

Cecilia Alemani responds:

I'm writing this response in April 2010. X Initiative closed in the very beginning of February 2010, after twelve months of exhibitions

mission of this new art space, but back then we all thought it would be better to start working rather than be stuck trying to formulate a formal mission. We believed our identity would be shaped throughout the very process of

a different way, by establishing a less formal atmosphere and a very different group of people. One of these events was *No Soul For Sale*, a festival of independent spaces, artists' collectives, non-profit organizations, and curatorial offices from all over the world. The idea behind the festival was fairly simple: we conceived a format that could stand as a symmetrical alternative to the art fair. Instead of commercial galleries we invited non-profit organizations; instead of financial exchanges we tried to initiate dialogues and forums; and instead of booths or walls we constructed the whole architecture of the event as an open space. The goal was to bring together non-commercial realities in an informal and spontaneous way: we thought of *No Soul For Sale* as a festival or a reunion—the model was actually that of fans' conventions, in which it is the public participation that really defines the program. *No Soul For Sale* was meant to be a celebration of the spirit of independence that animates the initiatives and programs of institutions and groups existing outside the market. While we all wish, together with Mr. Schillinger,

I would like to quote art critic Ben Davis, who in an article about X Initiative on Artnet.com about our closing event, "Bring Your Own Art,"³ commented: "The fact that even a gesture of maximum possible curatorial generosity generates such recriminations seems to indicate that the institution can't win; you can't get around the reality of the very unequal world we live in with a clever programming choice."⁴ It is clear from Mr. Schillinger's letter that no matter what we did, from institutional shows to more experimental events, we would have not been able to accomplish anything

taking part in *No Soul For Sale*, and that even our staff wasn't paid (which is untrue). Mr. Schillinger seems to ignore that the system of unpaid internships exists in all fields of human culture: we have all been interns in our life! X Initiative relied on a very small, paid staff, which included myself, our deputy director, the assistant director, one curatorial assistant, our team of art installers, and all guards. The rest of the staff was composed of volunteers, which is a normal thing considering many of them were still students and saw in that a chance to earn experience and credit.