

## On The Proper Use & Appropriate Archiving of Exhibition Guides & Catalogues, Gallery Ephemera and Other Free Arty Tat That Comes On Paper

You can tell if an exhibition guide is any good from the moment you receive it. If some open-jawed douche bag in an orange t-shirt thrusts the thing at you before you've even had time to properly organise yourself into going through the door of the gallery, then you can be sure that the guide is worthless. (Shove it back in his spotty face if you like.) This sort of experience normally occurs at a ticketed show at a big gallery; they save all the interesting text for the giant book in the gallery shop that costs more than £20<sup>1</sup>. (To an extent this horrible encounter is your own fault for going to that sort of show.)

In situations such as the one stated above, (with the douche) you can expect two things to always be present in the guide:

- (i) **A map of the gallery.** What this map will essentially communicate to you is that there is art in all of the rooms you have access to, and principally the location of the gallery shop. The map is useless as you were going to work your way around and look at all the artworks one at a time anyway so there's no way you could miss anything.
- (ii) **A bit of writing by the curator.** The curator is often someone that you had remembered was quite good, but who has taken the opportunity with his or her bit of writing for this show to reveal him or herself as a plum. (That is unless you are thinking of that show that Mark Wallinger did, in which case, doubly so.)

Better guides of this sort tend to have a couple of lines of fart by a critic or academic. They are quite fun, memorise the names of these quotes-for-hire and make up some kind of league based open how many outings they make. You can place bets on your favourites. (I like JJ Charlesworth, though he's been a bit quiet of late.) I once saw JJ Charlesworth shove a table against a wall really angrily, like he'd been listening to loads of rap music and was right riled up. It was Great!

(Guides that have too much stuff in parentheses should be avoided.)

Another way of receiving your guide/ephemera is at the kind of real trendy bullshit exhibition that has a list of works printed off of a home printer and left on a chair / windowsill / little shelf by the door in a kind of faux careless way designed to make you feel that the show you are seeing is somehow more exclusive and special. Its such an effective technique that some larger galleries have taken up the practice too and leave bits of paper for the show lying about on the desk at the front with no real system of delivery to the visitor. It doesn't work quite so well at big galleries; the receptionist (Why isn't she handing it to me are her ruddy arms broken, the cow.) scowls at you from over her macbook when you go to take one. (What does she do all day, she just sits there and checks her facebook. I've made all this effort to come to effing London to see this exhibition; she could at least acknowledge that I don't have to come to look at this bullshit, and smile. *Forget about that and nab that list from the chair/ windowsill/ from under the cows nose.*) If it's one of the small and trendy galleries then you be damn sure you hold onto that bit of paper, if any of these artists make it big then its your proof that you knew their early work and it'll give you tremendous currency at parties.

A third sort of exhibition ephemera is one that folds out like a poster. It might have a big picture on it, or have the text laid out all funny. (Often these are dispensed from something that's like halfway between a plinth and a newsstand. These probably have a name but I don't know what it is.) The posters are rarely any good, pick one up and give it to student when you get home, they can't get enough of that sort of tat on their bedroom walls. If you know two students then make sure you take two posters. (And a couple for their friends why not.) In fact it is good practice always to take a couple more of any printed materials than you need. If you are a true art enthusiast you'll need three copies, so make sure you pick up about six incase you drop a couple on the way home or one gets creased or something.

Sometimes if the artist or curator has invited you to the show personally, then they may send you a copy of the catalog in the post. Then when you see them they'll say something like 'Hey \*insert your name\* did I ever send you that catalog?' They're probably reminding you so that you can thank them but you must reply by telling them that you *did not* receive it. Make them send it to you again, even though you did get it the first time. This way you'll get two copies. Bonus.

The final sort of ephemera/ guide worth mentioning is very elaborate, printed on a sort of paper that you don't know the name of, (Usually its like manila<sup>2</sup>, but obviously not manila, something more expensive) which is folded into some origami shape, or has fancy embossing on it. In this case the fancy thing given away is probably compensating for the show being crap. Pick up eight, and a couple for any students that you know, and leave.

1 - £26

2- What they make envelopes out of.

Now, here's what to do with everything you've collected when you get home: Hopefully you should have got to your flat/house/caravan/villa with at least three copies of whatever it is you picked up from the gallery. Take the first copy, put it in a box marked 'exhibition stuff' (or a folder if you'd prefer) then put the box (or folder if you prefer) in a drawer/filing cabinet/wardrobe/under a beanbag and forget about it. –This is standard practice and everyone does this or a variation upon it.

For the second copy: If you know any practicing artists, simply wait until the exhibition has been over for at least two months then arbitrarily circle the name of an artist in the guide (or whatever ephemera it is) and hand it to the artist that you know. Say to them these words: 'I think this person would be an important reference to inform your practice,' it doesn't matter whether you believe that the reference you've given them is relevant, give them long enough and they'll discover something in it. If you don't know any artists, give it to a student.

You have a choice of what to do with the final copy, you could use it as a book mark in a hard back book and try to look proper cultured on the train or at the bus stop. You could give it to a student. If you don't have many books on your bookshelf, why not stick it on there. Or you can do what I like to do, which is to put it on a pile of stuff you *will* get around to reading properly and then throw it away a couple of months later.

If you are in the fortunate situation that you have managed to arrive home with more than three pristine copies of whatever it is, why not secrete them around your house, forget where you put them, then discover them again years later when your moving house and have a good old reminisce.

J Lockey