

Third Text Relaunch Speech

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Richard Dyer

Thank you, Tony, and thank you everyone for coming tonight to celebrate – strange word – our relaunch. We're the same magazine, but you can't stay in one place, you have to grow. It's like a new phase of a journey, and it is a journey towards a remapping of art history, both what it was constructed to be in the past, and as it is being made in the present. A true art history can only be made by a constant state of alert, if you like, a constant state of critique.

So, after the independent review, with the new editors, new advisory board, but also with new trustees, I think governance is really important – that the way an organisation is run meshes with the way it is actually produced. So as Tony mentioned, transparency is essential, but so are ideas, the production of ideas, new ideas. We are exploring new areas of visual research, and particularly I think for Third Text – something that a lot of art magazines are afraid to do because of their connection with the market, because of their connection with the institution – we can enter into a relationship with a radical politics which questions the status quo, both of art and of society. And we want to, and we will, strengthen Third Text's position, as a leading international journal of critical analysis of contemporary art in a global context.

I think one of the aspects of the journal which was there from the beginning, and is still there, is a recognition of what colonialism did to culture, and what colonialism did to cultural production. And in brackets postcolonialism – are we postcolonial? I don't know. One of our critiques is to question the whole notion that colonialism is somehow over, and we are in a postcolonial state. I think actually what happened is a whole scholarship grew up, in the eighties, which seemed to accept a notion of the end of colonialism, postcolonial studies produced some fantastic writing, but nevertheless bought into the notion of a post-state. We are not there yet.

We support new and established voices. This mix is really important, so that recognised academic scholars are published alongside a new generation of writers, serious activists, artists. We have to remember that writing isn't just a privilege of writers, writing isn't something that one sector of the cultural community does and other people read it. Most artists, most practising artists I know, write. Many writers are practising artists. This has begun to be acknowledged by the practise PhD. It's a natural state of affairs, it always has been for myself, I can't really separate the two. We will continue to focus on those areas of practice excluded from the mainstream, to challenge euro-centric and ethno-centric positions, which neglect work, not only from culturally diverse practitioners, but also those whose practice challenges the institution, the market, and the neo-liberal hegemony.

So, fresh perspectives, on the Global South, contemporary art, and political ecology, revolutionary aesthetics, and cultures in transitional and transnational societies. We do continue our commitment to investigating artistic practices beyond the Euro-American horizon, which are well catered for in the mainstream. There is other work to be done and we hope we are doing it.

But none of this would be possible without the new team. I'd like to mention specifically and particularly the new editors: T J Demos, Angela Dimitrakaki, Natasha Eaton, Reuben Fowkes, Ros Gray, Isaac Marrero-Guillamón and Gareth Stanton. The core group of leading editors, we are going to expand to twelve, in order to provide a more diverse, inclusive, and explorative group.

They're supported by the advisory board, which is international, and comprises of new members, members of the previous advisory council who wanted to be part of Third Text still, which is very heartening – despite our seeming disappearance for a short while – it was just a glitch in the matrix: Gulsen Bal, Iain Chambers, Justin Clemens, Anthony Downey, Jacqueline Francis, John Frow, Dario Giugliano, Janis Jefferies, Vinay Lal, Bashir Makhoul, Derek Conrad Murray, Anamik Saha, Arnd Schneider and Eyal Weizman.

And the trustees led by Tony Panayiotou, who deployed his in-depth and long-standing knowledge of organisations, both art and otherwise, to draw us through, steer us through an incredibly difficult period of transition, and bring us to a moment of renewal. And René Gimpel, who spoke earlier, the Deputy Chair, has been the link between the old structure and the new. He has guided us from the old to the new and I'd like to extend special thanks to him for lending us his fantastic gallery for this event, and all of his staff who have been so generous with their help. Other trustees, some of whom are here, Felicity Allen, Voon Pow Bartlett, Alice Correia, Martin Shaw and Simon Tegala. Note that our Trustees are made up of a mixture of curators, artists, and people who have worked in arts administration and other organisations. We are trying to get away from a mono-culture, where you have writers writing, artists making art and bureaucrats running organisations, we are trying to put it all together. It's more of a proper mix of cultures if you like, cultures of practice.

But the Third Text we have today wouldn't be possible without our long-standing partner Taylor and Francis, Routledge, who supported us with dedication and knowledge from the very beginning of our relationship in the mid-2000s and through their extraordinary skill, and infrastructure have brought Third Text to the widest possible international audience. When I look at those charts of where Third Text is read and where it's downloaded it's quite extraordinary to realise the reach that we now have. In that team, I'd particularly like to thank Ruth Glasspool, Gail Hartley, Stacey Gubb, Diane Minvalla, Claire Spence, Marie Coffey, Natalie Foster and Kath Burton.

I'd also like to thank our new intern Philomena Epps, for her dedicated work and incredibly swift understanding of Third Text, and how it works, and our new archivist Sophie Morgan, who has made sense of the historical aspects of the journal.

I'd like to also invite all of you to join the team, as contributors, readers, reviewers, supporters. Very much as contributors, there is no exclusionary practice in our choice of writers, it's about the content of the writing. So, please, if you think you have something to say, then send it to me and I'll read it.

Thank you once again, and enjoy the rest of the evening.