# Letter

Krzysztof Cieszkowski's review in the Autumn 1982 issue of the *Art Libraries Journal* of the *Bibliography of Arts Council exhibition catalogues, 1942–1980* criticises both the purpose and the contents of the bibliography.

While the Arts Council does of course keep file copies of all catalogues, it was clear that a published list was also needed. The opportunity arose when in 1978 we introduced a new style Publications List containing details of all catalogues in print (approximately 400 titles). We decided to use this material as a basis for a complete listing, using the existing typesettings.

The Publications List, which now appears annually, was carefully thought out and aimed at those who wished to be informed about and purchase Arts Council catalogues. The descriptions were deliberately brief, while giving the user as much information as was practical within a reasonable space.

We felt that this same criterion could also apply to a complete listing of catalogues. We accept that a much fuller bibliography could have been produced, incorporating all the information Mr. Cieszkowski would have liked. But as he rightly says 'it is a bibliography of catalogues rather than a list of exhibitions'. Details of dates and locations relate to the exhibitions rather than the catalogues, and are often to be found in the catalogues themselves and, in the case of 'long-life' exhibitions, can run to a lengthy listing of interest only to the occasional student who has access to the information from our files. All Arts Council exhibitions shown in a particular year are listed in the Council's Annual Report, which is presumably the proper place for them, not in a bibliography.

The bibliography is aimed at librarians, art historians, students and all those interested in art publications. The chronological order seemed a natural solution, and the alphabetical order within each year is based on the already existing format of the Publications List.

Where a catalogue has a sub-title this is quoted in full. Thus participating artists listed on a catalogue cover (as in *British painting before 1940*) form a sub-title; but those in the 'Hayward Annuals' who are not listed on the covers, do not.

Of course Mr. Cieszkowski is right to criticise the unorthodox system of recording pagination, which is carried over from the Publications List, and

merely lists the number of pages, black and white and colour illustrations.

We gave much thought to an index of artists, but because of the extra work and cost involved decided to omit this information, however valuable it clearly would have been to include it.

The bibliography has been widely welcomed and many libraries have ordered copies. We do not claim that it will satisfy the needs of everyone, but our files are readily accessible to anyone seeking further information. We consider that, at a minimum cost, we have produced a useful tool, and we are proud of the record of forty years. It is a pride in which many members of the Tate staff can share, who have contributed so significantly to many of the most memorable exhibitions in that record.

Joanna Drew
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### Krzysztof Cieszkowski replies

I was reviewing a specific publication — not the Arts Council, its catalogues or its Publications List; that the *Bibliography* is an off-shoot of the Publications List may account for its deficiencies as a bibliography, but cannot excuse them, and I see no reason to withdraw my criticisms of a publication 'aimed at librarians, art historians, students, and all those interested in art publications'. The *Bibliography* provides sufficient evidence of the fact that very little thought was given to how so important a bibliography should be organised, how its constituent information should be arranged, or the precise nature of its likely utilisation. Chronological order may indeed be 'a natural solution', but it is a pity that this order was maintained only superficially, and that the dates (and locations) of exhibitions were not considered worthy of inclusion.