

Sujet zéro

Concours B – Langue vivante obligatoire anglais Durée de l'épreuve : 2 heures

L'épreuve comprend deux parties :

1 – Compréhension de l'écrit

2 – Expression écrite

1/ Compréhension d'un texte écrit: 1 heure

Lisez le texte ci-dessous et choisissez la bonne réponse. (une seule réponse par question) /
Read the following passage and choose the correct answer.

Artists and museums are often in the thick of free speech debates — think of Rudolph W. Giuliani's battle with the Brooklyn Museum over a Virgin Mary artwork with elephant dung. Typically the art world holds its ground, emerging bruised but resolute.

But in recent controversies, the protesters seem to be winning.

On Monday, the Guggenheim decided to pull three major works from a highly anticipated exhibition after pressure from animal-rights supporters and others over the show "Art and China After 1989: Theater of the World." This has art leaders concerned that museums are setting worrisome precedents when threatened with organized pressure tactics.

"When an art institution cannot exercise its right for freedom of speech, that is tragic for a modern society," the artist Ai Weiwei said in a telephone interview, referring to the Guggenheim's decision. "Pressuring museums to pull down artwork shows a narrow understanding about not only animal rights but also human rights."

The three works in the Guggenheim show, which opens Oct. 6, were created between 1993 and 2003 and were intended to symbolically depict oppression in China. One video, "Dogs That Cannot Touch Each Other," shows four pairs of pit bulls on nonmotorized treadmills, trying to fight even as they struggle to touch. Another video, "A Case Study of Transference," shows two pigs mating in front of an audience. And an installation — "Theater of the World," a central work of the show — features hundreds of live crickets, lizards, beetles, snakes, and other insects and reptiles under an overhead lamp.

Protesters marched outside the museum over the weekend, and an online petition demanded "cruelty-free exhibits" at the Guggenheim. The museum said in a statement that the works were being removed "out of concern for the safety of its staff, visitors and participating artists." The museum added: "Freedom of expression has always been and will remain a paramount value of the Guggenheim."

A museum spokeswoman, asked to describe any threats or security issues, including whether the police had been notified, declined to discuss specifics. But the spokeswoman, Sarah

Eaton, added, “The tone in both the petition comments and the social media postings, calls and emails was markedly different from what we’ve seen before and required us to take the threats very seriously.”

The Guggenheim has also been a target of protesters in recent years over its decision to build a museum in Abu Dhabi despite widespread concerns about labor conditions there. The Guggenheim has not withdrawn those plans.

For many artists and museum professionals, the latest move at the Guggenheim amounts to an artistic capitulation in the face of heightened political sensitivities that have been amplified by social media. “Museums are here to show works that are difficult, uncomfortable, provocative,” said Tom Eccles, executive director of the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College. “The chilling effect of this of course is museums will now look to make exhibitions that won’t in any way offend.” Similarly, PEN America called the Guggenheim’s decision “a major blow to artistic freedom.”

Others say the Guggenheim should have used the controversy as a moment to engage the public about difficult art. “It’s just surprising that there was no call to see the side of the artists,” Mohini Dutta, a transmedia designer who teaches at Syracuse University, wrote in an email. “It’s sad, but not surprising that a populist institution like the Guggenheim caved, instead of using it as an opportunity to have a larger dialogue about consent, living props and uncomfortable art.”

More often in the past, museums have resisted such pressure. In March, a small group of protesters blocked Dana Schutz’s painting in the Whitney Biennial based on open-coffin photographs of the mutilated body of Till, the teenager who was lynched by two white men in Mississippi in 1955. They objected to a white artist’s using — and potentially profiting from — an image of violence against a black person and urged that the painting not only be removed from the show but also destroyed. The Whitney kept the painting on view.

Some applauded the Guggenheim’s decision. “It’s the right thing to do,” said Stephen F. Eisenman, an art history professor at Northwestern University who has written extensively about the ethics of using animals in art. “The works are cruel and support cruelty and give sanction to animal abuse, and it’s right that they should pull them.” 723

The New York Times, September 28, 2017

1/ The Guggenheim Museum in New York City has

- a. organized an exhibition on animal welfare in China.
- b. organized an exhibition on free speech in China.
- c. organized an exhibition of works by contemporary Chinese artists.
- d. organized an exhibition on modern Chinese theater.

2/ The museum curators have decided

- a. drop four animal-art works only days before the show’s opening.
- b. destroy three artworks from its controversial exhibition “Art and China after 1989” shortly before its opening.
- c. not to feature three artworks a few days after the opening of an exhibition entitled “Art and China

After 1989: Theater of the World.” drew fierce protests.

d. withdraw three artworks featuring animals ahead of the show’s October 6 opening.

3/ The Guggenheim Museum has made that decision

- a. because visitors have threatened its staff.
- b. because the animals on display might pose a threat to staff and visitors.
- c. because the artists are dissatisfied with the installations.
- d. because it fears for the safety of its employees and visitors.

4/ What’s ensued is a battle over

- a. animal rights, censorship and artistic licence.
- b. Chinese art, free speech and censorship.
- c. human rights, animal rights and political correctness.
- d. ethical conduct, artistic freedom, and censorship.

5/ Usually, when that kind of controversy arises

- a. museums retreat and withdraw the controversial artwork.
- b. museums stick by their position come what may.
- c. museums negotiate and try to find a compromise.
- d. museums ask supporters to sign petitions to support their exhibitions.

6/ The pieces in question are

- a. paintings by Chinese artists depicting animals and insects.
- b. photographs of scary animals fighting each other.
- c. videos and installations showing live animals.
- d. photographs of dead animals, insects and reptiles in coffins.

7/ The decision has been

- a. criticized by some for caving in to animal rights activists
- b. criticized by protesters who want the works destroyed
- c. hailed by human rights activists
- d. acclaimed by the art world as brave and wise

8/ Art leaders and artists think

- a. the decision is a victory for free speech
- b. it is a shame the museum should have bowed to pressure
- c. the decision silences artistic expression
- d. the decision is cruel to artists

9/ Which of the following is true ?

- a. The situation was not received kindly by artist Ai Weiwei.
- b. Ai Wei Wei stepped in to defend the museum.

- c. Ai Weiwei expressed his sympathy for the animals featured in the show.
- d. Ai Weiwei rallied to the protesters 'cause.

10/ A spokeswoman for the museum justified the decision saying that

- a. they had realized the protesters were right.
- b. they had realized how outraged the protesters were.
- c. they had been struck by the tone of the petition and comments posted on the social networks
- d. they had been impressed by the huge number of people who had signed the online petition.

11/ The protesters

- a. think the works are typical of modern art : ugly, trivial and in bad taste.
- b. dispute the artistic merit of works that feature pigs, pit bulls and reptiles.
- c. think the exhibition will only make oppression in China worse.
- d. think the show is cruel and unethical : live animals have no place in an exhibition

12/ The protesters

- a. demonstrated to draw attention to the plight of Chinese artists.
- b. launched a petition in support of Chinese artists.
- c. took to the streets and signed a petition against animal cruelty
- d. took to the street to free the animals trapped in the museum

13/ It is not the first time the Guggenheim has been targeted. In the past it came under fire

- a. for pulling down a painting of Emmett Till
- b. for not destroying a painting of Emmett Till
- c. for exhibiting a Virgin Mary artwork with elephant dung.
- d. for building a museum in The United Arab Emirates

14/ People in the art world think the Guggenheim should have

- a. seized the opportunity to start a conversation about art.
- b. asked the artists for permission to pull down their works.
- c. made sure the animals on show were comfortable.
- d. chosen a different title for the exhibition.

15/ After all the public should accept that

- a. art is meant to be cruel and offensive.
- b. art can sometimes be uncomfortable and disturbing.
- c. art has to be shocking and violent.
- d. animals can be artists too.

16/ “The works [...] give sanction to animal abuse” means that

- a. The works punish animal abuse.

- b. The works turn a blind eye to animal abuse.
- c. The works authorize animal abuse.
- d. The works endorse animal torture.

17/ “The latest move at the Guggenheim amounts to an artistic capitulation” means that

- a. the Guggenheim’s decision to remove artwork is a defeat for artistic freedom.
- b. the cancellation of the works represents a blow to artistic freedom.
- c. the Guggenheim museum has dodged an open debate on artistic freedom
- d. when the museum decided to withhold the artworks it de facto silenced artistic expression

18/ “there was no call to see the side of the artists” means that :

- a. Few have voiced a defense of the artists' right to show their work.
- b. Nobody phoned the artists concerned to ask them what they thought of the controversy.
- c. Nobody phoned the artists to ask them what message they intended to convey when they created their artwork
- d. What seems to matter least to all those involved in the controversy is the artists themselves and their message.

19/ “museums will now look to make exhibitions that won’t in any way offend.” means that

- a. Animal rights activists will force museums to mount exhibitions that do not exploit animals.
- b. Museums will now be tempted to organize exhibitions that will not hurt anybody’s feelings.
- c. The risk is that museums will now offer the public a sanitized version of the world.
- d. From now on museums will only show the works of well-behaved, innocuous artists.

20 / Which of the following is wrong ?

- a. The Guggenheim controversy reveals how risk averse some cultural institutions are becoming.
- b. The controversy shows that today animals rights have come to matter more than human rights.
- c. The controversy reveals how little the principle of free speech seems to matter to the show's critics.
- d. The controversy shows how narrow and intolerant the climate of public discourse is becoming in many Western societies.

Réponses

1c 2d 3d 4d 5b 6c 7a 8c 9a 10c 11d 12c 13d 14a 15b 16c 17a 18d 19b 20b

2/ Expression écrite (1 heure, 200 mots +/-10%)

Should there be curbs on artistic freedom ?

Is freedom of speech an absolute right ?

The primary role of museums is to engage and educate the community. Discuss

Animal rights are gaining ground. What do you think of this evolution ?