

**6 June 2006**

**For Immediate Release:**

## **A letter from Mai Abu EIDahab, Anton Vidokle and Florian Waldvogel, former curators of Manifesta 6**

Dear Colleagues, Dear Friends,

Manifesta 6 was planned to take the form of a temporary art school, the Manifesta 6 School, comprised of three departments revolving around diverse cultural issues and debates, and each proposing a different structural model for art education. The proposed Manifesta 6 School is a postgraduate, trans-disciplinary program for approximately 90 participants from many parts of the world lasting about 12-weeks: (see full list of Manifesta 6 participants below). Inspired by such historical examples as Black Mountain College and the Bauhaus, the School would be a meeting ground for cultural producers in the region and beyond, and a platform for discussion and production.

In keeping with the past goals of Manifesta to open dialogue between West Europe's artists and audiences and their Eastern European peers, Manifesta 6 intended to "play a modest role in developing new forms of cultural partnerships, not only within the new Europe, but particularly between Europe and its immediate neighbouring regions." Such cultural partnerships in the context of Nicosia, a city located on the furthestmost edge of European Community and divided into Greek and Turkish Cypriot sectors, specifically implies engagement and presence in both communities inhabiting this city.

Unfortunately, on June 1st, we received a letter from the Mayor of Nicosia, Cyprus, effectively terminating our contracts to organize Manifesta 6, the European Biennial of Contemporary Art in Nicosia. On June 2nd, Nicosia for Art Ltd. (the non-profit organization set up and owned by the Municipality of Nicosia to run the project) made a public announcement and circulated it internationally defining a variety of alleged breaches of contract by the curators, which led the city to cancel the project.

The alleged breaches of contract being referred to relate in large part to what Nicosia for Art Ltd. states as "Recently and contrary to the original concept of the Manifesta 6 program the curatorial team insisted on the establishment and operation of an essential part of the Manifesta 6 School in the occupied part of Nicosia", a break of confidentiality and an unwillingness on the part of the curators to mediate the situation to reach an amicable compromise to allow for the project to be realized.

With regards to the primary issue around the location of a part of the school in the north, the contractual agreement made with the local authorities clearly defined Manifesta 6 as a bi-communal project, therefore, we believed ourselves to be working within the parameters outlined and agreed upon at the outset of the project. Accordingly, we developed the project in the spirit of this bi-communality, and throughout the process, the Greek Cypriot authorities not only agreed, but also

encouraged this approach to working in both areas of the city and made numerous official public statements confirming their support.

The Manifesta 6 School was envisioned as an important cultural project to take place in a city whose political climate has been changing dramatically. Needless to say, we continued to work to safeguard this position while obviously making every effort to reach a compromise with Nicosia for Art Ltd. to ensure our concept is realized. Moreover, we continuously advocated for a transparency within the process to maintain responsible and accountable conditions for our collaborators and ourselves.

Unfortunately, throughout the course of the last six months, we were increasingly hindered by a lack of administrative support to realize the project, which simply climaxed with the termination of our contracts as the final gesture reflecting Nicosia for Art's unwillingness to resolve any disagreements. Although we can conjecture and analyze the problematics of the situation, we feel that our foremost priority now is to attempt to find a way to ensure that the commitments and hard work of all of those involved whether administratively or from the artistic side is not lost, and is treated with the utmost respect and support.

This cancellation of the Manifesta 6 School does a great disservice to the cultural community of Cyprus. Numerous artists, writers and academics who live on both sides of the island have sent us letters of support, protesting arbitrary action by local authorities that deprives the cultural community of an invaluable opportunity to meet and engage with their peers from around the world, noting that "given the limited resources available at the local level, the mobilization of such interest and expertise for Nicosia is unprecedented and extremely special."

We are currently in the process of considering and planning how to proceed, while rejecting any form of censorship that obstructs the dissemination of ideas and impedes artistic production.

We very much appreciate the support we have been getting in the course of the past few days and very much hope we are able to turn these unfortunate events into a productive outcome. The International Foundation Manifesta will be sending out a press release shortly outlining the plans to come.

Thank you once again.

Sincerely,

Mai Abu EIDahab, Anton Vidokle, Florian Waldvogel

For further information, please write to International Foundation Manifesta at [secretariat@manifesta.org](mailto:secretariat@manifesta.org)

## Invited participants of Manifesta 6 School

### Department 1

Curator - Mai Abu ElDahab, Assistant Curator - Mohamed Yousri

Participants: Eyal Weizman, Variant Magazine, Francesco Bernardelli, Philip (a workshop by Heman Chong and Leif Magne Tangen), Pages Magazine, Jonas Ohlsson, Jan Verwoert, Yael Davids, Mark Aerial Waller, Brian Kuan Wood, Demetris Talliotis, Constantinos Talliotis, Christina Lambrou, Constance Gonoud, Sarah Oppenheimer, Andrew Peter Steen, Gidoen Boie, Motaz Atalla, Maha Maamoun, Dena Kasraian, Babak Rostamian, Andre Sousa, Gul Kozacioglu, Will Holder, Valentinas Klimasauskas, Ricardo Alzati, dotdotdot

### Department 2

Curator - Anton Vidokle, Assistant Curator - Kaja Pawelek

Participants: Boris Groys, Martha Rosler, Walid Raad, Jalal Toufic, Tirdad Zolghadr, Liam Gillick, Anri Sala, Mete Hatay, Tobias Rehberger, Yiannis Papadakis, Christian Jankowski, Neurotransmitter, Pierre Huyghe, Akram Zaatari, Chrostodoulos Panayiotou, Ali Cherri, Alexandra Weirstall, Amber Onar, Antonios Bogadakis, Mike Bouchet, Carlos Motta, Carolina Caydeco, Driton Hajredini, Emily Mast & Carly Busta, Ethan Breckenridge, Fia Backstrom, Gabriel Lester, Haris Pellapaisiotis, Hila Peleg, Hubert Czerepok, Jakup Ferri, Jonah Freeman, Jose Leon Cerrilo, Julieta Aranda, Katina Saoulli, Katsura Kuniera, Koken Ergun, Liz Linden, Mandla Reuter, Munir Al Azawi, Pelin Uran, Polonca Lovsin, Regina Basha, Santiago Cucullu, Serap Kanay, Setareh Shahbazi, Shahab Fotouhi, Nico Dockx

### Department 3

Curator - Florian Waldvogel, Assistant Curator - Benjamin Seibel

Participants: Julie Ault, Martin Beck, Silke Wagner, Japanther, Sebastian Lütgert, Thomas Edlinger, Sister Corita Kent, Fritz Ostermeyer, Dona Carmen, Jeronimo Voss, Gui Bonsiepe, Thomas Vizent, Nikolaus Hirsch, Moshe Zuckermann, Stefan Lehnert, Kisa, Alfred Schobert, Duncan McCowan, Katherine Hare, Melita Couta, Maria Efstathiou, Margarita Paraskevaidou, Anna Photiadou, Christopher Malapitan, Jens Strandberg, Bärbel Hartje, Gabriele Gaspari, Alexander Schikowski, Begum Erciyas, Can Sarvan Boranbay, Samuel Dowd, Andria Meletiou, Windianto Utomo, Claudia Di Lecce, Gaja Fugazza, Squid, Magnus Liistamo, Ralph Kistler, Robin Bhattachanya, Societe Realiste, Sussannah Mira, Craig Smith, Patrica Reed, Lasse Emlund Lorentzen, Lyn Lowenstein, Craig Leonard, Anthony Schrag, Inga Zimprich, Chicks on Speed, Petros Moris