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the familiar, "opening the eyes", detachment. The important thing is movement, the way, searching of new impulses and motives, leaving alone and acquiring independence. In the future the connection with the native place is kept as a desire about creative coming back, showing own works of art in the initial point of the way. There is fear caused by the suggestion if people will understand the works of art and if this kind of coming back is possible at all. And it seems as if with this explanation the answer to the question Who Left What Behind? is exhausted to a certain level – it turns out that the native place and the big city are related because they are a part of the professional development of the women artists – in a different period and in a different way. Their relationship is organic.

However, the participants in the research balance the sidedness of the question as they turn their look at the future:

What does the big city attract with? What can people obtain from life and work in it? The environment is the most important, it determines the interests, develop new skills, meets you with unknown things, many and different people who come to the city from everywhere – this gives assurance and calmness, inner balance. The physical places give birth of thoughts and ideas, influence creativity; often the change of place of living and work is connected to the change of the setting where you work, creative skills, techniques and materials. The big city allows you a specific anonymity but makes you also visible in a different way. It becomes clear not only how do you look at the world but also how the society accepts you. Big cultural centers allow you to go out of the local and to feel the global; they put you in another dimension, they give you the freedom to be yourself.

Does the women's point of view exist to everything that and what is it?

Yes, there is a difference between man and woman – as energy and assumption, position in the society, attitude to their work. This difference is important – it brings diversity and richness. But there is also discrimination of women – as payment and evaluation of their qualities and their creative work. A woman always gives more if she follows her professional way, especially when she has children.

But the contemporary art is not divided into male and female, the borders between them disappear, the individuality is important not the differences. Emancipation of women is the process of realizing the differences. It is important to men as well.

For most of women artists who live and work out of the country the division of male and female art doesn't exist. A part of them confess that they don't understand feminists' problems even though it is more difficult for them as women but the topics they concern are not "female". But for another relatively small group (Vasilena Gankovska, Svetozara Aleksandrova, Petja Dimitrova, Lora Dimova, Katia Terzieva, Boryana Rossa) feminism is an important topic. It expresses protest and desire for explanation and clarity. These women artists talk about its politicization and about that in this circle of questions the social affiliation of an artist is important.

The presence of "female" look can be felt in some of exposed works of Bulgarian women artists. In them we see familiar "female" topics as the stereotypes of assumption of the woman body and its metamorphoses (Vasilena Gankovska, Svetozara Aleksandrova), the body, pain, flesh, female rituals (Stela Vassileva, Katia Terzieva, Diana Boneva, Boryana Rossa), maternity (Katia Damianova-Terzieva), the different forms of home violence (Lora Dimova) as well as newer topics, related to the lives of women emigrants (Petja Dimitrova).

As a whole the twenty Bulgarian participants in the survey show the characteristic freedom and curiosity of the contemporary artists towards different art media among which in a natural way they include their own bodies. The works of one small group

(Violeta Tanova, Vesela Statkova, Svetlana Mircheva, Rada Dicheva, Miryana Todorova, Elena Kaludova) show especially mature, fresh and sculptural flexible thinking. More of the exposed works



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are created during the last years, with the only two exception (the works of Vesela Statkova and Diana Boneva), which is created especially for this artistic survey.

In the beginning of this text there was a suggestion that the question Who Left What Behind? can get an unexpected answer. The unexpected is connected with a realization that the concepts we work with are not completely adequate. In concepts as centralization and decentralization there is contradiction and a certain sidedness – though connected, one pole denies the other. When we talk about sex often the point of view is with the certain political interest and even though the topic comes to both sexes, people usually talk only about women.

The opinions of the Bulgarian artists and their works direct us to one more flexible and various, nuanced thinking. Leaving their native place is not necessary to be dramatic and usually it does not happen under force.

The creative way of the artist is extravagant and concepts as centralization and decentralization should be used not only from the audience's point of view but also from that one of the authors themselves. The big creative centers are absolutely necessary for the development of one author and the opportunity to show your native place is a substantial part from this development. The movement is not lineal from the center to the periphery. It has rather the pulsing character. It starts directed to the center and at certain moments of the artist's development it becomes centrifugal.

The creative tension between the center and periphery nurtures the artist's development.

The female point of view, the gender questions have not only conceptual, political and social aspects but also purely technical and plastic arts sides and in the latter the differences between sexes can be especially valuable, namely when they become an expression of an awareness of a creative individuality.

## **“Mission possible” Women's rights as cultural and development rights**

By Mariana Prodanova

*„Culture is an aspect of life with innate worth that we enjoy  
and seek out”*

*/“Cultural diplomacy”, 2007, J.Holden, R. Briggs, S. Jones, K.  
Bound/*

*„Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural  
life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in  
scientific advancement and its benefits”*

*/Universal Declaration of Human Rights/*

*„The right to development is an inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples  
are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in  
which all human rights and fundamental freedoms can be fully realized”*

*/Declaration on the Right to Development, 1986/*

Culture is becoming more and more important element in human life. Cultural development is considered not only a complimentary part of overall community development but a prerequisite and instrument for community progress and sustainability.

In the field of culture EU strategic vision stresses on the importance of creativity and innovation for personal, social and economic development. Access to culture (as actors or users) is regarded as an



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essential condition for people to unlock their talent and creative potential. This means that people not only enjoy the benefits of culture but also take active part in overall cultural life of the community and in the process of its cultural development. It supports and increases their self-confidence and personal development; contributes to individual and social wellbeing and at the community level – to economic prosperity and strengthens the feeling of belonging to a community. In times of economic crisis national governments are searching for solutions and most of them turn to culture as source of creativity and development on the basis of human values and dignity of the individual preserved by his cultural rights. Governments place arts and creativity their development firmly on the national policy agenda.

Access to culture becomes fundamental for the community cultural, social and economic policies.

This text was inspired by the awareness that access to culture of our free choice is an act of equality and respect of human dignity and in a larger sense it is an implementation of our cultural rights and enrichment of the understanding of our human rights.

The scope of cultural rights depends on the definition and understanding of 'culture'. It has been proposed by UNESCO that: '... culture is not merely an accumulation of works and knowledge which an elite produces ... is not limited to access to works of art and the humanities, but is at one and the same time the acquisition of knowledge, the demand for a way of life and the need to communicate' The Council of Europe has also suggested that: "Nowadays, culture embraces the education system, the mass media, the cultural industries..."

On this basis the list of cultural rights given by Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should also embrace the right of everyone to education and the right to information formulated by Article 10 (Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and Article 19 (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) in the context of the right to freedom of opinion and expression.

Hence the dialogue on cultural rights contributes to the debate on the right to development.

In the national agenda the cultural rights and development rights are somehow set apart from the traditional and widely accepted human rights of the individual human person. In comparison with other categories of human rights: civil, political, economic and social, cultural rights are generally excepted but not legally binding. Though cultural rights are mentioned together with economic and social rights, in fact attention is limited to economic and social rights, whereas cultural rights are not debated. Quite often they are completely forgotten. Indeed, they need further elucidation, classification and strengthening.

On the other hand cultural rights and the level of their application and defense In the broad sense of the term "culture" are indicators for the overall social development.

But with the set of Millennium Development Goals as a top priority on the international agenda the "Right to Development" has encountered greater interest and recognition. It is respected as a key to the full achievement of the Millennium Development Goals".

Each State has the primary responsibility for the creation of national and international conditions favorable to the realization of the right to development.

In the context of the project it is important to add gender dimensions to the theme of cultural and development rights since limitations of women's rights as cultural rights is still observed, there is relative lack of participation and presentation of women in the arts and the question of gender is normally ignored in the development of policies or programs for dealing with economic, social and cultural issues.

The access to culture is of key importance both for women in general, as it helps them to form personal taste of art, aesthetics and models of communication with art, and for women artists as it is the way for development and mastering of professional knowledge, experience and skills.



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It is well known that there is variety of obstacles for women in establishing a career in the arts; female artists have shorter careers than men; they have lower incomes; difficulties in balancing career and family responsibilities often result in women dropping out of careers in the arts; different domestic and financial pressures makes them move to another city or country, most of the women artists consider their gender disadvantage of their career and working life. As if women has no cultural and development rights.

There is a need to raise awareness of the problem and the need of impact on gender stereotypes and equal opportunities.

The present-day technological change opens up vast prospects for creation and innovation. Information and communication technologies ensure easy access to the world cultural heritage, possibility to visit through internet and multimedia world famous museums and galleries, attend exhibitions, concerts and performances, visit libraries and get the latest information in the field. New technologies enable reaching out education services and create lifelong learning opportunities. They are tools capable of enhancing the effectiveness of educational services.

In fact these could happen when the information is accessible. Unfortunately a new type of exclusion and poverty is observed related to new technologies and efforts at different political levels have to be made to foster access by the unprivileged countries and community groups to the new technologies, by helping them to master information technologies and by facilitating the digital dissemination of the educational, cultural and scientific digital resources available worldwide

The globalization has also profound effects on the enjoyment of cultural rights. It could be seen as advantage in the aspect of professional networking, regionalization, international collaboration, exchange of ideas, events, sharing of practices and successful models, global network to all information in the public domain, free communication, mobility and free circulation of artist, ideas and works.

The promotion of gender aspect of cultural right throughout the European Union is one of the essential tasks of the EU. Though there is no legal obligation on Member States to combat gender stereotypes the human values are common to all Member States and the governments strive to create a favorable conditions for the realization of cultural and development rights. They have to bring a gender framework to policy, law and practice at local, national, regional and international levels through ever-evolving strategies and activities in both conceptual and practical realms.

Local and national authorities have to define national and local agenda for culture which sets as a strategic objective the presentation and promotion of women in the arts as a vital element of community development and its inter-state and international relations. Governing bodies have to take measures to develop financing programs or to provide information on availability of funds for the promotion of cultural development and women participation; strictly to observe legislation protecting the freedom of artistic creation and performance; to encourage arts and cultural organizations to review the representation of women on their governing bodies; encourage more women to apply for grants or stimulate their active participation in cultural life or cultural entrepreneurship by sustainability programs and seed grants for women; to elaborate professional educational programs in the field of culture accessible to women that can foster their professional development. The role of the mass media and communications media in promoting women participation in cultural life is also very important

It must be underlined that this text is just a step in what, as a participant in the "Who left what behind" project, I see as a long-term process of discussions, researches, sharing and exchanges at local, national and international level, with the opportunity to examine cases studies and collect good practices and to formulate policy options on how to guarantee equal women cultural and development rights and how the greatest possible number of women should not only enjoy the benefits of culture but take active part in the cultural production, development and decision making.



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## Of Culture, Policies and Gender

By Maya Krasteva

It is an indisputable fact that culture broadens the possibilities of choice and gives each individual a greater freedom. In essence, art, as a cultural expression, is the purest form of communication and therefore is fundamental to human evolution. Thus human development, which is individual to each person, remains incomplete without contributions from the aspect of culture. It is also true that culture is still in a disadvantaged position in present public policy agendas. In Bulgaria, like in other countries, the cultural policy development keeps a tendency to be technical and pitched at the centralised (national) institutional, administrative and financial level. Though the latter is a requisite of the official cultural



policy, the centralised approach tends to overlook culture as an important factor in regional and community development. Not to mention the human development...And it is a peculiar fact that speaking of culture and arts the term "gender issue" is still reflected in debates and program documents and is pending in the political vocabulary.

The concept of "culture" has broadened its semantic field over the centuries. Etymology Dictionaries draw back the term "culture" to "cultivation, tilling of land". The figurative sense of "cultivation through education" is first attested about 1500. The meaning "the intellectual side of civilization" is from 1805; that of "collective customs and achievements of a people" is from 1867. Contemporary definitions of culture, such as those made by UNESCO or by *Agenda 21 for culture*, demonstrate that the understanding of "culture" may be heading more towards its original meaning of a "dynamic process", one that creates freedom. In its widest sense culture is about what matters to people and their communities. It is about experiences, relationships, shared memories. It is about history, identity and a sense of place. It is about the different social, political, economic, religious backgrounds found in most communities. It is about the things we consider valuable for passing on to future generations. It is our way of connecting the present with the past.

As cultures differ, so does the approach to them. It is for each State to determine its cultural policy and methods according to its own conception of culture, its socio-economic system, political ideology and technical development. EU harmonization requires greater convergence of national and local policies (incl. cultural policy) toward common European objectives. Therefore regional and local planning should deal with all the unique values and experiences of culture. It is the way of helping those planning processes focus their efforts in all the areas that affect the quality of people's lives. It is a way of linking those efforts with broader management plans and strategies. However, most Bulgarian municipalities where policies tend to focus on the immediate personal living environments lack a strategy for cultural development. In communities with rich cultural heritage, culture-based development is also commonly poorly linked to economic activities such as tourism. Regional policies make a reference to culture only in relation to the conservation and restoration of cultural heritage. Culture is also rarely promoted as a catalyst for creativity, growth and development while



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the fundamental 'civic interest' to participate in local cultural policy-making is scarcely stimulated. Where ad hoc initiatives on cultural debates have been undertaken, public participation is often used to provide legitimacy to decisions already taken rather than catalyzing an inclusive, bottom-up process for cultural innovation. As a result, the participation of citizens in cultural policy-making is an emerging field that needs to learn from successful experiences in other fields.

In the guidelines for the programming period 2000-2006 at a European level, the contribution of culture to tourism was still the predominant way of thinking about its potential contribution to the economy and society more generally. However, in the current programming period 2007-2013, we see a *broader conception of the role of culture*, especially in the references to its importance in promoting the attractiveness of region, encouraging inward investment and stimulating development of information technology. Still there is not a general agreement on how to delineate the cultural sector, neither in the narrower sense of those engaged in traditional 'cultural' activities nor in the broader sense of those whose activities draw on inspiration and creativity – the creative industries. Cultural planning or cultural policy-making has become widespread over the last 10-15 years. It is the strategic and integral use of cultural resources in community and regional development. A process of policy making ensures that cultural considerations are present in all processes of planning and development- locally and/or regionally. However, a more integrated approach to local cultural planning is needed. In his paper written for the *Active citizens, local cultures, European politics* (2006)<sup>1</sup> Franko Bianchini says "This (the approach) would rest on a very broad anthropological definition of 'culture' as a 'way of life'. Such a strategy should audit and deploy all the cultural resources of the city, from its physical layout and design, its architectural and industrial heritage, local craft traditions, skill pools, arts, to public spaces, educational and cultural institutions, tourist attractions and images of the city which the interaction of myths, conventional wisdom, cultural and media representations produce. It would cut across the divides between the voluntary, public and private sectors, different institutional concerns and different professional disciplines". As it is generally said, culture has three dimensions:

- our sense of place, our values and our identity;
- the material products of creative processes;
- and
- our engagement with and participation in creative processes.

A local cultural planning processes should address each of these dimensions of culture. It is used to develop local cultural policies based on the intrinsic values of culture, including concepts such as memory, creativity, imagination, diversity, critical knowledge, rituality... A planning process is also used to underline the significance of culture in other local policies, such as employment and social inclusion, urban regeneration and to introduce cultural considerations into all public policies with the aim to improve community well being and encourage healthier lifestyles. Despite the fact that it encompasses many sectors of life, cultural policy making goes beyond. When discussing the field of culture, the most important element, the beginning and essence of all today's and future cultural work and development is related to the basic and unifying sector - Education. This acknowledged the fact that educational aspect of cultural policy making is at the very root of all other policy makings. It helps to: uphold the human right to cultural participation, develop individual civic capabilities, celebrate cultural diversity and intercultural understanding, teamwork, build confidence and self esteem. So to say, these aspects of culture are broader in scope than the work of any single

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<sup>1</sup> [www.policiesforculture.org](http://www.policiesforculture.org)





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government agency and relate to all spheres of government and the work of many agencies across a range of portfolios. In their book "Guide to Citizen Participation in Local Cultural Policy Development for European Cities"<sup>2</sup> Jordi Pascual i Ruiz and Sanjin Dragojevic suggest that cultural planning, especially on local level needs to involve (all the stakeholders!) and especially the "new types of collectivity", (1) whose "goal is not the achievement of a founding idea or desired end or purpose, but the very process of production", (2) that "break down the boundaries between art as a separate sphere of action and everyday life", and (3) that promote a creative tension between "the personal and the collective".

The goals of local cultural policy making surpass the boundaries of mere theoretical strategic planning of cultural resources. Its fundamental aim is to create **social capital**. While at the same time arts are mainly engaged with the **personal evolution**. In Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948)<sup>3</sup> it is clearly stated:

*"Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits".*

I doubt whether many people know about such a right? I personally did not know. Does it mean to have the right to be yourself? Once we believe that art is self-expression, then the individual can be criticized not only for her/ his skill or lack of skill, but simply for being what she/he is. Is that so? Does it have something to do with the "gender issue"? This I do not know either...

Still we have a list of questions to answer- either to ourselves or to our likeminded. Some of the questions even refer to existential aspects: Who am I? What do I want? What are my personal objectives? And then come the questions such as: Do I dare to be myself? Do I want to be part of the community/ society/ the Whole? And if we go further into concretising maybe we will come to articulation of, at first glance, formal and artificial, but otherwise meaningful (!) terms like: civil participation, cultural planning, etc.

With this project we experience a kind of cultural policy-making- local, from the point of view of our small project "community". In that sense we are a tiny part of the cultural policy making history. I hope our common intentions could influence even a miniature change in the local, national, or even global cultural arena. So that one day the culture and arts will have a priority in public policy agenda. And the human development and personal spiritual growth will be of fundamental importance, even to politicians. So that one day the term "gender issue" will carry no more meaning. Yet Art has no gender...

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<sup>2</sup> *Guide to Citizen Participation in Local Cultural Policy Development for European Cities*" by Jordi Pascual i Ruiz and Sanjin Dragojevic (2007), translated into Bulgarian language by the *FabriC* Regional Cultural Resource Center (2011)

<sup>3</sup> [www.un.org/Overview/rights.html](http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html)





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## Good start of an important conversation

By Pavlina Doublekova

It has been clear for a long time that we live in a "global village" (1) and we are situated "in the end of the geography" (2). The connections are changed. The distances are shorter. The time runs with other different rhythm. The knowledge is more accessible. The information is too much. And it has been clear for a longer time that we live in a patriarchal world. It changes inevitably too. The meaning of "male" and "female" are in a constant process of actualization but it does not deny the fact that the basic rights valid today are written through men's eyes and have for its base a corpus of values associated with "the male". This situation with no doubt is a substantial part of the context where the contemporary art is thought and created and concerns artists, creating here and now.

Setting up research questions as: „How do you navigate in this global male world if you are woman-artist, fighting for a professional confession and equal attitude especially if you come from a smaller populated place but not from a famous center?“, "How long is the way which you go along and what do you lose walking along this way?" is extremely important. But also it seems very important to us to ask ourselves: "But if don't women artists gain anything else walking along this way?", "If the importance of the problem is in the need of leaving or it is hidden in the impossibility to come back?", "Where is the border of "the female" in this situation and whether and how it is more different from "the male"?"

Namely these unasked completely questions provoked me in the research initiative "Who Left/ What Behind" and I would like to describe some aspects connected to them. And in particular: the topic for travelling and (im) possibility for coming back as well as the necessity of gender perspective. It obligatory needs knowledge of the situation through the men-artists' look in order to be really commented.

In a paradox way the globalized world matches two principles of organizing geography and social significance: network and centralization. On the one hand, through the Internet, new technology and therefore it seems that everything can happen everywhere. But simultaneously the rules and knowledge are taught in certain centers. There the public legitimation is possible which make you visible and when you have been already noticed, everything can "flow" in the net.

And as if exactly between these two leading principles of structuring mobility acts, changed itself into a basic value and myth of the contemporary world. This mobility is thought as freedom of choice, as an opportunity for a change of the environment, the lack of this anchoring binding with a concrete place. But the curious thing is that the project „Who Left/What Behind" focuses the attention to another dimension of mobility – as a duty and a single device for taking a certain way. Travelling enriches: it seems as if all participants in the project "Who Left/ What Behind" from Bulgarian side tend to agree with this statement.

The moving from one populated place to another one suggests opportunities for new meetings which are important for the artistic development as well as for the personality of the author and this is important for his/her works of art, too. In this sense the necessity of leaving the native place seems as if women artists don't experience it dramatically. It is rather accepted like a step of the development which opens new horizons. Except that in the native town most often only the family stays because friends and peers also leave.



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The real problem for these artists is the lack of opportunities for coming back and an active interaction with the local audience after they have passed a big part of their way. It is because in the smaller populated places a setting is missing. There is a lack of understanding, systematic efforts for creating appropriate conditions.

Other important characteristics of the initiative „Who Left/What Behind” is the choice for seeing the problem through the eyes of women artists and the experiment to catch the pulse of the left behind by this perspective. From gender point of view the similar strategy is simultaneously useful and risky. It has sense when it is applied as a laboratory experiment looking for distinction of Weber’s “ideal types” and obligatory it can be accepted as a first stage of a future larger research.

As it is well known male and female are related and situated concepts without constant definition and in a permanent process of negotiating in every cultural context and time. Except that they determine their semantic content according to each other. Respectively when one of the concepts obtains additional meaning it immediately means a change in the meaning of the other. It is the reason why it is necessary the same situation to be studied through the eyes of men artists coming from smaller populated places and taking their professional way. It is necessary to be surveyed what they left behind and whether the navigation in the system is different for them and if the answer of the question is “yes”, to find out how. In this way the picture of the problem and situation will be more precise and complete.

And when we have this kind of material, the situation can be analyzed in a relative perspective and it can make possible the definitions like “male” and “female” to be differentiated in a concrete context. They will be the base for tracking differences and interactions.

Moreover, one similar expansion of the horizon will help successfully the women professionally dealing with contemporary art to be accepted as equal and not be isolated and helped as a socially low group because of their affiliation.

## About the local and global through the artist’s look

By Svetlana Mircheva

The topics that interest me in my artistic work are common, even abstract. Maybe they derive or are inspired by the details of the life around me, but they are not bounded with them directly, they don’t present the locality as a topic but rather as a first step which the work has based on.

I accept the local context as a base and source of ideas, personal, social and close to me which help me to express myself better and so as to be understood by more people as concentration, with details and direct experiences.

Maybe the global is aggregation of united locations, one more common and overall look to the world where the differences don’t confront each other and even vice versa-they form one more common, more superior, more global sense which is important for all people and concern all of them.

The global language of one work allows its universal understanding and increases its significance.

One of my works, presented in the project with the clear attitude to the topic local/global is Riverside. It consists of ten photos, pages and notes found in the streets of Sofia. The process of



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gathering this material in the beginning was completely stranded, left to chance. During two-three years or more, walking along the streets of Sofia, I have found thrown pictures which impressed me and my curiosity made me gather them.

Some of them are very personal images, carefully kept to a certain moment, with a strong and clear sense about somebody, kept as a memory or symbol for something, as an archive piece of personal life, with a lot of sealed details from the certain time and the certain place. Other images are more a part of our memory as a society, signs which recall our common memories, signs of the time and events in it, sealed maybe forever in our collective memory.

Every one of these found images is a strong bearer of a local and personal context, depending completely on the place, Sofia, on people living in it, on their thought and way of life, on time and events in it. But one collected, carefully selected and formed in a common work, these found objects acquired another sense, they began to tell an imaginary story, to provoke the spectator to be a part of its invention, to connect individual personal foreign fragments in a story which excites the spectators themselves and to give an image to their own memories and dreams.

And for this purpose it is not necessary to be completely familiar with the local context of the founded materials because the locality is in the work of art only as a base, providing concrete images and details. But based on this ground, the imagination of each spectator is free to interpret, create, think of Riverside in their own way so as it gains flesh and image with a strong meaning for the spectators themselves.



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