

Issue number: 32

**Issue: What are our relations with the press (journalists, arts writers, chief editors...)?**

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Summary of discussion, conclusions and/or recommendations:

The idea was to talk about the relationship artists and promoters have with the radio, press, specialized magazines, TV, etc. What are the expectations when contacting/ inviting journalists? Why do we need them (if we need them!)?

- Ø The group stated first there was few space left to arts and culture in the papers and more generally speaking in the media. Journalists are mainly announcing upcoming events (vs talking about the artistic content of artworks) and many people raised their difficulty to publish articles in the daily papers – chief editors sometimes “scarify” the culture pages when space is needed (other news, advertisement, etc).
- Ø There is a general lack of curiosity, medias review “big names”, classic works, and they're quite market oriented... So it's difficult 1/ to interest them to contemporary creation, new forms, emerging artists (even if their role is informing people about what's happening!); 2/ to overpass the partnerships media have with big cultural institutions/ festivals/ venues (e.g. journalists review shows presented during a festival which bought advertisement).
- Ø Other questions raised: is quality a criteria to be reviewed, and then what is quality? Journalists believe they know what their readers/ public want to hear about... but do they? At some point, lots of websites propose to post comments on shows – direct feedback from the audience and sometimes these posts bring public – Internet users/ audience do an interesting “side work” that do have impacts (comparison with online hotel booking platform where consumers comments are really appreciated)
- Ø Why artists try to get reviews? 1/ kind of free advertising, since in many countries, a review do bring audience – tickets are sold; 2/ press book is useful to valorize the work when talking to funders and sponsors; 3/ positive to bring interest and dialogue on the artistic contents, not only with journalists but with audience; 4/ matter of existence, without visibility, artists are “lost”...
- Ø The group linked this reflection to another topic discussed in several sessions: the relationship with your audience. Many artists are already working in close relationship with the audience.

- Ø The group then distinguished journalists from arts writers: the second ones are likely to follow your work, are not always working in a short-term impact, are challenging (they “ask real questions”), are experts and can make good feedback on your artwork – they’re more in a long term process, sometimes collect information/ document artists’ pieces...
- Ø Propositions: to reinforce relationship with journalists and critics:
  - A mutual understanding is needed: 1/ understand they’re working in bad conditions, under a lot of pression, often as free lancers (do they make a leaving?); 2/ they are passionate about arts and culture, so they don’t have to be considered as enemies.
  - Invite them during the creation process and not only when you present a performance and need a good review (?): e.g. they could attend a rehearsal, etc
  - Trust is a very important value in this relationship!
  - Case study presented: a residency for arts writers organized in Paris (FR) in June 2009: during 1 week, 12 critics from all over Europe were invited to attend 2 festivals, meet artists and programmers, visit an artistic residency centre, have working and informal sessions to know more about contemporary circus > no pression from their “employers”, or from festivals/ venues (e.g. “I paid your flight and hotel so you own me a good review”), have a quality mobility experience, knowledge and know-how exchanges, time and space to think... Very successful pilot project that will be duplicated in Helsinki (May 2010 @ new circus festival of Helsinki and probably other cities) > [www.circostrada.org](http://www.circostrada.org)