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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

May 1, 1990

Mr. Ed Rogers
Deputy Assistant to the President
and Executive Assistant to the
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Enclosed is the latest package of editorials and columns on the
arts funding controversy.

We will continue to forward pertinent clippings as they become
available.

Sincerely,

Jack Lichtenstein
Director
Office of Public Affairs

Enclosures

cc. John Frohnmayer
White House Office of Communications

10A ■ The Clarion-Ledger ■ Friday, March 23, 1990 ●

OPINION

The Clarion-Ledger

THOMAS J. SHAFER
President and Publisher

JOHN D. JOHNSON
Executive Editor

BENNIE L. IVORY, Managing Editor

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A GANNETT NEWSPAPER

PLEASE NOTE: THIS NEWSPAPER
IS FROM JACKSON, MISSISSIPPI -
THE HOME STATE OF THE AMERICAN
FAMILY ASSOCIATION.

The arts

Bush is right to rule out censorship

The Bush administration has correctly decided to support funding for the National Endowment for the Arts over the next five year without content restrictions.

It's a move sure to infuriate right-wingers, who want the public to see only what they deem appropriate, but the fact is the government should stay away from censorship.

If the U.S. government were suddenly arbiter of the arts, it's unlikely any thought-provoking (read that: controversial) art would be publicly funded. We'd get pablum.

This is not to say that art should be publicly funded simply because it is gross, shocking or offensive.

Last year, the NEA funded two exhibits that conservatives convincingly held up as being sacrilegious or obscene.

But those were only 10 images out of 1 million in the agency's history. Only 25 grants out of 85,000 have caused trouble — quite an enviable record in any program.

No, the arts should be as unrestricted as possible. Creativity begets creativity — censorship does not.

THE SACRAMENTO BEE
SACRAMENTO, CALIF.

The Sacramento Bee, March 31, 1990

BURRELLE'S

Bush: The art of leadership

Both the White House and National Endowment for the Arts director John Frohnmayer are getting a lot of heat from social conservatives for failing to back restrictions on the content of federally funded art. The heat is not surprising, but the administration is right, and it should stick to its guns.

The conservative groups complain, correctly, that some federally funded works in the past have verged far enough into the obscene that they would offend the vast majority of those whose taxes helped support them. But writing formal restrictions into law, however worded, opens the door to endless disputes and uncertainty about what fits or doesn't fit the guidelines. One cannot read art like a formula in mechanics or a cookbook recipe. If the committees of artists and

critics who evaluate grant requests can't make reasonable choices, they should be replaced.

What's particularly significant about this controversy now is that it marks the first time that George Bush, that most cautious of men, has departed on any significant social issue from the Republican Party's most conservative wing. Many people see that as a test of the party's flexibility and its ability to grow. But it's also a small sign that Bush may be willing to take some risks for the sake of leadership. If he's not turned to stone by the extreme right's protests about dirty pictures, maybe he'll decide he won't be turned to stone by conservative protests on other decisions. The possibilities are breathtaking to contemplate.

DAILY BREEZE
TORRANCE, CA
DAILY 131,194

SUNDAY
MAR 25 1990

BURRELLE'S

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Supporting the arts

EDITORIAL 2197E
If the arts are important enough to a nation to be buttressed with government funding, then they are important enough to be taken seriously.

And to take them seriously is to nurture full and vigorous expression.

John Frohnmayer, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, was particularly eloquent on that issue last week as he explained to a congressional subcommittee the necessity of avoiding content control — even when the content may be offensive.

"To those who are offended, I am truly sorry," Frohnmayer said.

"But art is like research. It is trying new things, taking risks, pushing boundaries. Not all art succeeds. To not do research is to stand still and be bypassed by the rest of the world."

Frohnmayer is trying to fend off restrictions on federal funding for art that some would consider offensive, sacrilegious or indecent.

Those who would impose restrictions — primarily Sen. Jesse

Helms, R-N.C., and Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, Calif. — presume to know what obscene art is, even though courts and the critics, not to mention Congress, have never been able to reach a consensus.

Actually, for Helms and Rohrabacher, the primary target is the endowment itself, which is before Congress for a five-year extension.

The endowment's budget for this year is \$171 million; its grants are usually seed money, to be matched by private donations.

Helms and Rohrabacher do not believe the federal government has any business funding the arts, obscene or otherwise. But they ignore the endowment's 25-year record; out of the thousands of grants made, only a handful have ever provoked controversy.

Fortunately, the Bush administration supports the work of the endowment.

Mistakes may be made, as Frohnmayer admits. But a costlier mistake would be the chilling effect on the arts if congressional restrictions are imposed.

APR 5 1990

BURRELLE'S

Arts endowment builds record of achievement

6 21ME EDITORIAL

In testimony before Congress last week, Garrison Keillor of Lake Wobegon fame recounted his days as a struggling young writer with a family to support.

"I was young, broke, married with a baby, living on very little cash and a big vegetable garden," Keillor told the Senate Subcommittee on Education. But Keillor got the break he was looking for in 1969, and it came from a source that has been a bulwark in developing and nurturing the arts in America for the last 25 years.

The National Endowment for the Arts, which has come under fire recently, gave Keillor his start through a federally funded program for young writers.

The arts endowment has encouraged thousands of young writers and artists over the years to work on their craft and develop their talents. Not all of them have become as famous as Keillor, but the spirit of creativity in America has often been boosted in a way Congress envisioned when it formed the arts endowment 25 years ago.

Beyond helping young artists, the agency has developed the arts in ways seen every day across America. It may be a local orchestra or museum the arts endowment has supported, or perhaps a theater featuring the culture of a community, the agency has promoted the idea that the arts are not just for New York or Chicago, or any other big city, but for small-town America as well.

This city, as so many others, has benefited - and continues to benefit - from grants bestowed by the endowment.

All of this must be remembered during a time when the arts endowment has come under attack from Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and other critics who contend the agency finances pornographic material.

Congress is studying the agency's

record and performance as part of a normal five-year reviewing process. A key part of the current discussion about the arts endowment is a provision that prohibits the agency from interfering with the content of the work it finances.

Some members of Congress want more oversight over the agency's grant-making process. The Bush administration, to its credit, is opposing this viewpoint. The administration made it clear last week that it is against any change that would allow the arts endowment to tamper with the work it finances.

What should be kept in mind is that the agency has sponsored some 85,000 works during its 25-year history. The arts endowment has built, as was noted by Sen. Claiborne Pell, D-R.I., an "exemplary record with only a handful of controversies."

For Congress to change a formula that has worked so well would be a mistake. Helms and others want to take the moral outrage they feel over a few federally funded works and turn it into a storm that will adversely affect the agency's performance.

Congress should stay away from defining artistic tastes that the agency should follow. Artistic tastes can often be subjective, but in a broad sense, the arts endowment has earned the privilege of making judgments on works that will contribute to this nation's appreciation of the arts.

"I do believe that we, with our hands-on experience, are better suited to make these judgments," said John Frohnmayer, chairman of the arts endowment, in testimony before Congress last week.

Frohnmayer is right. Congress would be well suited not to change something that has worked so well and done so much good for America.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
APRIL 6, 1990

APP

BURRELLE'S

Arts funding

Federal subsidy is right and proper

Rep. Dick Armey has offered some good ideas in the past — most notably his successful push for evaluation of military bases and closing of those that are redundant — but the Texas Republican has hit a sour note by calling for abolition of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Armey's casting of the arts debate in economic terms is especially specious. He said that the Bush administration request for \$175 million for NEA in 1991 is wasteful, citing other national needs that could use the money — all of them, such as child care and the drug crisis, enormously more costly than the arts contribution.

Federal arts support is not an economic issue.

The real issue, for Armey and his ideo-

logical brethren who oppose NEA funding, is not the relatively little bit of seed money that the government invests in promoting American arts or even the rare but well-publicized instances of pornographic art that may or may not have received indirect NEA support.

The real issue is a basic philosophical one: Is it right to have public funding of the arts?

Armey says that it is "neither necessary nor appropriate."

We believe that it is both. A nation that is forced to devote so much of its public resources to the means of destroying human life surely can and should contribute a little to those arts that expand and enlighten the human condition.

Seattle Post-
Intelligencer
SEATTLE, WASH.
D. 203,726
1990 APR 4

APR 4 1990

BURRELLE'S

Endowing creativity

With the arts community scrambling to defend public endowment of exhibits that may offend members of the public, Garrison Keillor offers some unequivocal advice.

Pointing to some 20 controversial elements that have shown up in the 25-year history of the National Endowment for the Arts, the author and former host of National Public Radio's "A Prairie Home Companion," told a congressional subcommittee:

"I don't regard those 20 'controversial' pieces as errors. I wish there were more — 30 or

50 at least. The lesser number is testimony to how timid and repressed the arts are."

Keillor hits on the precise need and importance of public endowment for the arts: the opportunity for trial and error, experimentation, grand leaps of faith and passion, that will inevitably lead to profundity or to pratfalls, and generally more the latter.

It is democracy that allows artists to take that leap and it is public endowment of the arts that propels them.

NEW REPUBLIC

WASHINGTON, DC
WEEKLY 93,000

APR 16 1990

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NOTEBOOK

ARS GRATIA ARTIS: Credit must be given where credit is due, and credit this week is due President Bush and his chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, John E. Frohnmayer. In testimony explicitly endorsed by the White House, Frohnmayer put the administration firmly on record in favor of repealing the statutory ban on funding for prose, poetry, and painting "that may be considered obscene." This ban, as we argued last week ("Indecent Request"), is silly, demagogic, and generally unworthy of a free country. Good for Bush et al. for finally getting up the gumption to court the wrath of Senator Jesse Helms, its author. Frohnmayer even had the temerity to criticize by name the American Family Association and Pat Robertson's "700 Club" TV show, pointing out to the members of the House Subcommittee on Post-secondary Education that the intemperate mail they have been getting on this subject is a function not of widespread public outrage but rather of the organizing abilities of these two religious-right groups. Now it's Congress's turn. Only when the House and Senate have followed the White House's lead will the shades of Whitman, Lawrence, Balthus, and Picasso, and the modern pretenders to their thrones, be able to rest easy.

Bush on censorship

We commend President Bush for his strong stand in defense of artistic freedom for recipients of National Endowment for the Arts grants.

Mr. Bush took the truly conservative position recently when he opposed the efforts of such presumed conservatives as Jesse Helms to withhold NEA grants from artists whose works members of Congress and others find offensive.

Upholding the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitution is the truly conservative position. Those who would impose official restraints on artistic expression have, wittingly or otherwise, taken a radical position.

Mr. Bush confessed to be "deeply offended by some of the filth" that passes for art and is supported by federal grants. Many other Americans undoubtedly would share his view.

But, said Mr. Bush, "I don't know of anybody in the government . . . that should be set up to censor what you write, or what you paint, or how you express yourself."

The problem with setting government standards for art is that it would stifle creativity in the same manner that government restrictions in communist or formerly communist countries have stifled art. The predictable results are works lacking in originality or pertinence or works simply crafted

to keep the government money flowing.

It is also worth remembering that what is offensive or shocking to many in one era can be acceptable in another. Indeed, what is offensive to one person might not be to another in any given era. That, of course, goes to the heart of the great difficulty of reaching a common, truly workable definition of obscenity.

Havelock Ellis, who was not a stranger to controversy, wrote that "without an element of the obscene there can be no true and deep aesthetic or moral conception of life." But it is not necessary to declare an official definition of obscenity — or profanity or sacrilege or whatever else might upset particular segments of our diverse citizenry — to provide grants in support of the arts in general.

The administration's position on federal grants was outlined by John Frohnmaier, NEA chairman, at a congressional hearing. The NEA has been under fire from Sen. Helms, who never seems to tire of trying to dictate moral standards for the nation, and others who insist it is disregarding a congressional ban on financing obscene art.

Perhaps inadvertently, Sen. Helms has delineated a central risk in government financing of the arts: Sooner or later, someone in the government is going to try to influence the results.

3/25/90

Sunday Republican

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Bush joins battle for arts freedom

Defenders of artistic expression picked up a new, and very important, supporter the other day — George Bush.

The president's strong statement regarding funding for the National Endowment for the Arts was a pleasant surprise to those who have been fighting off attacks by the likes of Sen. Jesse Helms, and undoubtedly dismaying to the North Carolina senator and his ultra-conservative supporters.

The issue has been festering for almost a year. It was triggered by two photo exhibits, supported in part by NEA funds, which included a few works with homoerotic and sacrilegious themes.

Helms and Co. leaped to the attack, demanding an end to public funding of the arts or at least restrictions on the contents of works supported by the NEA. They didn't win the battle but succeeded in adding restrictions on funding of art which could be considered obscene.

* * *

That set the stage for this year's debate, a much more important one because it involves renewing the very existence of NEA for another five years.

The arts community has been confident it would get the renewal, but it wasn't sure what kind of restrictions would be attached to it.

and of restrictions might be tagged on.

Thanks to Bush's strong statement, there now is hope the answer will be: none.

John F. Frohnmayer, chairman of the arts endowment, spelled out the president's position in a hearing on the renewal legislation conducted by the House subcommittee on post-secondary education.

"After much careful thought and discussion, it is our conclusion that the legislation proposed here, which contains no content restrictions, will best serve the American public," he said.

Thus the administration not only supports renewal of the agency, it opposes continuation of the one-year restriction imposed last year.

That position is in interesting contrast to the criticism by Republican leaders last year of Massachusetts Democrats who said pretty much the same things Bush says now.

* * *

Bush's statement is heartening news, which we hope leads to the end of a time-consuming debate over an issue that has been blown far out of proportion.

In the entire existence of the NEA, some 80,000 grants have been awarded. Of them, no more than 25 have been controversial.

Yet Helms and his ilk would have us believe that the entire moral structure of the nation is under attack.

The American Family Association, for example, is outraged that the NEA gave grants to three lesbian writers. The AFA apparently would like grants to be made on the grounds of life style.

How silly. As Frohnmayer pointed out, just because someone is gay doesn't mean the art that person makes is going to break the law.

The creation of great art has nothing to do with one's sexual preference. Nor is eroticism necessarily obscene.

The NEA has a proven system to determine its grant-giving. It has worked with little criticism for many years.

Who, other than zealots like Jesse Helms, would rather have decisions made by politicians rather than art experts?

That's the real issue — not what the decision is, but who decides. We vote for the experts.

EDITORIALS

Eugene, Oregon, Friday, March 30, 1990

A friend in high places

The nation's artists and the arts in general have discovered a friend in an unexpected, but most welcome, place — the Oval Office.

John Frohnmayer, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, received clearance from the White House last week to tell Congress that the Bush administration opposes legislation to control the content of art supported with federal dollars. It was the administration's first official foray into the spirited dispute between congressional conservatives and artists and arts groups. The former want legislative restrictions on the kinds of art that the endowment helps support, while the latter object to any congressional interference with the NEA's grant-awarding process.

The administration's opposition to legislatively controlled artistic content is important for two reasons: 1) It places the White House at odds with the Republican right wing and, especially, with conservative heavy-hitters such as Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. 2) Though welcome, this is not a battle the Bush administration needed, or was expected, to fight.

Currently at issue is legislation reauthorizing the NEA for another five years. In the past, such reauthorization has been routine. Not this time. Last year, Helms led a congressional assault on the NEA over two controversial photographic exhibi-

tions indirectly supported by endowment funds. He sought to ban federal grants to art that he and other conservatives might consider "obscene." Although Helms' sledgehammer approach was ultimately tempered, it polarized the issue of federal support of the arts. As Congressman E. Thomas Coleman, ranking Republican on the House subcommittee with jurisdiction over the NEA reauthorization, said:

"The debates over reauthorization of the endowment have been simplified down to whether one supports pornography in the interest of freedom of artistic expression or whether one supports censorship to satisfy the needs of public accountability. Such an oversimplification of the issue reflects a bumper-sticker mentality, which serves neither the interests of the endowment nor brings credit to the legislative process." Well said.

In testimony before the subcommittee, Frohnmayer forcefully set forth the NEA's position on obscenity: "I and the National Endowment for the Arts oppose obscenity unequivocally. It is the antithesis of art. It is without a soul. It conveys no message. It degrades humanity." Amen.

The issue, however, is who decides what is or isn't obscene for purposes of federal arts grants — the NEA's screening and peer-review process for awarding grants, or Congress? We'll take the NEA every time.

WEDNESDAY
MAR 28 1990**BURRELLE'S**

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The art of subsidy

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In a move that has infuriated its supporters on the right, the Bush administration is opposing legislation establishing standards of decency for federally subsidized art. At the same time, John E. Frohnmayer, the Bush appointee who heads the National Endowment for the Arts, has pledged that he will be "diligent" in preventing the endowment from subsidizing obscenity.

Mr. Frohnmayer's promise offers Congress a way out of the thicket it entered last year after it was revealed that NEA funds had supported two exhibits that outraged many congressmen and their constituents. One was a show of photographs by the late Robert Mapplethorpe that included homoerotic depictions. The other involved a photograph by Andres Serrano portraying a plastic crucifix submerged in urine.

The initial congressional response to these exhibits was a measured one. The House of Representatives voted to excise from the endowment's \$171 million appropriation the sum of \$45,000 — precisely the amount the NEA had expended on the two controversial exhibits. Although insignificant in dollar terms, the House's gesture reminded the endowment to think twice before subsidizing artworks that blatantly offend moral and religious convictions. It is safe to say that the NEA got the message, even before Mr. Frohnmayer was appointed.

Unfortunately, the finesse shown by the House was not matched by the U.S. Senate. That body was stampeded by Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina into passing a know-nothing amendment barring federal funds not only for sexually explicit artworks but also for any work that "denigrates, debases or reviles" a group or class of citizens on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age or national origin."

To its credit, a House-Senate conference committee last year threw out that absurdly

overbroad proscription, contenting itself with a temporary ban on federal financing for art that would be considered obscene under a 1973 Supreme Court ruling. One element of the court's definition of obscenity was that a work "taken as a whole, lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

The conference committee's approach was infinitely preferable to the Helms proposal, but it still put Congress in the position of defining artistic merit. And if a work truly qualified as obscene under the Supreme Court's definition, it would be a candidate not for federal subsidy but for prosecution.

Given those facts, it isn't surprising that Mr. Frohnmayer declined to endorse continued content restrictions when he proposed legislation to extend the NEA's life for another five years. He may also have been influenced by the agenda of Sen. Helms and his allies, which obviously extends far beyond blocking subsidies for legally obscene works.

A case can be made that the federal government should not be in the business of subsidizing artists whose works have little appeal for the mass public. But if the government is to be involved in encouraging artistic excellence (and innovation), there ought to be a buffer between Congress and the grant-making process.

It isn't just that politicians make poor art critics; delegating responsibility to the NEA allows members of Congress to dissociate themselves from specific projects that might bemuse their constituents.

In that sense, the Mapplethorpe and Serrano works were exceptions that proved the rule — images so offensive to public sensitivities that elected representatives felt obliged to protest. But the point has been made. Congress should give Mr. Frohnmayer the opportunity to administer the NEA without excessive interference from Capitol Hill.

FRIDAY
APR 6 1990

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BURRELLE'S

SV

NEA is still at war 25 years later

The National Endowment for the Arts celebrates its 25th birthday this year, and if it were throwing a party you can be sure many Americans would blackball the affair. Jesse Helms, to name one, would definitely be a no-show.

Ever since Congress established the NEA in 1965 to stimulate the arts in America by awarding grants to composers, painters, writers, dancers, museums and theaters, the agency has not been the most popular resident on the federal block. Ronald Reagan even mumbled something about abolishing it altogether. But Congress, to its great credit, recognized the importance of cultural enrichment for American society and protected the NEA by supplying it with funds, albeit piddling funds compared to other Western nations' subsidies for the arts.

This seems a fitting time to review what critics and champions say about the NEA, not only because of its 25th anniversary but also because Congress is currently debating another 5-year authorization for the NEA.

Many of the criticisms that dogged the NEA at its birth are still around today. This includes the complaint that the NEA is unconstitutional because the Founding Fathers never specified that the arts could be federally subsidized.

That is true. But neither did the Framers specify many government practices and in-

stitutions that have evolved since the 18th century and derive their existence from the Constitution's implied powers or from its dictum about promoting "the common good."

Detractors respond that the "common good" is not served because the NEA appeals to elite interests. Wrote one naysayer: The government is "compelling some citizens to pay for unwanted benefits that others desire."

According to that logic, government expenditures should be subjected to popularity tests. Unless attendance at museums and concert halls is so high that it knocks the turnstiles off their props, the government should not be in the business of making grants to them.

But that argument calls into question other controversial government programs that serve the narrow interests of special citizens. It is highly doubtful, for example, that federal tobacco subsidies so cherished in North Carolina would win a national popularity contest.

Yes, I know what you're thinking — that tobacco subsidies can be justified because they produce economic benefits by putting food on the tobacco farmer's table and shoes on his children's feet.

But the arts? How does one measure their tangible benefits for Americans?

The best justification for federal subsidies was voiced several years ago by a man who is rarely at a loss for words. William J. Bennett, now drug czar but formerly chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, concluded that subsidy for the arts is comparable to government support for public education: Both produce more desirable and enlightened citizens.

All of which brings us to the bubbling controversy over art as enlightenment. The now-famous photographs of Robert Mapple-

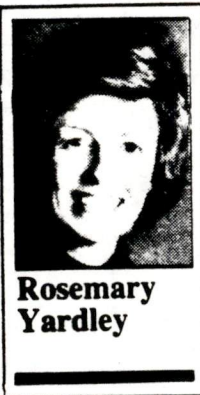
thorpe and Andres Serrano raised that issue to a fever pitch last year and prompted Sen. Jesse Helms & Company to persuade a nervous Congress to pass an amendment barring NEA grants to "obscene or indecent" art. (Nobody was sure how to define obscene or indecent.)

The Helms amendment contradicted NEA's charter, which expressly prohibits interference with the content of art receiving a federal subsidy. But Senator Helms managed to whip up enough froth to get his measure passed. The Helms amendment expires Sept 30, but the senator is leading the charge to renew censorship.

To his credit, President Bush has urged Congress to pass the NEA funding bill with no restrictions on the content of art supported with tax dollars. The president believes that freedom of expression takes a higher priority than an occasional work of art that turns out to be controversial or offensive. In its 25 years of existence, the NEA has made more than 80,000 grants and fewer than 20 have ever caused controversy. That's a better batting average than most government agencies and departments.

What's more, the NEA has encouraged what Senator Helms and President Reagan have wanted for the arts: private funding. Since many NEA grants are contingent on matching funds from the private sector, the NEA has been a catalyst for private giving. In 1989, the NEA's matching-grant program spent \$153 million of federal money that generated \$1.4 billion from the private sector. That, too, is an impressive batting average.

In its 25 years, the NEA has earned its right to exist and flourish. That sentiment comes from one who thinks the Mapplethorpe and Serrano photographs are offensive, but prefers offense to the censorship of free expression.



**Rosemary
Yardley**

Rosemary Yardley is a News & Record editorial columnist.

APR 4 1990

BURRELLE'S

-1431

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Bush's Comment on Federal Support for Arts Heartens Those on Both Sides of the Debate

By CHRISTOPHER MYERS

2197E

WASHINGTON

In his first public statement on the year-old fight over federal support of the arts, President Bush managed to give comfort to people on both sides of the debate.

The President said he opposed government censorship. Many scholars hailed the comment and said it might help rally support for removing legal restrictions on the content of work that the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities can support.

But the President also said he opposed spending federal money on what he called "filth" and "pure blasphemy." Critics of the arts endowment cited those comments as evidence that the President backed their position, and said they would continue to press for restrictions.

Mr. Bush made his comments in a question-and-answer session with a group of journalists.

Under Fire Since Last Year

The arts endowment has been under fire since early last year, when several members of Congress assailed the agency for supporting works they considered obscene or sacrilegious. Sen. Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, led an effort to place far-reaching restrictions on the kinds of work the endowments could support. A compromise pared the restrictions, leaving a prohibition on federal support of work that is obscene and that lacks significant literary, artistic, or scholarly merit.

That restriction, part of the fiscal 1990 spending bill for the endowments, expires in September, as does the five-year legislation governing the two endowments. Now Congress is in the process of reviewing the work of the endowments and must vote later this year on whether to reauthorize the two agencies for another five years,

Continued on Page A32



ROBERT E. KAISER

Samuel R. Gammon, executive director of the American Historical Association: The President "laid a couple of weights on the scale, but the net effect is a plus."



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John Hammer of the National Humanities Alliance: "Now's the time for academics to come out and call for a reauthorization without restrictions."

Bush Heartens Both Sides in Fight Over Federal Support for the Arts

Continued From Page A21

and whether to extend the restrictions.

Although the arts endowment has been the focus of the controversy, any restrictions would be likely to apply to both agencies because they fall under the same authorizing legislation.

'No Content Restrictions'

Last month the Administration proposed a reauthorization bill without restrictions. In comments to a House of Representatives panel, John E. Frohnmayer, chairman of the arts endowment, was less ambiguous than was the President. "After much careful thought and discussion, it is our conclusion that the legislation proposed here, which contains no content restrictions, will best serve the American public," he said.

Mr. Frohnmayer's comments, coupled with the President's statements against government censorship, were viewed as a hopeful sign by scholars and other supporters of

the endowments. They said that with the Administration now officially opposed to legislative restrictions on the endowments, lawmakers who have been wavering on the issue could oppose restrictions with less risk of suffering political damage. Also, scholars said, supporters of the arts and humanities should now be able to speak more emphatically on the issue without fear of bringing Congressional wrath down on the agencies.

Said John Hammer, director of the National Humanities Alliance: "I think scholars have been holding back because of a concern about the vulnerability of the humanities endowment. But I think that now's the time for the academic community to really come out and call for a reauthorization without restrictions. The Administration needs to see that there are a large number of scholars who are very concerned about this."

Lynne V. Cheney, chairman of the humanities endowment, declined to comment on the Adminis-

tration's bill. According to a spokesman for the endowment, Mrs. Cheney said it would be "inappropriate" for her to discuss the issue until she testified in the humanities endowment's reauthorization hearings, beginning this week.

Stanley N. Katz, president of the

American Council of Learned Societies, said he was pleased by Mr. Frohnmayer's "forceful" statement and said a similar statement from Mrs. Cheney would be helpful.

"What is needed is a very strong statement defending what the endowment does and has done," he said. "Nobody has specifically criticized the endowment, so why lay back in that situation?"

Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, a California Republican and a leading critic of the arts endowment, says his stand was supported by President Bush's comments. An aide to the Representative called the statements "a clear-cut victory" for those who want to restrict the agencies.

"The President made a clear pol-

icy directive to Frohnmayer that he does not want one more cent going to the kind of sacrilegious art that he's seen," said the aide, Richard T. Dykema.

Letter to Bush Planned

He added that because the arts endowment's process for reviewing applications was not adequate for preventing misuse of federal funds, there must be specific restrictions in the reauthorization legislation.

He said that Mr. Rohrabacher planned to write a letter to the President explaining the need for such restrictions.

Mr. Dykema said that Representative Rohrabacher did not have any specific complaints against the humanities endowment but thought that, "just to be consistent," restrictions should apply to both agencies.

'Net Effect Is a Plus'

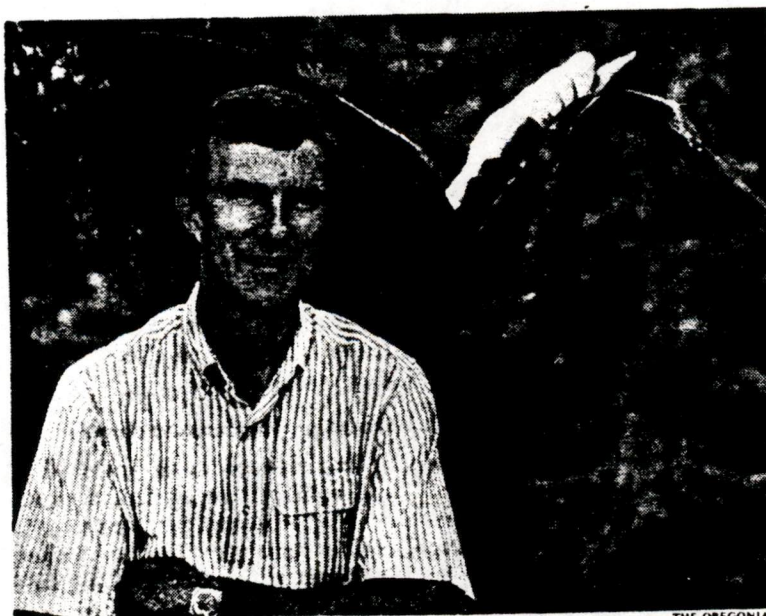
Several scholars said they were pleased by Mr. Bush's comments, despite their mixed nature.

Samuel R. Gammon, executive director of the American Historical Association, said that the President "laid a couple of weights on the scale, but the net effect is a plus."

Mr. Katz said that the fate of the endowments now hinged on their supporters in Congress.

"It depends a lot on how stiff the spines of our friends are," he said. "I think they gave in too soon last time, and hopefully the President's comments will stiffen their spines this time."

He added: "We're not out of the woods yet."



John E. Frohnmayer: "It is our conclusion that the legislation [with] no content restrictions will best serve the American public."

THE OREGONIAN

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

THE CHIEF of STAFF
has seen

APR 25 1990

DATE: April 24, 1990

TO: GOVERNOR SUNUNU

FROM: ED ROGERS

Per Beth in Chairman Frohnmayer's office, he will be meeting with Gary Bauer to discuss the attached on Monday, May 7th at 2:00pm. They promised to let us know the outcome of that meeting.

FYI

Family



Research Council

T.M.

Gary L. Bauer, President

April 12, 1990

682 5414
called
4/24
11:30 am

CC

Did he respond??
If so what response?

Mr. John Frohnmayer, Chairman
The National Endowment for the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Mr. Frohnmayer:

The article in the Style section of the Washington Post entitled "NEA and the West Coast Protests" is of concern to our organization. The Family Research Council is a division of Focus on the Family, a California-based organization with a nationwide constituency. Focus's radio broadcast "Focus on the Family" is heard daily by an estimated two million households. Its broadcast "Family News in Focus" is heard daily over approximately 450 stations nationwide. Its publication, Citizen magazine, goes to 250,000 households on a monthly basis. Each of these conduits of information were used last year to educate a large grassroots constituency to the concerns raised over NEA funding of such exhibits as Robert Mapplethorpe's and Serrano's.

It is clear from the article that neither the Endowment nor the oversight committee seriously desires to hear from the taxpayers or organizations that have legitimate concerns regarding NEA exhibit funding.

If one American tax dollar was used to fund racist writings, if one American tax dollar funded discrimination against women, or promoted Nazism or other harmful philosophies, the American public and lawmakers would deny such funding and rightfully so.

We believe that the funding of exhibits that mock an individual that millions of Americans believe is the Son of God is also totally unacceptable. We desire to hear from you as the Chairman that our tax money will not be used for this purpose nor to promote the homosexual lifestyle.

Mr. Fronmayer
April 12, 1990
Page Two

We also adhere to the democratic principle that members of Congress, as stewards of Americans' tax dollars, should spend funds on projects that are desired by the taxpayer. It is clear from the last session of Congress that many Americans do not wish to see federal dollars used to fund homoerotic/homosexual art work.

The Family Research Council wholeheartedly supports the efforts of Senator Jesse Helms (R-NC) and Congressman Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) in decreasing NEA funding and prohibiting such exhibits as Robert Mapplethorpe's from receiving government funds. It is important to realize that both members of Congress have the support of numerous colleagues and America's grassroots constituencies.

We do not view this issue as one of censorship, but rather an inappropriate and publicly expressed undesired use of the taxpayers' monies.

Last year, Congress clearly indicated that none of the funds authorized or appropriated could "promote, disseminate or produce materials . . . which may be considered obscene, or that depict or describe in a patently offensive way sexual or excretory activities or organs including, but not limited to, obscene depictions, sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts . . . and which include depictions of 'sadoomasochism' and 'homoeroticism.'"

As reported in Human Events February 3, 1990, the NEA funded three \$20,000 fellowships to support individual writing projects for one year. The Washington Blade, the Gay Weekly of the Nation's Capital, reports that all three writers are "well known for their lesbian identification and for the homoerotic contents of some of their works."

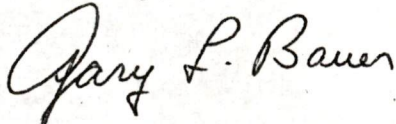
It is our understanding that the chairman of the NEA gives final approval to all grants. Given the concern expressed through votes by 153 members of the House of Representatives in August, 1989 and the public outcry against this use of taxpayer dollars, we believe that violations have occurred over the objections raised by members of Congress and thousands of Americans.

Mr. Fronmayer
April 12, 1990
Page Three

You have given no indication as to whether or not you will prevent such funding in the future. We would like to meet with you in the near future to discuss this issue.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

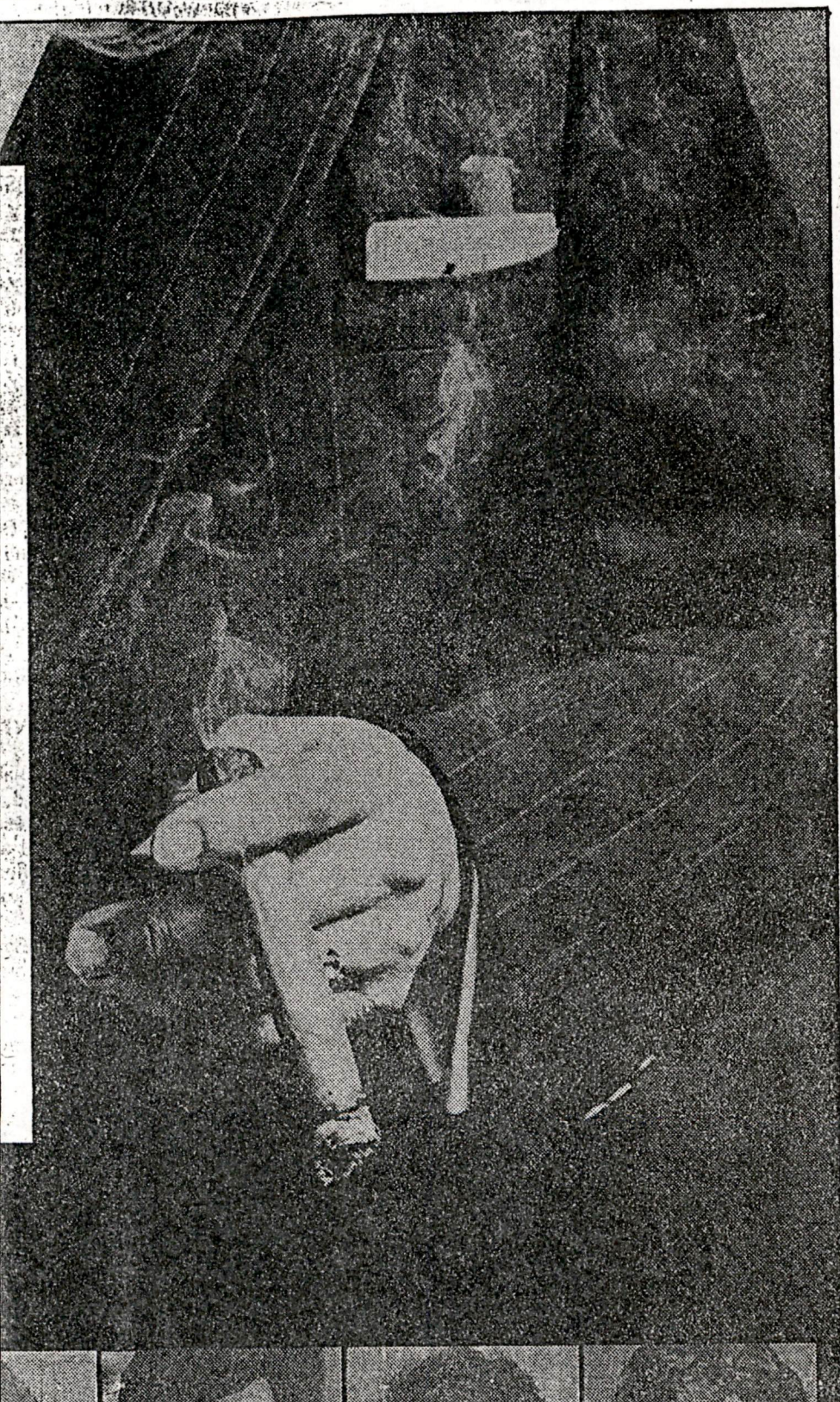
A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gary L. Bauer". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Gary L. Bauer
President

GLB:eyk

cc: The Honorable John Sununu
Chief of Staff

The Honorable Roger Porter
Assistant to the President and
Director of Economic and Domestic Policy



NEA

And the West Coast Protests

House Panel Hears From Artists, Chairman

By Kim Masters
Special to The Washington Post

LOS ANGELES, March 5—While demonstrators outside the J. Paul Getty Museum protested the existence of the National Endowment for the Arts, its chairman, John Frohnmayer, testified inside that artists should be permitted to create works calculated to offend without risking the loss of endowment support.

The hearing, called by the House subcommittee on postsecondary education, is a part of reauthorizing the endowment, a process that has traditionally taken place every five years. Frohnmayer also testified that the controversy surrounding the NEA over what kind of art it should fund already has hampered the agency.

In his six months as chairman, he said, "I have spent most of my time trying to respond to attacks, sometimes for things which we didn't even fund, and have had very little time to get on with my own agenda."

That controversy began when the endowment funded an exhibition that included work by photographer Andres Serrano and an exhibition of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, which the Corcoran Gallery of Art canceled.

While Frohnmayer got a warm reception inside the Getty auditorium, demonstrators on both sides of the controversy jostled outside the museum on its usually staid, well-manicured grounds.

In Washington, Susan Brackin, executive director of the local office of the conservative Eagle Forum, headed by Phyllis Schlafly, said a "loose coalition" of about a dozen



BARBARA BOXER

LYNN MARTIN

LINDY BOGGS

See NEA, C8, Col. 1

Congressional Hearing

NEA, From C1

groups will band together to oppose NEA reauthorization. "We don't feel the NEA should be funded by the federal government and if it is, there has to be some kind of standard," she said.

Schlaflly, reached at her home in Alton, Ill., seemed unfamiliar with the coalition. Asked about the NEA, she initially said she opposed any increase in the agency's budget. Questioned about an organized effort to oppose the agency's existence, she responded, "I don't know about a coalition but if there's a coalition to cut money for obscene art, I'm certainly for it."

Meanwhile, pro-NEA demonstrators hung banners supporting federal arts funding above the Santa Monica Freeway and the Pacific Coast Highway as far as 12 miles away from the secluded museum. They displayed cutout busts of "art criminals" who had survived censorship fights, including Walt Whitman, D.H. Lawrence and James Joyce.

In a meeting with reporters after the hearing, subcommittee chairman Rep. Pat Williams (D-Mont.), said he was pleased by Frohnmayer's assertion that artists should be permitted to create "offensive" works. Frohnmayer did not volunteer that opinion and gave it only under questioning by Williams.

When Williams first asked whether "offensive" art should be permissible, Frohnmayer replied, "We never fund anything whose sole purpose is to offend. . . . [But] if you grew up in the ghetto and your mother was a junkie and you never knew your father and you're angry . . . chances are some of that work is going to be rough stuff. . . . Not all the messages are blue skies and pretty mountains. It isn't always going to be easy. If we were looking for elevator

music, then we don't need a National Endowment."

When Williams persisted in asking whether art that offends is permissible, Frohnmayer eventually responded, "I would say yes."

Williams was satisfied. "For a chairman to answer yes to that question in today's climate shows real determination that the NEA not be used as a censoring agency," he told reporters after the hearing.

Two panels of witnesses were composed of artists who support the NEA. Asked why the subcommittee didn't hear testimony from the endowment's opponents, Williams said he was focusing on artists familiar with the endowment. He said the opposition will testify at subsequent hearings at other locations.

Frohnmayer sounded the theme that "the currency of the 21st century will be the ability to create" and outlined his argument that the NEA has played a key role in furthering creativity through its support of artists and arts education.

He defended the NEA's system of using panels of artists and arts professionals to recommend funding decisions. "The panel system . . . is very much akin to the American jury system," he said.

Frohnmayer said he has the sense that "the debate has moved past a question of 'Do you like this picture?' to a question of 'Is creativity really an important thing for our government to be involved in?'"

After the hearing, Frohnmayer said he has traveled extensively lately and come away encouraged about public support for the NEA. "There are very few voices making these kinds of case-by-case criticisms," he said.

Among those who spoke on the NEA's behalf was video artist and MacArthur Foundation "genius" grant recipient Bill Viola, who traced the NEA's longtime support of his

career. "I realize now that I couldn't have done what I have done, indeed certainly could not have survived and continued to do my work, without the presence of the National Endowment for the Arts," he said.

Williams said he is concerned that "the censorship genie may be out of the bottle." Judith Baca, a Mexican American muralist and co-founder of the Social and Public Art Resources Center in Venice, Calif., said the language affixed to the NEA appropriation this year forbidding funding of "obscene" art is already having a chilling effect on the arts community.

At her arts center, she said, members of a curatorial committee already are reluctant to show certain works. Later she explained that the committee balked at exhibiting work by a young Hispanic artist who depicted a cross burned into a piece of toast. "It was very interesting imagery," she said. "It was about examining Catholicism and its influence on Hispanics." The art center's board of directors supported the exhibit, she added.

But if the restrictive language were in place for the next five or 10 years, American art would gradually become more homogeneous, she said. "You would see a sameness, the rough edges being smoothed."

In his remarks after the hearing, Williams encouraged the arts community to take the threat to the NEA seriously. He said he expects Congress to reauthorize the NEA but warned that the legislation may not emerge without restrictive language. He said such language could "in effect allow the NEA to be a free-flow valve for a brand of censorship in America."

He said artists need to be "on a political war footing" for the next few months to avoid the "tragedy" of censorship. "I had thought for a long time, frankly for almost a year, that artists weren't up to it, that they would not organize, that they would not demonstrate," he said. "I was wrong."

8 ACADEMY AWARD NOMINATIONS
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SHOWTIMES

KENNEDY CENTER

AFT—"Love in a Fallen City," 6:30; "Walpurgis Night" and "The Count of the Old Town," 8:30.

CONCERT HALL—National Symphony Orchestra, 7.

EISENHOWER—Stardust, 7:30.

OPERA HOUSE—Dark.

TERRACE—Gil Shaham, violinist, 7:30.

THEATER LAB—"Shear Madness," 8.

ARENA

ARENA—"A Doll House," 7:30.

KREGER—"Merrily We Roll Along," 7:30.

OLD VAT—Dark.

SMITHSONIAN

BAIRD—Magnificent Michelangelo, lecture, Walter Pers-

gati, 6.

DISCOVERY THEATER—"We the People?," 10:30 a.m., 12:30.

CARMICHAEL—Castro, the Blacks, and Africa, lecture,

Carlos Moore, 6; Tyre, Queen of the Seas, lecture, Patricia Bikal, 8.

STAGE

AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS—Dark.

FOLGER—"Mary Stuart," 8.

FORD—"Sheila's Day," 7:30.

NATIONAL—Dark.

WASHINGTON STAGE GUILD—Dark.

DINNER THEATER

BURN BRAE—"1776," dinner 6, show 8:15.

HARLEQUIN—"Annie Get Your Gun," dinner 6:30, show 8:15.

PETRUCCI—"The Belle of Amherst," lunch 11:30, show 1; "Greater Tuna," dinner 6, show 8.

LAZY SUSAN—"Agatha Christie's Verdict," dinner 7, show 8:30.

TOBY'S—"It's a Wonderful Life," dinner 6, show 8:15.

WEST END—"Barnum," dinner 6, show 8.



Steven Seagal is

Hard Kill

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WASHINGTON
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A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts



April 24, 1990

Mr. Ed Rogers
Deputy Assistant to the President
and Executive Assistant to the
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Enclosed is the latest package of editorials and columns on the
arts funding controversy.

We will continue to forward pertinent clippings as they become
available.

Sincerely,

Jack Lichtenstein
Director
Office of Public Affairs

Enclosures

cc. John Frohnmayer
White House Office of Communications

APR 2 1990

BURRELLE'S

FOR ARTS' SAKE

National Endowment deserves new lease on life

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT BUSH HAS TAKEN the right road in refusing to support government restrictions on the National Endowment for the Arts, and in urging that its life be extended for another five years.

While a minuscule fraction of projects assisted financially by this worthy agency have caused controversy and given offense (and probably those who approved the grants in retrospect wish they hadn't), these are exceptions, not to say regrettable human mistakes.

The overwhelming preponderance of works assisted by the NEA elevate the quality of life in communities all across the country. Accord-

ing to the Cultural Arts Council of Houston, the NEA awarded Houston arts organizations more than \$1.4 million in 1989. It would be a shame to have missed out on that.

And those who ask why a government should underwrite art, even in the pitifully small amounts the NEA is budgeted for, reveal their ignorance of history. Governments have done so throughout history. We do not live by bread alone, and the U.S. Constitution itself has at its roots the concept of promoting the general welfare.

The Post urges a quick and unfettered vote to renew the NEA.

MAR 24 1990

BURRELLE'S

NEA brouhaha

Bush is right: Congress no art critic

E 2197E

EDITORIAL

Conservative criticism of President Bush for not endorsing legislation to restrict federally funded arts programs is ill-founded.

Bush Wednesday supported National Endowment for the Arts chairman John Frohnmayer, who asked Congress for legislation extending the NEA's life for five years without restrictions on what it may support.

Sen. Jesse Helms and other conservative political and religious leaders have sought strict legislative controls — censorship — over what artistic projects can be supported by the NEA and its public funds.

Such legislation, however, is like using a howitzer to swat flies. NEA's defenders say that it has made more than 85,000

grants, of which fewer than 20 have caused any controversy.

The present squabble arose last year over NEA support of a museum showing of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. The pictures in question were definitely objectionable to most citizens and to most members of Congress.

That point was made, with soaring rhetoric.

NEA chairman Frohnmayer got the message. Frohnmayer was not appointed to administer obscenity, and he knows it. It comes down to whom you trust and whether Congress needs to be dictating specific standards of artistic merit.

Congress does not. Bush trusts Frohnmayer to keep the NEA's standards up. That should be good enough.

WEDNESDAY
MAR 28 1990**BURRELLE'S**

128

63

Don't let a few spoil funding for arts

2197E
Last Wednesday, Roy Howard Beck of The Press' Washington bureau reported that Rep. Paul Henry, R-Grand Rapids Township, and 10 Michigan Democratic congressmen had been singled out for chastising by a Mississippi-based organization for allegedly defending the federal financing of pornographic art.

The next day, the Associated Press reported that the Bush administration is sternly opposed to federal censorship of art projects financed through the National Endowment for the Arts.

The two stories are, of course, directly related; they are, in fact, but two different aspects of the same issue that is rapidly coming to a boil in Washington.

The ring-leader of the campaign to destroy the National Endowment for the Arts, which seems to me to be the obvious and sole purpose of the present drive, is Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C. Virtually the only members of Congress on his side are adherents of their right-wing Republican group in the House and Senate. Where their scruples lie is suggested by the fact that so respected a member of the Michigan Republican delegation as Rep. Henry is among the targets of their unrelenting attacks.

Residents of the Fifth Congressional District know Rep. Henry as a highly-principled patron of the arts, a man of discriminating taste and strong religious affiliation. To suggest that he would be a party to any move to encourage pornography in any way is to betray the hypocrisy of those attacking him. He has done good man service in his home community for such organizations as the St. Cecilia Music Society, the Ladies Literary Club and the Grand Rapids Art Association and needs no apologies from me or anyone else on behalf of his service in defending the National Endowment for the Arts.

It is true that the NEA has financed some art projects that have turned out to be not only questionable but downright offensive to the vast majority of Americans — or would be if they had been subjected to them. It is an unfortunate fact that the NEA can't look into the heads and hearts of an artist to see what may be developing there before deciding whether to provide the artist with funds to continue his or her work.

Every once in a while — although rarely — the artist is discovered, after the work is done, not to have warranted the trust that had been placed in him or her. That has been going on for a couple of thousand years, and it will be going on for, we should expect, at least a couple of thousand more.

Now and then a so-called artist will have been discovered to be harboring motives other than those concerned strictly with the creating of a work of art. It seems all too apparent that some of them are more devoted to making a statement about their sexual preferences rather than making an artistic statement; and some examples of such works that have come to my attention are blatant attempts to propagandize, if they are not merely to inflame or outrage.

Most Americans abhor censorship as vigorously as

GERALD ELLIOTT

they do pornography; they perhaps realize that to invoke censorship even in extreme cases is to invite an avalanche of the same — the camel's nose in the tent — and resist both with equal determination.

Having said as much, I feel impelled to add that I can find nothing to say on behalf of those persons who have sought to take advantage of their constitutional liberties, the government's generosity and the public's tolerance to foist off on the public paintings, drawings and other representations that clearly transcend the bounds of good taste, of public acceptance, community morals and standards and the ordinarily accepted guidelines of decency.

With liberties go responsibilities; it is all too apparent that a few recipients of NEA grants have ignored the fact that they struck a bargain when they accepted the funds. I can find no reason to defend them.

Not only have they in a sense violated their contract, they have jeopardized the welfare and well-being of countless artists of all kinds, many of whom must depend on federal largess that they may go on working and producing. A few have fouled the nest.

It should be comparatively easy to rectify the situation so far as past offenders are concerned. Betrayal of their trust should eliminate them from consideration for any further financial aid from NEA. Removing such persons from the list of those qualified to receive federal grants should protect the rights and privileges of those persons who are solely dedicated to the arts, who need financial help and who warrant the kind of stimulus that a federal grant may provide them.

It is reassuring to hear from John E. Frohmeyer, chairman of the NEA, that the Bush administration is opposed to federal censorship of art subsidized by federal funds, as it is to learn that there is a large and courageous bloc in Congress, as represented by men of Rep. Henry's civil and informed attitude, who are equally determined to stand by the Constitution and by art. But we ought not to be expected to take to our bosom those whose real aim is to destroy the National Endowment for the Arts; nor should we be expected to harbor those who, by sabotaging the very purpose of NEA, play into the hands of its avowed enemies.

We ought not to have to resort to any so-called code of censorship in this situation, save that which every thinking, responsible citizen imposes on himself, and for that we should not have to have anyone spell it out in so many words.

MAR 27 1990
BURRELLE'S

Arts lynch mob suffers setback

The barbarian hordes last week suffered a mild but possibly temporary defeat in their war on art.

The Bush administration submitted legislation to extend the life of the National Endowment for the Arts another five years — without the censorious language that Congress, goaded by North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms, appended to this year's NEA authorization.

John Frohnmayer, the recently installed NEA chairman who flip-flopped badly over funding of an AIDS-related art show last fall, has grown a spine. Rather than caving in to the religious right, Frohnmayer is now holding a mirror up to its ethical bankruptcy.

In testimony last week before the House Education and Labor subcommittee on post-secondary education, Frohnmayer attacked the American Family Association and Pat Robertson's "700 Club" for spreading "misinformation" about the NEA and its funded projects.

Rep. Pat Williams of Montana more accurately if less politely assailed "religious zealots" for think-



Mike Greenberg

ing that if they fell "a big enough lie," they'll be believed.

The zealots are fighting back. Helms will surely propose content restrictions on his own. Meanwhile, he has asked the General Accounting Office to investigate whether the NEA funds pornography.

He has plenty of allies in the propaganda ministry's lynch mob.

Robertson, the failed presidential candidate and unindicted TV évangéleer, was outraged by the charge of "misinformation."

Outraged but unrepentant: On his "700 Club" soap box last Thursday, he continued to misrepresent the Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano photography exhibits that started the current tumult.

Robertson dismissed the entire Mapplethorpe exhibit as "pornographic" and "homosexual." He described it as a "show when it was among the half-dozen that had raised an eyebrow."

He failed to note that most of the 150 images were flowers and clothed portraits. In his mind a flower is just a sex organ and Louise Nevelson just a — well, you get the idea.

Robertson scored Serrano's now-famous "P— Christ" as an attack on Christianity. In fact its target was the self-interested exploitation of Christianity — Robertson's own business.

Syndicated hydrophobe Pat Buchanan is aiding the extremist cause with similar falsehoods and attempting to deny artists the same privileges he claims exclusively for himself — "the right to dictate what is art" and "the right to bait and taunt with impunity."

What is the restriction that the goons are so eager to preserve?

Money is barred for "material which in the judgment of the NEA

may be considered obscene, including, but not limited to, depictions of sado-masochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts, and which, taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

Strictly speaking, this language would not bar grants for any of the shows that have been in dispute — if the NEA leadership is honest and resistant to intimidation.

If the law is toothless, it does intimidate. It chills the climate.

Ironically, however, the language also widens the scope of grant-worthy projects to include political and scientific material.

One could argue, for example, that homoerotic art has serious political value in any state that prohibits homosexual acts.

Even conservative columnist James J. Kilpatrick says Annie Sprinkle's art form is "instructive for medical students planning to go into gynecology" — and thus (hee hee) has scientific value.

With legal creativity, content restrictions could be a lot of fun.

APR 7 1990

BURRELLE'S



**TERRY
HUGHES**

Mel Hancock Shields Us From Evil Of Art

THANK YOU, Rep. Mel Hancock for your efforts to shield me from those smut-peddlers and money-wasters masquerading as congresspeople in Washington.

What inspiration and courage you showed this week when you called for an end to that, and I quote, "obscene waste of taxpayer dollars" known as the National Endowment for the Arts.

You and a handful of others on Capitol Hill — most notably, that bastion of decency and freedom, Sen. Jesse Helms — see the true evil that lurks in our nation's efforts to foist art on the public.

Let others laugh, I know what you're talking about. Some checking revealed truly shocking information.

Did you know, Mel, that right there in your very own town of Springfield, Mo., the National Endowment has been hard at work.

John Gilbert, director of the Springfield Symphony, readily admits that endowment money is used EVERY YEAR to subsidize tickets for schoolchildren.

And get this — the endowment also gets part credit for the staging of the symphony's annual Carols at Christmas program. Taxpayers actually help pay musicians to play Christmas carols — and let the public in FREE to sing along! Do I smell a church-state issue here or what?

But it doesn't stop there. This obscene bureaucracy also helps pay for the "Fire Fall" — an outdoor concert with fireworks staged around the Fourth of July that sucks in 60,000 people every year.

Also in your very own town, Mel, you should know that the endowment seduced the Springfield Art Museum with \$22,300 to fix up storage vaults where it hides its artifacts. They pulled some of them out earlier this year for an exhibit called "Treasures of the Springfield Art Museum." Among these "treasures" were some pre-Columbian artworks (graven images by godless heathens!) and a silver spoon crafted by Paul Revere (a known curfew-violator).

The exhibit also included a photograph of a head of lettuce — "a very lovely photograph," a museum official claims — by Robert Mapplethorpe, whose work Jesse Helms has condemned.

I know this must weigh heavy on your heart, Mel. Right here in St. Louis, I uncovered similarly grievous assaults on the public decency.

The endowment has given money to Willie Mae Ford Smith, a well-known gospel singer.

Jill McGuire, head of the Regional Arts Commission, sat in her office Friday and said with pride that the endowment has provided money for numerous neighborhood arts projects.

She bragged about bringing string quartets to Eureka.

She smiled as she talked about neighborhood house tours and efforts to help the Black Repertory Theater keep from going under.

And this doesn't even touch on how the agency has infiltrated our venerable St. Louis Art Museum. It helped pay to bring in a statue, "The Reclining Pan" by Giovanni Angelo Montorsoli that the Museum lists as "one of the finest examples of 16th Century Italian Renaissance sculpture in the United States."

As if that wasn't enough, the endowment is at this very moment sponsoring an exhibit of Turkish rugs at the Museum. I'd bet the farm that non-Christian people have trod these rugs, Mel.

Here's the topper: You can hardly drive past these days without being assaulted by ads to see another of the endowment's projects, an exhibit of the work of George Caleb Bingham.

Friday, I discovered schoolchildren looking at a picture he painted of fur trappers. Fur trappers, Mel — a glorified image of people who kill cute little animals!

There was also a portrait of John Quincy Adams, our nation's sixth president, and one of a Baptist preacher. There's a family scene with a mother nursing a baby. There are TWO pictures — big ones, sofa-size at least — of election day crowds which include obviously drunken people.

In East St. Louis, the endowment has kept the Katherine Dunham Museum and Children's Workshop afloat for the last eight years. Our tax money has gone to teach children dance and cultural history.

Jeanelle Stovall, who has been working for years to raise money for these programs, would have us believe that this is good for the kids. She calls it "socialization through the arts," getting children to know more about the world at large.

This, she says, will open their minds so that when they one day become adults running the country they can think beyond their narrow upbringings.

Keep it up, Mel. As long as there are folks like you in positions of power, we can fend off such disastrous consequences.

Survey Finds Wide Support for Bush Stance on the NEA

■ Opinion: Survey also found that 93% of Americans believe the public has a right to view controversial artworks.

By ALLAN PARACHINI
TIMES STAFF WRITER

The year-old controversy over artistic freedom and the National Endowment for the Arts has captured the American consciousness to an extent actors in the debate may not have thought possible, a new national survey released Thursday appears to show.

The new survey—of 1,200 people questioned at random by telephone between March 14 and 26—shows that in the fight over whether Congress should place controls on the content of artworks the NEA may support, 61% support the NEA and the Bush Administration, which oppose the restrictions.

The survey also found that 93% of Americans believe the public has a right to view controversial artworks and 80% disagree with the contention that nudity in art is usually pornographic.

However, a majority of respondents—53%—agreed that art should be censored if it offends a majority of people and 86% said art galleries should notify parents if work they display is unsuitable for viewing by children. A total of 74% agreed that censorship in general "is not the American way" and 81% opposed laws limiting freedom of artistic expression.

The poll was sponsored by the Liberal People for the American Way group and conducted by Research & Forecasts Inc., a New York opinion survey consultant.

With support for federal government funding of the arts holding steady at about 2-to-1—nearly the same ratio as in a similar poll conducted by The Times last fall—the new survey results show that

Please see SURVEY, F13

SURVEY

Continued from F12

The months of controversy over arts funding in Washington and elsewhere has attracted the attention of a majority of Americans.

While three quarters of a sample of 2,217 Americans last September said they had never heard of the controversy, 57% now say they are familiar with it. Moreover, the political battle has boosted the arts endowment's name recognition rate to 76%—the same proportion familiar with the endowment's key congressional opponent, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.).

Only 30% of the respondents in the new nationwide poll believe government funding for avant garde art should be stopped because some of it is controversial, and 66% disagreed with the contention that Congress should cut off funding for controversial art projects or shows.

The new opinion poll was released simultaneously at press briefings in Washington and Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, People for the American Way also announced a newspaper advertising campaign intended to target Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Lomita), a leader of anti-arts endowment forces in the House.

Full-page advertisements—depicting an empty picture frame over the headline "Is This the Only Kind of Art Rep. Rohrabacher Would Be Happy With?"—are to be placed in several Southern California newspapers, said Michael Hudson, Western vice-president of People for the American Way.

Rohrabacher criticized the People for the American Way poll, contending that "many of the questions were worded in a way that had no relationship to the battle that's going on over the NEA." Rohrabacher took issue with the poll's focus on censorship. "If someone asks me if I'm in favor of censorship," Rohrabacher said, "I emphatically say, 'No.'"

Helms did not respond to requests for comment. The NEA also declined to comment.

"Americans overwhelmingly reject censorship of the arts and support the NEA," Hudson said. "Rep. Rohrabacher has taken the leading role in the House calling for the abolishment of the NEA. If we are to win this battle, we must energize and mobilize the creative community here in Los Angeles."

The new survey also found that:

■ Attendance at arts events is more popular than going to live sporting events nationwide, with 72% of respondents reporting attending arts events in the last year

compared to 53% who went to sporting events. Arts attendance averaged six events per year compared to 4.1 for sports.

■ A total of 68% endorse the concept of government funding the arts, with 30% opposed and 2% unsure. However, 60% also agree that the NEA should be held responsible for the content of artworks it supports and a slim majority—51%—agreed that artists who get government grants should sign an oath regarding the content of their art.

■ The arts endowment had a higher positive opinion rating than Helms—30% versus 11%. A total of 69% disagreed with the notion that the NEA is a waste of taxpayers' money and 83% agreed with the statement that the NEA "serves a very useful purpose in American society."

■ Nearly a quarter of respondents favor increasing the NEA budget—\$171 million this year and 56% favor keeping budget levels as they are. Only 13% advocated cutting NEA funding.

The poll sample had an average age of 40. It was 52% female and 48% male. The sample was split almost evenly among Republican Democrats and people who identified themselves as independent. Research & Forecasts said the poll had a margin of error of plus minus 3%.

NEA-Funded Art Exhibit Protested

Wildmon Mails Sexual Images to Congress

By Kim Masters
Washington Post Staff Writer

122

With the help of a mass mailing by the Rev. Donald Wildmon and the American Family Association, photographer David Wojnarowicz may soon become as controversial as Robert Mapplethorpe.

An exhibit mounted earlier this year with \$15,000 from the National Endowment for the Arts is the target of a mailing aimed at every member of Congress as well as 178,000 pastors on the American Family Association mailing list.

"It's not the kind of mailing you can send to the general public," Wildmon said. "I could be prosecuted by the U.S. Postal Service for that mailing. What I'm trying to do is put it into the hands of key leaders."

The package includes two pages of mostly homosexual images taken from larger collages by Wojnarowicz. While NEA Chairman John Frohnmayer denounced the mailing as misleading, it has nonetheless rattled some congressional nerves as the fight over NEA reauthorization gains momentum.

Frohnmayer said the mailing implies incorrectly that the show, called "Tongues of Flame," was funded after he became NEA chairman and after Congress added language to the NEA appropriation bill prohibiting the agency from funding obscene work. While the works were displayed this spring, Frohnmayer said it was funded last May before he became chairman in October and before the legislation was passed.

He expressed his concerns yesterday in a letter to Wildmon, in which he asked Wildmon to reconsider his position against the NEA and concluded, "I respect your zeal and your absolute right to speak on any subject whatsoever. I do not respect your use of falsehoods, half-truths and intimidation."

"It's simply not something that I had any opportunity to exercise any judgment over," Frohnmayer said in an interview yesterday.

He said the pictures in the mailing are "pretty strong stuff that would offend almost anybody." But since he hadn't seen the exhibit, Frohnmayer wouldn't say whether he would have considered funding the show. "I have made a promise to the president and Congress and to the American people that we will not fund obscenity," he said.

Wildmon responded that the letter doesn't say the exhibit was funded under Frohnmayer, only that "the exhibit came after" Frohnmayer became chairman. "Mr. Frohnmayer is having difficulty reading," Wildmon said.

Reached in New York, the 35-year-old Wojnarowicz said those who attack his works are "a bunch of repressed 5-year-olds." His works are not fairly represented in the mailing, he added. "They're creating pieces of their own," he said. "They're not even my pieces, when they've gotten through with them." He said he made the most controversial works, known as the Sex Series, last year because "I felt the conservative climate had gotten so high . . . that there was this call to deny sexuality itself."

He said he opposes the use of his works to attack the NEA. "Public monies are being used to fund covert wars, to buy instruments of death," he said. "The few pennies that come out of people's pockets to fund the NEA is nothing—and absolutely does not cause death."

Wojnarowicz said he believes the obscenity issue is a pretext for an attack on freedom of expression. "I can really approximate what it must have

been to be a Jew during Hitler's rise to power—as a human being, as a homosexual, as a person with AIDS," he said.

Frohnmayer said that "it's too early to tell" whether the Wildmon mailing will whip up the type of national controversy generated by Mapplethorpe's pictures or an Andres Serrano photo of a crucifix immersed in urine. Those works became a focal point in the emotional debate over government funding of art and freedom of expression.

"The thing that I hope doesn't happen is hysteria here," said Frohnmayer, who practiced law in Portland, Ore., before becoming NEA chairman. "In the law, we used to say that sympathetic cases make bad law, and this is that kind of situation."

Hill aides said they are uncertain what to expect from the Wildmon mailing. "I'm still trying to gauge this whole thing," said a staffer on the Senate education subcommittee that will handle the reauthorization process. So far, he said, he has received only a couple of calls from Senate offices seeking more information about the exhibit. "They weren't outraged," he said.

On the House side, reaction was mixed. "I don't think we've had any time to assess how worried we are or should be," said one staffer who will work on reauthorization. But another subcommittee staff member said the mailing will erode support for the NEA.

"I expect it to have a big impact," he said. "... I think it's going to be the straw that breaks the camel's

back for a lot of moderate members of Congress who cannot support these kinds of graphic sex images."

Rep. Pat Williams (D-Mont.), who chairs the House subcommittee that has launched the reauthorization process, could not be reached for comment.

The Wildmon mailing came almost seven weeks after the closing of the "Tongues of Flame" exhibit at the University Galleries of Illinois State University in Normal, Ill. Director Barry Blinderman, who assembled the show, said it ran from Jan. 23 through March 4 and included more than 60 works, 20 of them photographic pieces and 40 paintings and sculptures. Six thousand students and local residents saw the show and the galleries registered only two protests, Blinderman said. After the show closed—when Wildmon began to publicize the exhibit—the galleries received about 50 letters of protest.

The exhibit included eight montages that make up the Sex Series, Blinderman said. The Wildmon mailing includes blow-ups of insets that depict sexual images. "They've gone through the entire 128-page catalogue, which contains something like 140 illustrations, and they've just zeroed in on these insets, not showing you the collage, which could show you what it's about," he said. "They've taken a 6-foot-by-9-foot [work] and given you one little scene."

Blinderman said he got \$15,000 of the \$45,000 cost of the show from the NEA. That funding came before Frohnmayer's tenure, he confirmed. The balance came from a foundation and the galleries' budget. The university administration remains supportive of the galleries despite the growing controversy, he said.

"Most people who saw the exhibit

don't know what the fuss is about," Blinderman said. "There's only a fuss when they start distorting and excerpting. . . . Yes, there are sexual acts that are depicted. But they are in the service of social and political ideas."

Wildmon acknowledged that the pictures are excerpted but asked, "Does that make those photos less offensive? Does that make them less obscene? . . . Even in Washington, D.C., if you take that on the street and ask 50 people, I'll bet you 45 to 48 of them will say the government shouldn't be funding that."

Wojnarowicz has stirred controversy before. His essay in a catalogue at New York Artists Space led Frohnmayer to pull NEA support from the show soon after his appointment last year. After visiting the show, he reinstated the funds but excluded the catalogue from the grant. NEA adversary Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-Calif.) included a Wojnarowicz photo in a Feb. 20 letter sent to other members of Congress, and a Wojnarowicz photo depicting Jesus with a syringe in his arm has been used in anti-NEA ad campaigns. That image was not included in the exhibit.

The show's next stop is the Santa Monica Museum of Art in California, where it is scheduled to run—without NEA support—from July through September. Then it moves to New York's Exit Art in November, also without government support.

Santa Monica Museum Director Thomas Rhoads said he won't be deterred by controversy.

"I think people should know what they're using for target practice," he said. "It's a free country and I think people should be able to see the work."

1353

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 19, 1990

The Honorable John Sununu
Chief of Staff
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Governor Sununu:

Thanks for your note about my letter to the President.

I am quite familiar with John Frohnmayer's release that you enclosed and that he circulated to all Members of Congress three weeks ago. It emphatically does not refute my contention that John has refused to say that the types of things NEA has funded will not be funded again. That is because John understands "obscenity" to mean something entirely different than what you, I and the President understand it to mean, when he says that he is "unequivocally opposed to government funding of obscenities."

The last paragraph of the release is the tipoff. He says, "Art and obscenity are opposites." In other words, whatever is art cannot be obscenity, and vice versa. John made his personal definition of obscenity clear in another statement he distributed to Congress: "And if a panel finds there is serious artistic intent and quality in a particular piece of work, then by definition that is not going to be obscene." (emphasis added). This definition necessarily excludes everything NEA has ever funded from being "obscene" in John's understanding.

Given John's definition, it should come as no surprise that when Senator Nancy Kassebaum asked John whether he would fund the infamous Mapplethorpe retrospective today, he didn't answer the question directly. Instead, he implied that he would fund this sexually graphic subject of a child pornography indictment when he replied, "There are books in there [a library] you may find offensive, but you don't have to check them out or read them. It is a quite different thing to say, however, that those books should not be in a library." And, of course, neither John's release nor anything else he has said addresses the President's stated objections to "blasphemous" art.

Even if the NEA chairman were completely committed to stopping federal funding for the works to which the President objects, he simply doesn't have the authority to do so under current law. Nothing in John's release or any other NEA document I have seen contradicts this central point: under current law, the only grounds he has for overturning a peer review panel decision is on the basis of "artistic merit." He has no authority to deny funding to any work for being sexually graphic or blasphemous, or even for containing child pornography, if the work

has "artistic merit." This was the point of our letter to the President: Should the NEA Chairman have that authority?

I think you can help clear this up by asking John two questions. First, ask him whether there is anything the NEA has ever funded that he, himself, would consider obscene. Second, ask whether he has the authority to refuse federal funding for any work on the grounds of being "blasphemous" or "sacrilegious." I expect you will find the answers quite revealing.

Sincerely, *respectfully*

Dana

Dana Rohrabacher
Member of Congress

DR/rtd

 NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

April 17, 1990

Mr. Ed Rogers
Deputy Assistant to the President
and Executive Assistant to the
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Enclosed is the latest package of editorials on the arts funding controversy.

We will continue to forward pertinent clippings as they become available.

Sincerely,


Jack Lichtenstein
Director
Office of Public Affairs

Enclosures

cc. John Frohnmayer
White House Office of Communications

(The Press-Telegram is from Cong. Rohrabacher's home district.)

The art world strikes back

Brush off for Rohrabacher?

Trust Rep. Dana Rohrabacher to get it wrong — he gets it wrong so often. In the matter at hand, a coalition of arts groups has announced plans to form a political action committee to oppose Rohrabacher, who has pursued a relentlessly slack-brained campaign to eliminate the National Endowment for the Arts. Of the coalition's plan to raise money, Rohrabacher says: "If they've got so much money to put into politics, how come they're looking for grants from the NEA?"

Yikes and yeeks and who elected this guy? Not only does Rohrabacher lack any grasp of the value of federal support for the arts, but he appears to have a second-string high-school debate coach writing his comeback lines. The question, Dana, is not whether supporters of the arts can raise money. The question is whether the federal government should help subsidize the arts and, if so, whether the NEA should be limited by the intolerant sensibilities of unsophisticated cultural ideologues.

The answer to the first part is yes, absolutely; to the second — no, indisputably. There are clear benefits to be had from the vital thinking and the fresh ideas that federal funds can help promote. Even the

most avant-garde works offer new perspectives, provoke introspection and reassessment — if not in any individual viewer, than at least within the broader environment of modern American culture.

But if the federal government is going to encourage the arts, it must do so without fear of being censored by opportunistic reactionaries. The NEA is sure to insult some viewers; taste and decorum are relative terms. But neither have taste and decorum ever been at the core of artistic drive. Indeed, the absence of wide popular support for novel and modern aesthetic thinking is what makes the NEA purpose so essential, so valuable.

Still, trust Rohrabacher to get it wrong. He wrongly thinks that the NEA should be judged by the bottom line, because he wrongly thinks that the money is more important than the purpose to which it is put. He wrongly thinks it ironic that art groups can raise political money to defend themselves, because he wrongly thinks that most people agree with him.

Finally, he obviously — and wrongly — thinks that he knows something about the value of contending aesthetic sensibilities. That's because he wrongly believes he knows something about art. He doesn't know art, he only knows what he hates.

MAR 28 1990

BURRELLE'S

Five more years for the arts endowment

F 2197 E
After passively listening to religious and political conservatives for nine months, the White House has come forcefully to the defense of artistic freedom and the National Endowment for the Arts. In doing so, it has flung the gauntlet at U.S. Sen. Jesse A. Helms.

The North Carolina Republican and his ideological soulmates breathed fire last year when they found that the endowment had partially subsidized controversial exhibits by photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano.

Mr. Helms set himself up not only as critic but also as censor. He pushed a measure through Congress forbidding the endowment from funding anything that "may be considered obscene." The White House was silent.

But last Wednesday, NEA Chairman John E. Frohnmayer went head-to-head with Mr. Helms and such religious television programs as the Rev. Pat Robertson's "700 Club." In testimony before a congressional subcommittee, Mr. Frohnmayer denounced current efforts to prevent funding of the endowment. With the full support of the White House, Mr. Frohnmayer asked for legislation extending the life of the endowment for five years — without prohibitions on the art it may support.

Critics wrongly claim that his agency was promoting obscenity, Mr. Frohnmayer said. The endowment, Mr. Frohnmayer said correctly, should not be second-guessed by politicians in its decisions on arts projects. Funding decisions should be left to the peer-review process used by the agency and the regional groups it supports. They, of course, must never forget it's public money that is being spent and that good taste must

prevail.

EDITORIAL.

He and the endowment "oppose obscenity unequivocally," Mr. Frohnmayer asserted. "It [obscenity] is the antithesis of art. It is without a soul. It conveys no message. It degrades humanity and it sickens me." The demagogic posturing of endowment-bashers has been what's sickening.

TENNESSEAN
NASHVILLE, TENN.
D. 119,120
TN-114

MAR 27 1990

BURRELLE'S

Strings should be removed from arts endowment fund

EDITORIAL

PRESIDENT Bush may not have a taste for broccoli, but at least he has the good taste and good sense to know that politicians shouldn't be art critics.

The President's view came forth last week in an appearance by Mr. John Frohnmayer, the chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, before a House subcommittee that is now considering extending the endowment for another five years.

The NEA made big news last year because of two grants that it awarded to two artists who had produced some controversial works. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N. C., an avowed opponent of the NEA, fanned the public fire over these two grants by passing legislation restricting the way that NEA can award grants.

The restriction, which is effective for only one year, says that NEA funds cannot be used to produce or disseminate material that "may be considered obscene, including, but not limited to, depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts, and which, when taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

Prior to the passage of Mr. Helms' restrictions, the NEA awarded grants to artists and projects through a system of peer review, so that the works to receive NEA funds would be selected by artists.

Throughout last year's debate, the White House was silent on the topic. But last week, Mr. Frohnmayer clarified the President's view.

Speaking before the House subcommittee on post-secondary education, the NEA chairman said that "it is our conclusion that the legislation proposed here, which contains no content restrictions, will best serve the American public." A White House spokeswoman confirmed after his remarks that Mr. Frohnmayer had the advance approval of the Bush administration.

Senator Helms' restriction, when strictly applied, could disqualify works of Shakespeare, Rodin, and Michelangelo. It would virtually guarantee that the NEA would fund mainly bland, uncontroversial works.

The best argument for allowing the NEA to be cut free of the restrictions is its own enviable record. In its history, it has awarded more than 85,000 grants — fewer than 20 of them have been controversial.

If Mr. Helms or anyone else wants to argue that the federal government should be giving no money at all for the support and promotion of the arts, let them. That debate is worth having.

But as long as the NEA exists, then it is right to sustain a system where people who know and appreciate art determine which works get NEA grants. ■

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FRIDAY
MAR 23 1990

BURRELLE'S

64

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Congress is a poor art critic

^{E 2197E}
The Bush administration, wisely, says Congress should not get involved in deciding which arts projects should qualify for federal tax dollars. The administration says the decision should be left to the peer review panels of the National Endowment for the Arts, which has handled the job with remarkably few complaints since 1965. The NEA panels will, inevitably, make some bad calls. But the problems would be far more numerous and more serious if Congress tried to set standards of officially acceptable art.

The question of whether taxpayer dollars should be used to subsidize art that the public might find offensive arose last year. The national endowment awarded grants for a show of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, who died recently of AIDS. The show included a great many self-portraits, flower pictures, and other non-shocking works by a man described by *The Economist*, a sober-minded British magazine, as one of the finest art photographers of his generation. The show also included a relatively small number of photos depicting homosexual sex, some of which was sado-masochistic. When the show was displayed in Washington, these pictures were exhibited in a small, separate room with a warning sign. The NEA also funded an exhibit in Winston-Salem, N.C., by photographer Andres Serrano, including a picture of a crucifix dipped in urine.

In response, Sen. Jesse Helms and other conservative senators are pushing to continue a temporary ban imposed by Congress on art that is obscene and without "serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value."

How could a president who champions family values and such traditional forms of enjoyment as country music, horseshoes, and eating pork rinds, refuse?

Because the last thing any reasonable person should want is Congress setting standards for what constitutes officially sanctioned art. In 1965, when the endowment was created, people saw good reason to be suspicious of government taste-setters, and the reasons are just as valid today. In the words of the late Sen. Jacob Javits, no one wanted Congress deciding "who is going to sing the leading role in 'Aida.'"

Conservatives had a more serious objection. They feared that liberals in the government might set ideological or aesthetic standards that the right wouldn't like. The present system of giving out government grants has produced remarkably few complaints. Members of Congress have questioned only 20 of the 85,000 grants given out by the endowment in its 25-year history.

Has the system produced some excesses? Certainly. But the alternative, allowing members of Congress to set standards of taste, is far worse. Trying to set standards of obscenity that would satisfy all 100 members of the U.S. Senate and 435 members of the House, let alone the American public, would be almost impossibly difficult. In the end, it would make funds available only to art as bland as a network sitcom.

Government funding for the arts serves a useful purpose, by encouraging unknown or experimental artists who would have a hard time making a living from private sales or corporate grants. Public funding is especially important at a time when corporate donations have sharply declined. The NEA's budget last year was only \$169 million, compared to \$724 million spent in Britain. That's a small price to pay to encourage a vital and independent art world. Occasional controversy is also part of the price. It's a price worth paying.

MAR 23 1990
BURRELLE'S

EDITORIAL

Bush saves Nell, but Helms still lurks

^{2197E}
E It is a scene out of classic melodrama: Little Nell is lashed to the railroad tracks, the locomotive is bearing down and the villain stands to the side, stroking his waxed mustache and chortling at the prospect of Nellburger, when —

When President Bush, to his great credit, comes to the rescue, throws the switch that sends the train fading harmlessly down a spur and the villain, muttering "Curses!" behind his stage mustache, is revealed as Sen. Jesse Helms, the North Carolina Republican, foiled in his attempt to misuse public funding as an excuse for a national witch-hunt against the arts.

But don't applaud too soon. This play isn't over.

The president's sanity will be a huge help, particularly in bucking up the politically faint in Congress, but Mr. Helms very much intends to continue the demagogic campaign he unleashed last year against the National Endowment for the Arts after the flap over NEA funding for a couple of art shows whose sexual content and social commentary stirred controversies.

Mr. Helms tried to bar NEA funding for any art he and his friends would object to. The issue was finessed with a one-year legislative ban on obscene material "including but not limited to, depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts; and which, taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value."

Despite its grandstanding language, the law in fact only bars federal aid for material that would be obscene under U.S. Supreme Court guidelines; it is little threat per se. That was the policy already.

Even so, the provision has had a chilling effect in the arts, producing hesitations that numb creativity, and it has provided an excuse for right-wing groups, particularly the religious right, to fly-speck NEA grants even for second-handed association with any project or artist the far right and fundamentalists find untoward. Suddenly, people whose only previous attention to art was the day they bought the day-glo Elvis on black velvet are now scouring art galleries, play-bills and esoteric presses.

Mr. Helms has used the law to justify a formal request for the government's General Accounting Office to search for instances of wayward art, and he will be pushing Congress to make his prohibitions — or some more severe version — part of the five-year extension of NEA.

We were late among titularly civilized nations in providing public arts support. NEA was set up just 25 years ago. And we still do far less than most such nations. NEA's \$170 million budget is small beer. Even this modest effort has helped to spark remarkable artistic activity, inspiring local-government support, too, and leveraging strong increases in private and corporate funding. And of the 80,000 grants NEA has given, only five have incited controversy.

Mr. Bush and his appointee as NEA chairman, John F. Frohnmayer, have drawn the right line in the sand: It is improper and self-defeating for Congress to start dictating the content of art, and nothing in NEA's responsible stewardship of public funding suggests there is any need for legislative intrusion.

Villain Helms and his black-hat gang ought to be booed off the stage.

The Miami Herald
MIAMI, FLA.
D. 437,233
FL-148

MAR 26 1990

BURRELLE'S

Art, yes; censorship, no

^{E 2197E}
ALDOS HUXLEY once noted that "if it were not for the intellectual snobs who pay — in solid cash — the tribute which philistinism owes to culture, the arts would perish with their starving practitioners. Let us thank heaven for hypocrisy." Hypocrisy, of course, does not suffice to explain the existence of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a small Federal agency that has provided valuable support to America's "starving" artists and art groups.

But philistinism does explain in part the efforts of Sen. Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, to impose restrictive criteria on the content of the art supported by NEA grants. The senator's campaign against the NEA began in the aftermath of two controversial — some would say obscene — exhibits financed by NEA funds.

Though the NEA was rightly warned by Congress, the Senate went much further. It anointed itself as stern cultural commissar and determined that the NEA could not "fund obscene or indecent work . . . or material which denigrates the objects or beliefs of the adherents of a particular religion or nonreligion."

Now the Bush Administration has taken

WELL SAID, MR. PRESIDENT

the brave step of opposing Senator Helms's censorious proposals. The White House's action merits applause from all who support freedom of artistic expression.

NEA Chairman John E. Frohnmayer told a House subcommittee that the White House supports legislation that does not restrict artistic content. In that commendable action, the Administration restated its confidence in the NEA's long-standing — and largely successful — peer-review system for grant applications. The NEA has made more than 85,000 grants. Of these, only 20 have been controversial.

On Friday, President Bush said that he is "deeply offended by some of the filth" and "sacrilegious blasphemy" that NEA-supported artists have produced. But "I am against censorship" by Congress, he added. Instead, he recommends leaving it to Mr. Frohnmayer to craft guidelines for artists seeking NEA grants.

That's the only sensible approach, and the President deserves praise for courting the displeasure of his most conservative supporters by saying so.

Los Angeles Times
LOS ANGELES, CAL.
D. 1,119,840

CA-352

MAR 26 1990

BURRELLE'S

The White House and the Arts

EDITORIAL

2197E

A critic reviewing the Bush Administration's decision to oppose any legislation that would force the National Endowment for the Arts to police the content of the works it funds would give the White House high marks for integrity and clarity of purpose. A good critic might also note the compelling simplicity of the principle implicit in the Administration's stand, that freedom of expression is the rootstock upon which all other forms of liberty flower.

The White House position was outlined by NEA Chairman John E. Frohnmayer during last week's congressional hearings on whether to extend the endowment's life for another five years. A small group of right-wing lawmakers and religious fundamentalists has demanded that the NEA be forbidden to fund any art considered obscene or sacrilegious. As examples of such offensive work the group most frequently cites photographs by the late Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, though recently its chief spokesman, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), also has attacked NEA grants to writers he says are homosexuals and lesbians.

By forthrightly opposing the group's demands,

the Administration has restored a sense of balance to the debate by recalling that only a handful of the more than 85,000 grants made under the NEA's current peer-review procedures ever have evoked the slightest controversy.

More important, the White House has acted in the the public's interest by giving substance to the sentiments expressed last week by Ron Silver of Actors' Equity Assn. As he testified to Congress, the endowment has made an essential contribution "to the democratization of the arts and the cultural diversity of this country."

Finally, by refusing to pander to Helms and other members of his own party's so-called new right, President Bush has taken a small but important step toward some restoration of civility in national politics. The end of the Cold War has deprived Helms and his fundamentalist allies of most of the demons they once used to stoke the fires of their lucrative direct-mail fund-raising operations. Bush now has served notice that his government will not allow the National Endowment for the Arts to become a stand-in for the Evil Empire.

MAR 27 1990

BURRELLE'S

EDITORIAL

President gets the picture

^{E 2197E}
REP. Dana Rohrabacher of California thinks he knows what "good" art is all about: "Anything that shows the goodness, the wholesomeness, the beauty and the truth of the American people." By that definition, the walls of many American museums would be pretty bare. Wholesomeness may get you Norman Rockwell, but it won't leave much room for Picasso, or Goya, or even the erotic flower paintings of Georgia O'Keeffe.

Convinced that the National Endowment for the Arts is dabbling in indecency, Republican Rohrabacher wants to do away with the agency altogether. At least he's up front about his intentions. Other critics of the NEA, and even some of its friends, would hobble arts funding with chilling restrictions on content. Three cheers to George Bush for resisting such myopia.

The president signaled his sensitivity to growing concerns about artistic censorship when he sub-

mitted legislation to extend the NEA for another five years — but without a current congressional directive barring federal support for so-called "obscene" art. The restriction had been a sop to North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms and other conservatives who were enraged last year by two NEA-funded photographic exhibits, including one that showed homoerotic imagery.

Does Bush's opposition to such restrictions make him a friend of obscenity? Not at all. It does suggest that, in trying to distance himself from his party's right wing, his administration is beginning to understand the dangers in allowing the government to dictate the content of art.

Such dangers are real. Scarcely was the ink dry on Congress' anti-obscenity measure last fall when the NEA's new director, John Frohnmayer, withdrew a grant to an art show that depicted the agony of AIDS. Frohnmayer later reversed himself, but artists had gotten the message: Steer clear of cutting-edge work if you want federal funds.

True, artists have no constitutional right to tax dollars. But Congress established the NEA 25 years ago to make the arts accessible to all citizens. Lawmakers explicitly forbade the government to interfere in the content of subsidized art. The arts community was asked to decide what to fund.

That was a wise course then and it remains wise today. Content limits would inhibit rambunctious experimentation and promote only the safest, most sanitized art. Sure, NEA juries occasionally goof. But Frohnmayer, to his credit, has moved to improve the grant-giving process — for example, by diversifying the makeup of evaluation panels.

SUCH REFORMS will not prevent all controversy over federally funded art. A society that cares about free expression ought to welcome such ferment. Sometimes wholesome, sometimes not, art is meant to stimulate, not stultify.

TUESDAY
MAR 27 1990

91

BURRELLE'S

RD

Bush stands up to the art police

E 2197E

The education president? The environmental president? It seems at least as likely that George Bush could well be remembered as the aesthetics president.

The president certainly earned some distinction for refusing to censor the content of federally supported art. That decision bucked the wishes of Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and others who would like to tell us what's art and what's nasty. The president correctly recognized that the National Endowment for the Arts and its community panels will be better judges of artistic merit than Helms and other self-appointed art cops.

Helms fueled this controversy last year when he proposed legislation to block funding for arts projects that denigrate the beliefs of religion or non-religion, or are found offensive to individuals on the basis of race, creed, sex, handicap, age or national origin. That large legislative fig leaf would have covered just about everything, which was the trouble.

Instead, Congress drew its own line, a softer one. It approved a ban

EDITORIAL

on the use of federal money for one year for works that, in the judgment of the NEA and the National Endowment for the Humanities, "may be considered" obscene and that lack "serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." That was more vague, but no more sensible.

When Congress began debating the NEA's future again last week, Bush made his stance clear. He is "deeply offended by some of the filth" that passes for art. But he is opposed to censorship and will oppose legislative restrictions on the content of federally funded art.

The president's message to the endowments is simple. Carry on. Let the process work. Let the panels that represent different regions of the country and community attitudes help award the art grants. Keep the politics out of the decisions.

And above all, leave the artists free to show us ourselves and the world around us in ways that are sometimes delightful, sometimes surprising, and sometimes shocking.

TRIBUNE

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FRIDAY
MAR 23 1990

BURRELLE'S

584

03

Arts head deflects poison dart

E 2197 EDITORIAL
IF THE ARTS are important enough to a nation to be buttressed with government funding, then they are important enough to be taken seriously. And to take them seriously is to nurture full and vigorous expression.

John Frohnmayer, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, was particularly eloquent on that issue Wednesday as he explained to a congressional subcommittee the necessity of avoiding content control — even when the content may be offensive.

"To those who are offended, I am truly sorry," Frohnmayer said. "But art is like research. It is trying new things, taking risks, pushing boundaries. Not all art succeeds. To not do research is to stand still and be bypassed by the rest of the world."

Frohnmayer is trying to fend off restrictions on federal funding for art that some would consider offensive, sacrilegious or indecent. Those who would impose restrictions — primarily Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and California Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Lomita — presume to know what obscene art is, even though courts and the critics, not to mention Congress, have never been able to reach a consensus.

Actually, obscene art is not the primary target. For Helms and Rohrabacher, the primary target is the endowment itself, which is before Congress for a five-year extension. The endowment's budget for this year is \$171 million; its grants are usually seed money, to be matched by private donations.

Helms and Rohrabacher do not believe the federal government has any business funding the arts, obscene or otherwise. The pornography issue is a poison dart aimed at the endowment's heart.

Last year's controversial endowment-supported photographic exhibits — one by the late Robert Mapplethorpe, the other by Andres Serrano — were godsend to the endowment's opponents. They ignore the endowment's 25-year record; out of the thousands of grants made, only a handful have ever provoked controversy.

Fortunately, the Bush administration believes in the work of the endowment and understands that the agency can be effective only if Congress resists the temptation to dictate content.

Mistakes may be made, as Frohnmayer admitted. But a costlier mistake would be the chilling effect on the arts that congressional restrictions would inevitably impose.

Wednesday, March 28, 1990

Springfield (MO)
The News-Leader
3/28/90

OUR EDITORIALS

Editorials on this page express opinions of The News-Leader editorial board, including the publisher, editor and editorial page editor. Observations elsewhere on the page are independent opinions of columnists, readers and cartoonists.

Arts Endowment deserves funding

Rep. Mel Hancock, R-Mo., should be having second thoughts.

In the name of protecting all of us from something none of us may like, the 7th District congressman from Springfield poses as guardian of the pocketbook to plant the seeds of censorship.

Hancock has joined U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-California, in trying to defund the National Endowment for the Arts. The conservatives, including U.S. Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., have judged NEA guilty of funding art projects they deem obscene. They are all too eager to decide for themselves what is art while they ignore the abundance of worthwhile projects.

If we invested in such logic, there would likely be no Springfield Symphony, which got \$65,000 to help fund Firefall, the Chamber Orchestra and Carols at Christmas. There would likely be no Chameleon Puppet Theater for Children, which received nearly \$3,000 for eight performances. Eda Mae Davis, a square dancer; Art Galbraith, a fiddler; John Wyun, an instrument builder, might not be able to perform and teach their native skills. A community theater group in Branson (\$6,400) or the Mountain View Music in the Park program teaching traditional dance (\$5,400), might well be lost.

Are all these guilty by association with federal funding? Or is it federal funding that Hancock thinks is obscene?

Of course some in the business of funding the arts have demonstrated some amazingly poor judgment. They are by no means the first. But let's keep the problem in perspective. The list of objectionable works numbers 10 out of about one million total projects funded.

If Congress made only 10 mistakes per million acts, Americans would be tickled. If only the Department of Defense, with its long history of expensive toilet seats and hammers and weaponry, would limit its mistakes to only 10. If only the federal regulators overseeing the thrift industry were so frugal with their mistakes.

Would Hancock abolish the defense department? Of course not. Would he abolish federal S&L regulators? Not likely. Would the American people abolish Congress? Sometimes it's tempting.

Helms likes to complain loudly about the arts, but there is nothing more obscene to many taxpayers than his voting record to continue subsidies to North Carolina tobacco farmers who receive millions annually for growing a plant linked to cancer.

The question of federal funding for the arts isn't just about a handful of controversial art projects. Art is by definition sometimes shocking, not always soothing, and that is not intended to define anything shocking as art.

But the arts are important to the Ozarks and to Springfield. The economics of scale make it impossible to divide the \$5 million in federal arts funding allocated to Missouri to every community to support its own art museum.

What's more, federal funds alone don't begin to support the arts. But they surely help. More important, federal support helps knit the whole concept together, and provides valuable guidance. That expertise needs to be shared, not duplicated needlessly. Through federal endowments, it is shared — with youngsters who might otherwise never sample our culture.

As important as the arts and cultural diversity are anywhere, it's hard to imagine the Ozarks without Ozarks culture. Mel Hancock may think he's only balancing the budget, but what he's really trying to do is stunt our cultural roots. That won't do.

If the southwest Missouri congressman wants to be helpful, he ought to be using common sense to preserve and expand the rich cultural diversity of the Ozarks instead of trying to dismantle a program that works well but not perfectly.



DAYTON DAILY NEWS
DAYTON, OHIO
D.196,417
OH-121

MAR 25 1990
BURRELLE'S

The law is wrong place to define good art

EDITORIAL

2197E
President George Bush sends his person to Capitol Hill, and that person tells lawmakers that the administration doesn't think there needs to be a law specifying that the National Endowment for the Arts can't fund obscene work.

What's wrong with this picture?

Nothing.

Maybe it isn't the one that some expected or wanted the administration to paint, but the position is from the realist school.

Congress is holding hearings on the endowment, because it's up for renewal. North Carolina Sen. Jesse Helms, in particular, has made a point of questioning the endowment's judgment of art, relying mainly on the fact that the endowment supported two photographers whose work included strange and, to him, offensive homoerotic art. Sen. Helms, supported by some religious groups, wants to put in writing that the endowment can't fund obscene work.

The Bush administration's argument

is that one bad grant does not a bad endowment make. Or even two or three or four grants for bizarre works, for that matter.

The endowment is just too big — it hands out too many grants — to be judged by a few arguable misjudgments. One advocate of the endowment argues that more than 85,000 grants have been made to artists. He said fewer than 20 have created controversy.

The arts community gets really edgy when anybody proposes defining what's acceptable art and what's not. The argument is that creativity and artistic expression shouldn't require a license.

As valid as that concern is, there's a problem here. Artists can't get too dependent on government for their funding or get too absolute about an artist's right to express himself at taxpayers' expense. There will always be some Jesse Helms around, some politician waiting to pounce.

Still, Mr. Bush is right: The endowment has not so abused its discretion that new restrictions are necessary.

Public arts money takes another jab

By **EDUARDO DIAZ**
Special to The Light



"The National Endowment for the Arts is at it again." So began another diatribe by U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., to other members of Congress

in February.

Rohrabacher, who last year proposed abolition of federal arts funding, has launched a weekly campaign highlighting those projects which he considers inappropriately funded. Rather than learning about the positive work of the NEA, he seems to be obsessed with uncovering potentially controversial grants. Rather than attending performances and exhibits to educate himself on the wealth of aesthetic experiences the NEA makes possible, Rohrabacher has looked to be outraged and has deliberately sought out any art forms which could possibly do so.

Incidentally, two of our local congressmen, Henry B. Gonzalez and Albert G. Bustamante, invariably supporters of the NEA, have recently come under attack from

the American Family Association and possibly from other supporters of both Rohrabacher and Sen. Jesse Helms.

Public subsidy for the arts has been seen as a public responsibility only since the New Frontier and Great Society presidencies of Kennedy and Johnson. The rationales were that art is a nation's most precious heritage, that contemporary artists are a national asset to be nurtured and that democratic society should promote the widest possible participation of its citizens in its cultural life.

The National Endowment for the Arts was created in 1965. Its first appropriation was \$2.5 million. It soared during the second Nixon administration and the Ford presidency. Its present budget is \$171.2 million. President Bush has recommended \$175 million for next year (\$238 million would be needed to fund the NEA in fiscal year 1991 to equal its fiscal 1981 appropriation in real dollars, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics).

Since its inception, NEA-supported projects in all arts disciplines have provided millions of North Americans with access to a steady stream of enriching cultural opportunities. It has also provided thousands of artists with meaningful



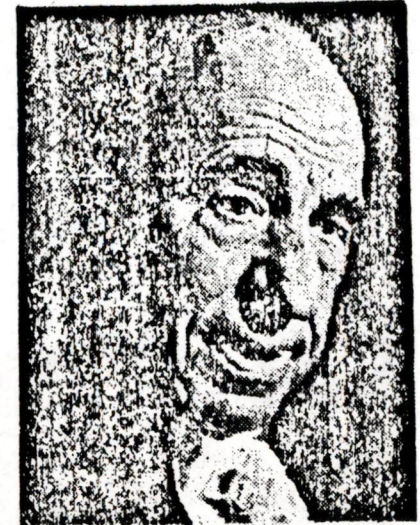
JESSE HELMS
Agrees with Rohrabacher

employment and has leveraged considerable economic activity that dwarfs the Congressional allotment.

Considerable congressional and public attention has been focused on the NEA over the last year, prompted by two grants that helped fund exhibitions of photographs some found offensive or sacrilegious.

During the debate of the NEA's fiscal year 1990 appropriation, a controversial amendment was adopted that requires the agency to bar funding for work that "may be considered obscene" and "without serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." The debate continues, as the NEA prepares to address two important pieces of legislation this term - its reauthorization (required every five years), and its 1991 appropriation.

What's at stake in San Antonio this fiscal year? In grants, \$367,519; a wealth of arts opportunities in local theaters, galleries, on television and in classrooms; millions of dollars in reverberating economic impact; and the city's reputation as an



HENRY B. GONZALEZ
Supports NEA

important regional cultural center.

The following local organizations receive NEA support: KLRN-TV (\$11,704), the Guadalupe Cultural Arts Center (\$68,000), the San Antonio Museum Association (\$75,000), the San Antonio Performing Arts Association (\$16,800), the San Antonio Symphony (\$75,000), the Carver Community Cultural Center (\$93,534) and Ballet Folklorico de San Antonio (\$5,000). San Antonio Independent School District, Healy Murphy Center, the San Antonio Art Institute and Bexar County Detention Ministry receive a total of \$22,470 in arts in education grants.

Thomas Mann once said, "Nor is it possible to devote oneself to culture and decide that one is 'not interested' in politics."

Congressional proceedings on NEA reauthorization and reappropriation have already begun. Final action on both bills could come as early as the end of July.

Eduardo Diaz is director of the Department of Arts and Cultural Affairs, City of San Antonio.

GUEST COLUMN

Cultural negativism must not prevail

The arts are under attack in America. Recently individuals and groups from the political and religious right, among them Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and the Rev. Pat Robertson, have mounted an assault on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA).

Because of a small number of images that they found offensive, these conservatives and their allies have inaccurately portrayed the NEA as supporting pornography and lavishing hard-earned tax dollars on crackpot artists. They have mounted a grass-roots campaign based on distortion that has as its aim preventing re-authorization of the NEA by Congress. They want nothing less than to eliminate federal support for the arts in this country.

Examples of the misrepresentation from the right wing appeared recently on the pages of this newspaper. Twice editorial cartoons appeared from Wayne Stayskal of the Tampa Tribune portraying the NEA as a gravy train for scruffy artists who thumb their noses at society. One showed a painting of just such an artist, thumbs in his ears and tongue stuck out at the viewer, with the title "Self-Portrait of an Artist Who Just Got \$75,000 from the NEA."

That artist doesn't exist.

Strict limits on fellowships

In fact, relatively little money is given by the NEA to individual artists. Of the \$168 million total budget of the NEA in 1988, only \$7.5 million, or about 4.5 percent, was given in the form of fellowships. These fellowships — the only grants given directly to individuals — have strict limits. The largest, in creative writing, is \$20,000; in the visual arts, the largest is \$15,000. These grants, for projects taking up to a year of work, are a far cry from Stayskal's \$75,000-a-picture dole.

More importantly, the vast majority of the

PETER ALEXANDER

is Director of Arts Center Relations at the University of Iowa.



NEA grants go out through local agencies on at least a one-for-one matching-fund basis. This means two things: first, that nearly all grants go for projects that already have support in their local communities; and second, that the relatively modest budget of the NEA has been very wisely used to stimulate and encourage private support for the arts.

What's more, the endowment has been stunningly successful, both in cultivating local arts activities and in generating private spending. When the agency was founded 24 years ago, for example, there were 162 local arts agencies in the country; today there are 3,000. The \$119 million given in the largest grant categories in 1988 generated \$1.363 billion in private funds — more than 11 times the investment of tax dollars.

All of this has been done on a shoestring. The current contribution of each American to the NEA is about 64 cents, as opposed to estimates for the savings-and-loan bailout — to mention but one federal fiasco — of between \$660 and \$1,000 for each American.

This approach would seem to make the

NEA a model federal agency. The benefits have gone directly to the citizens, as local dance companies, community arts centers and museums, regional folk-art activities and the like have flourished with NEA support. At the same time, real control of the money has remained in local hands, because if there are no local contributions to a project there is no grant money for it.

Artistic works citizens want

This last point is crucial, since opponents of the NEA want you to believe your money is being spent on projects citizens of this country don't want. But they must want them, or there would be no matching contributions to the federal grants.

In Eastern Iowa, for example, much of the money raised two years ago to bring the Joffrey Ballet "Nutcracker" to Hancher Auditorium went to match an NEA grant. Without that grant — and the local support it generated — we would never have seen that inspiring performance here, hundreds of schoolchildren would not have attended "Nutcracker" matinees, dance schools across Iowa would not have felt the flowering of interest that followed "The Nutcracker," and dozens of Iowa children would not have danced in the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. And that's only one example.

Today we stand at a crossroads in our nation's cultural history. As the forces of narrow-minded cultural negativism fight to take the arts off the agenda of our government, we need our democratic Endowment for the Arts more than ever. We need a federal agency that can operate on a small budget, leave control in local hands and enrich the lives of millions of Americans without regard for politics, religion or cultural bias.

That's the kind of government we need more of, not less; it's the American way.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS

NEWS



A Federal agency advised by the National Council on the Arts
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20506

For further information contact:
Katherine Christie/Virginia Falck
202/682-5440 tel.

For Immediate Release
March 22, 1990

National Endowment for the Arts Chairman John Frohnmayer today reiterated his and the Endowment's position on art versus obscenity. He stated:

"For approximately the last six months, I have been Chairman of the Arts Endowment. Many of the complaints which are currently being aired about 'obscenity' with regard to Endowment funded art projects relate to actions taken prior to my appointment. The record shows that I am personally and unequivocally opposed to government funding of obscenities. I will be diligent that obscenity will not be funded by the Endowment. As I stated yesterday in my testimony to Congress:

'I and the National Endowment for the Arts oppose obscenity unequivocally. It is the antithesis of art. It is without soul. It conveys no message. It degrades humanity, and it sickens me.'

"In my testimony yesterday, I outlined 14 steps which I have undertaken to strengthen the panel process so that the citizen-experts (some 800 of them each year who come to the Endowment to recommend grants) might have adequate guidance both on the law and their responsibilities as panelists.

"I believe in a responsible Arts Endowment, which promotes only the finest art available in this country. I believe it is inappropriate for Congress to micro-manage the Endowment through additional legislation. Rather, we at the Endowment must act responsibly and reflect the broad range of American cultures, expertise and viewpoints.

"Art and obscenity are opposites. Obscenity will not be funded with taxpayers' money."

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date: April 11, 1990

FOR: GOVERNOR SUNUNU

FROM: ED ROGERS

- ☐ Action
- ☐ Your Comment
- ☐ Let's Talk
- ☒ FYI

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

April 10, 1990

Mr. Ed Rogers
Deputy Assistant to the President
and Executive Assistant to the
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Enclosed is the latest package of clippings -- editorials and columns -- regarding the latest developments in the ongoing debate over Federal funding of the arts. Also enclosed are: a Resolution by the Metropolitan Dade County Cultural Affairs Council and a Statement of Appreciation by the California Arts Council, both of which should be of interest.

We will continue to forward pertinent clippings as they become available.

Sincerely,

Jack Lichtenstein
Director
Office of Public Affairs

Enclosures

cc. John Frohnmayr
White House Office of Communications

Statement of Appreciation

At this meeting of March 28, 1990 the California Arts Council offers its profound appreciation to President George Bush for his opposition to censorship of the National Endowment for the Arts. We commend the President for recognizing the great value of the NEA and the fundamental importance of freedom of expression in the arts as in other venues of our society.

In our responsibilities to the arts, artists, and audiences of our state, we have seen the many positive effects of NEA practices, and the cultural benefits it makes possible. The Endowment's stress on excellence in and access to the arts not only preserves our country's highest cultural heritage, but also nurtures the creativity so needed by our citizenry. We praise the integrity and foresight of the President in standing up for this important cultural resource and defending it against those who, however well-meaning, would weaken it and undermine its mission.

For 25 years, the Endowment has supported the major cultural institutions of our nation, and a diversity of arts programming throughout the US. Quality in the arts has been the primary funding criteria, as it should be in our vigorous and pluralistic society. We are fortunate that our President recognizes the danger of censoring the arts, or of letting them become a tool of a particular political point of view.

We of the California Arts Council extend our gratitude and appreciation to President Bush for his wise decision to oppose any damaging restrictions to the National Endowment for the Arts.



METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY, FLORIDA



04 APR 1990



METRO-DADE CENTER

March 26, 1990

CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL
SUITE 625
111 N.W. 1st STREET
MIAMI, FLORIDA 33128-1964
(305) 375-4634

Kenneth R. Kahn
Executive Director

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the National Endowment for the Arts and its various programs supporting and stimulating arts activities across the United States are of extreme benefit to the public, promote creativity and vitality, help to stimulate economic growth at the national as well as local levels, and serve as fundamental components of support for the arts in thousands of communities nationwide; and

WHEREAS the arts yield immeasurable benefits to our nation's communities and citizens, including stimulating downtown revitalization, attracting corporate and business relocation, supporting and promoting increased tourism, fostering better communication among the vast cultures that comprise our country, presenting a broad range of views and perspectives from which individuals can make informed choices and establish strong values, and contributing to a well balanced and dynamic education curriculum which produces perceptive, creative and imaginative leaders and audiences of tomorrow; and

WHEREAS federal financial support received by the South Florida cultural community over the years through the National Endowment for the Arts has amounted to several million dollars, triggering many additional millions of dollars in matching support; whereas the methods of peer panel evaluation implemented by the National Endowment for the Arts in making allocations have consistently proven fair, equitable and appropriate for the past twenty-five years and have served as models for state and local arts agencies to ensure the proper distribution of public funds; and whereas freedom of expression is an inalienable right upon which the foundation of democracy is based and which must never be legislated or restricted in a free society;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE METROPOLITAN DADE COUNTY CULTURAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL that this Council unanimously urges support of the reauthorization of the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965, opposes the addition of any restrictive language to the National Foundation on the Arts and Humanities Act of 1965 in the reauthorization bill, supports increased appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum Services for Fiscal 1991 of the highest possible levels, and opposes the insertion of any restrictive language in the appropriations bills for the National Endowment for the Arts, the National Endowment for the Humanities or the Institute of Museum Services.

A. J. Barranco, Jr., Chairman

Kenneth R. Kahn, Executive Director

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Monday Morning, April 2, 1990

Section A

Page 10

Take Chance on Art

The sage of Lake Wobegon is right. If only 20 out of 85,000 federally funded arts projects have caused public outcries, the process that passes out Uncle Sam's money obviously is very conservative. Americans should be worried that their arts endowments aren't taking enough chances.

Instead, because a handful of exhibitions and works have deeply offended people, including some powerful U.S. senators, debate has erupted in Congress for the better part of a year over how to prevent federal support of obscene or otherwise offensive art.

Garrison Keillor, creator of Lake Wobegon, the little town that time forgot, told a Senate subcommittee that he wished the National Endowment for the Arts embarrassed itself more often by its support of questionable projects. The fact that it hasn't indicates "how timid and repressed the arts are."

That's a telling comment from a radio performer and author who has built a career on humorous tales of the white bread life and values of rural Minnesota. He could be called a Norman Rockwell of the airwaves, but that characterization does not take fair account of Mr. Keillor's subtle wit, insight and intellectual breadth. The point, though, is that it's hard to conceive his work deeply offending anyone.

The NEA debate has created at least one ripple in Utah. It was reported last month that a panel discussion of the issue, accompanied by the screening of two short films by Robert Mapplethorpe, had been delayed on the advice of Marcia Price, chairwoman of the Utah Arts Council. According to the account, she had suggested privately that the showing and forum, originally

scheduled for Feb. 8, was politically inopportune at that time because the council was seeking a \$2.3 million appropriation from the Legislature for an endowment.

An exhibition of homoerotic and sado-masochistic photos by the late Mr. Mapplethorpe in Washington, D.C., provided Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., with ammunition for his congressional battle to restrict federal funding of controversial art last summer. Though the films subsequently shown by the Utah Media Center last month covered different, comparatively innocuous subjects and were not part of the earlier controversy, Mapplethorpe's name alone apparently was enough to sound political alarms in Salt Lake City.

The incident illustrates how the congressional debate already has arts administrators running for political cover. That is a very odd thing in a society that supposedly cherishes free expression and tolerates unpopular, even offensive ideas as the price of freedom. Great art often has been greeted with outrage at its birth, particularly when it challenges popular norms of sexuality or politics. The historical examples are beyond counting.

The NEA often funds projects on the basis of proposals, otherwise federal support would be limited to completed works. It thereby encourages the creative process, making work possible that could not be undertaken without the NEA's help. Inevitably, some of the results will be scandalous or of dubious merit. But without risk, there is no growth. That's true of business, art and most other human endeavors.

The NEA should be encouraged to take more, not fewer, chances.

Opinion

8A Tuesday, April 3, 1990

Argus Leader

Sioux Falls, South Dakota
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Art endowment should not have restrictions

Some people are attacking the National Endowment for the Arts because they don't like a few NEA-sponsored exhibits.

If the American Family Association, Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina and some others have their way, the NEA would be curbed in what it would be allowed to sponsor or eliminated altogether. The **EDITORIAL** NEA, facing a tough budget fight in Congress, is scared by these conservative critics.

We are, too. We think those who want to dispose of the NEA are off base and particularly troublesome for South Dakota where the endowment contributes about \$450,000 to the arts each year.

The critics are focusing on about a dozen of the thousands of NEA's exhibits during the past few years. They don't think taxpayers should be paying for art they consider to be offensive, obscene or sacrilegious. They want Congress to cut or restrict funds to the NEA, thus endangering support for tens of thousands of artists.

We acknowledge that not all people are going to agree on what is in good public taste. And many people might find some exhibits in question to be offensive. That said, we strongly believe the unrestricted freedom of the arts needs government's financial and moral support.

The NEA helps struggling artists who might give up if they are not supported. The cost to the average taxpayer is only about 65 cents a year.

The NEA sends money to art

projects in every state. Its value in promoting and supporting artists in South Dakota is more important than in wealthier, more populated states where private benefactors and corporations underwrite the arts.

In South Dakota, all but 12 of 66 counties participated in NEA projects in fiscal 1989. These projects produced 4,440 events, attracted an audience of 1.8 million people and generated a combined \$5 million in local matching money.

In Sioux Falls, the NEA contributed about \$113,000 to the arts in 1989. It supported the South Dakota Symphony, the Sioux Falls Community Playhouse and the Civic Fine Arts Center. It enabled Augustana College to have artists in residence, and 12 artists-in-the-schools projects are funded by the NEA.

NEA's money isn't only for high-brow arts. It is responsible for folk festivals, Native American projects on and off the reservation, and touring programs that include blue-grass bands.

The NEA also helps young artists get started in South Dakota. It helps artists teach our students. It helps enrich life in small and large communities alike.

We hope that the members of Congress don't bend to the wishes of a few and that they continue to support the NEA with tax dollars. The censorship or elimination of the NEA because of a few objectionable exhibits is an affront to the arts. The government should support the arts with money and without restrictions.

Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty

EUGENE C. PULLIAM—1889-1973
Publisher 1944-1973
EUGENE S. PULLIAM, Publisher

"Let the people know the facts and the country will be saved."—Abraham Lincoln

Funding The Arts

The Bush administration wants nothing to do with controlling the content of art supported by federal tax dollars. In that, the administration is flat out wrong.

It should want nothing to do with using taxes to support art of any kind. But if federal money is going to be handed out in such a fashion, the people have the right not to be insulted, humiliated or outraged by recipients. Not so, says John E. Frohnmayer, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts.

Frohnmayer told a House subcommittee this week that the administration wants the life of the endowment extended another five years and it wants no restrictions placed on the art that the endowment may support.

That was a kick in the teeth for Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., and other lawmakers who have tried to ban federal support for such artistic obscenities as graphic homosexual photographs and crucifixes in urine and on-stage masturbation.

Maybe administration officials such as Frohnmayer see nothing wrong with subsidizing moral garbage. But every indication is that the average American taxpayer is offended and scandalized when his government uses his money to line the pockets of pretentious phony and perverts parading as serious artists.

The administration has been bamboozled by a noisy clique that wants public money but no public say-so in how it is used. That is not the way the game is played. In this instance, the game should be called off.

MAR 19 1990

BURRELLE'S

Local writers plan censorship protest

Letter-writing marathon to support arts rally in D.C.

By Nancy Scott
OF THE EXAMINER STAFF

A COUPLE of dozen Bay Area writers armed with computers are planning to mount a protest against censorship Tuesday — with a little help from a handful of popular restaurants and, if they are lucky, a lot of enthusiasm from sympathetic patrons.

The protest is billed as a letter-writing marathon on behalf of freedom of expression; it is being held in support of an "Arts Advocacy Day" rally in Washington, D.C., an event timed to coincide with Tuesday's Senate subcommittee hearing on reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts.

The letters, expressive of restaurant patrons' opinions on censorship, will be sent to the patrons' legislator of choice.

The marathon is being organized by the San Francisco Coalition for Freedom of Expression, in conjunction with a national coalition of writers organizations, in response to congressional attacks on the NEA — and in response to the restrictive language now being written into NEA grants.

That language has gone out in the form of a promissory letter to more than 4,000 artists who have requested grants from the NEA. To receive a grant, each applicant must promise to refrain from "depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts... which... do not have serious literary, artistic, political or

scientific merit."

While not so far-reaching as the amendment proposed last summer by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-S.C., which would have banned federal funding for any art considered obscene, pornographic, blasphemous or disrespectful of religion, the promissory letters have provoked outrage and alarm nationwide.

At the very least, enforcing the restrictions could turn out to be "an administrative art-cop nightmare,"

notes Liam Rector, director of Associated Writing Programs in Norfolk, Va.

Others cite historical analogies. Says Claire Isaacs, director of the San Francisco Arts Commission, "As a daughter of the McCarthy era, I recognize that these requirements that have been added to the NEA to get a grant are a first step toward the same kind of repressive and anti-creative attitude that really destroyed a lot of creative energy in the 1950s — and I can hear the echoes of Sen. Joe McCarthy roaring through the mouth of Sen. Helms."

Among the writers and artists scheduled to appear at Tuesday's marathon are: Maxine Hong Kingston, David Bedoya, Frances Phillips, Ann Powers and Nayland Blake.

The participating restaurants in Berkeley include Chez Panisse (11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.) and Cafe Pastoral (11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.). In San Francisco, writers will be at Greens at Fort Mason (2 to 5:30 p.m.) along with the San Francisco Mime Troupe, which is scheduled to perform from 3 to 5 p.m. Writers will be at Limbo (2 to 8 p.m.) where entertainment will be provided by Those Darn Accordions at 6 p.m. Artists and writers will also be available at the Galeria de La Raza in the Mission (noon to 6 p.m.).

Comment

The Arizona Daily Star

Founded 1877

Michael E. Pulitzer, Editor & Publisher

Susan J. Albright, Editorial Page Editor

EDITORIALS

Freedom and art

Bush realizes government shouldn't control content

George Bush's recent announcement of support for unfettered arts funding might simply have been a way to broaden Republican appeal. It might have been the result of reported personal persuasion on the part of two good friends. It doesn't really matter.

Whatever the spur, the president's decision to support reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts without controls on arts content represents much-needed high-level support for the critical notion that government has no business getting into the business of judging art.

The selection process for awarding grants must be conducted by people knowledgeable about the arts — and, most importantly, must be based on artistic considerations, not a moral agenda. Already, a chill has been put on the NEA and artists who seek its grants by restrictive legislation passed last year.

Sen. Jesse Helms, D-N.C., managed then to make political hay out of the NEA's processes by stirring up the Republicans' religious right. The debate stirred something more, too — the broader question of how public funds should be spent.

What an unfettered NEA will produce is accountability based on artistic values. In arts funding, that is the only kind of accountability that makes sense.

What Helms and the Rev. Pat Robertson want is accountability based on their own moral values. That is unacceptable in a free society.

If you want to support fine arts, you don't go to an artist and ask for something moral. You don't ask for something inoffensive. You give artists the resources they need to produce their own vision — a vision that might inspire lofty thoughts, or might just as well provoke.

Bush displayed some artistic sensibility along with political savvy when he said that while he was personally offended by some art that has been funded by the NEA, he nevertheless wanted government to stay out of the process. "I would prefer to have this matter handled by a very sensitive, knowledgeable man of the arts, (NEA Chairman) John Frohnmayr, than risk censorship or getting the federal government into telling every artist what he or she can paint or how she or he might express themselves."

He shows some understanding of the fact that whether art offends and whether it is serious art are two entirely different questions.

The NEA has developed sensible procedures for making decisions on artistic grants. As Frohnmayr has said, it is inappropriate for Congress to micro-manage that process. The arts can only flower when they are unfettered.

Of greater danger than a few pieces of publicly funded art judged by viewers to be offensive is the danger of a government that sets out to stifle its citizens' freedom of expression:

The Oregonian, March 28, 1990

wearily resigned itself to just about any idiocy that is placed before it. ... But the common man has his limits, and they are reached when some of these things emerge from the sanctuary of the padded cells of galleries and museums and are put in public places, where the public is forced to live with them and pay for them."

The limits of the common man may have been reached with news that NEA, directly, through a \$60,000 grant, and indirectly, through the New York State Council on the Arts, subsidized Chelsea's Kitchen Theatre, whose winter sensation was Annie Sprinkle.

Sprinkle, a veteran of 150 porn films, conducted for the Kitchen 12 live sex shows. Midway in the show, she stopped her act to tell the audience, "Usually I get paid a lot of money for this, but tonight it's government-funded."

Your tax dollars at work.

Syndicated columnist Patrick J. Buchanan also appears on the Cable News Network interview program "Crossfire."



BUCHANAN

can barely contain its secret delight at this public bonanza featuring a heroic scenario of free spirits troglodytes."

In short, they are not going away; they are not going to leave us alone. An alienated arts crowd is going to continue to provoke the American people, to get the attention of a public that has ignored it, to force to react in anger, so it can then cast itself in the self-satisfying role of victim and martyr in a fascist Amerika.

But we ought not to minimize what is at stake here. "Cult and culture go hand in hand," wrote art critic Hamilton Reed Armstrong. "Just as Indian art reflects its Buddhist or Hindu underpinning, and Romanesque and Gothic art projects Christian faith and hope, a Renaissance art reflects the humanism of the day, also much of 20th century art reflects underlying currents of what can only be described as the occult worldview."

Art manifests belief; and, before a new faith is established, the old must be torn down. Andreas Serrano's photo of a crucifix dipped in urine, Martin Scorsese's "The Last Temptation of Christ," Madonna's "Like a Prayer," are cut from the same bolt of cloth. Each is done to mock, shock, denigrate.

The arts crowd is after more than our money, more than an end to the congressional ban on funding obscene and blasphemous art. It is engaged in a cult

NEA's many achievements out

By LOIS ALLAN

When I was a first-grader in West Virginia a long time ago, I spent a lot of time looking at two pictures in the classroom, one above the blackboard and the other over the door. They weren't large enough or bright enough to see clearly, but they were the basis of hours of wonder and daydreaming.

The one above the door was a portrait of George Washington majestically rising out of the clouds. If the teacher knew, she didn't tell her students that Gilbert Stuart, the late 18th century American painter, hadn't finished the portrait, and the white, cloud area was where he left off. The other one showed three large, stiff women in long dresses bending over, picking up little bits of something. I couldn't tell what, in a big, already picked-over field.

Those two dark reproductions of Stuart's "George Washington" and Jean François Millet's "The Gleaners" were the closest I came to genuine art until I left West Virginia for college and the world beyond. The memory of them, obviously indelible, has haunted my thoughts recently in connection with the controversy around the National Endowment for the Arts.

Lois Allan of Aloha is a free-lance writer on art and

IN MY OPINION

Why is it that the primary question is about the rights of artists? The main issue is whether the public, especially children and people who live in rural areas, should be provided some access to music, theater, dance, literature and the visual arts. As one who never had it as a child, I am appalled that Congress is thinking of eliminating the access provided by the NEA.

In its 25 years, the NEA has awarded some 85,000 grants; of those, about 20 have aroused controversy. This is a record that ordinarily would be applauded. Instead, because of two recent exhibitions that would have gone mostly unnoticed without Sen. Jesse Helms' grandstanding, the NEA faces the possibility of severe restrictions or, worse, cancellation.

NEA's reauthorization, which is required every five years, will be voted on this year in Congress, probably before the summer recess. At the hearings preceding the vote, testimony surely will bring out the accomplishments that have ensured the endowment's existence during its first quarter-century. Yet, it is the outcry of "obscenity" that permeates the atmosphere and threatens to overshadow the accomplishments.

Although most NEA grants require matching funds to be raised by recipients, the endowment provides

Editorial:

EDITORIAL

Helms' censorship proposal is obscene

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President Bush's pledge last week not to seek restrictions on grants to the nation's artists is a welcome move amidst an otherwise ominous campaign to introduce federal censorship in the way funds are disbursed through the National Endowment for the Arts.

Speaking before Congress at a public hearing debating the five-year renewal of NEA funding, Bush's chief arts administrator John E. Frohnmayer made the long overdue promise, saying unequivocally he was speaking for the President himself.

Frohnmayer said, in effect, that while some NEA grants have supported art work and exhibits which some observers found objectionable or distasteful, the mere thought of legislative restrictions was abhorant to a nation which prides itself on free speech and expression.

This reaffirmation of free artistic expression could not have come at a better time, for lurking in this land of ours is a powerful group of conservatives led by none other than North Carolina's Jesse Helms who want to limit, curtail in some instances, federal money from supporting what they term "pornographic art."

Helms, who has consistently voted against every progressive piece of legislation dealing with civil rights, environmental issues, free speech, etc., has threatened to initiate an "investigation" into the NEA — a smokescreen if there ever was one designed to bring censorship to the entire NEA grant process.

Helms and others are calling for the restrictions based on a recent NEA

supported exhibit by Robert Mapplethorpe in which naked men were depicted striking sexual poses on their own and with one another.

To be sure, some viewers, Helms among them, found the material distasteful, even offensive. Many thought the work brilliant.

But Helms' negative response wasn't enough. He would ban such exhibits, using who knows what criteria other than his own sensitivities to determine what is or is not to be considered art. One can only imagine what would be acceptable to this man who once publicly championed the cause of the Ku Klux Klan.

Helms' stand on this issue smacks of a McCarthy-like rerun of the tragic suppression of the U.S. movie industry during the '50s. That repugnant chapter resulted in the wholesale condemnation of many artists' work because of their real or alleged political beliefs. It badly damaged a generation of filmmakers and scriptwriters.

Thankfully, those who oppose restrictions on artistic expression have some important heavyweights on their side, men and women like our own Sen. Claiborne Pell, and Anne G. Murphy, executive director of the American Arts Alliance, who has marshalled support from more than 50 members of the Senate vowing to oppose Helms' call for censorship.

Clearly this nation does not want another witch hunt aimed at our artists.

For art, like beauty, in our constitutionally protected society, truly means to be in the eyes of the beholder.

Bush a point of light in fight with bluenoses

By Robert S. Cauthorn
The Arizona Daily Star

After laboring to shed the wimp label, President Bush showed true spine last week in a move concerned more with principles than image.

There were no guns involved, no secret diplomatic missions, no chopping of firewood, no horseback riding cowboy hokey for the cameras. Bush did it by supporting the arts.

Last week, the White House recommended that Congress fund the National Endowment for the Arts without any restrictions with regard to content. A spokesman said the president feels the interests of the public are best served by keeping the government out of deciding what constitutes valid artistic inquiry.

The move places Bush in direct opposition to Jesse Helms and his right wing faction that last summer cowed Congress into barring the NEA from funding what they call pornographic and anti-religious art.

Bush's action, which seems the only reasonable position to take, is the most politically daring of his term. Helms might appear to some of the nation as a crazed yahoo. He is, after all, the apologist for dictators such as Chile's recently removed Augusto Pinochet. But as outrageous as Helms might be, he is powerful and persistent.

The Republican senator from North Carolina is an adept manipulator. When he introduced his NEA amendment last summer, Helms successfully convinced the better minds of Congress that every vote against him was a vote in favor of pornography. The larger issues of culture and the government's role in supporting it vanished as congressmen scrambled to prove to voters that they hated porn.

Although the House and Senate finally approved a watered-down version of Helms' amendment, they bought his line of reasoning. Now Helms is back for more and trying to marshal forces for a tougher bill to control the government's participation in the arts.

That's why the president's move last week was striking. The far right harbors profound doubts about Bush, and by standing up to them on the NEA the president enters what could be the political battle of the spring and summer.

Things are heating up in the debate. Last week Helms demanded that the General Accounting Office investigate the arts endowment. The senator maintains that even after the vote last summer, the NEA continued to fund "pornographic art." He went so far as to include an envelope with samples of the offending work. A note attached warned that the envelope should not be opened in the presence of women who, presumably, would swoon in the face of this terrible art. Country boy chivalry with a fascist spin.

A citizen pressure group has sprung up to support Helms. There's even a bill awaiting introduction in the House of Representatives that suggests abolishing the NEA outright.

All of this goes much deeper than the absurd movement to apply warning labels on rock albums. What Helms wants to do is control the tone and content of all of the nation's artists. The NEA amendment has a punitive aspect. It not only prevents public money from being spent to produce artwork that might offend conservative tastes: It penalizes institutions that presented such work in the past, even if the NEA did not fund the earlier art.

This is where the worst chilling effect of the amendment enters in. NEA money is vital to supporting art that is ambitious, serious and not necessarily commercial. By applying a litmus test of purity to any organization or artist who would apply for NEA money, the far right attempts to control the most serious artistic expression



Robert S. Cauthorn

If Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot," a penetrating challenge to religion, were written today, it is unlikely the NEA could fund it. Nor could the NEA safely fund the creation of Rodin's "The Gates of Hell" because of its earthy representation of Scripture. Picasso would be out because of the sexual bent of his work. His "Démolisseurs D'Avignon," a central painting in modern art, offers prostitutes to its audience. The list goes on and on.

NEA support for serious art is critical these days because powerful players in the art world have abdicated their role in promoting profound work. In fact, the bitter irony of the art world's anger over Helms and his cronies is that in the last decade, arts institutions have embarked on a program of self-censorship. Art museums, galleries, theaters, publishers and symphonies have largely abandoned work that does not have immediate commercial appeal.

Certainly commercial appeal matters for institutional survival. Yet in the past, arts institutions recognized their responsibility to support sincere work that had no immediate commercial attraction. Helms would censor for ideology: The art world censors for fashion. So wring their hands as they may, cultural mavens are not clean either. Certainly some of this debate stems from a problem the far right has with recent world events. With Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union loosening up, the far right finds its engines running out of fuel.

Now it must develop a domestic agenda and the NEA might be the first repressive salvo. Ironically, a Soviet crackdown in Lithuania might be the best thing that happened to the NEA, because it gives the extremists something else to worry about.

The dream of controlling artistic expression has gone on for ages; from the Council of Trent's prohibitions on iconography to the Nazis' attack on what they called "degenerate art." The Nazis, led by a failed watercolorist with a sad little moustache, hated most modern art and specifically the work of the idealist "Das Brücke" artists who delivered social criticism to the

See CENSORSHIP, Page 7B

Censorship

Continued from Page 5B

masses and dreamed of a just society.

Historically, all these efforts have failed. But what they have done in the meantime is cause personal suffering for artists and set cultural development back. Any culture or religion that needs to be protected from intellectual and artistic challenges is in deep trouble.

No one would say that the public should not have the right to be involved with how its money is spent on the arts. But a look at the NEA's track record in this regard demonstrates intense public involvement. Helms and his crew of blue-pencil censors aren't populists, they are thought police.

Coming down on the side of the arts, Bush surprised many with his boldness. It will be harder for Helms to bully a weak Congress with the threat of being pro-pornography and anti-religion if he has to include the president in this group.

Although it is possible this sad little episode in American history will fade, it is not likely. The pressure groups, new bills and calls for investigations indicate that Helms has focused his tiny brain on this issue. Because of that, Bush needs support from the public and lawmakers need to hear that constituents will not stand for restrictions. If these extremists have their way, the cost will be dear.

Tomorrow in Starlight: If Caravaggio were painting today, it is unlikely that he could be funded by the NEA. The paradox is that he endeavored to present biblical scenes in terms to which common people could relate.

MAR 20 1990

BURRELLE'S

Support arts to open up the mind

By Joan Murray

2/19/90

Today, March 20, is National Arts Advocacy Day, a day for demonstrating to Congress the need to continue and increase federal support for the arts.

It should also be an occasion for celebration — the 25th anniversary for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), whose 85,000 grants have fostered American culture and creativity in every state, assisted many institutions and artists, benefitted nearly every citizen.

But to my mind a day for arts advocacy should be unnecessary. If a nation cares about democratic ideals, individual freedoms, the quality of life of its citizens, the creativity and productivity of its work force, the image it projects to the world, and its legacy, that nation must make cultural support a priority.

HAS AMERICA done that? As a matter of fact, it falls behind the rest of the industrialized world.

For generations, Europeans have had nationally-sponsored theaters, dance companies and symphonies. Canadian support of its culture has many U.S. artists looking with envy across the border. And I've heard that businessmen in Japan may seek tax credits for donations to cultural programs in our country!

Our federal government spends \$516 million on a single Stealth bomber, \$171 million on its arts — 68 cents per taxpayer per year. It spends more on its military bands than on its people's arts.

Yet a recent Lou Harris poll found that 70 percent of Americans would pay an extra \$10 in federal taxes if it would be spent on the arts.

THEN WHY do some still question government funding for the arts?

Some people believe that government subsidy of the arts is an anomaly. Yet our government subsidizes science, agriculture, business, education, medicine, scholarly research, health, libraries, churches, parks, museums, historic sites, zoos, environmental centers, and other things. All, like the arts, benefit the the public welfare and quality of life.

Some people think the arts should "pay their own way." I like to think that part of my tax bill stimulates creativity at The Pyramid, Visual Studies, and Writers and Books — not merely to clean up oil spills and bail out junk bonds.

If we forced our cultural organizations and artists to survive by mass market standards, they would lose out to TV sitcoms, theme parks, stand-up comedians



Joseph Banks leads gospel choir of West Irondequoit, Wheatland-Chili and School of the Arts pupils, a part of the Shared Arts Collaborative program sponsored by Project UNIQUE and Arts for Greater Rochester, which receive NEA funds.

and rock shows. Soon these would be the culture by which the world would judge us, and by which our children and their children would be shaped.

I wouldn't want popular entertainment to replace the arts — nor would I want the arts to replace popular entertainment. Both are enriching to any society, but only with government support will the arts survive.

Some people believe government funding of the arts is some new and untried notion. But consider a few examples of government-supported art: the Pyramids of Egypt and the Pyramids of Mexico, the Parthenon and the Pantheon, Angkor Wat and the Alhambra, Chartres Cathedral and the Louvre.

Funding of the arts by governments large and small has been a fact since the first stirrings of civilization.

When our Founding Fathers chose a republic instead of a monarchy, patronage of the arts logically became public patronage. George Washington offered this

argument: "The Arts and Sciences essential to the prosperity of the State and to the ornament and happiness of human life have a primary claim to the encouragement of every lover of this Country and mankind."

If the 19th Century turned its back on America's early dream, it has been fulfilled in the 20th. It took shape under Roosevelt as the WPA, took encouragement from Kennedy, was realized as the NEA under Johnson and spread under Nixon into every community.

YET SOME people still do not feel "comfortable with the arts." They don't expect to understand everything in the sciences, yet they feel they are supposed to understand everything in the arts. They feel troubled when the messages aren't simple and comforting, decorative and stereotypical.

This is nothing new: the music of Liszt terrified some early listeners, the first performance of Stravinsky's *Rite of*

Spring erupted in rioting, Thomas Hardy's novels were denounced as indecent. It is the nature of the arts to be challenging, innovative and honest.

Other people feel that the arts are elitist, far removed from their own experiences. I grew up in the South Bronx, raised on television and on the streets. We thought ballet was sappy, theater snooty, classical music boring.

Actually, we were narrowminded. Thank goodness someone gave me a free ticket to the Bolshoi ballet. Thank goodness for the actors who performed *Raisin in the Sun* in our school.

Some people have not had such privilege. I heard one elected official say, "When I went to school there were no arts, no foreign language, no computers, and we did just fine." But I thought that the American dream was to give our children "the things we never had."

If America is to hold up its head and be competitive in the world, our children

will have to grow up comfortable with the arts, with cultural diversity and intellectual pursuits.

We've seen artists and intellectuals lead the fights for freedom in Eastern Europe, Latin America and China. We've read how Chinese students can quote our American poets, and how Japanese students link creativity to productivity.

But in America our youngsters have been discouraged from developing open attitudes and creative properties of mind. It's time to change this, in the interests of our national welfare.

OF THE 85,000 NEA grants, fewer than 20 have generated controversy. When Navy fighters collide, no one in Congress calls for abolishing the Navy. When a congressman is convicted of wrongdoing, no one calls for abolishing the Congress.

But attacks on the NEA deflect attention from the billions of dollars wasted in the HUD scandal, the S&L scandal, the military purchases scandal.

When legislators find they can't abolish the NEA, they try to diminish its prestige, impair its function, and undermine the public's trust in it. Last October many Congressmen voted for a bill that would "merely" prohibit government funding of "obscene art." Almost immediately, that bill was used in an attempt to withhold funding from an art show that made political statements.

The Congress of 1965, which authorized the NEA, attached a warning that the government must "under no circumstances attempt to direct artistic content." That's a wisdom worth preserving.

IN ADDITION to the arguments I've offered about the value of the arts to a productive and free society, there are a host of practical, dollar-and-cents persuasions for supporting them.

But whatever persuades you, I would urge you to take a moment today, National Arts Advocacy Day, and phone or write the local office of your congressman and our two U.S. senators. Thank them for their past support, and tell them that

you favor increased funding for the NEA and guaranteed freedom for the arts in America.

Joan Murray is a poet and 1989 NEA Fellow; she represents individual artists for the New York State Arts and Cultural Coalition.



Murray

Editorials

Jesse on the offensive

Hark! The distinctive cry of the Bluenosed Busybody:

Because of the nature of the enclosed material, I urge that great care be taken to assure that your women associates not be exposed to the material.

With this chivalrous caveat, Senator Jesse Helms formally asked Comptroller General Charles Bowsher of the Congressional General Accounting Office to make a federal case out of government support of the arts. Helms asked that the GAO investigate grant-giving by the National Endowment for the Arts since last fall. Helms says he is "deeply concerned about the NEA's apparent indifference to enforcing the congressional ban on funding obscene art."

Just what horrors Helms enclosed with his letter to Bowsher we don't know. But it's customary with censors to study the filth closely and share it with others of like mind — always taking great care, of course, to guard the sensibilities of chaste womanhood.

Finding filth is a thankless job, but somebody has to do it, apparently.

It's also a lonely job for North Carolina's senior senator, now that the Bush administration has come out against wrapping the NEA's appropriation in the red tape of censorship. If the administration gets its way, the strings attached to NEA's money last fall will unravel in September. "I believe in accountability, and I believe this is a responsible agency," NEA Chairman John Frohnmayer told Congress Wednesday. It was the administration's way of saying it trusts the arts agency to be sensible.

That's no consolation to Sen. Helms and a raft of self-anointed guardians of public taste who want to remodel NEA in their own image. Spurred on by a few well-publicized instances of NEA underwriting that

Arts grants again

supported erotic art, they have exaggerated the agency into a conspiracy to destroy American morals.

Defenders of the endowment have not helped matters by taking an unyielding — and unrealistic — position in favor of absolute license. Their rhetoric has ignored the essential distinction between artistic freedom and the circumscribed freedom of those accepting public subsidy. Personal freedom of expression is an absolute right in America; the dole is not.

It's not essential that we give tax money to an NEA for support of the arts, but an American consensus supports the idea. Perhaps this recognizes that over the centuries art of lasting value has usually been produced under patronage. It goes without saying that any system of patronage will also yield forgettable art.

A system of grants to artists cannot possibly control the outcome with absolute precision. What Americans have a right to ask is that those who dispense the taxpayers' money do so with a national conscience and a discriminating eye — not to avoid controversy at all costs, but to know the difference between controversial and faddish.

Over its history, NEA has given thousands of grants, only a handful of which have provoked complaints. That's an acceptable margin of error.

Not acceptable is Sen. Helms' attempt to waste still more federal funds and manpower on a pointless and silly GAO investigation of NEA grants. If the senator wants to collect and distribute bad art and erotica on his own, that's his right. Let the NEA pass out grants to artists and save the GAO investigations for the con artists.

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BURRELLE'S

PC

Bush joins battle for arts freedom

Defenders of artistic expression picked up a new, and very important, supporter the other day — George Bush.

The president's strong statement regarding funding for the National Endowment for the Arts was a pleasant surprise to those who have been fighting off attacks by the likes of Sen. Jesse Helms, and undoubtedly dismaying to the North Carolina senator and his ultra-conservative supporters.

The issue has been festering for almost a year. It was triggered by two photo exhibits, supported in part by NEA funds, which included a few works with homoerotic and sacrilegious themes.

Helms and Co. leaped to the attack, demanding an end to public funding of the arts or at least restrictions on the contents of works supported by the NEA. They didn't win the battle but succeeded in adding restrictions on funding of art which could be considered obscene.

* * *

That set the stage for this year's debate, a much more important one because it involves renewing the very existence of NEA for another five years.

The arts community has been confident it would get the renewal, but it wasn't sure what kind of restrictions might be tagged on.

Thanks to Bush's strong statement, there now is hope the answer will be: none.

John F. Frohnmayer, chairman of the arts endowment, spelled out the president's position in a hearing on the renewal legislation conducted by the House subcommittee on post-secondary education.

"After much careful thought and discussion, it is our conclusion that the legislation proposed here, which contains no content restrictions, will best serve the American public," he said.

Thus the administration not only supports renewal of the agency, it opposes continuation of the one-year restriction imposed last year.

That position is in interesting contrast to the criticism by Republican leaders last year of Massachusetts Democrats who said pretty much the same things Bush says now.

* * *

Bush's statement is heartening news, which we hope leads to the end of a time-consuming debate over an issue that has been blown far out of proportion.

In the entire existence of the NEA, some 80,000 grants have been awarded. Of them, no more than 25 have been controversial.

Yet Helms and his ilk would have us believe that the entire moral structure of the nation is under attack.

The American Family Association, for example, is outraged that the NEA gave grants to three lesbian writers. The AFA apparently would like grants to be made on the grounds of life style.

How silly. As Frohnmayer pointed out, just because someone is gay doesn't mean the art that person makes is going to break the law.

The creation of great art has nothing to do with one's sexual preference. Nor is eroticism necessarily obscene.

The NEA has a proven system to determine its grant-giving. It has worked with little criticism for many years.

Who, other than zealots like Jesse Helms, would rather have decisions made by politicians rather than art experts?

That's the real issue — not what the decision is, but who decides. We vote for the experts.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

Date: April 9, 1990

FOR: GOVERNOR SUNUNU

FROM: ED ROGERS

- ☐ Action
- ☐ Your Comment
- ☐ Let's Talk
- ☒ FYI

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

April 4, 1990

Mr. Ed Rogers
Deputy Assistant to the President
and Executive Assistant to the
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Chairman Frohnmayer has asked that I forward to you copies of editorials regarding the President's March 23 statement on the National Endowment for the Arts.

Enclosed are five editorials which appeared in the days following the President's remarks. I will see that you get additional editorials as they become available from our clipping service (which is usually two to three weeks behind) or from our friends around the country.

Please call me in the meantime should you need anything more.

Sincerely,

Jack Lichtenstein
Director
Office of Public Affairs
(202) 682-5570

Enclosures

cc. John Frohnmayer
White House Communications Office

The Washington Post

AN INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPER

The President on Arts Funding

THE SENATE begins hearings today on the issue that was last summer's longest-running sensation: the matter of what restrictions, if any, should be placed on federally funded art. But the script so far has unfolded with one major difference—an explicit stance by the White House against any legislation that would impose such restrictions through Congress.

The president's budget first telegraphed this position when it offered no proposed restrictions—and a small budget increase—in its five-year reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts, which became the target of fierce attacks last summer for grants to artists Andres Serrano and Robert Mapplethorpe. When asked about the issue at a press conference last Friday, the president went further. He answered that he was "deeply offended by some of the filth that I see into which federal money has gone . . . but I would prefer to have this matter handled by a very sensitive, knowledgeable man of the arts, [NEA head] John Frohnmayer, than risk censorship or getting the federal government into telling every artist what he or she can paint or how she or he might express themselves."

This, together with the budget, stakes out a clear and measured position: to object to certain uses to which NEA money has gone, and to

accept the government's right to make such objections, and also to believe that Congress is the wrong body and broad legislation the wrong vehicle through which to make them. There are better ways to make such distinctions, ways that do not threaten whole categories of subject area or drastically narrow artists' scope. The arts endowment's chairman, John Frohnmayer, has testified before a House subcommittee on ways in which the endowment itself can become more public and responsive in its decisions, including opening the deliberations of some selection panels to the public; several state councils do this already.

When the Senate last summer overwhelmingly supported a proposal by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) to impose sweeping restrictions on federally funded art, passing it by voice vote without debate in a near-empty chamber, many lawmakers later said they had acted out of fear that any attempt to protect the endowment would be used to label them pro-pornography in attack ads at home. What they and their House counterparts lacked was credible political cover for voting their convictions, and that protection is what President Bush has now given them by his carefully modulated statement.

The New York Times

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Mr. Bush's 'Big Tent' for Art

That he has a passion for country-and-Western music is all that most Americans know about President Bush's esthetic leanings. This week, however, they found out something more, and better. In opposing Senator Jesse Helms's proposals to hamstring the National Endowment for the Arts, Mr. Bush proved himself to be a friend to all artists.

Last summer Mr. Helms decided to insure that the endowment would never again subsidize art that offended public (i.e., his) taste. Several arts grants had raised the Senator's ire, but none more so than the grant to a retrospective of Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs.

Congress rejected his proposal to bar Federal money to "promote, disseminate or produce obscene or indecent material" and to prohibit grants for artwork that "denigrates, debases or reviles a person, group or class of citizens. . . ." But it also introduced the well-known camel's nose.

This was a mild but potentially mischievous

law barring funding for material that "may be considered obscene . . . and which, when taken as a whole, does not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value." Just how mischievous was shown a few months later when the new N.E.A. Director, John Frohnmayer, rescinded and then reawarded a grant to a New York art show that focused on AIDS.

In refusing to endorse restrictions on the contents of federally funded arts programs, the Administration is not endorsing obscenity. It is placing its faith in a process by which members of the arts community pass on grant applications in their respective fields. Those juries have doubtless made errors, and will continue to do so.

A civilized society can live with such mistakes. But it can't tolerate the loss of a process skillfully legislated to insulate art from politics. Now, for the arts, the President is showing that his Administration can be what he calls his party, a "big tent."

The New York Times

Saturday, March 24, 1990 page 11

Bush Notes 'Filth' but Rejects Censors

WASHINGTON, March 23 (Reuters) — President Bush said today that some federally financed art exhibits included filthy, blasphemous and sacrilegious material, but he nonetheless rejected Government censorship of the arts.

"I don't know of anybody in the Government or a Government agency that should be set up to censor what you write or what you paint, or how you express yourselves," Mr. Bush said at a news conference.

The Administration's opposition to legislation that would restrict the content of federally financed art programs has drawn criticism from

right-wing Republicans.

Without specifying which exhibits he was referring to, Mr. Bush said: "I am deeply offended by some of the filth that I see into which Federal money has gone, and some of the sacrilegious, blasphemous depictions that are portrayed by some to be art. So I will speak strongly out, opposed to that."

"But I would prefer to have this matter handled by a very sensitive knowledgeable man of the arts, John Frohnmayer, than risk censorship or getting the Federal Government into telling every artist what he or she can paint, or how she or he might express themselves."



"USA TODAY hopes to serve as a forum for better understanding and unity to help make the USA truly one nation."

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DEBATE

Shield the arts from political censors

Amateurs are masquerading as art critics. They don't know art, but they know what they don't like.

From Congress to the clergy, these amateurs insist that they know what bad art is. Not surprisingly, bad art turns out to be any art they don't like.

What they don't like, they don't want you to support. They want no government money to go to "objectionable" art. They want to tell you what is acceptable.

Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, the Rev. Donald Wildmon of the American Family Association, the writer across this page, and others don't like work like Robert Mapplethorpe's and Andres Serrano's. Last year, a handful of photographs in their exhibits, funded by the National Endowment for the Arts, raised a ruckus.

That was all the evidence the critics needed to convict the NEA of funding obscenity. That was all they needed to demand restrictions on all government funds for art.

These critics say they support good taste, but they really support censorship. They use smear tactics and misleading ads to convince people that the NEA is in business to fund filth unfit for public consumption.

But very few NEA projects — 10 or so images out of a million funded — have aroused any controversy. That hardly qualifies the endowment as a smut peddler.

Most NEA funding goes to projects that wouldn't get the attention they deserve without public money.

► Like the Newport, Ore., arts center that teaches creativity to latch-key kids.

► Like Jack Kritzer, a poet in Sioux Falls, S.D., who teaches fourth-graders to appreciate poetry.

► Like the Boston Museum of Fine Arts' exhibition of 120 Renoir paintings, many never seen before in the USA.

► Like Ray Hicks of Banner Elk, N.C., an eighth-generation backwoods storyteller who may be the last of his line.

The endowment already restricts its grants to artists or works that have "artistic merit." That means that obscenity is out automatically, since the Supreme Court has said that obscenity has no artistic merit.

That standard is high enough to satisfy most of us. It's high enough to satisfy President Bush.

How many of us would have embraced Picasso as a genius? Or Walt Whitman? Or Michelangelo? Probably very few. They were all reviled for blasphemy or obscenity.

Most of us look at the unfamiliar with suspicion.

We can learn to appreciate great art. But to do that, we have to be exposed to it. Fewer of us would be exposed to art in its many forms if the government didn't encourage it.

The art censors would like to restrict it to what's popular and uncontroversial. If they had their way, a Jackie Collins would get money, but a James Joyce wouldn't have. More elevator music, less Mahler.

In making those choices, the NEA should be careful to balance its responsibility to the public with the artist's right to free expression.

Even a good eye can mistake garbage for greatness every once in a while.

But if the amateur art critics have their way, the risk is that they'll toss out greatness as garbage.

San Francisco Chronicle

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EDITORIALS

Arts Grants

A SURE WAY to kill creativity in the arts is to make what is produced subject to arbitrary political control. So the White House deserves full credit for sending Congress a proposal to renew federal arts financing — in the form of a five-year extension of the National Endowment for the Arts — without any restrictions on subject matter.

There is no doubt about the encouragement federal funds can give to struggling artists, or about the contribution this money makes to strengthening this country's cultural diversity. Obviously the endowment does not intend to finance pornography, as some critics charge. But creativity involves risk-taking and running against the accepted stream of things. Such freedom must not be stifled.

"Art," as NEA chairman John Frohnmayer noted, "is like research. It is trying new things, taking risks, pushing boundaries. Not all art succeeds. To not do research is to stand still and be bypassed by the rest of the world."

THERE WILL doubtless be continued resistance to the Bush administration's proposal, and it is unfortunate that debate too often degenerates into simplistic sloganeering: obscenity vs. censorship, that kind of the thing. The issue is much more complex. This White House proposal, with its broad, unfettered approach, will serve the American public well.

Bush on censorship

We commend President Bush for his strong stand in defense of artistic freedom for recipients of National Endowment for the Arts grants.

Mr. Bush took the truly conservative position recently when he opposed the efforts of such presumed conservatives as Jesse Helms to withhold NEA grants from artists whose works members of Congress and others find offensive.

Upholding the freedom of expression guaranteed in the Constitution is the truly conservative position. Those who would impose official restraints on artistic expression have, wittingly or otherwise, taken a radical position.

Mr. Bush confessed to be "deeply offended by some of the filth" that passes for art and is supported by federal grants. Many other Americans undoubtedly would share his view.

But, said Mr. Bush, "I don't know of anybody in the government . . . that should be set up to censor what you write, or what you paint, or how you express yourself."

The problem with setting government standards for art is that it would stifle creativity in the same manner that government restrictions in communist or formerly communist countries have stifled art. The predictable results are works lacking in originality or pertinence or works simply crafted

to keep the government money flowing.

It is also worth remembering that what is offensive or shocking to many in one era can be acceptable in another. Indeed, what is offensive to one person might not be to another in any given era. That, of course, goes to the heart of the great difficulty of reaching a common, truly workable definition of obscenity.

Havelock Ellis, who was not a stranger to controversy, wrote that "without an element of the obscene there can be no true and deep aesthetic or moral conception of life." But it is not necessary to declare an official definition of obscenity — or profanity or sacrilege or whatever else might upset particular segments of our diverse citizenry — to provide grants in support of the arts in general.

The administration's position on federal grants was outlined by John Frohnmayer, NEA chairman, at a congressional hearing. The NEA has been under fire from Sen. Helms, who never seems to tire of trying to dictate moral standards for the nation, and others who insist it is disregarding a congressional ban on financing obscene art.

Perhaps inadvertently, Sen. Helms has delineated a central risk in government financing of the arts: Sooner or later, someone in the government is going to try to influence the results.