

Conference on the “Culture and Creative Industries in Europe:
Koherent Policies in a Globalized World”, 3./4. Mai 2007, Berlin

The Umberto Allemandi network of art world newspapers.

Motto: “Need to know; not nice to know”

**By Anna Somers Cocks, Founder Editor of The Art Newspaper and Group Editorial
Director of Umberto Allemandi e C.**

In Turin, in 1982, the former advertising copywriter and publisher, Umberto Allemandi, having become increasingly convinced that the art world needed a reliable, impartial source of news about what was happening internationally, founded his publishing house to produce **Il Giornale dell’Arte**. It was a completely new kind of publication, a true newspaper, not a magazine. The model was the Financial Times or the International Herald Tribune, not just for the section on the art market, but all our news reporting.

Il Giornale dell’Arte has grown over the years to include the magazine supplement Vernissage, and monthly specialist reports on segments of the art world, such as foundations, conservation, auction houses etc. It is the indisputed market leader in Italy, but above all, it is a strong lobby, respected and feared by government, for the protection and rational presentation of Italy’s unparalleled artistic heritage. **Il Giornale dell’Architettura** was to follow in 2002.

In 1990, Umberto Allemandi asked me, a former museum curator and editor, to start **The Art Newspaper** for him in London and New York. This is based on the same idea as **Il Giornale dell’Arte** but generates its own international news, of interest to a largely English-speaking readership. This is now an international market leader, with a respected tradition of investigative reporting and strong campaigning, particularly for the archaeological heritage and the better protection of world heritage sites, such as Venice. It has subscribers in over 60 countries, and has built up a network of reporters all over the world.

The French paper, **Le Journal des Arts**, now owned by Jean-Christophe Castelain, and published in Paris, is produced under licence from Umberto Allemandi & C. It has free access to the news generated by **Il Giornale dell’Arte** and **The Art Newspaper**, and they in turn can use the news stories by the French journalists.

The **Ta Nea Tis Technis** published in Athens has an informal and friendly business relationship with us., whereby we agree to pool news and contacts.

In effect, the five papers act as a kind of a news agency to each other, although I discovered very early on that, despite the supposed internationalism of the art world, news is very different from country to country. The investigative tradition in English and US newspapers means that **The Art Newspaper** would rather write less, but dig deeper.

For example, **Il Giornale dell’Arte** covered the very recent resignation of the Soprintendente of Pompeii, Pier Giovanni Guzzo and his almost immediate reinstatement in a five-line piece. **The Art Newspaper** happened to have a British

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journalist in the neighbourhood, who interviewed him at length and discovered that the reason for this surprising behaviour was that Guzzo had resigned in protest at the reappointment of a member of staff who was closely involved with the Camorra.

On the other hand, *Il Giornale dell'Arte*, on the other hand, is very good at getting public debate going between prominent Italian art world figures, such as the academic Salvatore Settis and the minister for culture, or the art critics Achille Bonito Oliva and Vittorio Sgarbi. The reluctance of member of the US and UK governments to make public statements, and the convention whereby, at least in the UK, civil servants never make public statements, mean that such kind of public polemic is very rare in our newspaper.

What I tell my journalists

We do not think that art is a branch of the entertainment industry—we believe that art and the world around art needs to be approached as seriously and scrupulously as the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* does its reporting.

When I started in 1990, journalists who specialised in reporting art world news hardly existed so I had to train them. I told them always to remember that this was a newspaper, not a magazine; we do not publish art criticism, exhibition reviews or slices of art history. Our job is to tell people as much as possible about everything that has happened or is going to happen in the world of art.

That being said, we do have two sections, Features and the Op-Ed commentaries, where the more subjective material goes, but only if it is topical. And we do get artists to talk about their art, because this has a documentary value; it is a primary source. For example, after Francis Bacon's death, we published some of his last thoughts, confided to Jean Clair *aka* Gerard Regnier, director of the Musée Picasso, Paris.

Particularly when writing about the art market and the contemporary art world we are careful to avoid doing anyone any favours. A lack of objectivity in these areas has spoiled far too many art magazines. In the short run, advertisers may complain but they quickly come to understand the advantages of an honest publication: after all, they know perfectly well if an art fair has been a failure, so they are not fooled if an article pretends it was success just in order to schmooze the organizers.

We have subscribers in over 65 countries. Obviously, we do not put in news about Malta just for the sake of the three readers there. On the other hand, it is not an idle boast when we say that we are the international edition; we do keep an eye out for what is happening everywhere and will give an important event anywhere in the world as much coverage as if it had occurred in the UK or US. We do this by reading all the principal newspapers, magazines and web sites, and through our network of stringers and contacts worldwide.

An analysis of one recent issue gave us the following breakdown of news coverage: 25% UK; 20% USA; 15% each Italy, Germany, France; 10% everywhere else.

Before coming here I flicked back over the 17 years of *The Art Newspaper* and noted a few stories of particular interest (to me, at any rate):

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Wars and the art world

Bogdan Bogdanovich, ex-mayor of Belgrade and architect of war memorial parks, bitterly—and bravely—denounced Slobodan Milosevich, the Serbian premier, for the war-mongering hold he had on national consciousness and on the intelligentsia.
(June 1992)

We published the first photographs of the ruins of Kabul National Museum, destroyed after the withdrawal of the Russians by rival factions of the mujaheddin.
(February 1994)

Numerous issues of the paper have covered the two Iraq wars: 1991 we got hold of the Pentagon's map of strategic targets in Iraq and discovered that most of the major archaeological and historical sites were very close to them, the oldest city in the world, Ur of the Chaldees, being inside an air base.

Since the second war, 2003, we have covered in detail and many issues the evolving tale of the looting of the Baghdad Museum and archaeological sites; world reaction, the legal measures imposed to stifle trade in looted items and museum efforts to assist Iraq.

Art issues

We published an early warning of visual illiteracy among US art historians, which the directors of the Metropolitan, Philippe de Montebello and of the Getty Museum, John Walsh, later declared to be a crisis for the museum profession
(February 1995)

In a seminal article, Riccardo Elia, Professor of Archaeology at Boston University, argued that, "the world cannot afford many more collectors with a passion for antiquities" and that the exhibiting by museums of private collections of antiquities merely encourages the looting of archaeological sites. This provoked strong reactions in the art world.
(October 1994)

We announced before any other paper the Louvre's project for long-term loans, as also its director, Henri Loyrette's defence of the scheme. This was ahead of the row that broke out in the French press earlier this year about this policy, specifically in relationship to the Abu Dhabi loans.
(March 2006)

Art news

Symptoms of social change: we recorded that the Lannan Foundation in Los Angeles decided to stop spending \$2-3 million a year on art and would redirect its funds towards the poor and disadvantaged.
(March 1994)

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The first interview with Sheikh Saud al-Thani of Qatar, in which he revealed his plans to turn the State into the cultural hub of the Gulf, by building five museums by world famous architects such including I.M. Pei, Arata Isozaki and Santiago Calatrava. (May 2004).

Two years later we broke the story of his arrest for less than transparent accounting in his voracious art-buying sprees.

Numerous issues of the paper have covered war-loot restitution cases, often described by our specialist legal correspondent. We discovered, for example, how the Cranach of *Venus and Cupid* in London's National Gallery got there from Goering's collection. (January and February 2007)

In this month's issue we publish the salaries and bonuses of US and UK museum directors and discover that the highest paid US director, Glenn Lowry of the Museum of Modern Art, New York, is paid 31 times the salary of the director of the Uffizi (\$901,000 and \$29, 200 respectively).

Exhibitions

Every year we publish the attendance figures for exhibitions worldwide. We are the only people to do this and we are widely quoted by the media, and consulted by exhibition organizers. In fact, I have even written an editorial apologizing for having opened this Pandora's box, which has almost certainly contributed to the tedious repetition of certain sure-fire successes, such as Impressionism, still pulling in the crowds in Italy.

Our online presence

All the papers can be accessed online, with slightly differing policies about what gets published.

The Art Newspaper has decided to put less of the paper online each month in favour of being more interactive and giving more regular updates, often daily. Our policy is to emphasise the difference between the online presence and newspaper itself, so as to encourage people to subscribe. We get people to register for a weekly newsletter, which we currently send out to over 15,000 people. It also offers the complete international exhibition listings and resumés. For the past five years, it has been possible to access the archive of all back copies on payment.

Monthly page impressions in February 2007 were over 350,000, with the largest numbers of visitors to the site coming to it from Google, and the keyword that produced the most clicks being the word “Exhibitions” (259,15,000 impressions).

Of the 350,000+ pages viewed, 243,300 were by US users, with Europe at 45,921, Asia 4,745 etc, confirming what we all know, which is that the US is the biggest user of the net.

From 15 June, a new, searchable site will go live, with the complete archives of the *Giornale dell'Arte* and *Giornale dell'Architettura*, plus a large and expanding amount of international “grey literature”, that is, the annual reports of museums, foundations etc (material that easily falls into a bibliographical oubliette), compiled for us by researchers at the Scuola Normale at Pisa. The aim is to provide fundamental source material of use to people working and planning in the cultural sector. In the creation of this site, Umberto Allemandi e C have received the financial support of the Fondazione di Venezia.

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Circulation

The Giornale dell'Arte and Giornale dell'Architettura are mostly sold over the counter, Italy's abundant, independent news kiosks making this possible. Sales of the former are c. 20,000 copies, and of the latter, 18,000. Nearly all the readership is within Italy.

The Art Newspaper is principally by subscription, as there is no equivalent retail network in the US and UK, and the relatively few outlets have very little space for specialist publications. Its circulation is 16,000. The readership is c5000 in the UK, 6,000

Business structure

All two Italian papers are produced by the Italian company, Umberto Allemandi e C. srl. The Art Newspaper is produced by the British company, Umberto Allemandi Publishing Ltd, wholly owned by the Italian company.

The turnover of the Giornale dell'Arte in 2006 was Euro 2.7 million, of the Giornale dell'Architettura, Euro 807,000, and of The Art Newspaper, Euro 2.8 million.