



## Modern morals

**For the funeral of a dear friend, the family requested that donations be made to two organisations – to both of which I am opposed. Cheques are being sent via the home, so if I “forget” to send, or choose an alternative charity, this will be noticed and might upset the family. Am I behaving morally or selfishly?**

Funnily enough, this Christmas I decided to ask people what they wanted as presents, so as to avoid my handing them gifts which they would open on Christmas morning with a festive cry of, “I can’t believe that anyone would actually pay money for this!” And do you know what? Their taste turned out to be a big letdown. A nephew asked for a James Blunt album. Oh my! So I gave him a Bob Dylan Greatest Hits CD instead. A niece who requested an Avril Lavigne CD got a great Ella Fitzgerald collection of Cole Porter songs. My mother wanted a blue cardigan, but I thought that brown would suit her better. A vegetarian friend who said she had too many possessions asked me for an edible gift, so long as it wasn’t meat! I told her she didn’t realise what she was missing and sent her a whole prosciutto. Hey, did I do wrong?

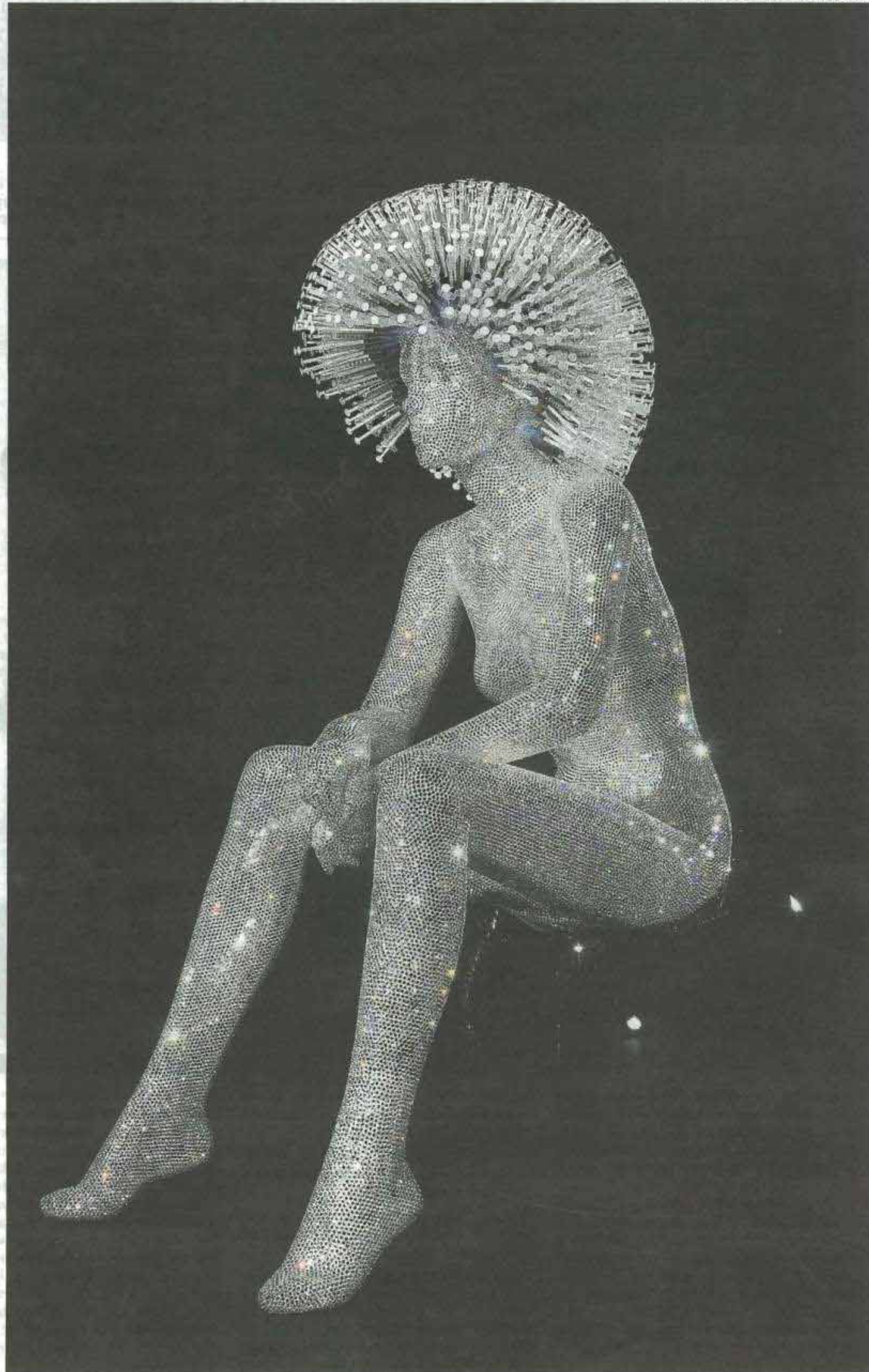
The cheque for charity is for your friend, not for you. How ugly could the chosen causes be for you to feel queasy at contributing? A neo-Nazi group? A racist organisation? If the deceased sympathised with such causes, how did he or she become such a dear friend in the first place? Flowers, or a charitable donation, are a way of marking your love and respect for the dead person. That includes respecting their wishes.

Faced with a choice between abandoning a friend or your principles, you should ideally have the moral courage not to abandon a friend.

JOE JOSEPH

### FACING A DILEMMA

Have you a dilemma of your own? Write to Modern Morals, Times Features, 1 Pennington Street, London E98 1TT. E-mail: [modernmorals@thetimes.co.uk](mailto:modernmorals@thetimes.co.uk)



*The Precious One* by Mauro Perucchetti, composed of Swarovski diamonds and polyurethane-filled syringes on a life-size mannequin, will be on show at the Islington Art Fair which opens on Wednesday



# We have nothing to apologise for, says arts chief

By **Dalya Alberge**  
Arts Correspondent

THE arts world should stop apologising for itself and reject government pressure to judge its activities by the social make-up of its audiences, Sir John Tusa said last night.

In a hard-hitting speech at the annual dinner of the Royal Academy of Arts, the managing director of the Barbican, in London, and former head of the BBC World Service painted a bleak picture of the arts under new Labour.

"Alastair Campbell once famously said of the Prime Minister's public profile: 'We don't do religion'," he said. "He might have added: 'We don't do opera, classical music or art galleries, either.'"

"Some say that Britain is becoming enveloped in a culture of fear. Surely, a greater danger is the existing fear of culture. Isn't it time to stop being frightened of what focus groups may say on the subject?"

Sir John's comments echoed those of Sir Christopher Frayling, chairman of Arts Council England, who this year accused Tessa Jowell, the Culture Secretary, of threatening the independence of the funding body with nanny-state interference. Sir John wanted to know what had happened to the arm's-length policy. "Inter-

ference is interference, even when dressed up as performance indicators," he said.

He spoke of a need for a new concordat between the arts and government, "one where the arts are valued for what they do, which is to enrich the mind and spirit of society; one where the arts also deliver many social goods, because that role has become an automatic part of our activity ... a concordat where the arts come first and other benefits follow as a result of their excellence".

Sir John called for the arts world to stop apologising for what it does. "No one will take us seriously if we don't believe in what we have achieved and speak out for it.

"The arts world should reject further attempts to judge what we do by criticisms of the social make-up of our audiences, the composition of our staff or any other quota-based criterion."

He recalled the Government's "excessive enthusiasm" for Cool Britannia, Creative Britain, Downing Street receptions for rock stars "and little interest in the arts as such".

In the second four-year term, however, the rhetoric had died down and funding had become easier. Then the emphasis had been on "social or economic objectives, such as access or regeneration", omitting "the only objective worth aiming at, principally the overriding

CHRIS HARRIS



Lifesize sculptures of jelly babies are polished before going on display at the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition. The sculptures, by Mauro Perucchetti, are made of urethane resin, come in different colours and cost £20,000 each. They stem from the debate over human cloning. "Jelly babies were a perfect, instantly recognisable caricature of the human form," Perucchetti said

responsibility to create great work in whatever art form".

Sir John urged the Government to apply to the arts the ideas that they were "boldly deploying" in the Olympic bid for London in 2012. "If the bid succeeds, and it deserves to, it will be because the elite nature of the sporting commitment is proudly acknowledged and praised. Why not for the arts, too?" Reflecting on the relation-

ship between the arts and the Labour Government since its election in 1997, he jokingly explored the possibility that the present Government would bring in "quality appreciation indicators" and "league tables" for the amount of time spent in exhibitions.

"What is the point of displaying beautiful objects if visitors glance at them for only a matter of seconds?" he said.

"Quality-appreciation indicators will set targets for the time visitors should spend looking. These should rise steadily year on year from the present 45 seconds to perhaps a minute and 45 seconds. Galleries will be graded in league tables of quality time spent in viewing."

Lamenting the state of popular culture today, Sir John suggested that the visual arts might be ripe for contemporary

television treatments, through reality shows and celebrity makeovers. "Intensive development work is under way on another reality arts programme, *Artists' Wives*, where the arts world is uniquely revealed through insights into what artists' spouses get up to when their partners are in the studio or at dinners."