opening session of the conference, there were reminders of the need for continuing improvements in Burma, a country where there have been significant reforms since the elections in November 2010. Military rule has been replaced by a military-backed, nominally civilian government, which has started a programme of economic and political reforms, in which many political prisoners have been released - most famously, the pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi - and censorship has been relaxed.

But former detainee and musician Win Maw, who was released from prison early in 2012, has still not

been given a passport, and was thus not able to attend this conference as planned, although he did make a video appearance. And the popular Burmese actor and comedian Zarganar, himself once banned and sentenced to a very lengthy jail sentence, warned that "some political prisoners are still behind bars - the country has not changed".

From elsewhere in Asia, there were reports of potential improvement in the situation in China. Si Han, a curator of the Chinese collections at the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities in Stockholm, argued that the long-term prospects for the freedom of the arts in the country seemed promising, despite continuing censorship and the much-publicised harassment of the internationally-respected artist Ai Weiwei, who was charged with economic crime, although it is his political comments that have irritated the government.

Charting the continuing struggle between artists and the authorities, Si Han began with the events of September 1979, which he has described as 'the first time in the modern history of Chinese art that the quest of freedom of art was clearly stated and shouted out loud'. This was the month in which a group of young artists hung up their works on the fences of a park outside the National Art Gallery in Beijing, although most of the paintings were influenced by Western modernism - a style that was forbidden and deemed to be politically incorrect. The exhibition was supposed to last for a week, but was closed after just two days. Refusing to give in, the members of the so-called 'Stars Group' (which included Ai Weiwei) held demonstrations, negotiated with the government, and were allowed to exhibit their works a few times in the gallery, China's most important art institution. Demonstration, Si Han noted, is one way to fight against censorship of art.

A decade later, in February 1989, there was another controversial show at the National Art Gallery entitled *China Avant-Garde*, which covered the Chinese modern

art movement of the 1980s. It was scheduled to run for two weeks, but closed by the authorities on the same day that it opened, largely because they objected to the performance art of Xiaoi Lu, who shot at her own work *Dialogue* with a handgun.

It took a year of dialogue with the authorities before a set of rules were agreed. The exhibition would be allowed if it fulfilled three conditions:

1. It is not allowed to exhibit works that are against the Party and the Four Cardinal Principles (which are: upholding the socialist road, the dictatorship of the proletariat, the leadership of the Communist Party and Marxist-Leninist-Maoist thought).
2. It is not allowed to exhibit pornographic or obscene work.
3. Performance art is not allowed.

Si Han argued that these restrictions represented the political censorship of art, moral censorship, and aesthetic censorship. Victims of political censorship included Ai Weiwei, who had dared to subtly criticise the government through his photographs. *Grass Mud Horse Covering The Middle* is a play on words when that title is translated into

Chinese – it sounds remarkably similar to an insult to the Party Central Committee. Another photograph, *One Tiger With Eight Breasts*, shows Ai Weiwei with four naked women – and this could be interpreted as a reference to the nine members of the Standing Committee of the Politburo. No-one from the government has explained why such art is improper, as doing so could be countered by the right to free speech guaranteed by the Constitution. Si Han compared political censorship to torture or terrorism “because the rules of the game are never made clear to those who suffer”.

As for moral censorship, he argued that the naked body, sex and sexuality are sensitive subjects in China, despite the Confucian saying ‘sex and food, these are where the greatest human desires exist’. Even Ai Weiwei’s *One Tiger With Eight Breasts* had been investigated for pornography. But he noted that younger artists have begun to touch on sexuality in the last fifteen years, and that the internet played a decisive role in allowing artists to find audiences both inside China and abroad.

Aesthetic censorship, said Si Han, is a field that is overlooked, and the convention of art itself has been used in China as a censorship strategy. Until the late



*Hello Comrades 2*, Wang Zi. From the exhibition *Secret Love* curated by Si Han

1970s, socialist realism was the dominant aesthetic, while impressionism was regarded as bourgeois and not accepted. Style was an ideological issue, and the paintings of Ai Weiwei and other members of the Stars Group in the 1980s were controversial simply because they were impressionist landscapes, and therefore challenged the system. Chinese artists now have greater freedom, thanks in part to the growing art market, but it remains to be seen how new art is accepted by official institutions outside of Beijing.



Tenzin Gönpo. Photo by: Monica Larsen

He concluded by arguing that traditional conservative approaches and values in China are changing, as rapid economic growth brings large-scale social change and consciousness of individual rights. But we need more fighters at the front, he said, and many more standing behind, so we can push the red line forward.

Attitudes may slowly be changing in China, even if censorship does remain, but we were reminded that the situation continues to be far more serious in Chinese-occupied Tibet. Two Tibetan exiles, the visual artist and poet Tenzing Rigdol and the musician Tenzin Gönpo, showed how they are using their work to provide reminders of Tibetan culture and encourage and support the exiled community. Rigdol gave examples of how some

of his work had also been censored in New York for being too political, and how he had also suffered from problems of self-censorship.

Such problems are of course very minor compared to the situation in Tibet itself, or in provinces adjoining the Tibet Autonomous Region. Here, thousands of students took to the streets in the autumn of 2012, denouncing what they saw as cultural genocide by the Chinese, as the extreme protest campaign of self-immolation continued, with six Tibetans setting fire to themselves in one week alone. “In Tibet, the arts are censored”, said Tenzing Rigdol. “They target writers, artists and film-makers - but there is an underground movement.”

From elsewhere in the Communist world, the Interdisciplinary Artist Tania Bruguera gave her views on the artistic climate in Cuba. She argued that there are “two Cubas”. One that is admired by tourists and left-wingers who are rightly impressed by the country’s lack of racism and by its excellent welfare system, and another Cuba seen only by Cubans. She said that censorship was not evident but that the authorities “censor your right to grow” because any criticism is seen as an attack on the Cuban revolution. She said she would like “to see if we can have a Leftist project without oppression”.



## RELIGIOUS CENSORSHIP

Censorship by repressive governments, military rulers or occupying powers has been a recurrent problem for artists around the world, but there is now a growing form of censorship that many in the West may have once assumed to be on the decline – censorship by religious groups. There are of course many different strands and ideas within the Islamic community, as there are within other major world religions, but Western attention has been centred on the rise of militant fundamentalist Islam, as seen through the influence of al-Qaida, the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pashtun areas of western Pakistan, or al-Shabaab in Somalia and Boko Haram in Nigeria. Connected with Wahhabi preachings, and the strict imposition of *Sharia* law, this was a doctrine in which many forms of non-religious music, including traditional music along with any Western or amplified styles, were banned. In Afghanistan, musicians had their instruments broken, and cassettes of their work smashed and festooned from the trees. I remember meeting musicians from Afghanistan who had fled in fear across the border to western Pakistan, only to find that they faced some of the same attitudes and restrictions there.

No-one thought that events like this could ever take place in the West African desert state of Mali. Here, after all, was a country with a Muslim population that – like neighbouring Senegal – had become known around the world for the work of its extraordinary musicians, and where music was not just an entertainment but a crucial part of life. Malian artists like Ali Farka Touré, Rokia Traoré or Toumani Diabaté became household names in the West, performing in concert halls or at major festivals, and became far better known than Malian politicians. In the process, they educated Western audiences about Africa and their country's ancient civilisation, and the way in which traditional families of musicians, the *Griots*, had acted as advisors to the rulers, and guardians of the

country's extraordinary history, keeping alive an oral tradition for generation after generation.

One of the best-known Malian bands around the world is Tinariwen, who became so successful that they performed not just at major World Music events, but appeared alongside the Rolling Stones. These exponents of 'desert blues' are from the north of the country, and are part of the Touareg or Kel Tamashek people who are traditionally nomadic, roaming across the desert to neighbouring Niger or Mauritania. Their popularity, and that of other bands in the area, was boosted by a remarkable series of annual Festival In The Desert concerts which began in January 2001 in the little desert village of Tin Essako, and attracted music fans, and even major bands, from elsewhere in Africa and the West.

There has been trouble in northern Mali in the past, with a series of upheavals that included a major rebellion in 1990, when Tamashek fighters turned against the Malian government, demanding greater autonomy, a right to defend and support their culture, and even independence for a new country that they named Azawad. But there was no suggestion then that their demands would include the imposition of hard-line *Sharia* law, let alone an Islamic authority that would ban their beloved music.

Yet that is exactly what happened in 2012. Yet another major rebellion in the north, in which the rebels were helped by weaponry acquired after the collapse of the Gaddafi regime in Libya, led to the defeat of Malian government forces in the region. And as the rebels advanced, it was clear that they were now dominated by hardline Islamic groups, including AQIM, al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb. The extremists, encouraged and helped by supporters from outside Mali, had infiltrated, won over and transformed the rebel movement. There had been warnings that this might happen, according to Manny Ansar, the former manager of Tinariwen who became

director of the Festival In The Desert. Since 2007, the year when AQIM was formed, its members became increasingly active in the region where the Festival In The Desert was held, and he was advised to hold the 2010 Festival in the greater safety of the city of Timbuktu.

The Festival in January 2012 went ahead as normal, but just two months later Timbuktu fell to the rebels, and now the situation was to change dramatically for the worse. In August, a spokesman for the Movement for Unity and Jihad in West Africa – an AQIM off-shoot, made an announcement in the city of Gao, which had now also fallen to the rebels. He proclaimed that the broadcasting of all Western music was now banned, and that “Satan’s music” would be replaced by Quranic verses.

The ban was in fact already in place. Young people had been stopped from listening to reggae music, traditional musicians had also been silenced, and families had their televisions smashed because they watched music shows. It was no surprise that large numbers of the population, including the musicians, fled across the borders, leaving Mali for Algeria, Niger or Mauritania.

Addressing the conference, Mohamed ‘Manny’ Ansar reminded us that he is one of the Tamashek people, and then gave a chilling account of what has happened to the culture he has done so much to foster. He said he had spent over a decade travelling around the world and talking about the Festival In The Desert “and I’m ashamed at what has happened. It was provoked by people who call themselves Muslims, like me”. He said he “shivered” when he saw that his talk had been titled ‘The Day The Music Stopped’ because “it reminded me of the film *The Day The World Stopped* – but this is reality”.

In Mali, he said “music is important as a daily event. It’s not just entertainment or business, but it’s through our music that we know our history and our own identity. Our elders gave us lessons through music. It’s through music that we declare love and get married – and we criticise and make comments about the people around us”. Looking at the historical importance of musicians within

the society, he said that when there were clashes between communities “they had *Griots* behind them, encouraging the fighters and shaming anyone for running away. But there was a gentlemen’s agreement that the *Griots* were not to be killed. At worst, they’d be kidnapped and asked to play for the victors”.

He complained that “to stop the music is to strip us of all this. And why are the militias stopping the music? To impose their authority, so there’s nothing to threaten them. That’s why they are attacking the traditional chiefs and the musicians. And they are using concepts of Islam that are 14 centuries old, and have never been applied. I find it strange that these ideas are being imposed now. It’s as if they took a computer and wiped the hard drive, and then imposed their ideas instead”.

Mali’s celebrated musicians are among those who have suffered, and the bass player and guitarist Pino Ibrahim ag Ahmed described how he had been affected. He said he had been forced into exile, and lost much of his land, and described how he had lost his guitar to bandits as he travelled from Algeria to Niger to get a visa. “It’s dangerous moving around”, he said. “I don’t know these groups, or what they want.”

But he is determined to keep playing. He was joined on stage by other members of his band Terakaft, who treated the conference to a rousing demonstration of the desert blues that the hard-line Islamists have banned.



Terakaft

Artists working in Afghanistan and parts of Pakistan are already aware of such pressures and dangers. The Pakistani actor and cultural activist Arshad Hussain described the events of 2008, when he was on his way home from Peshawar to celebrate the religious holiday of Eid, when he was kidnapped, punched and hit and put in a dark room with no electricity, simply because of his profession. "I'm an actor and a music promoter", he protested. "I pay my taxes and I have done nothing wrong". He was told by his captors, who were clearly Taliban supporters, that as a member of the Pashtun community, he was not allowed to be involved in such work. "But Pakistanis love film and music", he argued back. "Why can't I be an actor?"

Hussain emphasised the danger of artists in the community by showing slides of singers who had been killed, and the plight of musicians living in the province. But he talked too of his fight-back, his refusal to leave Peshawar, and discussions with the government to re-start cultural projects in the region.

The religious censorship imposed by fundamentalist Islamic groups is also a threat among immigrant communities in the West. The singer Deeyah explained how she was forced to stop her music career, and then leave the country where she was living, although that country was Norway, where this conference was being held. Born to a Pakistani father and Afghani mother, she started singing at the age of seven, and soon became recognised in Norway as a child protégé and teenage star, recording her first solo album at the age of 15. Her music blended her much-praised Pakistani classical influences and training with more contemporary Western styles, and although she was clearly a brilliant musician who had studied the great musical traditions of Pakistan, the local Muslim community turned against her, insisting that music was no profession for a young girl.

"They thought that being an artist was as low as being a prostitute", she said. "People told my father, a great music enthusiast, that I should stop doing this, and

they came up to me in the streets of Oslo and said that I shamed the community. They said I was a prostitute and would be beaten and raped, and I was told that my stomach would be cut open so that I could not give birth to another prostitute. So this has happened in Norway, just as in Peshawar."

Explaining the problems of growing up in an immigrant community, torn between traditional values and a new Western approach, she said that she felt "not Pakistani enough, or Norwegian enough - and white Norwegians didn't help me. I felt like an unwanted piece of baggage at the airport".

It was not just Muslim artists who have suffered from religious censorship, and the problems and tensions of growing up in immigrant communities in the West. Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti is a successful and respected British dramatist who is also a member of the British Sikh community. In December 2004, a production of her play *Behzti* (Dishonour) was cancelled after angry protests at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in the British Midlands, where it was being staged. Some 400 Sikhs took part in demonstrations outside the theatre, and a group of them stormed into the building, leading to the evacuation of 800 people, who had come to watch a family Christmas show.

*Behzti* was cancelled, effectively censored, as its staging was considered to be a threat to public order, and Bhatti herself was forced to leave home and go into hiding, with 24-hour police protection because of death threats against her. "I had to leave my flat, I felt isolated, and it affected my physical and mental state", she said. "And there was the pressure of knowing that I had caused all this." The Guardian's respected theatre critic Michael Billington described this threat to artistic free expression as the most shaming theatrical event of the decade.

The play dealt with a sexually corrupt Sikh community leader, and the action centred around a visit to a *gurdwara*, or temple, by a widowed mother and her

daughter. It later becomes clear that her husband killed himself after a homosexual affair with the community leader, who has abused a series of women in the temple. It involves a rape scene, and ends with the girl's mother fatally stabbing the man who has abused her.

Bhatti's life may have been threatened because of the play, but she refused to let the issue rest. She followed the controversial *Behzti* with another play, *Behud*, a satire about censorship, giving a fictionalised version of the events that followed the staging of the original play. In *Behud*, she analysed the events that made censorship possible, from the self-interest of local politicians to the motivations of the religious activists and members of the Sikh community who want to keep control of how their society is portrayed.

As with the Islamist groups banning music in Mali, the censorship raises the question of motive. Why is this particular group trying to take control, and do they really speak for the whole community? Are ethnic communities really uniform in their beliefs or are there conflicts and debates within them?

Speaking at the Oslo conference, Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti argued that it was the "self-appointed leaders who disapproved, leading to the theatre choosing to pull the play. A lot of Sikhs supported it. People hi-jack religion for their own purposes. I said to the protesters 'I'm a Sikh, I'm a believer. Is your faith so weak?'" Discussing why she had written *Behzti*, she said that "I'm a second-generation Sikh woman in the UK, and I wanted to talk about hypocrisy and the pressures of living in a community. There was anger among some Sikhs that one of their own was airing our dirty laundry. I'm a writer - this could have been about any religion. But I wanted to make it local".

The controversy over *Behzti*, as with the campaign against Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* in 1988, leads to the question of self-censorship, and whether it is morally unacceptable to cause offence to other cultures, either by writing a book or staging a play. In other words, should artists avoid causing religious offence by self-

censoring their work? Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti argued that artists have to be careful "but we should shout and scream at each other, and get to know each other. It's harder to be truthful and to say 'I find this difficult about you'". She argued that the perception of the Asian community by outsiders was that it is dominated by "food, flags and festivals. But you should want to look underneath, go where it's frightening and look at the issues".

It is not just Islamic or Sikh communities that can be accused of religious censorship, and there's no reason for any feeling of smugness over the issue in the West. Christian groups in the US are also responsible of "conveniently abandoning their First Amendment principles when it suits them", according to Svetlana Mintcheva of the National Coalition Against Censorship.

She began by asking how the USA could have an organisation dealing with censorship - "haven't we got the First Amendment? So how can there be censorship?". She then argued that "although we don't have torture or arrests there is a subtle but pervasive culture of censorship in the US, often encouraged by Christian groups that are fighting for political goals: the pursuit of social and cultural hegemony". The strategy is to 'attribute a simple and maximally offensive intention to an image, a film, play or artwork, and use it to trigger long-standing grievances, while also mobilising and radicalising your constituency by creating the impression that they are engaged in a war, and that their most cherished values are under attack'. And the results of this 'subtle censorship' can mean that galleries lose their funding because they are perceived to have caused offence - and that there is a wave of fear that makes self-censorship the order of the day.

Discussing the debate on free speech that resulted from the uproar and violence caused by the "crappy and offensive video" *The Innocence Of Muslims*, she argued that "there is an aversion to upset and offend sensibilities - people argue that it's hate speech just because they don't like it".

She then went on to give examples of the way that Christian groups have attacked art works, with the aim of mobilising their constituencies and increasing their influence at a time when they feared they were losing control of political and cultural hegemony in an increasingly diverse and secular society. One of the first works to be targeted was Andres Serrano's photograph *Piss Christ*, which Mintcheva has described as a "provocatively-titled but luminously beautiful photograph of a plastic crucifix in a golden fluid, declared to be the artist's urine". It was part of a travelling exhibition that closed in early 1989.

Three months later, the Rev. Donald Wildmon, a Minister from Tupelo, Mississippi, who is also the founder of the conservative fundamentalist Christian American Family Association, sent a letter of complaint about the work to members of Congress - leading to US Senator Alfonse D'Amato tearing up the exhibition catalogue on the Senate floor, and launching an attack on the federal arts funding agency, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

It was the beginning of a lengthy debate that in 1998 led to the US Supreme Court ruling to uphold a clause requiring the NEA, when awarding grants, to take into consideration 'general standards of decency and respect for the diverse beliefs and values of the American public'. The result of these culture wars was to leave arts institutions fearful of controversy and much more willing to censor themselves.

Mintcheva gave further examples of art works that have been attacked. She stated that nudity is the cause for the most censorship, and showed photos of nude statues that had been incongruously clothed by protesters. She also talked about censorship of literature by religious groups that set out to impose their values on homosexuality by disguising what they were doing as the protection of children, and respect for others. And as an example, she cited the case of the book *In Our Mothers' House*, by Patricia Polacco. Praised as a 'gem' by the

School Library Journal, it tells the story of a happy family with 'two moms and no dad' but was removed from some schools in Utah. This, she said, "was because of pressure from religious groups that are opposed to books that teach tolerance".

"There's a huge military budget, but tax-payers don't get a vote on how that is spent", she argued. "So should art be de-funded if some people find it offensive? The fear of controversy, and the fear of loss of funding, leads to self-censorship which can hamper thought and imagination."

There is, then, no room for complacency in the West. The existence of the First Amendment, which makes free speech an article of faith in the US, is no protection against censorship, because many would argue that free speech does not include the right to offend. And Mintcheva argues that "the camp of those who take exception to offensive speech is growing".

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## Corporate Censorship

## CORPORATE CENSORSHIP

As the conference proved, it's not just the fundamentalist Christian groups who have the power to create a climate of self-censorship in the West. There is also the problem of major corporations that are determined to oppose artists whom they perceive to be a threat to their profits, image or reputation. These corporations have money on their side, of course, and also have access to teams of highly-paid lawyers - and therefore the very real threat of crippling legal action. They can use this enormous power to try to crush those they see as a threat. But, as this session showed, these corporations are also vulnerable, and might back down if they fear that they themselves will be seriously damaged by any ensuing bad publicity.

One of the most intriguing and - for me - unexpected sessions of the conference was the one that dealt with Corporate Censorship, in which three very different European-based artists told their stories of clashes with internationally-known businesses.

First there was Larissa Sansour, a Palestinian multimedia visual artist who lives in London, and in 2011 was nominated for the prestigious Lacoste Elysee Prize, worth 25,000 Euros to the winner. Her highly inventive entry, *Nation Estate*, was a film work in which she envisaged a future Palestinian state being housed entirely in an enormous skyscraper, built on the edge of Jerusalem. Different parts of Palestine - from the Gaza shore-line to Bethlehem - now appeared on different floors of the skyscraper. The message, clearly, was that Israel had now taken over so much Palestinian land that there was no room for Palestinians outside the building. It was a clever, poignant and witty work, but Sansour suddenly found she had been removed from the shortlist. Amidst furious accusations of censorship, the Lausanne institution the Musée de L'Elysée reportedly claimed that Lacoste were responsible for her exclusion - which the French clothing firm then denied, and withdrew their sponsorship for

the prize. Sansour told the conference her version of what had happened: Lacoste had found the work "too pro-Palestinian", she said, and had asked her to say she had retired from the competition voluntarily. The affair resulted in bad publicity for Lacoste, but Sansour was able to finish the film of her extraordinary work, which was shown to the conference.



*Nation Estate - Olive Tree (AP)*, C-print, 42x59cm, Larissa Sansour, 2011

The Danish artist Nadia Plesner then gave her account of an extraordinary battle with Louis Vuitton, the company that makes expensive and luxurious ladies' handbags - and who threatened to ruin her financially if she refused to stop using images of their bags in her work. Wanting to make an artistic statement about the trivialisation of the media, the humanitarian situation in the Sudanese region of Darfur, and the disappearing boundaries between advertising and editorial, she painted an image of a suffering child from Darfur holding a Louis Vuitton bag. The company was furious. They took her to court and demanded that she pay a fine of 15,000 Euros a day if she continued to use the image and didn't remove associated material from her website.

Plesner told of her meetings with the company saying: "they promised to back me if I apologised, or wreck me

financially”, and she did agree to stop selling T-shirts of the picture. But she refused to leave Louis Vuitton alone. She created a large art work, *Darfurnica*, that was based on Picasso’s *Guernica*, but included celebrity references – and an image of the child with the bag.

There were further demands and legal moves by Louis Vuitton, but Plesner now found that she was not alone. A Danish museum wanted to exhibit her picture – to prove that it was a work of art – and other artists and cartoonists around the world championed her cause by wittily incorporating images of the bag into their work. The issue finally came to a head in May 2011 when the

eating off their brand. This was an important case. We need free art and we have to stand up against authorities who try to silence art work”. When she announced that the court had decided in her favour, the conference hall broke out into applause.

Another remarkable and heartening David and Goliath story of a battle between an artist and a corporate giant came from the Swedish film director Fredrik Gertten, whose documentary *Bananas!* chronicles the fight between banana plantation workers in Nicaragua, who didn’t know they were being exposed to pesticides, and the US food corporation Dole. Dole didn’t want it



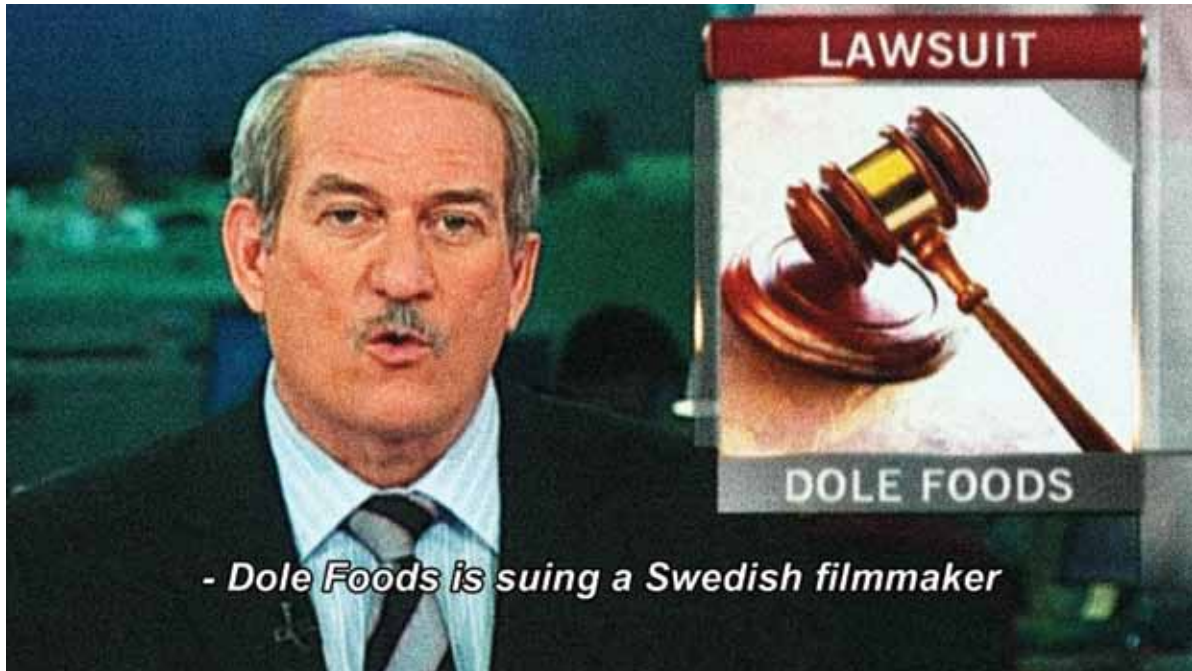
*Darfurnica*, Oil on canvas, 350x776cm, Nadia Plesner, 2010

two sides met in court, and the picture was brought into the court-room as evidence – with Plesner now threatened with a legal bill of 485,000 Euros if she lost the case.

Her description of what happened next was one of the emotional highlights of the conference. “It was the conflict of two rights”, she said “the right to protect a brand versus the right to express yourself. I talked about freedom of expression, and Louis Vuitton talked about me

shown, especially when they learned that it was being screened in competition at the Los Angeles Film Festival, and mounted a massive PR and legal campaign against the film, claiming it was based on fraudulent and fabricated evidence.

What happened next became the subject of a second powerful documentary, *Big Boys Gone Bananas!*, which tells the story of Gertten’s fight-back. It shows how



CTV Morning Show July 9, 2009, from the film *Big Boys Gone Bananas!* Photo: CTV

pressure from Dole led to the film being withdrawn from the competition, after they had contacted all the sponsors, and how he eventually managed to get it screened in LA, but only out-of-competition and after a disclaimer against it had been read first. He then faced horrific law suits, but his fortunes eventually changed after his film was shown in the Swedish parliament and a boycott campaign against Dole bananas was mounted in Sweden. Eventually Dole backed down, and Gertten won through, though at financial cost to himself. The moral to this being that “it’s naive to think you can take a pop at a big multi-national and not walk away without some kind of a fight”.

After telling his story to the conference, Gertten gave a warning about the shifting balance of power in Western media, at a “critical period when journalists are losing their jobs and the PR industry is booming, with

Crisis Management teams solving problems for important people”. It is hard getting documentaries shown, but it was important that there is support for documentary-makers, as we “have to keep telling the stories”.



## CENSORSHIP OF WOMEN

Censorship takes many forms and can be found even in countries that pride themselves on having fought and won earlier battles against oppression. Other limits on freedom of expression may still remain – such as the continued discrimination against female artists, especially if they are gay.

Zanele Muholi is one of the most brilliant but provocative photographers in the new South Africa, celebrated for her humane and tender images of lesbian couples in the townships. When she came out, she said, she realised that there were no photographs that spoke to her. Photography was a largely male occupation “men photographed women”, and there were few black artists using a camera. Her aim was to “capture the reality of what is going on” in work that she describes as “mapping



*Being, Triptych 1, Silver gelatin print, 30x22,5 cm, Zanele Muholi, 2007*

and archiving a visual history of black lesbians in post-apartheid South Africa”. “We have got to have images and visuals”, she said “just as we have to have performers and singers”. But she discovered that aims clashed with those of senior members of the ANC government.

In 2009 her photographs were shown at a major exhibition, *Innovative Women*, in Constitution Hall, a former women’s jail. The then Arts and Culture Minister Lulu Xingwana was invited to attend, but walked out on seeing Muholi’s photographs, reportedly calling them “immoral, offensive and against post-apartheid nation building”. Muholi hit back, accusing the minister of encouraging hate crime against lesbians. “We fought apartheid in South Africa”, she argued “and now we are fighting on-going hate crime. When a minister makes homophobic comments it could perpetuate hate crime”. Muholi explained to the conference that she now spends much of her time photographing the funerals of black lesbians who have been the victims of these hate crimes. “Men fear lesbians because they fear they will take away their girl-friends”, she said “and they challenge male masculinity”. She explained the rape of lesbians as being a result of the belief that if a lesbian has sex with a man she would be cured of her sexual inclinations.

She then showed a film examining such male attitudes – and the violence that result from it. It included images of a seriously-beaten rape survivor in Gugulethu township near Cape Town “who is lucky to be alive”. In Durban, she said, a lesbian had been raped, stabbed and murdered in her own home by a neighbour “and there have been ten such killings recently. It is far too many”.

Muholi argued that some police were not sensitised, or homophobic, and that became an issue when they took statements from women involved in such cases. The same was true of some doctors. “The Constitution is supposed to

protect people”, she told the conference “but women are being killed. In South Africa today, equality is a fantasy. It’s the worst period ever, and it’s unnerving”.

From Egypt, another country where it had been hoped that repression had been lifted following the euphoria of the Arab Spring, there were further stories of the censorship of women as the singer Sherine Amr told of her on-going battles to play the heavy metal music she loves, in the face of hostility from the authorities, her family, and male musicians. The Arab Spring has led to a blossoming of new musical styles in some countries, and has been chronicled by the Arab Hip-hop movement. But such developments have not helped Amr, founder of Mascara, the first all-female heavy metal band in the country. Announcing herself to the conference as “the only woman in Egypt who screams”, she explained how she could never show her face on screen in the film *The Other Side Of Mascara*, which deals with her band and the underground music scene in Alexandria “which is now dead”.

Although she has been able to perform outside the country alongside such leading bands as Motörhead and ZZ Top, she said it was difficult for her to sing in Egypt “because some think that metal music is satanic, and we are accused of rituals and slaughtering cats!”. Her role was made even harder because society discriminates against women, she said, and that was even true in the heavy metal scene. Male musicians had told her that she only got to play alongside famous Western bands because she was a girl. Now, she said, she was only allowed to play at one venue – the El Sawy Cultural Wheel in Cairo – and she could only do so once every three months “after they have checked what I am wearing and the lyrics to my songs”.



Sherine Amr. Photo by: Mik Aidt

But she has refused to give in and stop singing, and deserves to find a far wider audience, as she proved when she performed one of her songs “about being pushed to be someone you don’t want to be”. Backed by a heavy rock backing track, and with her band appearing on a screen at the back of the stage, she proved to be an impressive and exciting singer with a distinctive hoarse voice – and a powerful scream. The conference was remarkable for the way in which live performances were constantly mixed in with the presentations, and Sherine Amr gave a rousing demonstration that she has refused to allow her music to be crushed.

## FIGHTING BACK

Censorship and restrictions on the arts can come in many forms; from governments, religious groups, corporations, or those refusing to allow sexual equality. Some of the sessions brought bleak and troubling reports from across the world, but the overall mood of the conference was the exact opposite. For this was also a celebration of enormous courage and bravery in the face of adversity, with constant reminders of the many different ways that artists have found to make their voices heard, and to hit back at those trying to oppress their work.

Several artists present had been jailed or risked death, because of their work, and they discussed the techniques they used to survive, and to continue creating.

Zargangar, the Burmese comedian, actor and director, was banned from publically performing, jailed on several occasions, and finally released from a 59-year sentence



Zargangar

in October 2011 in a mass amnesty of political prisoners. “I’m a comedian”, he said. “In a country under military dictatorship, I lost the freedom to write, so I made jokes.” He has been tortured with electric shocks, and at one stage was buried in the sand. He explained how he managed to keep writing in his cell, by using plastic bags on which he wrote his jokes, along with screen-plays and a diary. Even after his years in jail, he has retained his sense of humour. “In our parliament, 25% of the seats are controlled by the military”, he said. “I’d like another 25% to go to comedians – and then half the parliament would be crazy!”

He has also retained his sense of humanity. At one stage during his imprisonment he found that one of his fellow-inmates was an army colonel who had once tormented him in prison, but had now himself been arrested by the military authorities. Understandably, the colonel was frightened that Zargangar would take his revenge, but in fact the exact opposite took place. Zargangar forgave his former tormentor, arguing “it’s important to forgive but not forget”. And on his release from prison he began to send food and clothing to the jailed colonel. One of his beliefs, he said was that “if you want to change anything, you should first change yourself”.

Zargangar also addressed the art of survival in prison, while still retaining one’s humanity, in his film *Invisible Moon*. It showed a prisoner finding escape from the misery of life in his cell by urinating into a pot and delighting in the reflections in the liquid, and was, as the session moderator Francis Harrison pointed out, a film about having the courage to find beauty even in a horrific situation.

The conference also saw *Uninterruptedness*, a short film by Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi, that made use of piano music and Burmese text in its homage to the banned Burmese writer Min Ko Naing.

Another of those who have been arrested because of their work is the distinguished Algerian writer, dramatist and poet Mustapha Benfodil, who has written 15 plays, which have been performed abroad – but not in his own country. Three years ago, in an attempt to get his voice heard, he started his *Wild Readings*, performing “in gardens, or parking lots or other public spaces”, sometimes by himself, and sometimes with the help of actors. He said that he once started a riot “the first for an artist in Algeria”, and – perhaps inevitably – he has been jailed because of his unauthorised activities.

Mustapha Benfodil said that in Algeria, artists are getting round such restrictions by turning private space into public space. So film-makers who can't get their work shown publically now show their work privately in their apartments. The other alternative is to show their work abroad. Benfodil said that “many artists are invited to perform by foreign institutions in Spain or Italy; our culture is now produced abroad”.

The session on Public Space and Art Clashes, in which Benfodil was speaking, was introduced by Alessandro Petti, chair of the Urban Studies and Spatial Practices programme at Al Quds/Bard College, Palestine, who discussed the problems that artists face when working in public spaces, at a time when they can be confronted with obstacles ranging from the privatisation of that space to the authorities' obsessions with security and control. One man who has tried to break down such barriers is the Norwegian conceptual artist Lars Ø Ramberg, who discussed the thought-provoking, often witty and at times highly controversial art works that he has constructed, or attempted to have constructed, in public spaces in Norway, Germany and elsewhere. He began by asking Norwegians to think critically about themselves, arguing that the country was “famous for Peace Prizes and for conferences like this one”, but also had a negative side. He then explained how he had attempted to construct an art installation in Germany that would provide a reminder of the Norwegian project to provide Heavy



Mustapha Benfodil, arrested during a *Wild Reading*. Photo by: Salim Mhamssadj

Water for a German nuclear weapon during the World War II. The project never went ahead, and he accused the Norwegian authorities of censorship. Other Ramberg projects have been more successful; he showed pictures of his *Palace Of Doubt* in Berlin, and the public toilets in the colours of the Norwegian, French and American flags that he constructed to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Norwegian independence.

Other artists have risked death to escape from their countries, in order to win the freedom to work abroad. One of the most dramatic sessions at the conference was the presentation by Sun Mu, the so-called ‘faceless painter’ from Korea. This is not his actual name but a *nom de plume*, and his real identity has to be kept secret for his own safety and that of his family and relatives living back in North Korea. He came on stage wearing a silver mask to conceal his face, and began with a performance art sequence in which he slowly removed the tape that he had placed over his mouth and eyes, and removed the taped word ‘ideology’ from his T-shirt. Only then did he begin to discuss his extraordinary life story and work, with illustrations provided by his own paintings.

Trained in North Korea as a propaganda artist, painting banners and posters to glorify his country's leaders Kim Il Sung and then Kim Jong-il, he said he was “ready to die” for them, and explained how the leaders' birthdays were a favourite time of year for children in the country, for this is when they received presents, sweets

and candies. Now, having escaped, he uses the same art style to turn the propaganda on its head, to show up the brutal realities of life in the North. Such pictures, of Kim Jong-il in a track suit, or a girl giving an obviously faked exaggerated smile to her leader, would have led to his execution.

He showed paintings showing his escape, first dodging army patrols to flee across the river to China, and later making his way to Laos, for fear that the Chinese would send him back home. He was arrested in Laos, moved on to Thailand, and eventually reached Seoul in South Korea. Here, ironically, he found that his work was censored for the first time: paintings showing North Korean leaders aroused concern and suspicion in the South, despite the artist's surely obvious intent in using his work to criticise the North.



Sun Mu. Photo by: Monica Larsen

Sun Mu is now an international success; some of his work has sold for \$20,000. But his aim now is to bring reconciliation. Explaining his painting *Children On A Cloud*, he asked “when will such a day come? Children from the North and South, on a cloud together and laughing”. He said that “North Korea is a nice place, but people there don’t live as human beings. But if you are inside the bubble, you don’t know that. I only learned when I crossed the river”.

Sun Mu had to change his name and hide his identity to create his art, but others have shown equal bravery by openly continuing their work in the knowledge of the dangers and threats that they face. For such artists, international support and recognition can play a crucial role.

Jonatan Stanczak argued that the pressures on the Freedom Theatre in Jenin refugee camp, occupied Palestine, can be made to have a positive benefit “because it leads to solidarity. As soon as things happen we have international campaigns operating. It gives meaning to our work and shows we are on the right track. There’s a ring of energy around us, and it gets stronger with every attack”. He said that financial aid was important, but a campaign of solidarity from the outside world was even more important.

The same positive message was stressed at almost every session. Artists have an important role to play in using their work to publicise repression, and they have even greater power than journalists in explaining or exploring a situation, simply because of the power and lasting nature of their work. There are many in the West who would never have even heard of the desert African state of Mali if it hadn’t been for the country’s magnificent music scene, and now that music is being used to remind the outside world of the repression brought by fundamentalist Islamic groups to the vast swathes of the north of the country where they gained control in 2012.

Mohamed ‘Manny’ Ansar, who founded the celebrated Festival In The Desert, said that he had not given up on Malian music or the Festival, but planned to move the venue. He hoped that the 13th Festival In The Desert would go ahead as a Caravan of Artists for Peace and National Unity, with musicians travelling from Morocco, Mauritania, Mali, Algeria and Niger, giving concerts during their journeys, and all meeting up in Burkino Faso. Publicity surrounding the events would hopefully add to international pressures to resolve the crisis in Mali, and bring music back to the desert.

The importance of influential outsiders in helping artists with their struggles against censorship was stressed on several occasions during the conference. It remains to be seen whether the international campaign to free the Pussy Riot members in Russia has any effect, but their plight has been publicised around the world. In different circumstances, in the far less powerful West African state of Cameroon, outside pressure certainly played a crucial role in freeing another jailed musician, Lapiro De Mbanga.

As Maran Turner, executive director of Freedom Now (US) explained, he too became the focus of an international campaign. It involved lawyers such as herself working pro bono and preparing a petition to the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, which then issued a legal opinion that his arrest was an infringement of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The campaign, which was initiated by Freemuse, also involved a series of petitions, sent to the Cameroon Embassy in Paris on Music Freedom Day, while in the US, Senator Richard Durbin also became interested in the case and approached the Cameroon Embassy in Washington. The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also became involved and raised the case with Cameroon's President Biya. Eventually, after further legal battles, the musician won his freedom.

Powerful outside help was also important for filmmaker Fredrik Gertten in his legal battles with the Dole corporation. The turning point came when his film *Bananas!* was shown in the Swedish parliament, for this screening led to a boycott of Dole Food by members of the Swedish public, bad publicity for the corporation which was to lead to Gertten eventually winning through.

It was outside help, and the fear of bad publicity by her opponents, that also helped Nadia Plesner, in her legal battle with Louis Vuitton, the manufacturer of luxury hand-bags. For her, the turning point came when other artists and cartoonists around the world also started making use of the Louis Vuitton design, in solidarity with

what she had been doing.

For many, the battle for self-expression in an often hostile climate can be a solitary and lonely affair, and the conference constantly showed the bravery of performers like Outspoken, who would be returning to Zimbabwe to continue to use hip hop and song to question his country's development, or Sherine Amr, with her continuing campaign to promote female metal music in Egypt.

Then there was Sondos Shabayek, also from Egypt, who has battled to get women's voices heard through her Bussy Project, in which actors perform real stories taken from the lives of women in the country, and has also performed a monologue, *Don't Tell Your Story*, consisting of stories from the Project that had been removed by the censors. She had prepared a monologue, of her own for the conference, but decided to abandon it at the last minute, and instead offered a spontaneous piece, describing how she had discovered courage after almost being trampled to death during the demonstrations of the Arab Spring. Later, in a film montage by Petr Lom, we saw Sondos performing street/public theatre in the women's only metro cars of the Cairo subway recounting stories of public sexual harassment. One conservative woman finds this offensive screaming that "things like this should not be talked about" and then yells "someone call the police!".

From elsewhere in North Africa, there were further stories of the way in which the arts have been used to reflect and inspire the continuing political change - and warnings of the censorship that still remains. From Tunisia, where the current upheavals in the Arab world began, the academic and film director Rachida Triki gave examples of how Facebook and other social media sites had been used to combat censorship, and discussed the case of the artist Nadia Jelassi, who in August 2012 was charged with breaching the peace and moral standards because of a work she had exhibited at the Printemps Des Arts exhibition in the El Abdelleya gallery in Tunis earlier in the year. It was titled *Let Him Who Has Not,*

and showed sculptures of three veiled women emerging from piles of stones. It was a powerful image that clearly made the viewer think about a stoning, and though no-one who had viewed the work had complained to her about it, the Examining Magistrate in Tunis asked her whether she had wanted to provoke people through her work. Jelassi faced a possible prison sentence because of her work, and proceedings against her were only dropped after a campaign by local supporters and Human Rights Watch.

From Syria, where the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad had developed into a continuing and bloody civil war at the time of the conference, there was a report on User-Generated Creativity and the Art of Resistance. Donatella Della Ratta, a PhD fellow at Copenhagen University and the Danish Institute in Damascus, showed how street artists had been inspired by the uprising, and how posters showing hands - originally a motif used by the government in an attempt to make people obey the law - were now cleverly used to convey a range of anti-Assad messages.



Donatella Della Ratta. Photo by: Monica Larsen

Azhar Usman showed a different way of fighting back. A Chicago lawyer turned bearded stand-up comedian, he showed how humour could be used in a one-man campaign to try to make Americans re-think their views on Islam, and was in turn very funny and thoughtful. "I'm from the USA, and a Muslim", he announced. "Should you hate me



Azhar Usman. Photo by: Monica Larsen

with a quote from the Sufi mystic Rumi "discussing the existence of God is like a fish discussing the existence of the ocean".

There was another welcome, and unexpected display of the way in which humour, and a bravely unexpected approach, can be used to counter oppression, in the entertaining session from the Australian film-maker, painter, photographer and former war correspondent George Gittoes. Currently based in Afghanistan, he has set out to bring new values and ideas to Jalalabad and surrounding areas controlled by the Taliban, with an apparently eccentric series of arts projects that have a serious purpose. Operating in an area where he said the Taliban "had blown up the last video store", he shows films to local villagers in a travelling circus tent, and said that he encouraged first children "and then the Taliban" to come into the tent because they wanted to watch this "crazy Australian" doing tricks with his pet monkey.

The films that he makes and shows attempt to change attitudes to marriage and the role of women not by polemic and lecturing but through the simple device of love stories. Gittoes said that in the Pashto language dramas he is producing it is important to show high achievement women as role models and gave the example of one such film, *Talk Show*, dealing with social issues like arranged marriages and young lovers who are murdered

for defying traditional customs. He showed a clip from the film in which a girl in a wedding dress is driven to a remote valley and killed, by having her arm severed, all because a photograph was found of her with her arm around a boyfriend. Gittoes explained how one of the actors in the film had told him that he himself was beaten almost to death and his girlfriend stabbed multiple times because they had fallen in love and did not want to be parted by an arranged marriage. Arguing the importance of the freedom to love, and the pain of enforced marriage, Gittoes explained how he had also set up the Yellow House Collective in Jalalabad as a sanctuary for artists and a place where young people can get together. His aim, he said, was to “change society, so that people can meet and fall in love”. Remarkably, he seemed to have won the confidence not only of local people but also the Taliban, who have not disrupted his projects.

In other sessions, gay and lesbian artists discussed their attempts to combat hostility and change attitudes to their sexuality. In South Africa, the photographer Zanele Muholi has bravely fought back simply by keeping going, drawing public attention to the horrors of the rape and killings of lesbians by photographing their funerals. During the same session on ‘Moral Panics: Sexuality and Art’, Robert Sember, who was born in South Africa but now lives in New York, discussed the use of art in the battle over the “violent silencing of gay men and women” and AIDS, while Pang Khee Teik, a Malaysian Arts Consultant and Human Rights Activist, discussed his lengthy battles with his parents over his sexuality, religion, and political activism. “I don’t demand the right to be gay”, he said. “I demand the right to be human.”

One of the constantly recurring themes of the conference was the danger of self-censorship, an issue that was explored in several of the sessions in which the writer and columnist Kenan Malik acted as moderator. Born in India but based in the UK, Malik explored the issue first in a session dealing with Religion and Artistic

Freedom of Expression, agreeing with Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti and Azhar Usman that “to create change, you have to offend some group”.

He returned to the subject again in a later discussion with William Nygaard, who in October 1993 was shot and seriously injured outside his home in Oslo. His attackers have never been found, but it was widely assumed that the assassination attempt resulted from his publishing house bringing out the Norwegian edition of Salman Rushdie’s novel *The Satanic Verses*, after Iran’s leader Ayatollah Khomeini had called for Rushdie’s execution because of the book in a *fatwa* four years earlier.

Discussing the lasting impact of the Rushdie case, Nygaard stressed that self-censorship, triggered by fear,



*Manta*, Dance performance, H la Fattoumi.  
Photo by: Laurent Philippe



must be defeated. There should be zero tolerance of violence, he said, but mutual understanding is promoted by critical dialogue. Exploring this idea of self-censorship further, Malik suggested that the idea of tolerance once meant the acceptance of other ideas, but now it has come to mean avoiding issues and not wishing to offend. Nygaard agreed. It was important to stick to the old meaning of tolerance, but if tolerance was now equated with not standing up for one's beliefs "then we are sliding into a different situation – self-censorship".

Liberals, Malik suggested, have retreated from free expression, "leaving the space to be taken over by bigots". Again, Nygaard agreed. "That space has definitely been filled up." He went on to discuss how the fall of the Soviet Union has led on to the conflict of two religions "driven by politics". But the way to solve the situation was, he suggested, "not to stand back". So long as it didn't lead to violence, the effect of challenging what was going on could have a positive effect, perhaps leading to curiosity in others and form part of a multi-cultural new world.

The conference ended with the hall in darkness for the first time, for the solo dance performance by the France-based Tunisian artist H la Fattoumi. Exploring her fascination with the veil, and its increased visibility in society, she danced with her face partly covered to explore through movement its impact on her understanding of women's freedom to live their lives without constrictions and restraints. It was a dramatic performance, punctuated by sound effects and flurries of dazzling white light, and provided a suitably powerful close to this remarkable conference.

The 22 very different sessions had covered a brave and widely varied array of topics, from the causes of contemporary censorship to the techniques that can be employed to overcome it, interspersed with performances from many of the artists themselves. Of course it would have been good if the event had gone on longer – there were many in the audience surely desperate to ask

questions, and perhaps debate the question of a limit to free speech that was raised by the Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer, when he discussed his campaign against the production of an anti-Semitic drama in Budapest.

It was a conference that provided at times chilling reminders of the pressures on artists by those in authority who fear their work, but equally thrilling and encouraging reminders of the bravery of musicians, dramatists, artists or writers to continue to create in the face of those pressures.

For me, the most powerful moments of all were those that took place off-stage, as different artists who had suffered and fought back against persecution came together to discuss their experiences. This conference made them appreciate that they were not alone.

**Robin Denselow**

London December 2012



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## THURSDAY, 25 OCTOBER 2012

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### Session 1

#### 10:00: **BEAUTY UNDER PRESSURE**

**Zarganar**, Comedian, Actor, and Film Director (Burma)

**Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi**, Poet and Filmmaker (Burma)

**Win Maw**, Musician and Composer (Burma)

Moderator: **Frances Harrison**, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster (UK)

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### Session 2

#### 10:40: **RELIGION AND ARTISTIC FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION**

**Svetlana Mintcheva**, Director of Programmes, National Coalition Against Censorship (USA)

**Gurpreet Kaur Bhatti**, Playwright and Screenwriter (UK)

**Azhar Usman**, Comedian, Activist and Lawyer (USA)

Moderator: **Kenan Malik**, Writer, Lecturer and Broadcaster (UK)

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### Session 3

#### 11:40: **MORAL PANICS: SEXUALITY AND ART**

**Zanele Muholi**, Visual Artist (South Africa)

**Pang Khee Teik**, Arts Consultant and Human Rights Activist (Malaysia)

**Robert Sember**, Artist and Researcher (South Africa/USA), Moderator

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### Session 4

#### 13:45: **CORPORATE CENSORSHIP**

**Larissa Sansour**, Visual Artist (Palestine/UK)

**Nadia Plesner**, Visual Artist (Denmark)

**Fredrik Gertten**, Film Director (Sweden)

## Session 5

### 14:30: PUBLIC SPACE AND ART CLASHES

**Mustapha Benfodil**, Writer and Visual Artist (Algeria)

**Lars Ø Ramberg**, Artist (Norway/Germany)

**Alessandro Petti**, Architect and Researcher (Italy/Palestine), Moderator

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## Session 6

### 15:15: HUNGARY: ARTISTIC FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY IN THE AGE OF XENOPHOBIA

**Adam Fischer**, Chief Conductor (Hungary)

**Silvia Moi**, Soloist at the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet (Norway)

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## Session 7

### 16:00: TIBET: ARTISTS IN EXILE

**Tenzing Rigdol**, Visual Artist and Poet (Tibet)

**Tenzin Gönpo**, Musician (Tibet/France)

Moderator: **Frances Harrison**, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster (UK)

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## Session 8

### 16:30: THE INVISIBLE RED LINE: MANOEUVRING CHINESE ARTS CENSORSHIP

**Si Han**, Curator (China/Sweden)

Moderator: **Frances Harrison**, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster (UK)

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## Session 9

### 17:00: THE DAY THE MUSIC STOPPED: MALI

**Manny Ansar**, Festival Director (Mali)

**Terakaft**, Performance (Mali)

FRIDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2012

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Session 1

09:00: **OVERCOMING: WOMEN, ART AND EGYPT**

**Sherine Amr**, Singer (Egypt)

**Sondos Shabayek**, Writer, Theatre Director and Actress (Egypt)

**Petr Lom**, Filmmaker (Czech Republic/Canada), Moderator

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Session 2

09:45: **STOP THIS FILTH: ARTISTS UNDER THREAT**

**Deeyah**, Music Producer (Norway/UK)

**Arshad Hussain**, Actor and Culture Activist (Pakistan)

Moderator: **Ole Reitov**, Program Manager, Freemuse (Denmark)

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Session 3

10:05: **THE ART OF LOVE: CULTURAL TABOOS AND ARTISTIC REPRESENTATIONS OF ROMANCE  
IN TRIBAL PAKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN**

**George Gittoes**, Painter, Photographer and Filmmaker (Australia)

Moderator: **Frances Harrison**, Writer, Journalist and Broadcaster (UK)

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Session 4

10:30: **ORGANISING FOR FREEDOM: CULTURAL WORKERS IN RUSSIA**

**Nikolay Oleynikov**, Visual Artist (Russia)

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Session 5

11:20: **ARTS IN RESISTANCE | RESISTANCE IN ART: SYRIA AND TUNISIA**

**Rachida Triki**, Film Director and Researcher (Tunisia)

**Donatella Della Ratta**, PhD Fellow (Italy), Moderator

## Session 6

### 12:00: **FREEDOM THEATRE: WHAT KIND OF FREEDOM?**

**Jonatan Stanczak**, Co-Founder and Administrative Manager, The Freedom Theatre  
(Sweden/Palestine)

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## Session 7

### 12:15: **ARTISTS IN AN INESCAPABLE POLITICAL CONTEXT: CUBA**

**Tania Bruguera**, Interdisciplinary Artist (Cuba/USA)

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## Session 8

### 12:30: **OUTSPOKEN**

Artist and Community Activist (Zimbabwe)

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## Session 9

### 14:00: **NOTHING TO ENVY IN THIS WORLD**

**Sun Mu**, Painter (North Korea/South Korea), Interpreter: **Kim Hyo Young**  
Moderator: **Sigrun Slapgard**, Writer, Foreign Correspondent and Board Member of Fritt Ord

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## Session 10

### 14:20: **THE LASTING IMPACT OF THE RUSHDIE CASE**

**William Nygaard**, Publisher and Defender of Freedom of Expression (Norway)

Moderator: **Kenan Malik**, Writer, Lecturer and Broadcaster (UK)

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## Session 11

### 14:30: **TURNING OUT THE LIGHT: TURKEY**

**Asli Erdoğan**, Writer (Turkey/Austria)

**Pelin Başaran**, Researcher and Arts Producer (Turkey)

Moderator: **Kenan Malik**, Writer, Lecturer and Broadcaster (UK)

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## Session 12

### 15:00: **THE ARTIST VS. THE STATE: THE CASE OF LAPIRO DE MBANGA AND THE CAMPAIGN FOR PUSSY RIOT**

**Maran Turner**, Executive Director, Freedom Now (USA)

**Alexander Cheparukhin**, Music Producer, Promoter and Founder and Director of GreenWave Music (Russia)

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## Session 13

### 15:30: **MANTA**, extract from a dance performance

**Héla Fattoumi**, Dancer and Choreographer (Tunisia/France)





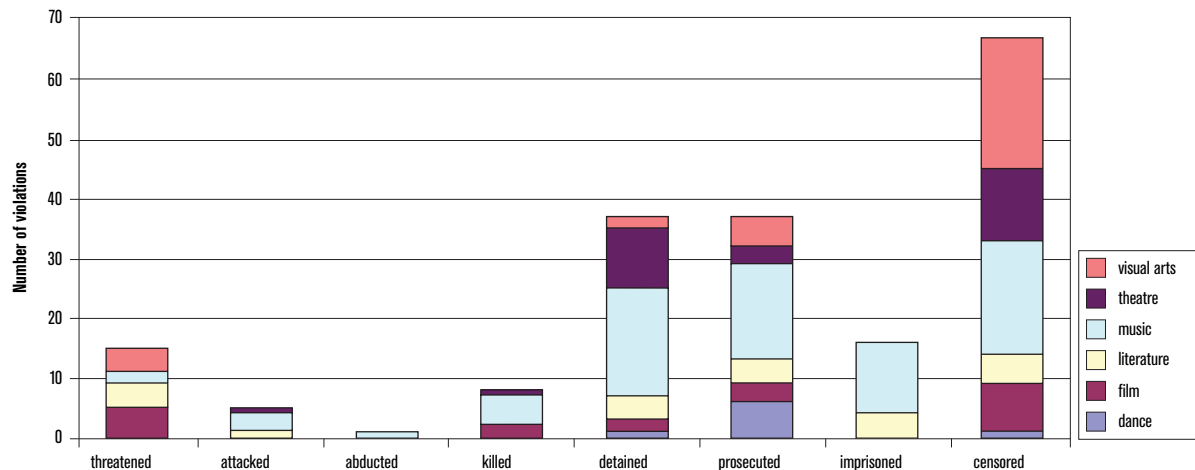
## Annex - Violations of Artistic Freedom of Expression in 2012

## VIOLATIONS OF ARTISTIC FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION IN 2012

Violations of artistic freedom of expression were monitored and documented on [www.artsfreedom.org](http://www.artsfreedom.org) as part of the conference. The documentation found the basis for a statistical compilation presenting a glimpse of the situation for artists worldwide in 2012 and includes cases in more than 50 countries across the fields of dance, film, music, theatre, visual arts and literature (journalists are not included).

A total number of 186 cases of attacks on artists and violations of their rights have been registered. The cases include 8 artists being killed, 16 imprisoned, 1 abducted, 5 attacked, 15 threatened, 37 prosecuted and 37 detained, as well as 67 cases of censorship.

**Please note that the documentation is based on reports published on [artsfreedom.org](http://artsfreedom.org). It is not a complete survey but the first collection of its kind.**



*The statistics are based on reports covering violations of artistic freedom of expression published on [artsfreedom.org](http://artsfreedom.org) between 20/3/2012 – 16/1/2013 and includes incidents taking place during 2012.*

*The following principles of statistical registration have been used: If an artist is threatened and attacked while abducted the case is only listed as “abducted” in the statistics. If an artist is detained, prosecuted and then consequently imprisoned for the same incident of the violation is only listed as “imprisoned”. Artists who were imprisoned before 2012, but who are still in prison are only included in the statistics if their case was presented in a news article.*

*The statistics do not, for example, include the serious situation for thousands of musicians in northern Mali who are prevented from performing their music due to bans by Islamic fundamentalist rebels. Neither does it include all cases presented by the PEN International Writers in Prison Committee which has produced an extensive case list and statistics concerning violations committed against writers as well as journalists.*

*For further information please visit: [www.pen-international.org/campaigns/how-to-campaign/caselist](http://www.pen-international.org/campaigns/how-to-campaign/caselist)*

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## Acknowledgements

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We would like to express our gratitude to our funders and to the Norwegian National Opera & Ballet, and to all the colleagues around the world who supported the conference with advice and suggestions.

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The conference was funded by Fritt Ord, Svenska Postkodlotteriet and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.





[www.artsfreedom.org](http://www.artsfreedom.org)