

Originally Processed With FOIA(s):
1998-0004-F[1]; 2002-0243-F

FOIA Number:
S

FOIA MARKER

**This is not a textual record. This is used as an
administrative marker by the George Bush Presidential
Library Staff.**

Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files

OA/ID Number: 29156
Folder ID Number: 29156-007

Folder Title:
1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	15	25	2	1

b
NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506

A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts



THE CHIEF of STAFF
has seen

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.

Don't let a few spoil funding for arts

2197P
GERALD ELLIOTT



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 of 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 yeoman 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

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

2143E
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 tell "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 evangelist, 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 a picture of a nude youth as "one of the nicer ones" in the 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 (tee-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 touts 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 feet have trod these rugs, Mel.

Here's the topper. You can hardly drive past a bus 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.

Jeanette 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 the works 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 or minus 3%.

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 CHIEF of STAFF
has seen

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

DATE: April 24, 1990

NOTE FOR: ANDY CARD
DAVID BATES

The President has reviewed the attached, and it is forwarded to
you for your:

information

☒

action

☐

The President's note to Susan Zeder,
which I've sent to John Frohnmayer,
may well do more to clarify WH views
than any of the measures we were dis-
cussing this morning.

Thank you.


James W. Cicconi
Assistant to the President
and Deputy to the Chief of Staff
(x-2702)

cc: Chief of Staff

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

April 23, 1990

Dear Susan:

Thank you for that letter of April 20. I appreciate your support for my stand.

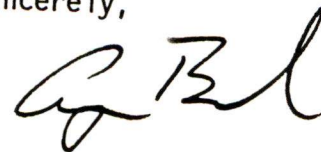
I've got to confess, however, that some of the works that have been funded with federal money are so gross and so offensive, that I can certainly understand the criticism that has come our way. I needn't describe the so-called works of art that offend me, and that I am sure would offend all the American people. But suffice it to say that any reasonable people would find them unredeeming.

Having said that, I will continue to oppose censorship, but will certainly encourage Chairman Frohnmayer. I am determined to preserve freedom, but am also determined to cut down on funding for pure filth and works that offend the religious sensibilities of so many people.

Good luck in all you are doing. I will continue to support the NEA, although given the size of our deficit, money is more and more of a problem.

Your Dad is going great! Warmest best wishes.

Sincerely,



Ms. Susan L. Zeder
2705 Spring Green Drive
Lutz, Florida 33549

Suzan L. Zeder
2705 Spring Green Dr.
Lutz, Florida 33549

President George Bush
The White House
Washington, D.C.

April 20, 1990

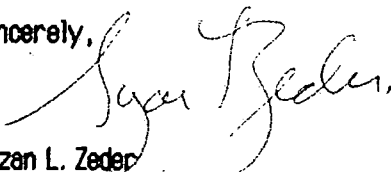
Dear President Bush,

For the past three years I have served on the Theatre Panel for the National Endowment for the Arts. In that time it has been my privilege to participate in the peer review panels which recommend grants for hundreds of theatre companies and fellowships to playwrights. As a panel member and an American citizen, I am deeply grateful for your recent statements in support of the NEA, and for your opposition to the kind of restrictive language reflected in the Helms Amendment. Be assured that the artists of this nation cheered your stand!

I believe that you have placed your confidence wisely in Chairman Frohnmayer, and I was very pleased with your support of the peer panel review process. I can tell you from personal experience that panel recommendations are very carefully considered along federal guidelines which stress artistic excellence, cultural diversity, and regional and national significance. It's a shame that the current controversies over obscenity and censorship have all but eclipsed the true portrait of the enormous positive impact that the NEA has had in cities and small towns all over this country. Federal funding of the arts is of vital importance to the cultural well being of the nation, not just for the monetary impact, but as the ignition which sparks your thousand points of light.

Please find enclosed a resolution passed at the recent meeting of the Professional Theatre Companies Panel in Washington. I join with my fellow panelists in sincere thanks for your support. Please continue to be in the vanguard of this issue. The arts are the footprints of civilization; they are the chroniclers of our past, the reflectors of the present, and the heralds of the future. The NEA and the artists of this nation need your support at this critical time.

Sincerely,



Suzan L. Zeder

STATEMENT TO THE CHAIRMAN

1990 Professional Theater Companies Panel

March 31, 1990

The Companies Panel of the Theater Program of the National Endowment for the Arts, seeking to represent the artistic, geographical, and racial richness as well as variety of the country, hereby resolves to applaud the President of the United States and the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts for:

- their endorsement of the N.E.A.'s contribution to the cultural fabric of American life;
- their continued recognition of the integrity of the peer panel process by which artists are recommended for funding; and
- their rejection of the proscriptive language recently added to N.E.A. legislation, which stifles the free speech of artists and creates a climate of fear that is anathema to the creation of art.

We also applaud the Chairman's endorsement of the need for substantially increased funding for the N.E.A. to expand even further its demonstrable success in enriching the cultural life of the nation.

Therefore, we encourage all people to publically and vocally oppose censorship in any form and support artistic freedom and excellence.

Panel Statement
March 31, 1990
Page 2

Sincerely,

The Members of the 1990 Professional Theater Companies Panel

David Chambers
Russell Vandenbroek

Sgar Tzedler

Michael Bell
Bany Huv

Michelle Carney
Garland Wright

Rodger D. O'Leary
Marshall Jackson

John Bell
Frank Jacobson
Eldon Egan

Dudley Cook
Samuel Woodhouse
Mark Lamos

NEA THEATER PROGRAM

1990 PROFESSIONAL COMPANIES PANEL

David Chambers, Panel Chair
Director/Professor
Yale Repertory Theatre
Box 1903A, Yale Station
New Haven, CT 06520-7434
(203) 432-1515

Rodrigo Duarte Clark
Artistic Director
El Teatro de la Esperanza
1292 Potrero Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 695-1410

Dudley Cocke
Director
Roadside Theater
306 Madison Street
Whitesburg, KY 41858
(606) 633-0108

John Dillon
Artistic Director
Milwaukee Repertory Theater
108 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202
(414) 224-1761

Sheldon Epps
Freelance Director
165 Van Buskirk Road
Teaneck, NJ 07666
(201) 833-2841

Michael Fields
Co-Artistic Director
Dell'Arte Players Company
P.O. Box 816
Blue Lake, CA 95525
(707) 668-5663

Michele Garza
Managing Director
East West Players
4424 Santa Monica Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90029
(213) 660-0366

Barry Grove, Co-Chair
Managing Director
Manhattan Theatre Club
455 West 16th Street, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10011
(212) 645-5590

Marsha Jackson
Co-Artistic Director
Jomandi Productions
1444 Mayson Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30324
(404) 876-6346

Frank Jacobson
President and
Chief Executive Officer
Scottsdale Cultural Council
7383 Scottsdale Mall
Scottsdale, AZ 85251
(602) 994-2301

Mark Lamos
Artistic Director
Hartford Stage Company
50 Church Street
Hartford, CT 06103
(203) 525-5601

Russell Vandenbroucke
Artistic Director
Northlight Theatre
2300 Greenbay Road
Evanston, IL 60201
(312) 869-7732

Sam Woodhouse
Producing Director
San Diego Repertory Theatre
79 Horton Plaza
San Diego, CA 92101
(619) 231-3586

Garland Wright
Artistic Director
The Guthrie Theater
725 Vineland Place
Minneapolis, MN 55403
(612) 347-1100

Page 2

Suzan Zeder
Playwright
2705 Spring Green Drive
Lutz, FL 33549
(813) 949-4950

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
01. Memo	From John Frohnmayer to David Bates Re: Karen Finley (1 pp.)	4/6/90	P 5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
(Document Follows)
By JP (NLGB) on 5/12/05

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
(b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
(b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
(b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
(b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
(b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
(b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
(b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506

A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts



file

✓
April 6, 1990

MEMORANDUM TO DAVID Q. BATES, JR.
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
AND SECRETARY TO THE CABINET

ANDREW H. CARD, JR.
ASSISTANT TO THE PRESIDENT
AND DEPUTY TO THE CHIEF OF STAFF

FROM:

JOHN E. FROHNMAYER
CHAIRMAN

This is just a heads up on another grant which is already in the pipeline and which may generate some negative press. Karen Finley will be appearing at The Kitchen in New York starting this weekend. I have not seen her show, but I understand that it is an aggressive, confrontational approach to many social issues, most of which deal with what in her view is suppression of women.

I attach some reviews from the Walker Center in Minneapolis. From all appearances, this show is not obscene, and, indeed, one of its primary targets is obscenity which is denigrating to human beings. Unlike some others, this show is defensible on its artistic merit, and the Endowment did fund it.

Please let me know if I can provide additional information.

Karen Finley bangs into emotions in a wild, passionate attack

By Mike Steele/Staff Writer

Instead of banning Karen Finley, governments might be well-advised to hire her in the name of community mental health. She's a release valve for the alienated, an exorcist of sexual demons, a releaser of cathartic emotions in an era of stuffed feelings, a primal scream arising from the eerie quiet of denial.

Finley, the first performer in Walker Art Center's Cultural Infidels series, is a singular, unexpected phenomenon. None of the advance hype, most of it dealing with obscenity, nudity, pornographic images, the smearing of food over her body or the rawness of her presentation, prepares you for the sheer, committed passion of her performance, or its healing qualities.

She bounces on stage, happy as a kid at a picnic, demure in a Plain Jane frock, disarmingly fresh and innocent. "I'm so happy to be in Minneapolis at the Walker," she chirps, giggly as a schoolgirl. "I'm having such fun performing."

A review

Then, before her show begins, she tosses out a pointed poem called "It's Only Art" about censorship, Sen. Jesse Helms, museums filled with empty frames and people ultimately having no opinions, no knowledge and no feelings.

She wryly apologizes for her language (a few S words, the F word, a couple of C words, a P word and what sounded like a Z word that may have dual meanings) and even seemed a little surprised to hear them tumble from her mouth.

Then she leaves the stage and enters again to start the real show, called "We Keep Our Victims Ready." The show may be a departure for her, less sensational, more openly political, delivered through poetry. It's almost a jazz rap poetry, a '90s incarnation of Allen Ginsberg, a postmodern "Howl." Her imagery is compelling, often playful, but evocative, angry, pointed, sometimes sentimental but in a nonsentimental context.

We Keep Our Victims Ready

Who: Written and performed by Karen Finley, presented by Walker Art Center as part of its "Cultural Infidels" series.

Where: Walker Art Center.

When: Today at 10 p.m., preceded at 8 p.m. by two films.

Tickets: \$8; call 375-7622.

Review: With a street preacher's verve, Finley bares her body and her soul to attack sexism, homophobia, racism and other "isms" that create a culture of victims. It's a poetic and deeply passionate, liberating work.

She's not a conceptualist, not an art world performance artist. She directs some of her barbs, in fact, at the nonemotionalism of much performance art. Her attack is direct, forceful, given in a mesmerizing, street-smart rhythm in which stream-of-consciousness observations tumble out in cascades of

pain, fury, fear and, often, compassion.

Her theme is victimization, especially woman as victim, woman as underclass. It's tough stuff, less concerned with judging the dysfunction than the cause of the dysfunction — the waitress with no insurance, no maternity leave, lousy pay, five kids, valued by no one; "I deserve the right to drink!" she screams.

She casually peels off her dress and pours gelatin into her bra. Then she pulls her bra off, letting the gelatin plop to the floor. Bare-breasted, she begins a long, dazzlingly angry poem about the ownership of women's bodies — "a woman's body is only to conceive children that will have the father's name on them."

She roars through bulimia, appetite, waste, abuse, suicide. She slathers chocolate over her body, then pours sprinkles over that. Like a street evangelist, her language charges forth, full of repeats, emphasis, color, reaching a state of near rant as she deals ironically

with love-hate, pleasure-pain — "I love you, leave me." Or, "It's better to feel abuse than nothing at all."

She sticks blobs of bean sprouts over her body and calls it sperm as she begins comparing the Nazis to those who condemn AIDS patients today. She delivers a moving, heartfelt poem about death in which anger is transformed into real hurt.

She makes her points by angrily standing convention on its head. Forgive, we're taught. Finley doesn't want to forgive. A naked body is pornographic, we're told. Finley's body, covered in chocolate, sprinkles falling like confetti as she fires out her insights, is de-erotized. Her language — obscene, strong, infantile, beautiful, provocative — is so overscale, so hyperbolic, so beyond literature, it rolls over you, banging into your emotions even before it is mediated by the mind.

But overriding the negative in her performance is yearning, an ache to have love without possession, to fill the hollowness of life, to move beyond the deadening, emotionless passivity of present culture and free its victims. Feel she screams.

She certainly isn't the first to war against sexism, homophobia, racism, but seldom has anyone thrown themselves into the battle with such painful vulnerability, such open grieving, such palpable emotion.

"I wish I could relieve you of your suffering, your pain, your death," she says. But she ends, "Silence at the end of the phone." What's shocking and obscene, she's finally saying, is that those capable of seeing refuse to see. It's easier to find victims than to confront oneself, easier to be a victim than to risk freedom.



Karen Finley, WE KEEP OUR VICTIMS READY, performance view

KAREN FINLEY AT WALKER ART CENTER

by Judith Lewis

JANUARY 11, 12, 13

In a downtown Minneapolis strip bar, men pay money to squirt oil on the bare skin of wrestling women. The men often wear suits; the women wear as little as the law allows. No one seems to expect these women to say anything memorable. They are, in a sense, already spoken for, by popular fantasies about women as playthings, as being sexual and physical yet never vulnerable. And everyone involved believes this scenario falls within the parameters of normal behavior in Western society.

But Karen Finley is not so civilized. In a Friday night performance of *We Keep Our Victims Ready*, Finley read her script

ARTPAPER

R

E

V

I

E

W

S

wrong—or pretended to—and removed her jello-filled bustier too soon, letting the jello splat on the floor. "Oh shit," she says, covering herself with a towel. "It's one thing to be naked when you're performing, but when you're not meant to be, it's a little weird."

When Finley performs, she makes it clear that she suffers and loves and wants to be liked. When audience members try to slip out—for whatever reason—she follows after them, visibly shaken: "Hey what's the matter, what's the problem?" When she bares her breasts, as she inevitably does, she gives herself no character to hide behind. She is exposed, aware of her nakedness, aware of her audience's reaction to her body. And she turns that reaction on its head.

It's one thing for men to manipulate a woman's image; it's another thing entirely when a woman does it to herself. Finley uses her body like a canvas on which she creates images to enhance her poetry—images of oppression, degradation, and sometimes startling beauty. What's upsetting about her performance has nothing to do with obscenity—in fact, it's hard to find anything obscene in her patently non-erotic act. If there's any reason to ban her, it's that she dismantles the rules that keep society in order, that keep women passive and repentant. Finley knows well that an angry woman is a threat to that system: "No wonder our female psyche is invoked to be as boring as possible," she shouts. "It's survival of the female species."

The furious ritual Finley eventually unleashes conflicts with the impression she gives when she first bounds on stage, wholesome and friendly. She wears a blue chiffon-over-taffeta dress, the kind you can get at second-hand stores for \$20. A bright red scarf winds around her upswept hair, matching her oversized rubber boots. She enters, stares at her audience for 15

seconds or so—an eternity in stage silence—and disappears behind a screen.

Finley appears again, but this time with something to say. "I'd like to turn the Walker into an after-hours club," she declares. "I think it would be a great after-hours club—not that it's a great museum." Once she's "gathered contact with her audience," as she puts it, Finley settles into a rocking chair and segues her rapport into serious catharsis. Her voice switches registers; she begins to bellow in long, quivering tones: "I went into the print room/I went into the print room and they had 19 prints by men and one by a woman." She launches an opening poem, speculating on the consequences of Jesse Helms's culture squad were it to take its inclinations to their logical extreme ("They locked up all the toilets because someone might think they're art/Charlton Heston did TV shows 24 hours a day"). But in the middle of her monologue she interrupts herself—"I've gotta get depressed," she exclaims, "I'm too happy." It might seem a different woman who later scoops chocolate from a conventional pink-heart candy box and covers herself with it from neck to feet, reprising an earlier chant: "My life is worth nothing but shit. A woman isn't worth shit." Except that no matter how deeply Finley immerses herself in her rhythmic incantations, the chatty Finley insists on reappearing. "Just to get things straight," she reminds the crowd after a particularly exhausting diatribe, "I do have male friends."

This dual self that Karen Finley brings on stage makes it impossible to identify her with the masked women of pornographic images. And it also precludes dismissing Finley as a social anomaly. She speaks for many more outcasts than herself. From her attack on William Hurt ("I baw when I see William Hurt/He thinks he's so cool 'cause he played the queer and he fucked the deaf woman") to her heart-rending ode to the black sheep of conventional families ("We knew this from when we were very young that we weren't meant to be understood/That's right/That's our job"). Finley harnesses common agonies with her poetry. People might come as spectators; instead of spectacle, they get commiseration.

Finley has toned down her act since C. Carr immortalized the artist's yam routine in the *Village Voice* five years ago. Finley no longer puts things in her body, only on it. But it doesn't matter; it wasn't Finley's actions alone that made her unacceptable to the people who would uphold the society she rails against. It was, and still is, her message: That the woman who dies from a botched abortion, the woman babbling on the street corner, the alcoholic mother, and the person with AIDS—won't fade away into ignominy as easily as some think. Their rage belongs to all of us.

Judith Lewis reviews theater for City Pages.

FEBRUARY 90

16

Artpaper

February 1990

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
02. Letter	From John Frohnmayer to POTUS Re: Response to criticism of NEA (3 pp.)	4/11/90	P5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JP (NLGB) on 4/10/08

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
 P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
 P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
 P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
 P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
 P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
 (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
 (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
 (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
 (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
 (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
 (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
 (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

April 11, 1990

The Honorable George Bush
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I have received a copy of a letter dated April 10, 1990 from Congressman Dana Rohrabacher and others. I believe the statement you originally made is correct, and I very much appreciate the faith you showed in me by making that statement.

In specific response to the Congressmen's letter:

1.) "Many of the [decisions of the Arts Endowment] have been to fund projects which are obscene, indecent and insult the moral and religious values of the American people."

We have given approximately 85,000 grants over the last 24 years. Of those approximately 20 have been seriously questioned. Put another way, we have funded approximately one million separate images. Of those, approximately 20 are claimed to be obscene, namely seven from the Mapplethorpe show, approximately 10 by David Wojnarowicz and a few more which do not readily come to mind. Of those million images, I can think of two which could be deemed sacrilegious: the Serrano "Piss Christ" and the David Wojnarowicz depiction of Christ with a needle in his arm. The American Family Association and others have spun this issue and worked up a good deal of righteous indignation. I do not doubt that people are legitimately offended by these images. What is unfortunate is the hyperbole which translates these into the entire mission and function of the Arts Endowment.

2.) "Meanwhile, the NEA denies grants to others for being traditional or realistic."

Plainly untrue. I enclose a letter that I sent to Senator Pell after our last hearing. Approximately 50 percent of the images we fund are a recognizable form (as opposed to abstract), and approximately 33 percent are realistic in the classical sense of the word. The fact of the matter is that the Arts Endowment has become an easy target. I can change that image, but I can't do it overnight.

For example, the Arts Endowment has introduced over three and a half million children to the arts through our Arts in Education Program. Art teaches them self-discipline, self-esteem, the ability to make critical choices, and the ability to establish values. All of these are fundamental to an educated, discerning populace in a democracy. Indeed, the arts teach family values which those who attack us also espouse.

The arts have reached the multicultural community in a way that few Federal programs have. In a country which is increasingly multicultural, we must understand each other, and the arts give an avenue for doing that. In the same way that the arts empower children, they also empower our multicultural groups to articulate and communicate in a society in which we must all live together.

The Arts Endowment has brought quality art to rural areas not only through our Media Program's support of Wonderworks, American Masters, Dance in America and others, but through artmobiles, dance touring, folk arts and other programs.

We have nurtured and supported our major institutions so that the audience for dance, which when we began was almost entirely in New York, is now 16 times what it was and exists throughout this country. I could go on, but the point simply is that the Federal government has seldom gotten as much for its money as it has through support of the arts.

3.) The Congressman miscasts my statements regarding offensive material. I enclose the page from my written testimony and the page of transcript in my response to Congressman Williams. My point, correctly reported, is that some of our best art is confrontational and to some might be offensive. For example, Eugene O'Neill's play, A Long Day's Journey Into Night is widely considered as the finest American play ever written. It deals with drug addiction, death, prostitution and debauchery. Ibsen's Ghosts deals with venereal disease; Oedipus with incest, and Medea with infanticide. Art holds up a mirror to the human race and helps us understand ourselves and deal with our problems. That is its power.

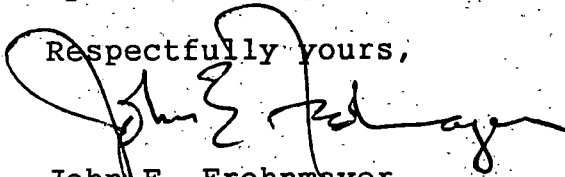
4.) I oppose unequivocally those who would legislate to "give the Arts Endowment the power to ensure that tax dollars are not used for that which is indecent or sacrilegious." This is not a statement that I want to fund those things. Quite the contrary. It is simply a statement that selecting art must be done on a case-by-case basis. Our process of bringing in citizens who are expert in the arts to make these decisions is a sound one. With the good judgment and care, I would hope that the most egregious examples upon which

Page Three

our critics have seized would not be repeated. But the answer is not the hammer that the Congressman suggests; it is in sound process and careful judgment. The legislation the Congressman suggests violates the freedom from political and content restrictions of the original legislation that Congress, despite repeated attacks, has maintained for 25 years.

Finally, I think the incident this weekend in Cincinnati should be sobering to us all. The image of police invading sanctuaries of thought chills me to the bone. That precedent, in my mind, is a far greater threat to the Union than seven offensive pictures which a jury, through due process of law, can and will rule on. It represents the kind of excess which would only be encouraged by content legislation.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John E. Frohnmayer', written over the typed name.

John E. Frohnmayer
Chairman

cc: The Honorable John H. Sununu
Andrew H. Card, Jr.
James W. Cicconi
David Q. Bates, Jr.

JEF/kd

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

April 4, 1990

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
United States Senate
335 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

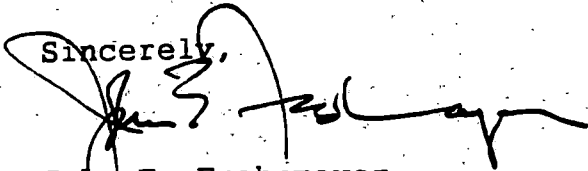
Dear Senator Pell:

In the hearing on Thursday before the Senate Subcommittee on Education, Arts and Humanities, you asked a question about the percentage of grants awarded to those practicing representational art. I responded that I thought the percentage was about 30% representational and 70% nonrepresentational. The figures I was using, however, related to realistic or figurative art. If the word representational is used to mean a recognizable image, the figures are more toward 50-50.

A review of the 1989 Fellowship grants in works on paper and painting (the two relevant categories to this inquiry) approximately 1/2 were representational in the broadest sense and 1/3 were realistic or figurative.

I hope this information clarifies, or if necessary corrects my testimony. I ask that a copy of this letter be inserted in the Record.

Sincerely,


John E. Frohnmayer
Chairman

cc: All Subcommittee members

JEF/lm

Pell, Claiborne

Attachment 1
4/11/90

EXCERPT FROM John E. Frohnmayer's statement before the House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education House Education and Labor Committee, Los Angeles, California, March 5, 1990

But one additional important point needs to be made. The Endowment has funded projects which simply have not succeeded or in a few cases have offended. In education, a child must be allowed to fail in order to know when he has succeeded. In the arts, if creativity is to flourish, some risk of failure is inevitable. Some experiments won't work. Some flights of imagination will crash. The Endowment has never sought to fund anything but excellent art, and has certainly never intended to offend. But a certain amount of leeway is necessary -- a certain amount of tolerance -- if the citizen-panel system is to work. This was aptly stated by Senator Pell in 1975 during a floor debate on reauthorization:

"It is unfortunate that, as we discuss the extension of the Endowment's legislation, there is a climate abroad in the Congress which supports the idea that every Federal grant must be totally in keeping with our own preconceptions and beliefs.

I am afraid that . . . this same type of thinking will be urged upon us, for it is easy to grab a headline by reading the syllabus for a Federal grant totally out of context with the grant itself. However, I do believe that for any program to be successful, it must take an occasional chance, it must be willing to fund projects or proposals which could well backfire. . . .

When we first enacted the legislation which established both endowments, there was concern voiced by those calling themselves political conservatives about the possibility of Federal control of the arts and humanities. . . . [T]hose same skeptics, when it suits their own views, are now seeking to have not only Federal control, but also Congressional control of all Federal grants."

Hearing before House Subcommittee on Postsecondary Education Chair: Rep. Pat William
House Education and Labor Committee
Los Angeles, California March 5, 1990 1

MR. Williams. Mr. Frohnmayer, I have one additional question. On page thirteen of your testimony, in a section entitled "'The Endowment as a Catalyst'", you make a statement: "'The endowment has certainly never intended to offend.'"

You make that statement with regard to how the Endowment is seeking to fund excellent art, but has never intended to offend. As you know, we are here to determine whether or not the NEA has carried out its mission during this past quarter of a century of existence. The mission again, being the creation of, or at least continuation and elongation of a national atmosphere in which creativity can flourish.

Will artists working in that atmosphere occasionally offend, and should they?

MR. Frohnmayer. The statement that I have made in my testimony is that we never fund anything whose sole purpose is to offend. But certainly art is controversial.

If you grew up in the ghetto with your mother as a junkie, and you never knew your father, and you are lucky enough to have some talent in the visual arts, and you're angry, chances are that some of that work is going to be very rough stuff, but that isn't to say in my view, that it should not be funded by the Federal Government. We have an opportunity to really communicate through the arts in this

country, and not all the messages are blue skies and pretty mountains. But one of the most successful public art projects that I know of is the Vietnam Memorial, which was funded through a competition that Mia Linn won, and that the National Endowment sponsored, and that very controversial monument is now one of the most popular in Washington. And it represents some very difficult times in our country. And the arts can help us heal through those kinds of difficult times, but it isn't always going to be easy. And if we're looking for elevator music then we don't need a National Endowment. What we need is the ability to express all of our emotions, the joyous ones and the painful ones.

MR. Williams. There are, I assume, in America, many artists of excellence whose work is quality under almost any measurement. Occasionally some of their work will intentionally offend. Many of these artists happen to be people whom, without some public funding, cannot continue to express themselves in a way that will be seen. Is it one of the Endowment's missions to encourage those people through funding of that offensive art?

MR. Frohnmayer. Again, Congressman, I would say that the criteria that we look at is artistic excellence.

MR. Williams. If it happens to be offensive, is that permissible?

MR. Frohnmayer. I would say yes.

03/12/90

11:47

005

3

MR. Williams. Well, my thanks to both of you, you've been very helpful up here.

attachment 3 p.3

Heritage Reporting Corporation
(202) 628-4888

4/11/90

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

Founded in 1851

ADOLPH S. OCHS, Publisher 1896-1935
ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, Publisher 1935-1961
ORVILLE D. DRYFOOS, Publisher 1961-1963

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER, Publisher
ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR., Deputy Publisher

MAX FRANKEL, Executive Editor
JOSEPH LELYVELD, Managing Editor
WARREN HOGE, Assistant Managing Editor
DAVID R. JONES, Assistant Managing Editor
CAROLYN LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
JOHN M. LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
ALLAN M. SIEGAL, Assistant Managing Editor

JACK ROSENTHAL, Editorial Page Editor
LESLIE H. GELB, Deputy Editorial Page Editor

LANCE R. PRIMIS, President
HOWARD BISHOP, Sr. V.P., Operations
RUSSELL T. LEWIS, Sr. V.P., Production
BRUCE C. LINKER JR., Sr. V.P., Advertising
JOHN M. O'BRIEN, Sr. V.P., Finance/Human Resources
ELISE J. ROSS, Sr. V.P., Systems
WILLIAM L. POLLAK, V.P., Circulation

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."

—Allen H. Neuharth
Founder
Sept. 15, 1982

Peter S. Prichard
Editor

John Seigenthaler
Editorial Director

Cathleen Black
Publisher

Thomas Curley
President

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
(received without date)

San Francisco Chronicle

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

RICHARD T. THIERIOT
Editor and Publisher

WILLIAM GERMAN
Executive Editor

MATTHEW F. WILSON
Managing Editor

PHELPS DEWEY
Assistant to Publisher, Administration

JACK BREIBART
Assistant Managing Editor/News

DANIEL ROSENHEIM
City Editor

ROSALIE MULLER WRIGHT
Assistant Managing Editor/Features

THOMAS C. BENET
Chief Editorial Writer

Founded 1865 by Charles and M.H. deYoung
George T. Cameron, Publisher 1925-55
Charles deYoung Thieriot, Publisher 1955-77

Marketing and Operations conducted by the San Francisco Newspaper Agency
ROBERT M. McCORMICK **W. LAWRENCE WALKER JR.** **THOMAS G. CLANCY**
President/Chief Exec. Officer Exec. VP/Business Manager Sr. VP/Sales & Marketing

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.

Notes & Comments:

January 1990

The NEA since Frohnmayer

The last two or so years have not been kind to the National Endowment for the Arts, the Federal agency charged with support of the arts on a national level.

First, in the spring of 1988, there was then-chairman Francis S.M. Hodsoll's ill-considered attempt to subject the peer panel considerations of grants to an undefined amount of computer-assisted qualification. After an outcry amongst grant recipients who were afraid of the replacement of human judgment by arithmetical formulas—and the resultant outcry in Congress—panel procedures were frozen by law, to the accompaniment of Mr. Hodsoll's humbled acquiescence and the arts advocacy community's open glee.

Then there was the Serrano/Mapplethorpe scandal, in which it transpired that NEA funding was making possible the exhibition of material—in this case photographs—that many found a profound violation of public decency. The Corcoran Gallery's cancellation of the Mapplethorpe photographs exhibition in Washington, D.C., failed to ward off the storm of protest against the NEA, and in the end only succeeded on the one hand in intensifying the battle between conservative forces in and out of Congress determined to pass legislative restrictions on NEA grants, and on the other in stiffening the determination

of visual artists and their advocates to see continued funding for the avant-garde. Though the exact meaning of the muddled compromise between NEA friends and foes that resulted from behind-the-scenes dealing in a Senate-House Conference Committee is as yet unclear—and will probably remain so indefinitely—there can be no doubt that the agency now occupies a kind of legislative limbo, with Congressional intent regarding its activities at once vague and contradictory.

It is into this pretty bureaucratic kettle of fish that Portland lawyer John Frohnmayer was thrown last summer, as President Bush's nominee to replace Mr. Hodsoll, who had resigned as NEA chairman in February to become a high-ranking official at the Office of Management and Budget. Though some years previously Mr. Frohnmayer had been chairman of the Oregon Arts Council, and though he had amateur musical interests (as a singer of musical comedy) and was something of a collector of the visual arts of the Northwest, he was little known outside Oregon at the time of his nomination. It was widely rumored that his qualifications, in addition to a strong Republican Party background and his legal training, very much included his West Coast origins and his complete lack of ties to the hitherto powerful Northeast arts establishment.

From the moment of his nomination, Mr. Frohnmayer sedulously refused to commit

himself on whether the NEA had acted properly or improperly in the matter of the Serrano and Mapplethorpe grants. His attitude seemed to be that, as the whole episode had taken place on someone else's watch, it was not his duty as the new kid on the block to comment on the past. Unfortunately, this refusal to take a position only intensified the difficulties in which the agency and its staff found itself. For the person on whose watch the questionable grants had been made was, of course, Mr. Hodsoll, the previous chairman—and Mr. Hodsoll, despite repeated entreaties from the press, wasn't talking.

As a result of this game of bureaucratic buck-passing, the burden of defending the NEA between Mr. Hodsoll's resignation in February and Mr. Frohnmayer's confirmation at the beginning of October thus fell on acting chairman Hugh Southern, a holdover from the Hodsoll administration well aware, as anyone in such a position must be, that his tenure would be short; indeed, it was announced in September that Mr. Southern would become general manager of the Metropolitan Opera. In any case, in defending the agency against charges of the support of indecent art, Mr. Southern saw fit to take the side of the arts lobby against the political opposition, stressing the role of the NEA in supporting what he saw as difficult and provocative new art, without at the same time making judgments on content.

Given the level of debate across the country about NEA grants policy, it might have been thought that Mr. Frohnmayer's confirmation hearing would have been contentious, but it was in fact serene. The major interest in his sworn palaver with an elite group of senators, including Bob Packwood of Oregon and Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, arose not from his thoughts on NEA grants policy, but rather from his agreement that the agency needed more money if it was to do its job adequately. This hardly oblique request for increased funding came against a background of Bush Administration policy, seemingly enforced on other agency heads, of holding budgets

flat or even—horrors—of cutting them.

The first untoward event of Mr. Frohnmayer's term became public on November 8, when it was announced that he was withdrawing NEA funding from an exhibition at Artists Space in New York City that was devoted to images of AIDS and its sufferers. Entitled "Witnesses: Against Our Vanishing," this artistically meager but nonetheless controversial exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue containing angry material excoriating religious and political figures for their alleged homophobia and for their equally alleged direct responsibility for the AIDS crisis. Mr. Frohnmayer's initial reason for the cancellation of NEA funding specified the political content of the material; as the storm broke, he changed his reason, on November 13, to what he called "an erosion of the artistic focus" of the exhibition; on November 16, he restored NEA funding to the exhibition, stating that, by agreement with the sponsoring Artists Space, NEA money would not be used to pay for the catalogue. The reaction to this reversal was predictable: outrage from conservative journalists, and, from arts spokesmen (a category very much including those responsible for an editorial in *The New York Times*), what might best be characterized as menacing praise, or what the Trotskyists used to call "critical support."

The fact of a Federal agency head who first avoids taking any position at all on a difficult matter and then, on a closely related matter, takes not one but several positions, hardly promises well for the conduct of public business. Furthermore, it was disquieting when, as quoted by Grace Glueck in the *Times*, Frohnmayer could do no better in explaining his reversal on the Artists Space grant than remark:

Certainly the last thing I want to do is to be crosswise with a major part of the Endowment's constituency. . . . The word political means something quite different in Portland, Ore., than in Washington.

But perhaps most disquieting has been Mr. Frohnmayer's expression of what might be called his philosophy of art. In a press conference at the Endowment offices in Washington on October 18, the very day that he was first informed of the existence of the Artists Space exhibition in New York City, he responded in the following way to an inquiry about his own view of what the NEA should be supporting:

The finest old-time fiddler is probably as much an artist as the concertmaster.... Long needlework is as much a part of what we should be endowing—it is looking for excellence—as is the finest visual artist working in oils and painting in the great tradition.

This view, which William H. Honan called "a broad, populist view of the arts" in the *Times* article from which the above quotation is taken, signals a return at the NEA to the discredited yearnings of the Carter Administration, yearnings which came close to destroying both the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. Moreover, it suggests a resumption, after the interregnum of the Reagan years, of the trend immanent in Federal cultural support since the beginning of the Endowments in the mid-1960s: the lowering and cheapening of great works of art, the concomitant blurring of distinctions between great art and folk art, and, above all, the use of public support to respond to vocal and organized constituencies, rather than to the reclusive and vulnerable masterpieces of civilization.

Taken together with Mr. Frohnmayer's divagations on the Artists Space grant, this approach to funding presages the ultimate mediocritization of Federal cultural support, and the shipwreck of a once not-ignoble dream on the social provocations of the avant-garde, the inflated claims of local crafts, and the exigencies of party politics. Taken together with Mr. Frohnmayer's assorted difficulties, this approach

goes far to suggest that the always difficult argument for Federal cultural support is now becoming, for many once favorably disposed, well-nigh impossible.

From the old New Journalism to the new Old Realism

Once upon a time, when *New York*—the magazine, not the city—was young, and *Rolling Stone* loomed as the wave of the future, there was a lot of talk in the literary world about something called the New Journalism. Fiction, we were told, was dead, or at least moribund. The "main event," as Tom Wolfe famously declared, was this new brand of reportage, which was alleged to be bringing us news of social change that far exceeded the scope of anything to be found in the novel. In a brash book called *The New Journalism* (1973), Mr. Wolfe effectively buried the novel as irrelevant to our needs, and pronounced himself and other like-minded votaries of the New Journalism the right and inevitable heirs to the tradition that had once, long ago, been seen to reside in the novel. The death of the novel—or rather, the death of its status, which for Tom Wolfe is always a fate worse than death—was indeed pronounced with a good deal of glee, and all sorts of wondrous nonfiction epics were confidently predicted to take the place of this once beloved but now deceased and despised fictional genre.

It never happened, of course. Lots and lots of these new-style nonfiction works poured from the press, to be sure, but more often than not they had more to tell us about the vainglorious psyches of the writers who produced them than about the events they were purporting to illuminate. And the self-indulgent prose of the New Journalism turned out to be far too mannered and intrusive to serve as a vehicle for anything but the narcissistic ululations of the writers themselves. The New Journalism did,

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

FILED 6 1990

"Usually I get paid a lot of money for this, but tonight it's government funded!"

Annie Sprinkle: "Post Porn Modernist" and Tax Dollar
Recipient, after experiencing orgasm on stage

THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
IS AT IT AGAIN!

Dear Colleague:

Does the following performance sound like an appropriate use of tax dollars to you?

Star of 150 explicit, XXX-rated videos, Annie Sprinkle takes to the stage and...

- * Masturbates with various "sex toys" until she experiences orgasm.
- * Performs oral sex with rubber penises, inviting the audience to massage her breasts.
- * To conclude her performance, she opens her vaginal canal with a gynecological tool known as a speculum and invites audience members to the stage to inspect her.

Okay, now, hold onto your hats...and your wallet. Annie Sprinkle's titillating masterpiece received your constituents' tax dollars, in the following manner:

The New York Council for the Arts receives \$500,000 in unrestricted funds from the National Endowment for the Arts every year. In turn, the Council chose to spend \$25,000 on a performance series at the Kitchen Theatre in New York.

"Annie Sprinkle: Post Porn Modernist" was performed twelve times during that series.

A "Post Porn Modernist Manifesto," printed in the show's program, is written by "artists" who "celebrate sex as the nourishing life giving force....We embrace our genitals as part, not separate, from our spirits....We utilize sexually explicit words, pictures and performances to communicate our ideas and emotions."

Unfortunately, they are also utilizing taxpayer dollars.

Once again, of course, NEA backers are calling opponents of the Annie Sprinkle Show "censors," because we don't believe that Annie has a First Amendment right to taxpayers' dollars

The executive director of The Kitchen, Bobbi Tsumagari, defended the "artistic quality" of Sprinkle's performance, defining the show as "a critical look at Sprinkle's personal experiences dealing with some of the most important issues of our time...."

Mr. John Frohnmayer, the Chairman of the NEA, defended the grant, saying, "The point is we are not the moral arbiter of this country. We're not going to run around and respond just because something happened somewhere that someone didn't like."

Let's remind Mr. Frohnmayer he is dealing with taxpayer funds and is accountable for how they are spent, just like every other head of every other federal agency.

If the NEA can't hold itself responsible to the U.S. taxpayer, it's our job to make them responsible.

Sincerely,

Dana

Dana Rohrabacher

Member of Congress

New York City Tribune

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 1990

SPECIAL REPORT

NEA Paints Veil Of Secrecy on Art Works Felt To Be Obscene

BY WALTER SKOLD
New York City Tribune Staff

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Some of the material in this series of articles may be considered offensive. We apologize. However, without accurately describing and quoting the programs and people who are the focus of this report, the nature of their art might be obscured.*

First of 4 Parts

"We are not the nation's official pornographer, and it's important that the country know that," said National Endowment for the Arts Chairman John Frohnmayer when he took control of the beleaguered agency last October.

Despite that proclamation, Frohnmayer may have a lot of house cleaning to do if critics have their way. A special investigation by the *New York City Tribune* has discovered that for at least a decade, the NEA and the New York State Council on the Arts have consistently funded artists and institutions who create what critics are now calling "obscene" art.

Far from boasting about its support for controversial performance art, the NEA has tried to maintain a veil of secrecy by refusing to respond to reporters' queries and by asking at least one playhouse to avoid causing the agency any "trouble with legislators."

The nationwide turmoil over "obscene" art exploded last year when the NEA partially funded the exhibits of works by photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. Included in their works were pictures of a crucifix submerged in urine, a fist in a man's rectum, and a little girl exposing herself.

A similar situation was uncovered 2 weeks ago when this paper reported that \$25,000 of state money had been granted to support a series of shows that included 12 performances by Annie Sprinkle, a self-proclaimed sex goddess and former prostitute, who has starred in 150 pornographic films.

In the show, *Annie Sprinkle: Post-Porn Modernist*, Sprinkle masturbated repeatedly, urinated in a stage toilet, performed what she called a "ballet" with her very large breasts, and invited the audience to come inspect her open vagina with a flashlight.

The *City Tribune* has now learned that the NYSCA approved funding for a performance by Johanna Went, a performance artist, who has a reputation for using such stage props as "giant, bloody tampons," "satanic bunnies," "three-foot turds," and "dildos" in her shows.

Another performance artist who has benefited from federal largesse is Karen Finley. Her provocative shows were described recently by *Village Voice* art critic Elinor Fuchs as "a toxic landfill of throwaway bodies" which creates a "theatre of disgust filled with obscene fantasies."

According to the text of a 1986 Finley performance at the Kitchen — a performing arts and video playhouse in the Chelsea section of Manhattan — which was published in the *Drama Review*, she talks about cutting off men's testicles, putting them in her mouth and mixing them with her excrement — she says "dung" — because she is "The Queen of the Dung Dynasty."

"Using tax dollars to fund this type of trash is an absolute outrage," said Dana Rohrabacher, R-Calif., who used the example of Sprinkle last Thursday when he attacked the NEA publicly for some of the ways in which it spends

government funds.

"Miss Sprinkle is manipulating herself with toys and selling opportunities for audience participation in her act with the assistance of tax dollars," he

said on the House floor, "generously provided by the New York State Council on the Arts, which receives half a million dollars in unrestricted funds each year from the National Endowment for the Arts."

Went was supposed to perform at the Kitchen next month, but curator Scott Macaulay said she canceled her scheduled performance for personal reasons.

This would not have been Went's first tax-funded performance in the City, however. In 1983, '85 and '87 she appeared at the Franklin Furnace, in Tribeca, Manhattan, as part of series that were partly funded with grants from both the NEA and NYSCA.

Like the Kitchen, the Furnace is an avant-garde, experimental theatre, founded in 1977 by Martha Wilson, to, she wrote in 1986, "fill a void in the art world" and to nourish the 20th Century's avant-garde tradition. It serves as an archive for hundreds of artists and presently boasts the largest collection of art in book form in the United States.

Foundation Grants

Besides government grants, the Furnace receives funding from more than 30 foundations, including the Hugh Hefner Foundation, the New York Times Company Foundation, Con Edison, the Swedish Consulate General, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs.

The amount of sexually explicit experimental art the gallery has sponsored over the years has only been a small percentage of its total product, but many of the female performance artists whom they have accommodated have been at the extreme cutting- and controversial-edge of the art world.

In the critical artistic community that reviews this genre of work, the women are labelled "post-porn modernists," "feminist artists," or simply "avant-garde."

Kitty Carlisle Hart, chairwomen of the NYSCA, adamantly denied last

Continued. . .

week that state funds had been allocated specifically for *Sprinkle*, but the approved 1990 contract with the Kitchen did include four performances by Went.

Whether or not the Kitchen actually received direct state funding this year for the recent *Sprinkle* performance is open to interpretation, but in early 1984, the NEA sent four officials scrambling to the City to avert a publicity nightmare because of a show called *Second Coming*.

The month-long exhibition, which was developed by a feminist/activist group called Carnival Knowledge, also included a 1-night performance by

"The NEA officials' message was: 'Please don't put our name on anything that is going to cause us trouble with legislators.'"

—Martha Wilson

Sprinkle and other women called *Deep Inside Porn Stars*. The whole exhibit was supposed to explore the possibility of "a new definition of pornography, one that is not demeaning to women, men and children."

Among the exhibits displayed were:

- An 86-year-old woman boasting about her sexual activities with teenagers.
- A refrigerator decorated with inflated condoms.
- Pictures of lesbians inserting dildos into each other.

In the controversy that ensued after a 1984 *City Tribune* article about *Second Coming*, Hart wrote a lengthy letter to

Padavan was not impressed with Hart's denials; he wrote back that "monies being given to the Franklin Furnace obviously makes it possible for them to accommodate this type of despicable presentation."

"When you state that you make your determination regarding funding based on the totality of their efforts without taking into consideration any component, the reason being the free expression of artistic endeavors," he wrote, "I am only compelled to say 'baloney!'"

Wilson, who also directs activities at the Furnace, told the *City Tribune* that the NEA officials' message to the board was: "Please don't put our name on anything that is going to cause us trouble with legislators."

Wilson is quite proud of all of the various Furnace productions and feels she has nothing to hide.

"We are heavily supported by the NEA for doing experimental work," said Wilson. "That is our cultural mission."

"There is no doubt about it, they pay for risky art," she added. "If they fund the whole series, I will put their name on it."

Based on newspaper reviews, NYSCA funding records and material about the shows kept in the Furnace archives, which the *City Tribune* has examined, it is probable that in recent years New Yorkers' taxes have partially or fully funded shows, which have depicted the following:

- Bodily excretions.
- Sexual intercourse and masturbation.
- Shamanistic and new age sex-religion rituals.
- Graphic tales of incest and sexual assault.
- Transvestism.
- The striking mixture of sacred and erotic images.

More than 10 days ago, the NEA was asked by the *City Tribune* to provide funding details for various artists and performances, but it was only after Rohrabacher spoke out about *Sprinkle* Feb. 1 that officials began supplying some answers, albeit sketchy ones. While the exact funding details are fuzzy, the *City Tribune* has learned the following facts:

In 1987, the NEA gave a \$40,000 grant to the Furnace for its visual arts program. Included in the year's series was one performance by Went and an undetermined number of performances by Frank Moore and Cheri Gaulke

'Hyena of Performance Art'

The 1987 Furnace press release for Went's show, *Twin Travel Terror*, described her as the "Hyena of Performance Art," whose shows "have never failed to challenge, amuse, frighten and stimulate audiences."

Cindy Carr, an art critic for the *Village Voice*, who has covered such risqué artists extensively, described the actual show more explicitly:

"Her pieces erase identity, embrace the unspeakable and value the irrational," wrote Carr, who added, "the biggest crowd-pleaser, though, was Went's giant" vagina "head-dress, which she squeezed as white liquid gushed from her mouth."

On the application upon which the NYSCA based its 1990 funding for Went, she is described as "a West Coast legend . . . well known for her explosive performances, which mix shamanistic ritual, raunchy humor and dynamic movement."

In 1985, one of the years Went was featured at the Furnace, the gallery received at least \$200,000 from the NEA. NYSCA also granted \$5,000, out of \$10,950 requested, for the 31-performance season by 19 artists.

Frank Moore, along with *Sprinkle* and other local performers, performed his *Intimate Cave* show at the Furnace in May 1987. He had received an NEA fellowship in 1985. He also performed *Journey To Lila* at the Furnace last June.

Moore calls himself a "shaman" and his performance technique "Eroplay." He describes it as: "Intense physical playing and touching of oneself and each other," and "the happy, playful attitude towards life that comes from such play."

At his performances, the audience is invited into his "cave" on stage. Those who come forward then shed their clothes and pair up to touch each others' bodies under his guidance.

Last July, along with *Sprinkle* and 15 others, he signed a *Post-Porn Modernist Manifesto*. The signators all "celebrate sex as the nourishing, life-giving force," and they proclaimed that "we use sexually explicit words, pictures and performances to communicate our ideas and emotions."

Continued. . .

Also performing in 1987 at the Furnace was three-time NEA fellowship recipient, Cheri Gaulke. Her show, *Virgin*, was part of an ongoing series of programs during which she used her often nude body to "explore female sexuality in relation to religion, myth, fashion and eroticism."

In this series, which she calls "part Christian worship service, part pagan ritual," her clad and unclad body has represented Eve, the serpent, a preacher, a witch and Jesus Christ.

Finley, who once claimed she was banned by Scotland Yard, also performed at the Furnace in 1985. She claims to have been boycotted by various institutions, because "sponsors are really scared that their funding is going to be taken away."

In her 1986 Kitchen performance, according to *The Drama Review*, Finley simulated incestuous trances during which a son sucks "my own cum juice outta my own mama's ass," and another where a father puts a girl in a refrigerator and "starts working my little hole."

Many people outside the avant-garde community consider this contemporary "sexual" art to be sacrilegious trash, and a few think its performers should actually be charged for violating federal and state obscenity laws.

When Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., introduced legislation last year aimed at restricting public support for "obscene art," his office was deluged, he said, by thousands of citizen-letters of support.

Under the Senate appropriations bill passed last year, the NEA is prohibited from funding materials that "depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual or excretory activities or organs, including but not limited to obscene depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sexual intercourse."

Last week, the NEA was asked whether this law can be applied to future performances; agency spokesmen have yet to respond.

These new examples of publicly-funded controversial arts come at a time when the battle over "obscene" art is heating up in Congress again, as the time for the NEA reauthorization hearings nears.

Last week the conservative weekly *Human Events* reported the NEA had recently awarded approximately \$60,000 in Creative Writing Fellowships

"Using tax dollars to fund this type of trash is an absolute outrage. "

—Rep. Dana Rohrabacher

to three lesbian writers. They were among 97 American poetry and prose writers given grants for 1990.

Human Events criticized the NEA for awarding the grants because Minnie Pratt, a Native American lesbian poet, included "homoerotic" passages in her application.

According to the *Blade*, a gay weekly in Washington, the submitted passages describe lesbian lovemaking and the "touching of lips or tongue ... to a woman's genitals."

A similar flap occurred here in 1988 after Frederic Dicker of the *New York Post* wrote that tens-of-thousands of NYSCA dollars were going to projects promoting transvestism, lesbianism and

homosexuality.

Hart was summoned before the state Senate and Assembly committees responsible for the arts, but one assemblyman told the *City Tribune* that nothing happened, because Assembly Speaker "Mel Miller is a patron of the arts community."

That same elected official, who asked that he not be named, said, however, that these latest revelations could blow the top off the issue again, and that there are plenty of assemblymen who want to see serious reforms in NYSCA's funding procedures.

According to a Rohrabacher aide, representatives on Capitol Hill are considering asking that New York state loses, or has drastically reduced, its large NEA grants.

Even though many of the artists mentioned here were funded in years past, and were therefore not the responsibility of Frohnmayer, the aide said the examples will help to document a pattern of irresponsible giving.

One congressional staffer told the *Washington Post* last week that a series of rumors about possible NEA-funded grants that could become controversial has the arts community "pretty hysterical."

The *Post* reported about Sprinkle's performance, but neglected to mention any of the sexually-explicit scenes. Instead, quoting Kitchen director Bobby Tsumagari, it merely reported that the show fought "gender stereotypes and examined the ways in which sexuality is portrayed in the media."

Next: Reporter Skold interviews Annie Sprinkle.

Annie Sprinkle Will Be Happy

Bush Rewards NEA with Raise

Annie Sprinkle, a veteran "performer" in over 150 "X"-rated films, put on a series of 12 public shows last month at a theater called The Kitchen in New York. So what? you ask.

"Usually I get paid a lot of money for this," Sprinkle joked to the audience with a smile, according to Walter Skold of the New York City *Tribune* who caught Sprinkle's act, "but tonight it's government-funded."

Sprinkle, who calls herself "a feminist-porn activist," was referring to a \$25,000 grant from the New York State Council on the Arts, which finances an annual "performance art" series. The NYSAC is itself partially subsidized by the National Endowment for the Arts.

All told, Sprinkle performed the same show 12 times in mid-January. Her "performance art" consisted of the following "artistic" endeavors:

She masturbated before the audience with a variety of "sex toys," and concluded her masterpiece of "performance art" by opening her vaginal canal with a gynecological implement called a speculum and then invited the audience to view her cervix.

Incredibly enough, this invitation was actually accepted by several men and women in the audience who, for all anyone can tell, may themselves now qualify for government funds as experienced "performance artists."

Nearly everyone would agree that financial support for such "art" taken from taxes levied on the general public is an outrage.

Some, moreover, are also outraged that only six days after Annie Sprinkle's demented exhibitionism, President Bush gave the go-ahead for a \$4-million increase in the NEA's budget.

"The Arts Endowment provides matching funds to assist the best of our nation's artists and art institutions," went the Bush Administration's justification for the \$4-million increase, "directly and through state and local art agencies and regional organizations...."

"To the extent that America's traditional cultural values have helped make America uniquely strong, it is important that these values be preserved—in order that they may be built upon as America continues to advance."

It was unclear to many which "traditional cultural values" the Sprinkle show was advancing.

Indeed, one would have thought that after last year's Mapplethorpe and Serrano controversies, not to mention last fall's congressional legislation

forbidding further NEA funding of obscene "art," the NEA would have taken special pains to ensure that none of its funds wound up in the hands of "artists" like Annie Sprinkle.

Unfortunately, however, the NEA seems to be as much a part of the problem as ever. For example, several weeks ago the Washington *Blade*, a local homosexual publication, fairly gloated in announcing that the NEA had chosen three avowed lesbian writers as recipients of \$20,000 grants.

All three writers—Audre Lord, Minnie Bruce Pratt, and Chrystos—are, according to the *Blade*, "well known for their lesbian identification and for the homoerotic contents of some of their works."

The *Blade* rejoiced that "the grants came at a time when Congress has instructed the agency not to support projects which 'promote, disseminate, or produce materials... which may be considered obscene' and which include depictions of 'sodomasochism' and 'homoeroticism.'"

Nor should such grants come as a complete surprise to NEA observers. Last November the NEA's new chairman, John Frohnmayer, first suspended a \$10,000 grant to a New York art gallery exhibiting "responses" to the AIDS crisis, then reversed himself and granted the money, but stressed that none of the funds would go towards financing a controversial catalogue accompanying the exhibit.

HUMAN EVENTS readers will recall that this was the catalogue in which one artist, David Wojnarowicz, mused aloud on the pleasures of dousing Sen. Jesse Helms (R.-N.C.) with gasoline and then burning him alive.

Wojnarowicz went on to fantasize about throwing Rep. William Dannemeyer (R.-Calif.) off the Empire State Building, and described New York's John Cardinal O'Connor as "a fat cannibal" and a "creep in black skirts" from that "cathedral of walking swastikas" (St. Patrick's cathedral).

New York's *Newsday* reported recently that the NEA is now partially funding, to the tune of \$15,000, yet another Wojnarowicz show—"Tongues of Flame," at Illinois State's University Galleries—which includes a reprint of that same essay deemed inappropriate for funding only a few months ago.

Along with sexually explicit homosexual imagery, the new NEA-backed Wojnarowicz show reportedly contains a collage of a Madonna and child with the Christ-child holding a gun.

"The NEA has been strangely quiet [about the new show]," Wojnarowicz recently told *Newsday*, "given all the noise that went on [last fall]."

"I tell you, if this goes off without a confrontation, I hope it gets as much press as the negative stuff."

HUMAN EVENTS asked a spokesman for the NEA, Josh Dare, if he could explain why Woj-

narowicz's essay was deemed inappropriate for funding two months ago but is now being underwritten by the agency.

"Chairman Frohnmayer has declined to comment on that," replied Dare. "I don't know why. We've gotten several calls about it but he's decided not to stir the pot."

Dare denied that the NEA was actually funding the current Wojnarowicz "Tongues of Flame" exhibit.

"Illinois State applied for a grant to support a retrospective of this particular artist's work," said Dare. "We approved the money for them. They are the ones providing money for Wojnarowicz."

Dare also maintained that one would be "reaching" to claim that the NEA had supplied the funds for the Annie Sprinkle show because the law

requires the NEA to provide money to state art councils.

Dare added that the NEA has no plans to suggest to state arts councils that they cease funding such shows.

"We have no basis in law to make such a suggestion," Dare said. "We have no power to suggest anything to them or to exercise any control over what they do with the money we give them. . . . We have no legal standing to interfere."

Dare's denials of ultimate NEA financial responsibility for shows like "Tongues of Flame" and the Annie Sprinkle debacle leave many unconvinced. And, in truth, not everyone within the NEA itself is altogether content with the "institutional line."

One source told HUMAN EVENTS, "There are people around here wondering how these things could have happened."

Particular anger is focused on the arts community. "It seems like the arts community has no political sensibilities at all. For a group that we have supported, and spent months on the hot seat for, to do things like this. . .", our source continued, "it seems they are just rubbing our noses in it. The climate is never right to financially support these types of things, but now? Come on!"

HUMAN EVENTS asked Sen. Helms, the long-suffering target of so much liberal venom, if he thought the NEA deserved its increased budget and, not surprisingly, he did not.

"Look at the antics of the self-proclaimed art crowd, what they have been doing with tax dollars," Helms said.

"Nor am I sure, anymore, that the NEA is playing fair with us," Helms added. "They always have an excuse for a shell game in the distribution of money."

"I still want to give Frohnmayer the benefit of the doubt," explained Helms, "because he came to my office twice and said that this kind of thing [publicly funded pornography] would not happen on his watch.

"But the truth of the matter is that it is hap-

pening on his watch, and I'm trying to find out whether he knows about it and is therefore assenting to it, or doesn't know about it—and it's very hard to pin down."

Helms assured HUMAN EVENTS that he has already spoken about the issue with several of his fellow senators and did not intend to sit by silently.

We asked Helms to comment on a recent speech by Frohnmayer quoted by the Los Angeles Times in which the NEA chairman unveiled a new defense of NEA funding policies. "As the Berlin Wall crumbles and artists in Eastern Bloc nations are free to openly produce alternative politically oriented art for the first time in decades, it is ironic that we in the free and democratic United States are debating issues of censorship and artistic expression."

Helms seemed surprised by Frohnmayer's latest tactic of relating Communist censorship of private art to U.S. congressional requirements for standards in publicly funded art and NEA accountability to the public whose taxes support it.

Helms told us, "If he said that, he is full of hot air and I'm disappointed in him. Those remarks are nonsense. He knows and has acknowledged in my office that censorship is not involved."

Warming to the topic, Helms added, "Any rational human being knows that it is not censorship to refuse to give somebody federal funds. They keep building charades on top of pretenses."

Another long-time foe of publicly funded pornography is Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R.-Calif.), who told us that, in light of the never-ending flow of NEA-funded "artistic" outrages, the agency should be "zeroed out of the budget altogether."

Rohrabacher complained, "There are more and more examples emerging every day of projects funded by the NEA that would totally outrage the American people."

He added that he plans to "make sure that the public is made aware of just where their tax dollars are going; and if we can, we're going to try to get wording into the NEA authorization bill that would set standards.

"However, there may be a lot of parliamentary skullduggery going on about this issue and we may be forced to try again to amend the appropriations bill which is a more difficult challenge."

Like Helms, Rohrabacher was shocked and displeased by the recent Frohnmayer speech likening the plight of censored artists in Communist countries to that of American artists whose free expression was supposedly being debated.

"The fact is," said the lawmaker, "we are not talking about censorship or freedom of expression; we are talking about standards for a government agency in order to make it reflect the will and values of the American people.

"Only an anti-democratic elitist would suggest that government funds taken from taxpayers should be used with total disregard for the taxpayers' values."

- Readers wishing to exercise their own freedom of expression on NEA funding standards and policies may contact Chairman John Frohnmayer at the National Endowment for the Arts, 1100 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20506 (202-682-5414).

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
03. Letter	From John Frohnmayer to POTUS Re: Recommendations on NEA [2 copies, one typewritten, one handwritten] [FOIA RESTRICTIONS REDACTED] (5 pp.)	6/5/90	B 5, (b)(6)	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JP (NLGB) on 4/10/08

Date Closed:	12/9/2004	OA/ID Number:	29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #:	1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:	
Re-review Case #:	2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:	
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:		Disposition Date:	
AR Case #:		MR Case #:	
AR Disposition:		MR Disposition:	
AR Disposition Date:		MR Disposition Date:	

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
 P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
 P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
 P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
 P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
 P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
 (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
 (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
 (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
 (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
 (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
 (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
 (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

file

LETTER FROM JOHN FROHNMAYER

JUNE 5, 1990

Mr. President,

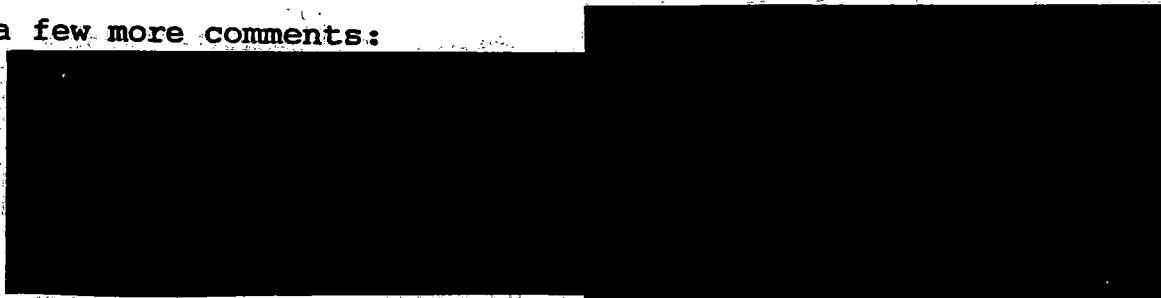
The NEA is constantly in the news and I think it important that you hear directly from me. My message is to stay the course and remain firmly in the middle because there is no way we will please either the far right or the far left on this issue.

My specific recommendations, should you choose to make further public statement on the NEA are:

1. Obscenity (which we all abhor) is already illegal in every jurisdiction. Its existence or non existence is ultimately for the courts -- not the executive branch. This is the wisdom of separation of powers which is the foundation of our constitutional government.
2. Congress has created the vehicle to analyze this situation -- rationally and calmly -- in the independent commission which will begin work tomorrow.
3. Congress should not radically alter the Arts Endowment in the heat of this political controversy, at least until it has heard from the commission. This might mean a re-authorization for only one year while the commission deliberates.
4. Careful administration of the agency is still the key -- resisting the pressures (and there are a lot) from both the right and left and exercising good judgement. I am fully prepared to do that.

Just a few more comments:

a)



- (b)(6)
- b) There are at least 5 troublesome grants which I was/am prepared to deny. The National Council postponed consideration of them until August but I will overrule the Council if they recommend them. (I can not, by statute, act on applications until the Council has made a recommendation, but I am not bound by that recommendation.

- c) Finally, you have received tremendous support for your stand on the NEA. I enclose approximately 50 editorials praising you. There are more. A recent nationwide poll (April 1990) found 93% of Americans believing freedom of expression is essential to artists. 81% agree that Congress should not pass laws that interfere with free expression. 80% favor maintaining or increasing the NEA's budget.

Please let me know if you have specific instructions for me. I am here to serve you.

Respectfully,

John Frohnmayer

FROM JIM FROMMAYER
ARTS ENDOWMENT

6/5/90
8 A.M.

Mr. President,

The NEA is constantly in the news + I think it important that you hear directly from me. My message is to stay the course and remain firmly in the middle because there is no way we will please either the far right or the far left on this issue.

My specific recommendation, should you choose to make further public statements on the NEA are:

1. Obscenity (which we all abhor) is already illegal in every jurisdiction. Its existence or non-existence is ultimately for the courts - not the executive branch. This is the wisdom of separation of powers which is the foundation of our constitutional government.
2. Congress has created the vehicle to analyze this situation - rationally + calmly - in the independent Commission which will begin work tomorrow.

3. Congress should not radically alter the Arts Endowment in the heat of this political controversy, at least until it has heard from the commission. This might mean a reauthorization for ~~at~~ only one year while the commission deliberates.
4. Careful administration of the agency is still the key — resisting the pressures (and there are a lot) from both the right + left — exercising good judgment. I am fully prepared to do that.

Just a few more comments:

(b)(6)



b) There are at least 5 troublesome grants which I was/am prepared to deny. The national council postponed consideration of them until August but I will overrule the Council if they recommend them (I can not, by statute, act on applications until the Council has made a recommendation, but I am not bound by that recommendation.)

c) Finally, you have received tremendous support for your stand on the NEA. I enclose approximately 50 editorials praising you. There are more. A recent nationwide poll (April 1990) found 93% of Americans believing freedom of expression is essential to artists. ~~81%~~ 81% agree that Congress should not pass laws that interfere with free expression. 80% favor maintaining or increasing the NEA's budget.

Please let me know if you have specific instructions for me. I am here to serve you.

Respectfully
John F. Johnson

EDITORIALS IN SUPPORT OF THE ARTS ENDOWMENT

<u>DATE</u>	<u>NEWSPAPER</u>	<u>STATE</u>
3/23	Jackson Clarion-Ledger	Mississippi
3/30	Sacramento Bee	California
3/25	Torrance Daily Breeze	California
4/5	San Antonio Light	Texas
4/5	Seattle Post-Intelligencer	Washington
4/16	The New Republic	National
3/30	Springfield Union-News	Massachusetts
3/30	Eugene Register-Guard	Oregon
4/6	Ft. Worth Star-Telegram	Texas
3/28	Pittsburgh Post-Gazette	Pennsylvania
4/6	Greensboro News & Record	North Carolina
4/2	Houston Post	Texas
3/24	Ft. Worth Star-Telegram	Texas
3/28	Grand Rapids Press	Michigan
3/27	San Antonio Express-News	Texas
4/7	St. Louis Post-Dispatch	Missouri
3/27	Lexington Herald-Leader	Kentucky
3/27	Milwaukee Journal	Wisconsin
3/26	Los Angeles Times	California
3/25	Dayton Daily News	Ohio
3/28	Springfield News-Leader	Missouri
3/23	San Diego Tribune	California
4/13	Cedar Rapids Gazette	Iowa
4/9	Long Beach Press-Telegram	California
3/28	Hartford Courant	Connecticut
3/27	Nashville Tennessean	Tennessee
3/23	Hackensack Record	New Jersey
3/23	Atlanta Constitution	Georgia
3/26	Miami Herald	Florida
4/2	Salt Lake Tribune	Utah
4/3	Sioux Falls Argus Leader	South Dakota
3/28	Arizona Daily Star	Arizona
3/26	Pawtucket Evening Times	Rhode Island
3/29	Arizona Daily Star	Arizona
3/22	Seattle Times	Washington
3/23	Greensboro News & Record	North Carolina
3/25	Springfield Sunday Republican	Massachusetts
3/28	The Oregonian	Oregon
3/29	The Washington Post	Washington, DC
3/24	The New York Times	New York
3/27	USA Today	National
	San Francisco Chronicle	California
	New Orleans Time-Picayune	Louisiana
3/27	Long Beach Press-Telegram	California
5/17	New York Times	New York
5/19	Washington Post	Washington, DC
5/25	Atlanta Constitution	Georgia
5/20	Boston Globe	Massachusetts
5/14	The State (Columbia, SC)	South Carolina
5/18	Kennebec Journal	Maine
5/18	New York Times	New York

The New York Times

Founded in 1851

ADOLPH S. OCHS, Publisher 1896-1935
ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, Publisher 1935-1961
ORVILLE D. BRIDGES, Publisher 1961-1963

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER, Publisher
ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR., Deputy Publisher

MAX FRANKEL, Executive Editor
JOSEPH LELYVELD, Managing Editor
WARREN MOSE, Assistant Managing Editor
DAVID E. JONES, Assistant Managing Editor
CAROLYN LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
JOHN M. LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
ALLAN M. SIEGAL, Assistant Managing Editor

JACK ROSENTHAL, Editorial Page Editor
LESLIE H. GELB, Deputy Editorial Page Editor

LANCE E. PRIME, President
HOWARD BISHOP, Sr. V.P., Operations
RUSSELL T. LEWIS, Sr. V.P., Production
ERICH G. LINDER JR., Sr. V.P., Advertising
JOHN M. O'BRIEN, Sr. V.P., Finance/Human Resources
ELINE J. ROSE, Sr. V.P., Systems
WILLIAM L. POLLAK, V.P., Circulation

America's Art, Smeared

To listen to all the angry commotion surrounding the reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Arts, you'd think the Endowment was in the business of funding smut. That's exactly what some far-right activists would like the American public to think.

They couldn't be more wrong — or more destructive to a program of inestimable value to the entire spectrum of American artistic activity.

In its 25 years, the Endowment has sometimes been described as too elitist and other times as too folksy, and at no time has it pleased all of the people all at once. But not until last year was it ever hit with an obscenity rap.

At that time the Endowment partly financed a retrospective of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, some of which depicted a sadomasochistic male homosexual subculture. And last year the Endowment awarded \$15,000 to Andres Serrano, one of whose photographs was of a crucifix submerged in the artist's urine. The work of both men is confrontational, and unnerving. It has also become the weapon of those determined to smear and trash the Endowment.

Never mind that the N.E.A. has nourished an astonishing range of creativity: small museums and great art institutions; hundreds of theater and dance companies across the country; a 92-year-old maker of bobbin lace in South Dakota; thousands of film, radio and television ventures; countless artists, some of them famous now, who might never have been heard from otherwise.

Never mind that the \$119 million in grants the Endowment made in 1988 encouraged citizens to contribute \$1.3 billion of their own money so those projects could be completed.

No, the only things that people like Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina and an organization

that calls itself the American Family Association are able to see is those two controversial photography grants. The shining record of those 25 years of accomplishment is lost in the tumult. Worse than tumult; hysteria.

"To my mind it's like the story of Chicken Little," says Representative Sidney Yates, the Illinois Democrat who has long been such a spirited champion of the N.E.A. "When an acorn fell on his head he shouted, 'The sky is falling, the sky is falling.' Those who are criticizing the N.E.A. claim pornography is rife there. But ask them where and they've only two answers. Mapplethorpe. Serrano."

Six weeks ago the Bush Administration refused to endorse Senator Helms's proposal to stifle the N.E.A. by restricting the content of programs it supports. Since then, however, the American Family Association has become even more inflammatory and misleading. It falsely claims, for instance, that an allegedly pornographic show had N.E.A. funding. Representative Philip Crane, Republican of Illinois, once a far-right candidate for President, has introduced a bill to abolish the agency.

And now, smelling blood in the water, the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies shamelessly proposes that most of the Endowment's money be given directly to local arts councils. To do that would truly plunge national arts policy, and funds, into just the political pressures that Congress has worked so carefully to avoid.

The N.E.A. has, by someone's standards, made misjudgments in its lifetime, and if it is doing its job of fostering creativity it will make more. But it has made no mistake as great as that which will be made if good men and women in Congress, in the arts community, in the White House and across the country don't now stand up for an institution that has benefited thousands of artists — and millions of Americans.

Chaos on the Arts Front

CONFUSION, AS much as criticism, is now driving the debate over the future of the National Endowment for the Arts. As Congress debates the endowment's five-year reauthorizing legislation, members seem to be acting on one panicky assumption: that there's no chance of retaining the endowment in substantially its current form and that without some sort of changes, whether cosmetic or drastic, political heads will roll. This idea holds sway even though the only substantive bill now on the floor—one little-regarded bill would abolish the endowment entirely—is the White House proposal, which asks for no restrictions on content and *increases* the endowment's budget. That bill reflects the president's reasonable statement that he abhors obscenity but doesn't believe that restricting the NEA is the way to go.

Instead there has been a hail of often contradictory proposals and actions. An assembly that represents state arts agencies floated a widely excoriated proposal to restructure the endowment, removing funds from the national endowment and giving them to the states to distribute. (This, oddly enough, is the exact opposite of a proposal last July, early in the controversy over Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, to bar such state "regrantings" altogether.) House Republicans Steve Gunderson and Thomas Coleman Thursday offered a sketchy proposal along similar but more drastic lines, moving most endowment money to the states and reserving most of the remainder for grants above \$50,000—even though such large

grants are now only 12 percent of the endowment's activity and though other parts of the bill call for "broader access" to the arts, a goal more in line with large numbers of smaller grants. But such calls for decentralization also undo the original notion of insulating arts money from political pressures—both left and right. Money distributed through state agencies is not so much "accountable" as simply vulnerable to political pressure. It was a state legislature that tried last year to cut off the Detroit Symphony because it had too few black musicians.

In varying degrees these are attempts at end runs made in the hope that somehow the central problem can be redefined, redrawn or postponed out of existence. But it can't. Is there no constituency for supporting the endowment in its current, time-tested form? If there isn't, there should be. But lobbying has been disorganized, and disputes over facts and widespread accusations of bad faith have not helped matters. Rep. Pat Williams (D-Mont.), chairman of a subcommittee handling NEA reauthorization, originally said he might support a one-year extension for the agency as it is—to let tempers cool and to allow time for a new White House-appointed commission to fulfill its charge of rethinking the endowment's structure. The idea of resisting major changes in the endowment—at least until the commission can report—holds merit. Keeping the endowment substantially as it is, pending a dispassionate and reasonably informed analysis from the commission, may be the best way to avoid damaging the agency beyond repair.

EDITORIAL

THE ATLANTA CONSTITUTION

For 121 Years the South's Standard Newspaper

James M. Cox, Chairman 1930-1937—James M. Cox Jr., Chairman 1937-1974

Jay Smith
Publisher

Ron Martin
Editor

Dennis Berry
President

Tom Toepen
Editorial Page Editor

Glenn McCutchen
Executive Editor

John W. Walter Jr.
Managing Editor

PAGE A-18, FRIDAY, MAY 25, 1990

Nonsense threatens America's art

If we are not careful — and carelessness is winning at least for now — this country could lose its most important source of support for the arts, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), a basic component of the quality of national public life.

The political right and its religious-right allies have whipped up a smear campaign against NEA, one that has some members of Congress rattled in this re-election year, and now one of the NEA's natural allies has turned out to be shark. It has smelled blood and is trying to eat NEA for lunch.

A little sanity, please.

The national endowment was created in 1965, our first major, sustained effort to support and improve American cultural life. It has been a huge success.

NEA's budget is tiny — just \$171 million this year, about 68 cents a person. (Compare that, and the value we get, to the \$100 a year every one of us will have to pay for the next 10 years to bail out S&L's sunk by greediness, incompetence and fraud.) But NEA's grants leverage up \$1.3 billion a year from private and corporate sources for arts organizations and artists. Over the years, the endowment's proven process — application reviews by panels of citizens and professionals — has handed out literally tens of thousands of grants without incident.

But last year, throwback Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) found a couple of questionable grants, saw a chance to play to the uninformed galleries and to rev up his own awesome political fund-raising machine in the process. His grandstanding loaded NEA grantees down with an unnecessary anti-obscenity oath, and the religious right took up

the issue as an ongoing crusade. It now routinely misrepresents NEA projects in order to defame the endowment, and doctrinaire conservatives who have always hated the idea of helping culture with public funds have boarded the bandwagon.

A letter-writing campaign has frightened some members of Congress, who think they have heard the public will if they get 300 form letters, and now — cruellest blow — the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, seeing NEA as a target of opportunity, has jumped it, proposing itself as the solution. Give us 60 percent of the money, the state groups say. (They now get 20.) Decentralize the process; go local. Republicans who can't quite bring themselves to vote against the arts look keenly at the idea. "Local control" sounds so Republican. But chopping up the money would trivialize and politicize the nation's meager arts effort. The state agencies ought to be ashamed of their rank opportunism.

The United States makes far less effort for the arts than other developed nations. A 1984 study found that the Canadian and French governments, for example, spent \$32 a person, West Germany \$27, Sweden \$35, Italy \$14. All U.S. governments combined — federal, state, local — spent only \$3 a person.

With such few resources at work, it is essential that they be used soundly. NEA has an excellent record of that, as no less than the president has recognized. Mr. Bush has proposed legislation that would unburden NEA of the silly Helms amendment and reauthorize its funding. That's exactly what Congress should do, and all it should do.

Boston Globe, Sunday, May 24, 1993

A bad rap for the NEA

In its 25-year history, the National Endowment for the Arts has become an invaluable friend and patron of the arts, funding an impressive array of institutions and activities. Now the hysteria generated by a small group of myopic arch-conservatives, led by Sen. Jesse Helms of North Carolina, threatens the NEA's freedom.

Strong pressures are building on Capitol Hill to place limits on the way the NEA awards grants because of the misperception that it supports obscene or sacrilegious art. Supporters of the NEA are divided on whether to seek a one-year or five-year NEA reauthorization.

It would be unreasonable to expect unanimity of support for the many projects the NEA has funded over the years, given the subjectivity of creative expression. The NEA has been criticized often, and some have charged it with elitism.

However, until last year it had never been charged with underwriting smut, as it was when it

financed a retrospective of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe and made an award to photographer Andres Serrano. The art of these two men has been used unfairly by Helms and an organization called the American Family Association as a device to discredit the NEA, overlooking the important work the NEA has accomplished in fostering the arts.

Where does the public stand on federal aid for the arts? A survey conducted for People For The American Way indicates that Americans strongly support the NEA's role as a promoter and distributor of arts funding and do not wish to see the methods for granting arts awards changed.

Congress should approve another five-year reauthorization for the National Endowment for the Arts and allow it to continue making its cultural contribution to the nation - without any legislative restraints.

The State

A Knight-Ridder Newspaper

Frank M. McComas
Publisher

R. Sidney Criss
General Manager
William E. Reese Jr.
Editorial Page Editor
G. Kent Krell
Associate Editor

Thomas N. McLean
Executive Editor
Robert A. Pierce
Senior Associate Editor
Katherine W. King
Associate Editor

Robert M. Him III, Managing Editor

6-A

Columbia, South Carolina, Monday, May 14, 1990

Arts funding deserves support, not censure

BECAUSE of their great diversity and the passions they arouse, the arts and institutions that sponsor them are seldom free of scorn, suspicion and controversy. Presently, they are going through an acute period of critical examination and skepticism.

Recently, for example, 31 prominent individuals urged Congress to assure the survival of the National Endowment for the Arts in the face of assaults by some lawmakers over federal support for art deemed obscene or blasphemous.

In a full-page, open letter to Congress published in *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, signers strongly supported the grant-making endowment as the primary catalyst for extending the arts to millions of Americans in the past 25 years.

"It is unfortunate that, recently, the NEA has become a subject of political controversy," the letter said. "Misrepresentation and misunderstanding threaten its integrity, perhaps even its survival."

The signers urged Congress to "safeguard what has evolved from a national resource to a national treasure," as the House and Senate consider legislation authorizing a five-year extension of the endowment, an independent \$171 million federal agency.

The NEA's political problems started last summer when Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., protested the agency's previous financial support for traveling exhibitions of provocative works by the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe and artist Andres Serrano.

Subsequently, 88 Republican House members and three Democratic representatives wrote President Bush urging him to support restrictions against federal funding of "obscene, indecent and sacrilegious" projects. To his credit, Mr. Bush has said he is against government censorship and opposes legislation constraining arts funding.

Since its creation in 1965, the NEA's service to the American

people has been extraordinary in variety and scope. It has awarded more than \$5,000 grants in support of worthy programs in every part of the country. The arts, once largely restricted to large metropolitan areas, flourish today in what used to be thought of as the cultural boondocks.

Consider South Carolina. Last week, the S.C. Arts Commission staged its annual salute to achievement and contributions to the arts with the presentation of the Elizabeth O'Neill Verner Awards. Honorees included both individuals and corporations without whose generosity and commitment arts enterprises in the state would be hard-pressed to survive.

In an appropriate gesture, this year's awards were dedicated to all who helped raise money and contributed to the Hurricane Hugo Arts Fund.

Even so, it is an ongoing struggle for individual artists and many arts organizations to make ends meet. The Southern Growth Policies Board, based at the Research Triangle Park in North Carolina, stressed that very point in a new report. The bottom line of the survey was to the effect that increased state support for local artists and indigenous cultural groups would significantly enhance economic development efforts to attract new businesses to the South and create new jobs.

The SGPB report said recent studies in six Southern states, including South Carolina, show that arts activities — Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, for example — have resulted in increased local business activity and created jobs in tourism and related industries.

Clearly, then, this is no time to be scaling back on governmental funding for the arts. Rather, it is time to build on policies and initiatives currently in place at the state and federal levels. In that regard, it would be well to remember that private, community-based support has picked up through matching federal grants from NEA.

EDITORIALS

Railroad job on arts endowment

The assault on the National Endowment for the Arts is becoming increasingly detached from reality, but that doesn't mean it won't be successful.

Pressure tactics can work, when the large mass of public opinion is unfocused. A sweeping statewide anti-obscenity ordinance was a real possibility before opponents began showing Mainers it could restrict what they could read and watch in their own homes.

The attack on the NEA has focused on two photographers, Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, making them improbable household names.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) and the American Family Association have been leading the charge against "obscene art." It would be easy to dismiss the campaign as irrational, and let it go at that. But that would be a mistake.

Who would have thought that the Cincinnati Museum of Art would be in court facing obscenity charges over its exhibition of Mapplethorpe's photographs? Who would have thought Congress would be stampeded into vague but menacing restrictions on NEA-funded shows?

Let's get two things straight: First, there is no such thing as "obscene art." The Supreme Court has allowed restrictions on written or visual material only if it utterly lacks "serious artistic or scientific value."

Second, Mapplethorpe's and Serrano's photographs may not be your cup of tea, but there's no real question that they're artistic expressions — not pornography. And it's amazing how many people are content to make up their minds not by seeing the actual works, but by reading a one-sentence description of them. By this standard, the countless medieval renderings of Christ bleeding on the cross could also be depicted as obscene.

The Mapplethorpe controversy began when Helms and other congressmen pressured the Corcoran Gallery in Washington into canceling a retrospective of his work (the photographer died of AIDS in 1988.)

Mapplethorpe's work concentrates on lyrical images from the natural world; he also shot, in the last months of his life, some explicit but still lyrical images of homosexual behavior. This is strong stuff, and not something you'd want kids to see, but is its presence in a museum an invitation to prosecution?

Serrano, a lesser artist, is an even stranger case. His "offensive" photograph, which reputedly shows a crucifix inside a bottle of the artist's urine, could not even be identified as such by a viewer. If he hadn't added the title "Piss Christ," no one would have noticed. Serrano often juxtaposes religious symbols with fluids such as milk and blood. Not especially imaginative, perhaps, but not "obscene" either.

Kennebec Journal
Friday, May 18, 1990

The NEA is essentially captive to its democratic approach to arts grants. Unlike European countries, which heavily subsidize the equivalent of the Metropolitan Opera and New York Philharmonic, the endowment has sought to encourage art locally, providing thousands of grants to small museums and individual artists.

Is it surprising that two of these thousands of grants might produce something offending majority tastes?

Even taken at the worst possible evaluation, the offending photographs do not support any wholesale change in the NEA's budget or grants. The endowment has gotten welcome support from President Bush, but still faces concerted challenges in Congress.

No cut in its \$119 million grants budget is justified. A tiny fraction of federal spending, it nevertheless does a world of good for artists everywhere — and the public which views and reads their work.

The NEA gets less support from the government than do military bands in the Army. It's the critics, not the NEA, which are excessive.

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

DAVID G. HAMPTON, Editorial Director

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 years 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.

A Free Society Doesn't Dictate to Artists

By Kathleen M. Sullivan

THE National Endowment for the Arts comes before Congress for reauthorization this year in the midst of a political firestorm generated by a few works — especially some nude photographs by the late Robert Mapplethorpe. Many are clamoring for restrictions on what publicly-funded artists may express through their art. But they are forgetting about the First Amendment. In a free society, such "content" restrictions have no place.

Advocates of restrictions commonly make three arguments. All three are wrong. First, they say, "It's the taxpayers' money and we may discriminate as we like with it!"

The Supreme Court has long since rejected that plea. Rather, the Court has held, the First Amendment applies whether the Government is wielding its checkbook or its badge.

It is easy to see why. It would obviously be intolerable to make it a crime to vote Republican. But it would be just as unconstitutional to offer cash bounties to those who vote

Kathleen M. Sullivan is professor of law at Harvard Law School.

Democrat! Either way, the world would be skewed impermissibly in favor of the Democrats.

Likewise, bribing Warhol to copy Wyeth would have had the same effect as outlawing pop art. Either way, the world would be made safe only for landscapes. But as Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote for the Supreme Court in a unanimous 1983 opinion, neither by penalty nor subsidy may the Government "aim at the suppression of dangerous ideas."

Indeed, the First Amendment has never been held to disappear just because the taxpayers are paying the tab. If you are a public school teacher, you cannot be fired for speaking out against the school board on matters of public concern — even though the taxpayers pay your salary.

If you wish to hold a rally or concert in a public park, you cannot be denied a permit because your ideas or songs are controversial — even though the taxpayers pay for the police who keep order at your event and for the sanitation workers who clean up the litter you leave behind. And editorials, however controversial, may not be banned from the public airwaves — even though the taxpayers foot the bill for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

The second argument often heard in favor of restrictions is that "government should not put its seal of ap-

proval on controversial art by paying for it." Wrong again. To make art possible is not to condone it. Consider, by way of analogy, recent events in the public spaces of the nation's capital.

Last autumn, pro-choice advocates filled the Washington Mall. A few weeks ago, anti-abortion demonstrators took the same ground. Both times, taxpayers paid the bill for the police and grounds keepers. But no

Limits on the power of the purse.

one would seriously argue that Government was thus "approving" either side. Rather, the only "message" conveyed by such neutral and even-handed public subsidies is that, in the Government's house, all ideas are welcome.

Third, restrictions advocates often say, "If obscene art may be banned, we may make a grant recipient promise not to produce it." Not so fast. A nation that has long distrusted loyalty oaths should not be quick to

impose conformity oaths.

We have long resisted such prior restraints on the ground that they exert an intolerable chilling effect. An artist who receives a check in the mail with a hit list of forbidden ideas attached will forego too much valuable and innovative expression for fear it will come too close to the line. As Justice Thurgood Marshall once put it, the problem with "a sword of Damocles is that it hangs — not that it drops."

Does this mean that Government can exercise no control whatsoever over publicly funded art? Of course not. Obviously, the Government may make sure that artists, like military contractors, use the money for what they are supposed to; some accountability is required. Moreover, the Government cannot fund everything; some selectivity is essential.

But quality, not political palatability, must be the touchstone. Except for neutral and nonpartisan requirements of esthetic excellence, Federal support for the arts should come without strings. In a free society, artists should not be the Government's puppets but should dance to their own tune. A free society can have no official orthodoxy in art any more than in religion or politics. And in a free society, such orthodoxy can no more be purchased by power of the purse than compelled by power of the sword. □

DAILY BREEZE

TORRANCE, CA
DAILY 131,194

SUNDAY
MAR 25 1990

BURRELLE'S

102

36

Supporting the arts

EDITORIAL

F 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 2471 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.

Seattle Post-
Intelligencer
SEATTLE, WASH.
O. 203,726
1990 425

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

-4804 **BURRELLE'S** CI

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 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.

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.

ADP

BURRELLE'S

Arts funding

Federal subsidy is right and proper

Rep. Dick Arme~~y~~ 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.

Arme~~y~~'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 Arme~~y~~ 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?

Arme~~y~~ 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.

WEDNESDAY

MAR 28 1990

BURRELLE'S

441

ZF

The art of subsidy

2.1978
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.

NEA is still at war 25 years later

The National Endowment for the Arts celebrates its 25th birthday this year, and 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, musicians 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 America and provided a society and profession 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-

Rosemary Yardley is a News & Record editorial columnist.



Rosemary Yardley

situations 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 nay-sayer: "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 support. 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 \$163 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.

The Houston Post
HOUSTON, TEXAS
D. 372,183

TV-205

APR 2 1990

BURRELLE'S

FOR ARTS' SAKE

National Endowment deserves new lease on life

6 217 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.

Fort Worth Star-Telegram
FORT WORTH, TEXAS
SAT. 266,735

MAR 24 1990

BURRELLE'S

NEA brouhaha

Bush is right: Congress no art critic

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.

MAR 27 1990

BURRELLE'S

Arts lynch mob suffers setback

2197E
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 tell "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 evangebleep, 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 "homoeerotic." He described a picture of a nude youth as "one of the nicer ones" in the 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, homoeeroticism, 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 homoeerotic 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 (tee-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 touts 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 feet have trod these rugs, Mel.

Here's the topper: You can hardly drive past a bus 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.

Jeanette 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.

LEXINGTON HERALD-LEADER

LEXINGTON, KY
DAILY 119,829

TUESDAY
MAR 27 1990

91

BURRELLE'S

RD

Bush stands up to the art police

EDITORIAL

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

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.

MAR 27 1990

BURRELLE'S

President gets the picture

EDITORIAL

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.

Los Angeles Times
LOS ANGELES, CAL.
D. 1,118,840

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.

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

21976
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.

Lou Ziegler, Editor
Betty Liddick, Managing Editor
George Freeman, Editorial Page Editor
Hank Billings, Editorial Page Coordinator
Robert Leger, Special Projects Editor
Louise Whall, Metro/Business Editor

OF THE CITY

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.



TRIBUNE

SAN DIEGO, CA
DAILY 125,000

FRIDAY
MAR 23 1990

BURRELLE'S

584

OT

Arts head deflects poison dart

E 2197E 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.

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.

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

The art world strikes back

Brush off for Rohrabacher?

True 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

F2197 E
A 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.

ED 7000
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

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. ■

RECORD

HACKENSACK, NJ
DAILY 161,969

FRIDAY
MAR 23 1990

BURRELLE'S

XF

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

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, playbills 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 2147E}
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.

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
A Member of the Gannett Group

Editorials reflect the opinion of the Argus Leader's editorial board. Members are:

Larry Fuller/President and Publisher
Ward Bushee/Executive Editor
David Kranz/Managing Editor
Rob Swenson/Editorial Page Editor
Pat Van Deest/Personnel Director

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.

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 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."

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 Frohnmayer 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.

MONDAY
MAR 26 1990

14 BURRELLE'S PH

Editorial:

Helms' censorship proposal is obscene

E 2147E
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 hooey 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



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 "Demoiselles 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 Brucke" 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 22 1990

BURRELLE'S

QUALITY CONTROL

Tighten, don't inhibit, the NEA grant process

E 2117E EDITORIAL 1

TOO much attention has been given to a few smutty pictures financed or displayed by tax dollars from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The NEA needs to clean up its act, but the issue is much more fundamental than a handful of offensive exhibits.

Would-be artists are turning out junk, and expecting Uncle Sam to be the patron of last resort. What truly frightens the arts community is exposure of this much more insidious decline.

Anguished cries against censorship are a smokescreen to distract attention from a vigorous discussion of whether the NEA has been reduced to a mediocre art enterprise.

Sadly, the debate is muddled by excesses on both sides.

Sen. Jesse Helms' legislative sensitivities were so aroused by one erotic display that the North Carolina Republican had a morality oath written into this year's NEA funding.

Legislation to renew the NEA charter for another five years is before Congress, and the Bush administration has decided not to seek extension of Helms' restrictions.

John Frohnmayer, chairman of the arts endowment, has pledged to improve the geographical and cultural representation in NEA grants, and diversify the membership of NEA selection panels.

Don't make the concept of quality a stranger to the review process, either. Why should the taxpayer finance work that would be hooted down by a private gallery or rejected by an art school's admission board? Encouraging excellence is not a totalitarian plot.

If integrity really were a central issue, there'd be a groundswell from the arts community to refuse all government funds, and simply paint, perform or write without fear of contradiction, or Big Brotherly judgment.

Oops, nevermind. This is about money, not censorship.

(Seattle Times editorial staff writers are Mindy Cameron, Lance Dickie, John Hamer, Don Hannula, Richard Larsen, Terry Tang and Don Williamson.)

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.

MAR 25 1990

224

BURRELLE'S

FC

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.

NEA's many achievements outweigh critics' myopic assault

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 a Portland Art Museum docent.

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

basic support, or "block grants," to states, and these are the basis of grants, usually seed funding, by state arts commissions to community organizations and individuals within the states.

This year's block grant to the Oregon Arts Commission was \$369,000, about one-fourth of its total revenue.

By tying grants to challenges, the relatively small amount can cover a larger number of projects and also encourage local responsibility in funding as well as planning. The range of programs includes all the arts throughout the state with an emphasis on educational projects. Umatilla County has a Saturday academy in art education for Native Americans. Similar programs are provided elsewhere for families of migrant workers. A "Theatre After School" workshop in Corvallis is aimed at underprivileged children who are considered "at risk." A small amount goes to "Young Audiences" that sends musicians, actors, dancers and writers to perform in schools throughout Oregon and Clark County, Wash. Direct NEA grants help to support "Across the River," which sends poets and writers to introduce their works to rural areas. Another successful program that began as an experiment in Washington County schools has spread to three other counties, and now is being developed statewide. Called "Architects in the Schools," it uses architecture as a basic curriculum builder. Architects instruct students and

teachers in the visual aspects of architecture and help them to understand — and apply — its relationship to history, social studies, mathematics and art.

Education is a special interest of John Frohnmayer, the NEA chairman, and he appointed Selina Ottum, the former director of Portland's Metropolitan Arts Commission, as the senior deputy in charge of arts-in-education at the national level. Both have well-established records as arts advocates in Oregon, and with support, they will build on them in the national arena.

Surely we will not permit their effort to be jeopardized or diluted by a small band of myopic zealots. The argument over freedom of expression vs. public support of controversial art is an important one, but it should not diminish the continuance of the NEA's essential work in international exchanges, multicultural art and resource enhancement, as well as education.

There are other important reasons for supporting the NEA, but to this native of Appalachia, none is more important than its outreach to rural and poor urban areas.

Historical evidence says so, and I know, too, from my own experience, that the arts, as much as science and the humanities, form our individual as well as national character.

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

Founded in 1851

ADOLPH S. OCHS, Publisher 1896-1935
ARTHUR HAYS SULZBERGER, Publisher 1935-1961
ORVILLE D. BRIDGES, Publisher 1961-1963

ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER, Publisher
ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER JR., Deputy Publisher

MAX FRANKEL, Executive Editor
JOSEPH LELYVELD, Managing Editor
WARREN MOOR, Assistant Managing Editor
DAVID R. JONES, Assistant Managing Editor
CAROLYN LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
JOHN M. LEE, Assistant Managing Editor
ALLAN M. SIDGAL, Assistant Managing Editor

JACK ROSENTHAL, Editorial Page Editor
LESLIE M. GELB, Deputy Editorial Page Editor

LANCE R. PRIME, President
HOWARD BISHOP, Sr. V.P., Operations
RUSSELL T. LEWIS, Sr. V.P., Production
BRUCE G. LINKER JR., Sr. V.P., Advertising
JOHN M. O'BRIEN, Sr. V.P., Finance/Human Resources
BLAKE J. BOLL, Sr. V.P., Systems
WILLIAM L. POLLAK, V.P., Circulation

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."

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.



Tom
Hennessy

Art gets bad rap by Dana

If anyone should be thankful for the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano, it is U.S. Rep. Dana Rohrabacher, R-Long Beach.

Without their controversial art to bash, he would be another dull face in Congress. Instead, we find him on such national TV shows as the MacNeil-Lehrer NewsHour, where, last week, he took his distorted crusade to abolish the National Endowment for the Arts. Sample:

"When we have a picture of Jesus Christ put in a bottle of urine ... and we see \$15,000 in tax dollars going to that at a time when we are having trouble paying for the health care of our elderly, it's an absolute outrage."

Sounds solid. But it's pure baloney.

Rohrabacher and Sen. Jesse Helm, R-N.C., have built a tempest from two 1989 exhibits which received NEA funds and which featured photographs by the late Mapplethorpe and by Serrano. These works included the Christ photo, certainly offensive to many.

Rohrabacher has hyped these two cases to portray the NEA as a reckless agency trading in smut and blasphemy. In truth, only 25 of NEA's 85,000 grants have been deemed controversial enough to raise eyebrows in Congress. Abolishing it for what may have been a badly spent \$15,000 is akin to abolishing the Pentagon the first time it was caught buying a \$15,000 screwdriver.

Rohrabacher's hand-wringing over funds for the elderly is a sham. True, he voted on the side of catastrophic health insurance for seniors — once. But overall, the National Council of Senior Citizens gives him a "report-card" rating of 10 on issues concerning seniors.

"That means he voted wrong 9 times out of 10," says Ken Hoagland, a Council spokesman in Washington. "Out of the entire California delegation, he is among the 10 worst congressmen when it comes to elderly issues. If he's a champion of the elderly, then the elderly are in a lot of trouble." Here's another statement from Rohrabacher's MacNeil-Lehrer appearance: "I think the process they (the NEA) have used has excluded certain types of artists who are complaining to me every day about a process that seems to be a clique, insider type of process where more eccentric art is financed at the expense of more traditional art."

The image of NEA-spurned artists complaining "every day" to Rohrabacher sounds like a virtual uprising in the arts. But when I phoned his Washington office and asked an aide exactly how many artists had done this, he could cite only two. (And could recall only one by name.)

What next? "I have here in my hand a list of 205 artists who ..."

Rohrabacher seems a bright guy. And there are many ways a bright, freshman congressman can make a name for himself. Slandering the National Endowment for the Arts should not be one of them.

A host of government agencies could use more Congressional scrutiny. The NEA is a refreshing exception. At costs that are a minuscule part of federal spending, it has done a remarkable job in bringing the arts to Americans who otherwise would never have that experience.

NEA funds have gone to such "radical" beneficiaries as the Long Beach Symphony, the Civic Light Opera and the Long Beach Museum of Art. Without the NEA, there might not be a Vietnam Wall. The agency funded the design competition.

Because its essence is to explore and create, art, at times, will offend. If it never offends, it may no longer be art.

What we have here is not a federal agency gone amok. What we have is one congressman gone amok in a quest to make a name for himself.

Find another issue, Mr. Rohrabacher.

WEDNESDAY
MAR 28 1990

128

BURRELLE'S

GJ

Don't let a few spoil funding for arts

GERALD ELLIOTT



2197F
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 of 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 yeoman 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

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.



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

—Allen H. Neuhauser
Founder
Sept. 15, 1982

Peter S. Prichard
Editor

Cathleen Black
Publisher

John Seigenthaler
Editorial Director

Thomas Curley
President

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

THE VOICE OF THE WEST

RICHARD T. THIERIOT
Editor and Publisher

WILLIAM GERMAN
Executive Editor

MATTHEW F. WILSON
Managing Editor

PHELPS DEWEY
Assistant to Publisher, Administration

JACK BREIBART
Assistant Managing Editor/News

DANIEL ROSENHEIM
City Editor

ROSALIE MULLER WRIGHT
Assistant Managing Editor/Features

THOMAS C. BENET
Chief Editorial Writer

Founded 1865 by Charles and M.H. deYoung
George T. Cameron, Publisher 1925-55
Charles deYoung Thieriot, Publisher 1955-77

Marketing and Operations conducted by the San Francisco Newspaper Agency
ROBERT M. McCORMACK **W. LAWRENCE WALKER JR.** **THOMAS G. CLANCY**
President/Chief Exec. Officer Exec. VP/Business Manager Sr. VP/Sales & Marketing

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.

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
04a. Memo	From David Bates to John Sununu Re: Lynne Cheney (1 pp.)	4/30/90	P-5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JP (NLGB) on 1/19/09

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
 P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
 P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
 P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
 P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
 P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
 (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
 (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
 (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
 (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
 (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
 (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
 (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

April 30, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR GOVERNOR SUNUNU

FROM: DAVID Q. BATES, JR.



I think these are some good thoughts from Lynne Cheney. (NEH has the same authorizing legislation as NEA.) John Frohnmayer has approved the language in her proposed answer for the President, although I did not send him all of Lynne's memo. I thought you might want to share this with the President.

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
04b. Memo	From Lynne Cheney to David Bates Re: Request in reference to NEH (2 pp.)	4/21/90	P5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JP (NLGB) on 1/19/09

Date Closed:	12/9/2004	OA/ID Number:	29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #:	1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:	
Re-review Case #:	2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:	
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:		Disposition Date:	
AR Case #:		MR Case #:	
AR Disposition:		MR Disposition:	
AR Disposition Date:		MR Disposition Date:	

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- (b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

**NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES**

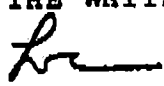
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

THE CHAIRMAN

APRIL 21, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR DAVID Q. BATES, THE WHITE HOUSE

FROM:

LYNNE V. CHENEY 

SUBJECT:

YOUR REQUEST IN REFERENCE TO NEA

If I were a reporter and wanted to ask an NEA question in the toughest way possible, here's how I'd do it. For the sake of briefing book decorum, you may want to leave the second sentence out.

Q: An exhibit of Mapplethorpe photographs funded by the National Endowment for the Arts recently caused a museum in Cincinnati to be indicted for criminal obscenity. The indictment handed down describes certain photographs in that federally-funded exhibit as follows: "A photograph depicting the forearm and hand of one person inserted into the anus of another, a photograph of a finger inserted into a penis, a photograph of a cylindrical object being inserted into an anus, a photograph of a man urinating into the mouth of another man, and a photograph of a man with a whip inserted in his anus." Mr. President, do you still oppose content restrictions on NEA's legislation?

A: Let me say once more that I am appalled that taxpayer money went to fund such an exhibit. Such a use of public funds is totally inappropriate, and John Frohnmayer, the new chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts,

MEMO TO DAVID BATES
PAGE 2

agrees with me completely on this. The best way to make sure that such projects are not funded in the future is to proceed with reforms that will make the process by which grants are awarded at the National Endowment for the Arts more rigorous. Chairman Frohnmayer has outlined certain reforms, and I know he's considering others. That's the best way to solve the problem.

David, I strongly recommend that the President avoid equating content restrictions with censorship. In the first place, it is very likely that there are going to be some restrictions in the reauthorization legislation that comes to his desk. Temperate and thoughtful congressmen, like Tom Coleman of Missouri, are saying so. Even more important, there is a difference between questions that deal with censorship (Should there be limits on what museums display?) and questions that deal with sponsorship (What should the federal government fund?) Saying that a museum has a right to hang Mapplethorpe or Serrano photographs is different from saying that they have a right to federal funds to help them do so.

Content restrictions should be opposed, not on grounds of censorship, but because there is a better way of dealing with the Mapplethorpe/Serrano/obscenity problem: i.e., reforming the grant-making process.

To your inquiry about funding of the Cincinnati exhibition: The Arts Endowment has stated that NEA did not fund it. Their funding, \$30,000, went to the Philadelphia Institute of Contemporary Art to put the Mapplethorpe exhibition together. NEA feels justified in saying they did not fund the Cincinnati venue of that exhibit since the Philadelphia Institute did not list Cincinnati among the places that the show might go. I find this reasoning somewhat shaky and will be unlikely myself, in the future, to say no federal funding is involved in Cincinnati.

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
05. Letter	From John Frohnmayer to POTUS Re: NEA grants to artists (2 pp.)	3/9/90	P5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By SP (NLGB) on 4/10/08

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
 P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
 P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
 P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
 P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
 P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
 (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
 (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
 (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
 (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
 (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
 (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
 (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

President has the original; retyped for easy reading.

March 9, 1990

From John Frohnmayer

Personal and Confidential:

Mr. President:

Yes, I am offended by the work of David Wojnarowicz (and by the man personally.) He is dying of AIDS and is very angry. The show discussed in the article you sent was funded before my tenure here, but you may remember that I was ambushed on the way into town by this same stuff (the same guy and much of the same material) at Artists Space in New York. In essence, this is the issue I have been dealing with since I have been here and my thoughts are as follows:

1. The original legislation creating the NEA says: "we must not, under any circumstances, impose a single aesthetic standard or attempt to direct artistic content."

- This is wise, has worked very well over the last 24 years, and is a policy I have tried to follow within the agency as well.

It is a fundamental policy that Senator Helms and others have been trying to change and we have resisted with all our strength.

2. The main job of this agency, I think, is to promote creativity - to allow a climate wherein the genius of American artists can flourish. Within such a climate some elbow room is necessary.

3. To put the kabosh on Mr. W. after he has produced this work would cause for more problems than it would solve and would, in my view, threaten the agency's continued existence with our congressional support (which is broad and bipartisan.)

My Solution:

1. Tighten up our citizen panel process by which grants are recommended by:

- a) adding some educated lay persons to get more balance.
- b) attending the start of each panel myself (we have over 100 each year) to explain the process, their obligations, etc.
- c) assuming wider geographic distribution, cultural representation, point of view, diversity, and greater size for the panels.
- d) assuring a complete record is made justifying the artistic basis upon which each grant is recommended.

2. All grant letters and our guidelines specifically say we cannot fund obscenity. (we couldn't before the most recent legislation, either, and I consider the legislation unnecessary.)

3. Make sure the panels know of our artist's past work and take it into account in future grants. The artist (and my agency) must be accountable - but not retroactively when the work was not in existence when funded.

4. Appoint some really quality artists to the National Council. You will have 10 vacancies to appoint shortly and we have some wonderful recommendations to make to you.

5. Assure that all of our decisions are made on Artistic merit. That's how we can make a real contributions to this country.

I have talked with Andy Card and will discuss these matters with the Governor (and hopefully with you if your schedule permits next Tuesday afternoon.)

The negative press notwithstanding, I think we are getting a handle on things here. There are tremendous opportunities for the Endowment to make this country a better place.

With my greatest respect,

John

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
06. Note	From POTUS Re: Phone call w/John Frohnmayer (1 pp.)	3/10/90	P /5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JF (NLGB) on 12/12/07

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

- P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
- P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
- P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
- P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
- P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
- P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

- (b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
- (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
- (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
- (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
- (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
- (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
- (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
- (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

Presidential Phone Calls



DATE: 3-10 _____

TIME: _____
incoming/outgoing

11.am

WITH: John Frohnmayer _____

SUBJECT: _____

_____ called to thank him for attached

_____ memo.just what I wanted

_____ told him I support the way he is handling right and l

FOLLOW UP: _____

_____ None

cc: JohnSununu

Withdrawal/Redaction Sheet

(George Bush Library)

Document No. and Type	Subject/Title of Document	Date	Restriction	Class.
07. Memo	From Anne Brooks Gwaltney to Chase Untermeyer Re: Talking points for Sununu's meeting w/NEA chairman John Frohnmayer (3 pp.)	3/2/90	P/5	

Collection:

Record Group: Bush Presidential Records
Office: Chief of Staff, White House Office of
Series: Sununu, John, Files
Subseries: Issues Files
WHORM Cat.:
File Location: 1990 Frohnmayer (NEA)

Open on Expiration of PRA
 (Document Follows)
 By JP (NLGB) on 5/12/05

Date Closed: 12/9/2004	OA/ID Number: 29156-007
FOIA/SYS Case #: 1998-0004-F[2]	Appeal Case #:
Re-review Case #: 2005-0426-S	Appeal Disposition:
P-2/P-5 Review Case #:	Disposition Date:
AR Case #:	MR Case #:
AR Disposition:	MR Disposition:
AR Disposition Date:	MR Disposition Date:

RESTRICTION CODES

Presidential Records Act - [44 U.S.C. 2204(a)]

P-1 National Security Classified Information [(a)(1) of the PRA]
 P-2 Relating to the appointment to Federal office [(a)(2) of the PRA]
 P-3 Release would violate a Federal statute [(a)(3) of the PRA]
 P-4 Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential commercial or financial information [(a)(4) of the PRA]
 P-5 Release would disclose confidential advice between the President and his advisors, or between such advisors [(a)(5) of the PRA]
 P-6 Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(a)(6) of the PRA]

C. Closed in accordance with restrictions contained in donor's deed of gift.

PRM. Removed as a personal record misfile.

Freedom of Information Act - [5 U.S.C. 552(b)]

(b)(1) National security classified information [(b)(1) of the FOIA]
 (b)(2) Release would disclose internal personnel rules and practices of an agency [(b)(2) of the FOIA]
 (b)(3) Release would violate a Federal statute [(b)(3) of the FOIA]
 (b)(4) Release would disclose trade secrets or confidential or financial information [(b)(4) of the FOIA]
 (b)(6) Release would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy [(b)(6) of the FOIA]
 (b)(7) Release would disclose information compiled for law enforcement purposes [(b)(7) of the FOIA]
 (b)(8) Release would disclose information concerning the regulation of financial institutions [(b)(8) of the FOIA]
 (b)(9) Release would disclose geological or geophysical information

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

March 2, 1990

MEMORANDUM FOR CHASE UNTERMEYER

FROM: Anne Brooks Gwaltney

SUBJECT: Talking Points for Governor Sununu's meeting
with National Endowment for the Arts Chairman
John Frohnmayer

BACKGROUND

- I've been reading your press and receiving a lot of complaints from the Hill.
- Our interest is in your doing a good job and in representing the president and the administration well.

WHY YOU WERE SELECTED

- We selected you for this challenge because we thought you, as a Westerner, would represent the tastes and desires of the general American public and not the Eastern arts establishment.
- You had a background in the arts, a passion for the arts, an interest in seeing quality art rewarded and highlighted as the embodiment of the best this country can produce.
- You are a litigator, which would indicate that you are facile at negotiating in contentious situations, and a conservative Republican which is in keeping with the philosophy of this president and this administration.

FROHNMAYER'S ACTIONS TO DATE

I see nothing that you've said or done that would distinguish you from a Democratic appointee. Let's review your actions to date.

- Within two weeks in office you very publicly withdrew and then reinstated a grant that was controversial at best.
- You agreed to have your upcoming council meeting held at the very site that started all the controversy [the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem, NC].
- You have said little publicly about the situation arising with The Kitchen and other questionable grants except that you aren't "going to run around and respond just because something happened somewhere that someone didn't like."

PRO-ACTIVE STANCE ABSENT

- Why don't we hear you saying you won't continue to support individuals and organizations whose primary purpose seems to be to defy norms and embarrass the Endowment -- particularly those like The Kitchen whose track records are far from exemplary.
- Why aren't we hearing loudly the statement you were highly encouraged to make that says flat outright that you are opposed to funding obscenity? --- However one defines obscenity, the Hill and the American public need to hear that statement clearly and frequently.
- Where is your statement saying you intend to be a conscientious steward of public taxpayer dollars?
- Where is your effort to contain this controversy without getting the White House further involved?

SUGGESTIONS

Let me repeat suggestions that have been made to you:

- Don't expect the Independent Commission to solve your problem. You need to take action yourself. The president doesn't want some of these things funded. Neither should you.
- Don't just say you're opposed to funding obscenity, quit approving grants that are going to blow up in your face -- and ours.
- I appreciate your desire to encourage artistic creativity and experimental art, but please remember the need to exercise judgment where public monies are involved.

- You have the authority to overturn panels and council. Use it, if necessary, and save us all from these continuing embarrassments.
- You want to see the Endowment continue to exist and so do we. So get out on the road and highlight the bread-and-butter established arts institutions so the American public and legislators have something they can relate to and be proud of--and thereby perceive the Endowment in a positive light.

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."

NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS

WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506



A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

March 14, 1990

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHAIRMAN

FROM: Jack Lichtenstein
Director, Office of Public Affairs

SUBJECT: Chairman Quotes Re Obscenity

The Chairman has been quoted as making the following observations regarding art and obscenity:

Pacific Northwest Magazine

October, 1989

"I think [the reaction to Congress' proposed limitations on NEA funding] is reflective of how important the arts really are to our society. I mean, this is a little agency that costs about as much per year as the landing gear for a sophisticated bomber. But I also think some of the art [in question] has really offended a fairly large segment of the population, and that's something we clearly have to pay attention to."

The Los Angeles Times

February 26, 1990

"I told Sen. Helms the same thing that I told every other congressman and senator, that is that we will not fund obscenity and that I will be a responsible steward of this agency. I have kept my word to him in that regard. The more we can tell him about what we are doing, the less critical he's likely to be."

The Cleveland Plain Dealer

December 6, 1989

Asked about a statement by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., following the Artists Space debate that referred to Frohnmayer's "voluntary commitment" to Helms, the chairman replied his only commitment to Helms was that stated in the law, namely, "We will not fund anything that is obscene."

The Washington Times

October 10, 1989

"We have a very fine line to walk here between continuing artistic freedom and maintaining the public trust, when you're using taxpayer dollars."

MORE...

The New York TimesOctober 19, 1989

"There is a continuum between public trust on the one hand and artistic freedom on the other. And where you come down on a case-by-case basis is the exercise of judgment. That's true under the present legislation and it would be true if the legislation weren't there."

Art in AmericaJanuary 1990

"I strongly believe in the ability of people to speak their minds under the First Amendment, but the endowment should not be funding that discourse."

The Washington PostMarch 6, 1990

"We never fund anything whose sole purpose is to offend."

Orange County RegisterMarch 6, 1990

"What I'm saying in terms of the endowment is we are looking for artistic quality. 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. Because one of the things that obscenity is, which makes it the opposite of art, is that it has no serious artistic intent or content."

Orlando SentinelOctober 15, 1989

"We all need to be sensitive, and certainly this controversy has raised the level of sensitivity."

Village VoiceNovember 21, 1989

Regarding the obscenity regulation, "It's the law. And I've taken an oath."

NewsdayNovember 7, 1989

"Congress has passed a law that says we cannot fund that which is obscene and without artistic merit. We have to apply that law with great care and on a case-by-case basis."

The New York TimesSeptember 12, 1989

"I don't think there is an agency in the Federal Government whose motives are more pure in trying to bring cultural literacy to its people and improve the quality of life of American people."

MORE...

The Washington PostNovember 15, 1989

At Friday's convention, Frohnmayer said he intended to ask panelists, "If you feel a project is on the edge of this legislation which prohibits obscene art, then make a complete and clear record of why you feel the artistic quality of this project is exemplary and should be funded."

The Washington TimesFebruary 7, 1990

"I think those who oppose obscenity, and I count myself among them, might more fruitfully look elsewhere."

Associated PressFebruary 7, 1990

"I want to make it clear that we do not fund anything that is obscene and, in fact, my view is that art and obscenity are mutually exclusive terms."

(The above quote was picked up in several papers.)

Letter to Members of CongressFebruary 7, 1990

"Finally, a word on obscenity. I promised many of you when I met with you personally that we will not knowingly fund anything which is obscene. I reiterate that promise to you. Obscenity is the antithesis of art; it has no soul; it has no redeeming value. I oppose it unequivocally."

Letter to Members of CongressMarch 7, 1990

"I share the commitment to every effort to ensure the responsible, appropriate allocation of the Federal funds in every Endowment grant. These grants also enjoy the clear commitment of community resources, as each Endowment grant requires a non-Federal funding match. That is a fact completely ignored by critics of the Endowment."

Open letter to the American Family Assoc.February, 1990

"I oppose obscenity unequivocally. It is the antithesis of art; it has no soul. Its purpose is antithetical to all that the Endowment stands for."

Letter to the PublicMarch 15, 1990

"The National Endowment for the Arts DID NOT fund the Annie Sprinkle performance. Had the Annie Sprinkle program been presented to our panels or to myself, it would not have been funded -- based on its description in the media."

**NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR
THE ARTS****WASHINGTON
D.C. 20506**A Federal agency advised by the
National Council on the Arts

March 14, 1990

MEMORANDUM TO THE CHAIRMAN**FROM: Jack Lichtenstein**
Director, Office of Public Affairs**SUBJECT: Chairman Quotes Re Obscenity**The Chairman has been quoted as making the following
observations regarding art and obscenity:Pacific Northwest MagazineOctober, 1989

"I think [the reaction to Congress' proposed limitations on NEA funding] is reflective of how important the arts really are to our society. I mean, this is a little agency that costs about as much per year as the landing gear for a sophisticated bomber. But I also think some of the art [in question] has really offended a fairly large segment of the population, and that's something we clearly have to pay attention to."

The Los Angeles TimesFebruary 26, 1990

"I told Sen. Helms the same thing that I told every other congressman and senator, that is that we will not fund obscenity and that I will be a responsible steward of this agency. I have kept my word to him in that regard. The more we can tell him about what we are doing, the less critical he's likely to be."

The Cleveland Plain DealerDecember 6, 1989

Asked about a statement by Sen. Jesse Helms, R-N.C., following the Artists Space debate that referred to Frohnmayer's "voluntary commitment" to Helms, the chairman replied his only commitment to Helms was that stated in the law, namely, "We will not fund anything that is obscene."

The Washington TimesOctober 10, 1989

"We have a very fine line to walk here between continuing artistic freedom and maintaining the public trust, when you're using taxpayer dollars."

MORE...

The New York TimesOctober 19, 1989

"There is a continuum between public trust on the one hand and artistic freedom on the other. And where you come down on a case-by-case basis is the exercise of judgment. That's true under the present legislation and it would be true if the legislation weren't there."

Art in AmericaJanuary 1990

"I strongly believe in the ability of people to speak their minds under the First Amendment, but the endowment should not be funding that discourse."

The Washington PostMarch 6, 1990

"We never fund anything whose sole purpose is to offend."

Orange County RegisterMarch 6, 1990

"What I'm saying in terms of the endowment is we are looking for artistic quality. 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. Because one of the things that obscenity is, which makes it the opposite of art, is that it has no serious artistic intent or content."

Orlando SentinelOctober 15, 1989

"We all need to be sensitive, and certainly this controversy has raised the level of sensitivity."

Village VoiceNovember 21, 1989

Regarding the obscenity regulation, "It's the law. And I've taken an oath."

NewsdayNovember 7, 1989

"Congress has passed a law that says we cannot fund that which is obscene and without artistic merit. We have to apply that law with great care and on a case-by-case basis."

The New York TimesSeptember 12, 1989

"I don't think there is an agency in the Federal Government whose motives are more pure in trying to bring cultural literacy to its people and improve the quality of life of American people."

MORE...

The Washington PostNovember 15, 1989

At Friday's convention, Frohnmayer said he intended to ask panelists, "If you feel a project is on the edge of this legislation which prohibits obscene art, then make a complete and clear record of why you feel the artistic quality of this project is exemplary and should be funded."

The Washington TimesFebruary 7, 1990

"I think those who oppose obscenity, and I count myself among them, might more fruitfully look elsewhere."

Associated PressFebruary 7, 1990

"I want to make it clear that we do not fund anything that is obscene and, in fact, my view is that art and obscenity are mutually exclusive terms."

(The above quote was picked up in several papers.)

Letter to Members of CongressFebruary 7, 1990

"Finally, a word on obscenity. I promised many of you when I met with you personally that we will not knowingly fund anything which is obscene. I reiterate that promise to you. Obscenity is the antithesis of art; it has no soul; it has no redeeming value. I oppose it unequivocally."

Letter to Members of CongressMarch 7, 1990

"I share the commitment to every effort to ensure the responsible, appropriate allocation of the Federal funds in every Endowment grant. These grants also enjoy the clear commitment of community resources, as each Endowment grant requires a non-Federal funding match. That is a fact completely ignored by critics of the Endowment."

Open letter to the American Family Assoc.February, 1990

"I oppose obscenity unequivocally. It is the antithesis of art; it has no soul. Its purpose is antithetical to all that the Endowment stands for."

Letter to the PublicMarch 15, 1990

"The National Endowment for the Arts DID NOT fund the Annie Sprinkle performance. Had the Annie Sprinkle program been presented to our panels or to myself, it would not have been funded -- based on its description in the media."