

Attn: Robert-Jan Muller  
Chairman of the Dutch AICA Foundation  
Timorplein 60  
1094 CC Amsterdam

Amsterdam, 13 January 2014

Dear Robert-Jan Muller,

Thank you for your letter of November 29, 2013, in which you (on behalf of AICA Nederland) outline concerns in regard to the location of Manifesta 10 at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.

Thank you for raising AICA's concerns regarding the recent introduction of anti-LGB & T legislation in Russia and for therefore contributing significantly to the discussion. We emphasise again that Manifesta, shares your concerns, and that we too find the recent legislation that outlaws the 'propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations among minors' objectionable. Our stated belief is that it is vital to play an active role in this ongoing dialogue, and to exchange ideas and raise awareness across borders. This is in keeping with Manifesta's original purpose, and I would add that we have never stated that Manifesta is or has adopted a position that is neutral.

As you will already know, Manifesta arose from the political, cultural and economic circumstances in the aftermath of the end of the Cold War. Manifesta was initiated as a platform for critical discussion and establishing a vital link between arts communities between East and West Europe: this remains central to what we do now and to a large extent influenced our decision in 2011 to accept the State Hermitage Museum as host in 2014.

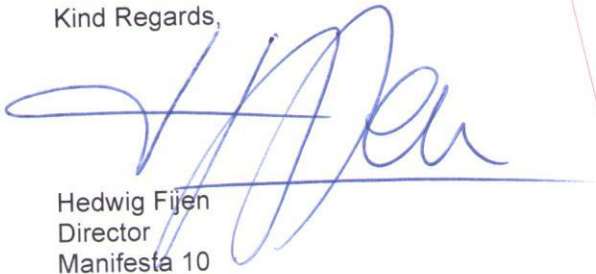
Manifesta 10 will explore what has happened within art practices in Europe since the fall of the Berlin Wall 25 years ago. This process will also reflect on the significant changes that have taken place in Western Europe – including the major social changes that have transformed the perceptions and acceptance of LGB & T communities. The decision to accept the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg as host of Manifesta 10 was made in close consultation with many Russian artists, writers, and exhibition curators, and this decision was fully endorsed by them. Over the past months we have established a continuing conversation with LGB & T representative organisations and individuals in Russia, as well as establishing a dialogue with the contemporary arts community in St. Petersburg. In doing so we have listened and engaged with their expectations and hopes. In the vast majority of cases we have heard that people want Manifesta and other cultural events to take place in Russia and to contribute to those communities seeking change, and be part of developing a progressive contemporary culture as a whole.

Regarding your concerns about artistic autonomy, Manifesta 10's German Chief Curator Kasper König is satisfied with the terms under which he is developing the Biennial exhibition and the conditions under which he is preparing Manifesta 10 at the State Hermitage Museum which has guaranteed his curatorial autonomy. Clearly he is very experienced in exhibition making and thoughtful of the issues you are raising and will present a sophisticated and considered Biennial program. Indeed, as would be expected, some artists have purposefully proposed developing projects that may address this and other pressing issues in contemporary Russia. Most of the selected artists have by now visited the exhibition venues of Manifesta 10 in St. Petersburg, and are advanced in their plans for site-specific works. Furthermore, Manifesta 10 will present a 120-day Public Program of talks, seminars, lectures and other activities. This program will not only engage with the communities in St Petersburg, but will especially address critical issues at large in contemporary Russia and the world at large.

Please also be aware that we are fully cognizant of the legal situation and reassure you that for each edition the Board and myself make specific arrangements to be certain that the specificities of the conditions in which we operate are planned for. This is also the case for the forthcoming edition. It may also assure you to know that we are in contact with the Dutch government, and other Dutch arts institutions that have experience of presenting events and activities in Russia, regarding those issues that are especially relevant in the Russian context.

I would always be delighted to make an appointment to meet with yourself and other AICA Nederland representatives in Amsterdam to further discuss your questions. Please do not hesitate to contact me to arrange this. Secondly we would be happy to discuss AICA's involvement in our Manifesta 10 public program.

Kind Regards,



Hedwig Fijen  
Director  
Manifesta 10