

# INTELLIGENCE

**TOP SECRET**

## Mat Callahan's Newsletter

Launching this newsletter coincided with the publication of my book, *The Trouble With Music*, and a brief promotional tour of the US. Upon completion of the tour I sent the following message to the many new friends and acquaintances I met along the way:

Let me begin by thanking you all for attending the events promoting my book. In every city I spoke there were lively discussions and thoughtful questions raised. This was a good beginning to what will be a long process. Since I view this as an ongoing struggle to defend real music from its enemies I know it will not be won simply by stating the truth. Most important is the effort all of us make to encourage debate amongst our friends and colleagues. It is no longer acceptable that people either wring their hands in despair or allow prevailing views to go unchallenged. And, let's face it, everyone has an opinion when it comes to music. It's not difficult to engage in discussion about it. What is difficult is to go deeply into the subject, get past the blizzard of babble blasted at us by the Broadcast and begin a genuine dialogue that leads to a change of mind. Dismantling the apparatus that's perpetuating Anti-music requires nothing less. It's hard. But it's worth it.

What's to come? The tour provided the basis for the next steps which are the following:

1. The book will be published in the UK and I will be touring there later this year
2. The publisher (AK Press) and various supporters around the US are working to get the book into universities and other educational institutions which would enable a lecture series to be undertaken, probably next year. (any suggestions you may have of a professor or school we should contact are most welcome)
3. Broken Arrow Records released my first solo CD simultaneously with the book. Now, they are organizing a tour which will feature musical performance but will also be linked closely with the book.

I will inform everyone about dates and times as they become available.

Subsequently, publication of the book in the UK has been announced and a tour is being organized for late October 2005. This is being undertaken by the good people of AK Press, Edinburgh with the continued assistance of Broken Arrow Records. Detailed information can be obtained by contacting:

AK Press (ak@akedin.demon.co.uk)

or by telephone 0044 131 555 5165

Broken Arrow Records

<http://www.brokenarrowrecords.com>

## THE PEACE ART SHOW

'Intelligence-top secret' was conceived as the common effort of good friends. While I take full responsibility for its content I, nonetheless, rely on the imagination and insight of others close to me. Among these is Thomas Powell, an artist and educator residing in Albuquerque, NM. Ten years ago he played a crucial role in organizing the first Peace Art Show commemorating the events that forever connected Los Alamos, NM with Japan and the world, namely, the dropping of the Atomic Bomb. Now, for the 60th anniversary another show has been organized. In their own words the artists announce:

"PEACE ART SHOW: ART IN THE BIRTHPLACE OF THE ATOMIC BOMB." The exhibition seeks to "investigate the social repercussions on America, and specifically, New Mexico, Sixty years into the Atomic Age." **THE EXHIBITION WILL BE AVAILABE FOR VIEWING ON LINE BEGINNING 8/6 - [www.ac2gallery.org](http://www.ac2gallery.org)**

To focus attention on underlying matters of principle, Tom has prepared the following essay which I am happy to present below.

## **Art and Morality**

It is not always easy to talk to artists about the moral components of art, even within the context of a Peace Art Show. As practitioners of art-making, most artists will argue that their efforts are part of a larger "social good," but having been educated in the Western art tradition, they tend to embrace the role of iconoclast and social critic. Morality is understood as the "other," the "false morality" realm of religious reactionaries and other panderers at the social trough. False morality is to be exposed for its narrow vision and hypocrisy, and that is the mission of most political art.

In this Peace Art Show, we attempt to move beyond this restricted view of art as the loyal opposition party. We hold that art is a moral force in society, and as artists we do not concede the moral higher ground to the fundamentalists, expropriators, and bigots of our times. Art is inherently moral. It is one of those select endeavors of our species which truly is. Art is moral because it is, and always has been, anchored to that divine inspiration which we refer to colloquially as "the muse." Every artist knows this from the heart, that neither he nor she is the sole inventor of the artwork. Inspiration, that cosmic fountain of creative force, flows through the artist who has been trained to capture this universal energy, and to interpret it materially through personal psychology, historical and societal dynamics, and a private inventory of ideas, skills and personal experiences.

Art is inherently moral for it imbues the underlying values and prejudices of a society to carry down through the ages as the glories and follies of human existence. Art educates us; it transports the baggage of history to permit us reflection upon our own lives and times. Art holds up a mirror that we might know ourselves.

Art is inherently moral for it can directly address the myriad issues of human feelings and emotions. Art can evoke joy, commiserate tragedy, build community through shared experience, embellish public space, persuade religious beliefs, or promote a social agenda. Art can capture the emotions of both individuals and a whole society.

Art is inherently moral because it effervesces the notion of beauty. We all make dozens, hundreds, even thousands of daily decisions. (Just think about driving your car.) How many of these decisions are based upon the aesthetic criteria of beauty, harmony, symmetry, or that it just feels right? What is right is also good, and thus in any society, what is judged morally good is completely saturated with ideas of beauty and rightness. Aesthetics and morality inform and feed off each other and are intertwined events. Art is inherently moral because people from all walks of life, from every continent and every atoll, adorn their lives with music and dance and visual displays. Art-making is a specialized activity, and artworks are a culturally distinct category of object. Regardless of whether the concept of "art" exists in the local lexicon, regardless of any locally unique purpose or intent, regardless of Western prejudices for commodity and value, every society on this planet produces a distinct class of objects which have been made through the collaboration of the trained artisan and the cosmic force of creation. This is a universally valid condition of human affairs.

What is unusual about this last statement is that art-making is not an economic activity, not in Western economic theory, for it produces neither food nor shelter. Art-making in society is made possible by the surplus wealth generated from the economically necessary activities of harvesting and manufacture. Like government, warfare, and sports, art-making is a category of human endeavor which must be subsidized from either a public or a private purse. For art, this subsidy structure is called "patronage." The production of art in society requires the establishment of complimentary patronage structures to support this activity. Art-making and patronage are structurally and historically linked, therefore, as artists it is essential that we should examine this relationship between art and patronage.

There are four dominant patronage structures of art. The most recognizable patron throughout human history has been organized religion. Every religion has its architecture, its art, and its iconography. To separate the sacred chant, the song, the ritual, or the image from its religious context is to deform it. The context of art within religion is critical for religion utilizes art to illustrate its dogma in a comprehensible fashion. Religion further utilizes art to educate its adherents to the guiding moral principals of society. Lastly, the patronage of art by religion exploits by proximity the cosmic collaboration between art and muse to bolster religion's own claims to divine truth.

The second patronage structure is that controlled by the state and the ruling elite of society. Wherever and whenever society has become divided into class and rank, which is pretty much everywhere on the planet, the elite have used art

to legitimize their dominion over the ruled. All state art and architecture, all institutional art including spectacles, museums, and schools, all patronage structures of privilege, all this category of patronage represents an historically effective method of maintaining the status quo of society. This category of "traditional art" works to formulate and conserve societal structures and values. It is "always already" political for it reflects societal values and the agenda of the ruling patron. This is equally true of art produced under upstart revolutionary regimes as it is under debauched and entrenched ones, for this is social architecture, not a judgment on the quality of art created under this system of patronage.

The third pillar of art patronage is the marketplace. In the marketplace, art becomes commodity where it may become bought, stolen, or traded. The novel wrinkle of the last century is the use of art to create desire and perceived value in the selling of other objects. Where is the product today which does not employ some form of art in its sales pitch? In our current world, the marketplace has far outgrown the more steadfast patronage structures of religion and state. The agenda of the marketplace dominates the production of art today, and this is important to note for the marketplace is a political and ideological institution as well as an economic one.

The last patronage structure is the most important for it is the wellspring of all art. Popular art arises spontaneously from the people as their reflection of the joys and sufferings of existence, of celebration, of tragedy and redemption, of death, rejuvenation, and new life; it is the great story of human existence as told in metaphor, in mythology, in meter, and in motion. Popular art is the low art of the masses. It may be energetic, sexual, mournful, cathartic, spontaneous, or anything else, but its immediate purpose is to build community amongst those who witness it. Popular art creates both the moment of experience, and the shared and lasting memory of the audience. Popular art is often considered entertainment for it is funded by ticket-buyers, bar-hoppers, and by the artists themselves.

Great art can be made under any of these patronage structures, and the category boundaries between them may be flexible, but of these four patronage structures, it is only in popular art where the artist and the witness exist on equal terms. The other three patronage systems are structurally hierarchical; the artist is always the servant of the patron. Art and patronage are conjoined. That is a given and not a bad thing, of itself, for patronage gives artists subject matter and direction, and patronage helps propel art to evolve and grow. But patronage is not a moral act. Patronage is not the "good cause" for patronage derives its legitimacy and its pretense of morality through its association with art. It is the art which lends credibility to the patron and his product, not the other way around.

Art is a very powerful tool in human affairs. The gift of artistic creativity bears with it moral obligation upon the artist. Each artist must decide whether he or she wants to use this gift to build community, or whether to further the power grabbing and criminality of the elite, whether to promote a peaceful world or to cheer lead the fear-mongering and bigotry of religious fundamentalists, whether to find harmony with nature or to foster the drooling gluttony of big capital. Each artist stands at the crossroads and must decide the quality of his own character.

As artists of the Peace Art Show, we reserve the right to critique the patronage structures of civilization. We reserve the right to impose our own moral standards upon our society. We reserve the right to promote our own visions for a peaceful and just world. This is our right and our obligation as intermediaries of the creative force of nature. Peace art is not a genre, not a new trend in art; peace art is artists behaving simply as moral beings.

*Thomas Powell  
August 2005*

#### **News And Reviews:**

PEACE ART SHOW OPENS AUGUST 6, 2005 (HIROSHIMA DAY) AND RUNS THROUGH SEPTEMBER 4, 2005. THERE WILL BE AN OPENING RECEPTION ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 6th, FROM 6:00 – 9:00 PM. GALLERY HOURS ARE THURSDAY – SUNDAY, 12:00 – 5:00 PM. [AC2]  
GALLERY IS LOCATED AT 301 MOUNTAIN RD. NE, ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87102, (505) 842-8016, [www.ac2gallery.org](http://www.ac2gallery.org)

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION CONTACT:  
Thomas Powell, (505) 873-1282, [unfinityorbust@cs.com](mailto:unfinityorbust@cs.com)

BROKEN ARROW RECORDS	ROCK AND RAP CONFIDENTIAL
<p>announces the release of  <b>“A Wild Bouquet”</b></p>  <p>Mailing Address  Broken Arrow Records  940 Bay Street, Suite 14  San Francisco, CA 94019</p> <p>E-mail us  <a href="mailto:info@brokenarrowrecords.com">info@brokenarrowrecords.com</a>  <a href="http://www.brokenarrowrecords.com">www.brokenarrowrecords.com</a></p> <p>Mat Callahan, former leader of world beat pioneers the Looters, releases his debut (U.S.) solo release A Wild Bouquet. The CD release coincides with the release of his book The Trouble with Music (AK Press).</p> <p>A Wild Bouquet features Callahan as singer-songwriter, surrounded by incredible musicians and talents. He travels to the world’s darker corners, but captures his singular view within beautiful songs and melodies. Musicians include Brain (Tom Waits, Guns &amp; Roses) on drums, Joe Gore (PJ Harvey) on guitar and bassist Les Claypool (Primus). Pete Scaturro produced most of the album.</p>	<p>I want to call attention to another publication I regularly read and greatly admire: Rock And Rap Confidential. <i>Rock &amp; Rap Confidential is the monthly newsletter edited by Grammy-winning writer Dave Marsh. We accept no advertising so we are free to tell the truth about what’s going on in music. We promote every style of music. Check us out with a super-cheap introductory subscription.</i></p> <p>Just send \$15 to  RRC  Box 341305  Los Angeles, CA 90034 (USA)</p> <p>Or you can just email your subscription order to <a href="mailto:rockrap@aol.com">rockrap@aol.com</a> and you will be billed with your first issue.</p> <p>This offer good in all countries, but US funds only, please.</p>

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