

AICHI TRIENNALE REOPENED BUT WORRIES ABOUT POLITICAL PRESSURE REMAIN

On October 14 last year AICA International and its Committee on Censorship and Freedom of Expression (CCFE) sent a Letter of Endorsement to the Japan branch of the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) expressing great concern about the closing by the Japanese authorities of the exhibition "After 'Freedom of Expression?'" at the Aichi Triennale 2019. This fourth Triennale edition had faced tremendous difficulties caused by the temporary closure of "After 'Freedom of Expression?'" which was a mini-exhibition within the International Contemporary Art Exhibition section of the Triennale.

Although the Triennale was allowed to reopen again, 6 days before its scheduled closing date, concerns remain about political pressure on the organisation in the form of a subsequent cut in funding by the authorities.

A withdrawal of a promised subsidy at the amount of JPY 78,000,000 (EUR 650,000) by the Agency for Cultural Affairs was imposed on the organisation. It can be regarded as an obvious political intervention on the re-opening, since the Agency for Cultural Affairs informed the Triennale about the withdrawal just following day when the Aichi Prefecture Governor, who is chairperson of Aichi Triennale Organizing Committee, announced the re-opening.

By closely working with the Learning section, colleagues and those who were involved in the "After 'Freedom of Expression?'" the Aichi Triennale curatorial team developed several measures to make sensitive works communicated well with the visitors, and not to make those works decontextualised from the artists' intention.

Shihoko Iida, Chief Curator of Aichi Triennale 2019, in a letter to AICA International emphasizes the fact that the re-opening of the Triennale was only made possible by the collective efforts by participating artists and curators, as well as reinforcement of safety measures and educational programmes. And she adds: "The Aichi Triennale was not defeated by political pressure and terrorism."

In addition CIMAM (International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art), an Affiliated Organisation of ICOM, in a statement on January 31 notes "with deep concern the continued withholding of funding for the Aichi Triennale 2019 by the Japanese state Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA)".

AICA International's CCFE once again expresses its grave concern about the suppression of freedom of expression and censorship, either by closing down this Triennale as well as cutting-off its funding. And we commend all parties involved in working hard to re-open the Triennale as a collective positive approach to the problems they faced.

Robert-Jan Muller

Chairman AICA Committee on Censorship and Freedom of Expression

Lisbeth Reboll-Gonçalves

AICA International President

<https://cimam.org/museum-watch/museum-watch-actions/aichi-triennale-re-opened-thanks-to-the-artists-and-curators-efforts/>

section.<https://aicainternational.news/news/2019/10/15/kkih9hgyxfap70njhtbiq2bpj7rhw>