

# frieze

frieze  
issue  
**100**  
UK £5.50 US \$8.50 €10



# Periodical Tables

In 1976 the British art journal *Studio International* conducted a survey of contemporary art magazines to see what could be revealed about their inner workings and motivations.

How do art magazines perceive themselves today? Are the questions that were posed 30 years ago still relevant in 2006? To find out, *frieze* asked 31 publications to respond to the *Studio International* questionnaire. Introduction by *Richard Cork*, the editor behind the original survey





When I edited the *Studio International* issue on art magazines in 1976, upheaval was everywhere. Diehard defenders of painting's supremacy were still angrily opposed to the radical new developments transforming all our ideas about what art might be. Later, looking back on this tumultuous decade, I gave my book of writings on art in the 1970s the title *Everything Seemed Possible*. It was a hugely exciting period, driven in most areas by the desire to open up, demystify and enlarge our awareness of art in all its manifestations. Magazines, I believed, needed to question themselves more closely and become more willing to reveal how and why they operated. So I was delighted when so many of them responded to *Studio*'s questionnaire, casting off secrecy and disclosing a great deal about their owners, income sources, conditions of work, overall aims, anxieties and hopes for the future.

Thirty years on, the art scene is far less fiercely divided. Most of the magazines who have replied to *frieze* seem committed to openness in their response to new art. More and more national barriers are being demolished: *Art in America* proudly claim that 'we've become global' and are now 'paying a lot of attention to Asia - especially China'. But some magazines remain unapologetic about their concentration on particular geographical territories. *Art & Australia* admits that its 'main focus is on Australian art', and *ArtNexus* declares that 'we cover Latin and Latin American artists wherever they are.' As for *Revue Noire*, they deal with 'Africa and all the preconceived ideas people have of the continent', while *Springerin*'s scope comprises 'the art-worlds of former Eastern Europe as well as so-called marginal or Third World territories'.

Few want to be confined in scope to a single country or continent. Nor do they identify themselves with a particular direction in art. *Springerin* 'tries to focus on art production that is socially and politically relevant'. But far more typical is *Border Crossing's* belief in keeping 'the magazine open to every new development while remaining vigilant not to embrace trends and currency for the sake of novelty'. Amen to that, and yet *Metropolis M* is perhaps more frank about the inevitability of bias by admitting that 'maybe every magazine is partisan and maybe every magazine tries to rise above it'.

What about the influence of regular advertisers and the market? *Art Review* confesses that it is 'less than my sales people like, more than the editors want'. But most magazines do not regard this influence as a problem. Some are small-circulation, non-profit concerns, and rejoice in their editorial independence. The price to be paid, though, hits staff and contributors alike. *Frog* pays nobody: 'till now, people write for free'. But as I read through these submissions, an alarming picture emerges of low pay even if you write for a big magazine. *art press'* print run is 50,000, and yet they pay wretchedly (between 17 and 20 euros for one typed page). As a critic myself, I ended up wondering how anyone without a salary or a trust fund can possibly afford to write for art magazines at all.

*Richard Cork is an art critic, historian, broadcaster and curator living in London. His most recent publication is Four Works, a collection of his writings on modern art, published by Yale.*

#### These are the questions asked by *Studio International* in 1976 in their 'Survey of Contemporary Art Magazines':

- 1 Who owns you, and to what extent are the owner's artistic/financial/political interests reflected in your magazine?
- 2 What are your sources of income, and do they give you a profit or a loss?
- 3 How many members of staff do you employ?
- 4 How many copies of each issue do you print, what is the cover price and what is the average budget per issue?
- 5 What is your scale of payment for writers?
- 6 How important is the physical 'look' of your magazine - the quality of paper, number of illustrations, standard of design etc?
- 7 What audience do you aim at, and would you be content to communicate only with a specialised 'art' audience?
- 8 Which is your first priority - art criticism or art information?
- 9 Are you international or national in your scope, and why?
- 10 Do you support a partisan area of art activity, or remain open to every new development?
- 11 Are you happy about the influence that art magazines exert on the development of contemporary art?
- 12 To what extent do you consider your magazine is shaped by (a) your regular advertisers and (b) the power of the market?





sense that '... the centre is where you are', we identify ourselves as a local international magazine.

**10** We don't support a partisan area of art activity and consider the magazine open to every new development while remaining vigilant not to embrace trends and currency for the sake of novelty.

**11** I'm not certain that it is necessarily art magazines which influence the development of art but the material we publish does spark debate and discussion and provokes new responses among artists, and audiences.

**12** Editorial content is never determined by advertisers or the market, and a very high editorial-to-advertising ratio is maintained.

*Meeka Walsh, Editor*

## Cabinet Magazine

COUNTRY USA

FOUNDED 2000

EDITOR *Sina Najafi*

**1** *Cabinet* is a non-profit publication.

Being a non-profit comes with its own set of economic difficulties, but it allows the editors to have total control of editorial policy.

**2** About 45% from subscriptions and news-stand income; 40% is from grants given by government organizations and private foundations; 5% is from private donations; and 10% is from commissioned artist limited editions. Advertising income is negligible. We have a balanced budget every year.

**3** We have a staff of about four. Our staff is almost exclusively part-time.

**4** We printed 11,500 copies of our most

recent issue. The cover price is US\$10 (£7 in the UK). The average budget for each quarterly issue is c.\$50,000 (\$20,000 for printing, \$12,500 for staffing, \$6,000 for writers fees, \$11,500 for other costs).

**5** We pay honorariums of \$150–\$250 to writers and artists.

**6** The physical look is crucial and is assigned a disproportionate percentage of the budget.

**7** *Cabinet's* expansive notion of culture means that its 'implied reader' is not a specialist in anything but is rather an omnivorous generalist. One of the organizing principles of the magazine is to break down specializations and niches. The magazine would be a failure if its only readers were art specialists.

**8** We do not report on art events or publish reviews. We also avoid art criticism in the sense of the long essay on a specific artist, movement, or 'scene'. We prefer to commission artist projects, and to present material that we think can be a sourcebook of ideas for the wide range of worldly interests that artists bring to their practices today.

**9** We are international in scope because we are for a culture of curiosity that by definition is not limited by national boundaries.

**10** We are open!

**11** We are happy when art magazines contribute to the development of contemporary art by expanding the repertoire of ideas available to artists (a type of influence that was more prevalent when this questionnaire was first formulated). We are unhappy when art magazines participate in the mechanisms that obscure what is at stake in art-making

by promoting definitions of success that discourage risk-taking.

**12** Our regular advertisers, if we had any, would certainly have no influence on our content. Given our non-profit status, we live in a 'false economy' whereby we use one hand to beg for money and the other to rule our tiny fiefdom with absolute authority.

*Sina Najafi, Editor-in-Chief*

## Flash Art

COUNTRY Italy

FOUNDED 1967

EDITORS *Giancarlo Politi, Helena Kontova*

**1** Helena Kontova and myself are the publishers and editors of *Flash Art*. The content has always been discussed and agreed with the editorial team which consists of young art critics who are very different to us. Our contributors across the world also have a key role and we give careful consideration to their proposals. Kontova and I are part of an extremely diverse multicultural team. Now after 40 years of managing the magazine (the first ten myself and the subsequent 30 with Kontova), a second generation is appearing on the scene; that of our daughter Gea Politi, who seems to be following with particular interest and innovative spirit all that has to do with *Flash Art* in the third millennium. This will be an extremely problematic handover in an era that is witnessing strong competition with the Internet.

**2** *Flash Art* has always existed thanks to the market; that is to say thanks to advertising (70%) and to sales (30%). We are extremely proud to affirm that over the past 40 years, we have never received any public funds. Not even a penny from the government and institutions. Our readers and our loyal customers worldwide have always been our sponsors. *Flash Art* is a very dynamic magazine that over the years has made good profits and has allowed us to live and travel across the world.

**3** Our publishing house, the Giancarlo Politi Editore, produces two magazines, *Flash Art International* and *Flash Art Italia* (we are now about to start *Flash Art Russia*) and also *Art Diary International* and *Art Diary Italia* as well as some books and catalogues. Our team consists of around 25 people.

**4** *Flash Art International* has a print-run of 40,000 copies (20,000 for the US and 10,000 copies for the UK and Germany) while *Flash Art Italia* has a print-run of 35,000 copies. The price of *Flash Art International* is €7. There is no monthly budget (even though on average we spend over €50,000 per issue only on the printing) as the pagination of each issue depends on the number of pages of advertising sold.

**5** From €50 for a short review up to €400 for a feature article.

**6** Our points of reference have always been *Time* and *Newsweek* magazines: out of the great respect we have for our readers, we privilege clear and legible information. In 40 years, we have never fallen into the trap of trendy and illegible design. *Flash Art* has always been an 'anti-design' magazine at the service of readers and clients.

**7** Art professionals and art lovers.

*Flash Art* is directed at the most attentive,

**'I believe that no critic can compete with the eye of gallerists Larry Gagosian, Nicholas Logsdail, Jay Jopling, Charles Saatchi, Maureen Paley or Gavin Brown.'**

*Giancarlo Politi, Flash Art*

