

# The New Futurist Manifesto (Revised, Expanded and Updated)

The Free Art Collective:  
Dave Beech, Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan

Manifestos are written during the night with a couple of friends at fever pitch and halfway to the moon with mosque lamps for eyes. They're not written on the street but in private apartments, hotel rooms and restaurants. And they're not written by the masses, they're written by little gangs who congregate to thrash out their revolutionary ideas across worn Persian carpets, fuelled by endless mugs of coffee carrying the discussion to the farthest limits of logic, ending with a little pile of paper on which is scrawled an insane agreement.

Throughout the history of the Manifesto each little gang of writers has stood alone, stood out and stood up for something, like lighthouses or (as the Futurists said) like advance guards. You write Manifestos alone with imaginary allies in exotic locations; you write Manifestos alone but in a style of writing that calls others forth; you write Manifestos alone but always with others in mind, always with the hope that when the Manifesto is published it will be met with recognition: a public! A community! A movement!

Marx and Friedrich Engels wrote the Communist Manifesto together in different cities. Marx was in Brussels in the winter while Engels was in the library in Manchester. They wrote it for The Communist League and they wrote it for the proletariat of the world, but they wrote it alone, apart from one another, in a quiet corner of the library and at Marx's private desk in exile.

Tommaso Marinetti wrote the Futurist Manifesto in a parked car on a road trip with a few literary young guns. They talked as they drove and they egged each other on. Driving away from home but never leaving the car, peering at a world rushing by and pointing at its strangeness through tiny windows.

Tristan Tzara wrote the Dada Manifestos in exile at the Cabaret Voltaire when the place was shut. With the radical ideas of his radical

friends still ringing in his ears he wrote love letters to them that he would publish as proclamations of war on everybody else.

Vladimir Ilích Lenin was across the road, another runaway who wrote his way back into the thick of things. Lenin took himself to the Zurich library to change the world. He didn't do half-measures so his Manifesto turned into an entire philosophy of history.

André Breton turned his back on everyone to write on behalf of their secret selves. Knowing that he was just the same as all his enemies he would use anything he could to write like a lunatic or a novice, anything but the white bourgeois poet that he was. His Manifestos were written as death warrants to men like himself, in the hope that others – real others – would take over.

Manifestos are written in silence, retreating from an exhausted world and its moribund palaces. And then, all of a sudden, hungry ears of the Manifesto writers are pricked by something going on just the other side of the closed windows.

'Listen!' says the Manifesto writer, 'That is the sound of a new world!' The Manifesto writer speaks to the Manifesto gang but the words carry beyond them into the world – really into the world, like a knife or a drug.

'At last truth and the utopia can be glimpsed', says the Manifesto gang, now quoting the Manifesto to one another:

... any day now we expect to witness the birth of our new world and, soon, we'll see the first blossom of fire for the revolution! We must shake the gates of life to test the hinges and the locks! ... This is truly the first sun that dawns above the earth! Nothing equals the splendour of our red words battling for the first time in the millennial gloom.

Manifestos need private rooms and silence in order for their noise to enter the public world and change it. But because of the very public and active effect that they desire, the Manifesto gang always see their private room as a coffin or a cave, remote, deathlike and constraining.

The Manifesto passes on the feeling that the Manifesto gang has of being hit by a world that changes them so much that they want to change the world and change themselves again on a daily basis. Events tear the Manifesto gang from themselves and sweep them away. Now they call for new events that will remake the world as a place for their new selves to inhabit. And from now on the Manifesto writers, the Manifesto gangs and the Manifesto readers will eagerly seek out delirious events to teach them to despise their old lives.

'Dissent', cries the Manifesto writer, 'dissent surprises all wise chiefs!'

And the Manifesto gang purr like young lions, not because they are regal or wild or fierce, just because they are stronger together and feel that strength as a force running through them like adrenalin.

Manifestos therefore have no universal or abstract ideals high as the clouds, no cruel authorities to whom to offer its corpses, no precious materials twisted into Byzantine rings! Nothing to die for besides the desire to rid the world of its new enemies!

Manifestos crush the watchdogs on the thresholds of houses, leaving them flattened under tyres like a collar under the iron. Manifestos cajole

death; they precede us on every curve; Manifestos offer claws, paws and fists, and, by turns, jaws that bite, swallow and speak.

Manifestos tell us to abandon wisdom like a hideous bombsite and hand ourselves over to the vast wind of history!

Manifestos tell us to volunteer ourselves to the unknown. And then, they say, eat, not out of hunger, but simply to enrich the unplumbable wells of our shared fate!

Manifestos are written alongside startling events which interrupt and redirect the flow of words. Events seize the Manifesto gang suddenly, without sense and order, as if the world was drunk or was nothing but folly, as if the world was a pair of poodles tugging at their leads, or two disapproving cyclists, reeling before us like two persuasive and yet contradictory arguments. Poodles and cyclists hate Manifestos... 'What a bore!', they say, 'Fuck that!...'. And so the Manifesto gangs dig holes in the cycle lanes and train poodles to hunt – bang! – and we all end up in a ditch...

Motherly ditch! Half full of muddy water! Industrial mud, country ditch! Each mouthful of poisonous slime recalls a different antagonism from a damaged world!

When the Manifesto gangs and Manifesto haters climb out of the shiny, stinking ditch, only then will they feel the red-hot iron of joy deliciously pierce their hearts.

Crowds of activists and academics gather in excited terror around the wreckage. Patient and meddlesome, they pull survivors from the ditch one by one. Each tells stories from the deep only to leap back in the ditch when they are reminded of how the world treats its combatants. Publications of all kinds issue from the muddy battle, leaving early drafts behind in the ditch like scales, along with the heavy body of common sense and its padding of comfort.

Crowds often think the battle is finally dead, but it is brought back to life time and again, sometimes with a single slogan, a pamphlet or a full campaign – in other words, a shark's tooth. The fight resumes, revived, running full speech ahead. These are the conditions under which we publish our views – faces hidden by factory slime, wrestled by the dross of humanity, carrying crushed arms in makeshift slings, deafened by the complaints of prudent academics and distressed activists. Thus, we dictated our demands to all the Manifesto readers left on earth:

- 1 No more neutrality, No more special cases! No more culture of the gods! All art must take sides!
- 2 No more false universalism! No more minority culture for the masses! No more diluted art on the high street! Art for all means art by all! Art for all means art riddled with the same differences and divisions as the world can bear!
- 3 No more ambiguity! No more irony! No more pussy-footing-around! Artists, it is time to say something and stand by what you say!
- 4 Down with art's shopkeepers! Down with luxury trading! Down with giving-the-collectors-what-they-want! The private sector is about freedom and diversity, not anxiety and uniformity. Sell, by all means, but for *fuck's* sake, sell SOMETHING!
- 5 Down with art's police! Down with the protectors of the common good! Down with the experts and officials who keep the artworld shipshape! There are no experts on happiness! There are no experts on liberation! There are no experts on art!

- 6 There is no more beauty except in struggle. No aesthetics without an aggression. No taste without power. Beauty is ideological! Beauty is no hiding place for art! Protest is more beautiful than the return to beauty in art. Art must strive to be as beautiful as emancipation, liberation and resistance!
- 7 We stand on the far promontory of centuries of struggle!... If our task is to smash the impossible portals of mysterious privilege, it is only possible because of generations of vandals, philistines and dissenters before us! Look ahead! Plan ahead! Dream up utopias! But remember! You did not get here on your own! You cannot achieve what you want without help! We are in this together! We are the tail and the head!
- 8 We want to glorify struggle – the only motor of history – dissent, protest, sloganeering, events that change everything, words that act on the world, and the scorn of the dispossessed. Art is protest or it is worthless!
- 9 We want to demolish monuments, public sculpture, fight against consensus, authority, and all opportunistic and utilitarian cowardices. Abolish culture-led regeneration! The correct response to public art is anger! Smash all the town centre fountains, statues and heritage sculptures! Make your ideas public! Publish! Publish! Publish! But know this! Publishing is not an arm of town planning!
- 10 We shall join the great crowds tossed about by work, by pleasure, or revolt; the many-coloured and polyphonic surf of revolutions in modern capitals; but our art will not profit from them. Protest will not be our readymade! Our art will take sides, make a difference, say something and do something! And we will stand by what we say!

It is in London that we launch this Manifesto of loving and incendiary violence, this Manifesto through which today we set up an art in the counter-public sphere, because we want to deliver British art from its gangrene of Frieze-dried professors, of don't-blame-me-it's-the-market retailers, of clueless guides, and of antiquarians in the latest fashions.

London has been too long a great second-hand brokers' market. We want to rid it of the innumerable shops that cover it with innumerable excuses. Shops, Excuses!... We're not against commodities; we're against profit and capital. Shops harbour excuses because they are led by the market instead of the commodities that they sell. London has turned into a hypermarket for art! *Do you want to be poisoned?* Do you want to rot?

The Museums have become safe-houses. Great public dormitories where art sleeps after the officials testify that it has earned some rest. All risks are controlled and all rivalries cancelled by the professionally cutting-edge and tolerant institution. They tell two stories... They are the official messengers of the mainstream. The dull record of whatever has happened to acquire power. But they tell another story... They are documents of the violence of canonisation and they reveal themselves as belonging to power and discipline. There is no story of art without a story of cultural division and cultural denigration!...

Art cannot make a difference on the basis of its separation from everything else. Culture is ordinary. Art is subject to the same economies as everything else. Art that wants to be exempt has to sacrifice everything but art. Art that wants to make a difference has to hold on to everything except art.

Art is not to be looked at or interpreted. Art has to do something, be something, say something. Aesthetics puts art into a special category of heightened experience. Interpretation puts everything the artist says in inverted commas. Aesthetics and interpretation let the artist off too easily. When we abolish aesthetics and interpretation from art, artists will have to take full responsibility for what they say and what they do.

For the stylish, the cynical, the uncomplicated and the all-too-comfortable, art will do. Since the future is forbidden them, there may be a salve for their wounds in the well made and the tastefully arranged... But we want nothing of it – we the angry, the philistine, the living alternative!

Let the pitiless rebels come with their philistine senses!... Here they are! Here they are!... Set the world on fire! Turn the street mobs in their course to flood the museum with philistines!... There go the glorious truths, floating adrift! Take up the picks and the hammers! Undermine the foundations of the venerable culture! For art can be nothing but violence, cruelty and injustice.

But we shall not be there long. Our fight against art is carried on in the work, moving between the places where other art lives and the places where art does not even try to compete with advertising, propaganda and polemic.

The Philistines will find us at last, on some winter night, out in the country, alone and remote, crouching by our camera, warming our hearts over the fire of our slogans and the images of them in action.

We do not need a mob around us to operate in the counter-public sphere! You can't measure the publicness of the counter-public sphere with bums-on-seats or feet-on-streets. A counter-public is an unprivileged minority that erodes the principles and standards of the official public sphere.

The publicly minded citizen enters the public sphere as a place where he/she belongs; he/she is certain of its certainties and share its highest values. The private person, on the other hand, retreats to a place of comfort where he/she can let his/her guard down and be him-/herself. *Wankers!*

The public and private spheres were won by dissenters and trouble-causers against the powers that monopolised publicity and silenced the individual. It is the worst kind of opportunism and cynicism to be private in the private sphere and public in the public sphere. History demands that we are private in the public sphere, and public in the private sphere!

*This means* that we have to publish our private opinions and interrogate our private lives as if they were on display.

When you are at home, do not throw your beliefs into the waste basket like useless manuscripts!... And when you enter the fray, do not hide your intimate thoughts as if they were secrets. They will come after you from afar, from everywhere, sticking in your throat, clawing your breath with their crooked fingers, hanging round public squares like a bad smell, the scent of rotting intellects already intended for the House of Lords.

The publicly minded have already squandered great treasures; treasures of energy, of love, of courage and anger have been converted into capital of every kind – hastily, deliriously, countlessly, breathlessly, with both hands. Don't let the bastards count you in! As soon as someone

says they have the public good in mind, keep your eyes open for partial interests being retailed as universal interests. Today the public can only be a mask for private interests.

Politics and public life have been colonised by big business and big institutions. Our politicisation of art does not seek to hand art over to this miserable, professionalised managerialism. Politics is as shifty as aesthetics. The politicisation of art must also involve the politicisation of politics or else it is just public-mindedness with cultural privilege added.

*LOOK AT US! we are not politicians...*

*LOOK AT US! we are not administrators...*

*LOOK AT US! we are not managers...*

*LOOK AT US! we are not bureaucrats...*

Our hearts are not in the least in hock to ulterior motives! Our hearts feed on commitment, on anger, on confrontation!... You find it surprising? That is because the cynics have convinced your generation that their reaction against critical culture is simply a description of the historical condition! – Here in the shit, once more we hurl our challenge to the world!

Your objections? Enough! Enough! We know them! Fair enough! We know well enough what our nostalgic, avant-gardist, revolutionary ideas conjure up in your sophisticated heads! – We are only, you say, reiterating conventional tropes when we call up a new world.

Perhaps! Let it be so!... What does it matter?... The tropes are repeated because the world has not yet been transformed in their image! Beware of your complacency! One day events will overtake your resignation!

Still in the shit, once more we hurl our challenge to the world!

---

For information on the Free Art Collective visit <http://www.freee.org.uk>

---