

The Stuckist Party

Candidate's statement

Charles Thomson is the Stuckist Party Candidate for the Islington South and Finsbury Ward for the General election on 7 June 2001.

I chose Islington South and Finsbury because of the symbolic value of challenging Chris Smith, the Minister for Culture.

He is a Cabinet Minister and hence a man of great power in a government with such a large majority. However, he acts as if he is cowed by the cultural establishment and is unwilling to risk unpopularity with them.

One time he stuck his head above the parapet in 1999 and suggested there should be more painting in the Turner Prize (it was the year of Tracey Emin's bed). The flak began to fly and that was the end of that protest. A few weeks before, I saw him at the opening of The Royal Society of Portrait Painters in the Mall Galleries. He seemed genuinely appreciative of the work and I believe this is what motivated him to his protest. His failure to carry it through is all the more pitiful.

In 1999, the King's Head Theatre in Islington lost its Arts Council (L.A.B.) grant, and consequently its Borough Grant also. Despite the excellent artistic reputation of the Theatre, one of the several bureaucratic stipulations then made was that it should produce an artistic manifesto. If this is allowed to happen in the Culture Minister's home territory, what hope is there for the unorthodox creatives out of sight in the provinces?

And how, one wonders, can a Government elected by the people be so out of touch with the people as salvage the Millenium Dome and not Wembley Stadium?

But being out of touch with the people has of course been a hallmark of Tony Blair's government, beginning with his awkward and embarrassing salons, hobnobbing with 'Cool Britannia'. Following this, integrity and principle seemed subservient to the ersatz constituency of focus group, opinion poll and spin doctor.

More recently the Prime Minister has begun to remind me of one of my past girlfriends, who was always charming and willing to promise anything – in the future. The only, seemingly very reasonable, request made of me was more patience, until eventually I ran out of it, when I realized the future was always with us.

Many people are disappointed with New Labour and feel taken for granted, if not for a ride. I offer them a chance to make a protest vote to wake up professional politicians to the fact that the country deserves some honesty, not constant stage management and hype.

Charles Thomson
22.5.01