The proceedings of a 3-day conference, discussing the relationship between government and the arts in the United States, are presented. Issues that will confront the arts in the 1990s were identified and policy recommendations were suggested. Six basic principles were reflected in many of the discussions: (1) a flourishing artistic life is in the best interests of a democratic society and therefore government support is appropriate; (2) the principal selection criterion for government funding should be excellence; (3) government policies and private actions that threaten artistic freedom in U.S. society should be vigorously opposed; (4) government arts programs should support new works of promise even if they may prove controversial; (5) public funding policies must be administered according to the principle that no artist's work may be compromised, suppressed, or unrecognized because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or political or religious belief; and (6) artists and arts organizations that receive public support must be responsible for creating the highest quality work and educating audiences to become critically aware. Findings and recommendations for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and state and local arts support follow these principles. The American Assembly participants recommended methods to improve the case for the arts and its presentation to the public and how the government can effectively address the cultural requirements of underserved communities. New international cultural policies and tax policies also are recommended. The report concludes with recommendations for improving arts education. A list of conference participants is attached.

(KM)
THE ARTS & GOVERNMENT
QUESTIONS FOR THE NINETIES

NOVEMBER 8-11, 1990
ARDEN HOUSE
HARRIMAN, NEW YORK

THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY
The volume, *Public Money & the Muse: Essays on Government Funding for the Arts*, edited by Stephen Benedict, is an American Assembly book developed for the American Assembly on "The Arts and Government: Questions for the Nineties," the contents of which are listed on the following page. The book will be published in early spring, 1991, by W.W. Norton & Company. It is available to you in hardcover at a 15% discount off the list price of $22.95. To order, fill out the Coupon below and send with your check or credit card order to:

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PREFACE

On November 8, 1990, seventy-one men and women from government, business, universities, labor, media, the law, arts organizations, and the arts met at Arden House in Harriman, New York for an American Assembly entitled The Arts and Government: Questions for the Nineties. For three days, the participants listened to panel discussions, an address by John E. Frohnmayer, chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, and viewed a performance piece by Guillermo Gomez-Pena. In small groups, they also discussed in depth the relationships between government and the arts in the United States, identified emerging issues that will confront the arts in the decade ahead, and suggested policy recommendations that would address these needs. The participants came from all regions of the country and represented a broad cross section of views and interests ranging from committed arts advocates to one participant who believes the government has no legitimate interest in supporting the arts.

Stephen Benedict, former director of the Program in Arts Administration of Columbia University, and Steven Lavine, president of California Institute of the Arts, acted as co-directors of this Assembly program. Mr. Benedict supervised the preparation of papers used as background reading by the participants. Authors and titles of these papers, which will be compiled and published in the spring of 1991 as a book by W. W. Norton book entitled Public Money and the Muse: Essays on Government Funding for the Arts, are:

Stephen Stamas
Preface

Stephen Benedict
Foreword

Arthur Levitt, Jr.
Introduction

Milton C. Cummings, Jr.
Government and the Arts: An Overview

Kathleen M. Sullivan
Artistic Freedom, Public Funding, and the Constitution

Joan Jeffri
The Artist in an Integrated Society
The panel discussions held during the Assembly were:

"The NEA under Siege: Lessons for the Arts and Government in the '90s.” Doris Dixon, Roy Goodman, Peter Kyros, Jr., and Bernice Johnson Reagon were panelists and William Strickland served as moderator.

"1992: Fragments of a Performance,” a performance piece by Guillermo Gomez-Pena. John Kreidler and Bernice Johnson Reagon were discussants and Steven Lavine served as moderator.

"Art and the Public Good: Re-thinking the Case for Public Support.” Kinshasha Conwill, William D. Grampp, and Stephen E. Weil were panelists and Anne Hawley served as moderator.

"Translating the Public Good: Some Enduring Issues and the Need for New Approaches.” John E. Frohnmayer gave an address followed by a panel discussion with Michael O’Hare, Dennie Palmer Wolf, and Gerald D. Yoshitomi, moderated by Andrew Heiskell.

"Who Decides?: The Grantmaking Process, Artistic Freedom, and the Right to Apply.” Panelists were John Brademas, David Mendoza, Kathleen M. Sullivan, and...
J. Mark Davidson Schuster with Schuyler Chapin as moderator.

"Keeping the Arts on the Agenda: Collective Action by a Community of Interest." Kitty Carlisle Hart, Charlotte Murphy, and Joel Wachs were the panelists, and Arthur Levitt, Jr. served as the moderator.

"The Coming Competition for Resources" was moderated by Raymond D. Nasher with Ruth Hirschman, Robert Pease, and Michael Woo serving as panelists.

The complete list of participants with their affiliations appears at the end of this report.

Following the plenary panel sessions and the small group meetings, the co-directors and rapporteurs produced a draft of this report on November 11, 1990 for discussion at the final plenary. A revised draft was submitted to all participants for review and, after further consultations and revisions, published.

We gratefully acknowledge the generous support of The Rockefeller and AT&T Foundations, which funded this undertaking. They, as well as The American Assembly, take no position on subjects presented here for public discussion. In addition, it should be noted that the participants took part in this meeting as private individuals, and spoke for themselves rather than for the institutions or organizations with which they are affiliated.

Stephen Stamas
Chairman
The American Assembly
REPORT OF
THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY
on
The Arts And Government:
Questions For The Nineties

At the close of their discussions, the participants in The American Assembly on The Arts and Government: Questions for the Nineties, at Arden House, Harriman, New York, November 8-11, 1990, reviewed as a group a draft of the following statement, which was then revised in the light of their comments. This statement represents general agreement; however, no one was asked to sign it. Furthermore, it should be understood that not everyone agreed with all of it.

PREAMBLE

This American Assembly on The Arts and Government met in the immediate aftermath of the most serious challenge to direct federal support of the arts in the twenty-five year history of the National Endowment for the Arts (N.E.A.). An eighteen-month public and congressional conflict had been provoked by two exhibitions assisted in part by the N.E.A. They included works of art that members of Congress and several private organizations seized upon to forward the argument that public funds were being misapplied to support obscene and blasphemous materials. N.E.A. grant procedures, some asserted, were obviously not working and needed to be overhauled. Some of the opponents carried the argument a step farther, maintaining that the episode proved the federal government has no legitimate role in funding the arts.

This initial phase of the argument in 1989 led the Congress, for the first time, to impose content guidelines on N.E.A. grantmaking procedures. The controversy that followed soon became a lightning rod that exposed the wide variances among the American people in political, social, religious, and aesthetic values, and raised anew basic questions about the rationale for public arts support and the processes for its administration. The unfettered artistic freedom
envisaged in the original N.E.A. legislation could no longer be assumed inviolable.

That government-aided art was not more widely supported by the general population came as a shock to many arts supporters. The realization grew that a much more concentrated effort was needed to convey the positive achievements of the N.E.A. to a far wider spectrum of the population, and that the arts programs themselves were still reaching only a minority of the population. The content restrictions in the legislation raised their own set of Constitutional questions and brought about the direct involvement of a great many individual artists, along with others, in political action to oppose the new provisions.

When The American Assembly planned its meeting in the fall of 1989, the full extent of the challenge to federal funding was yet to unfold. It was clear only that further battles loomed and that significant issues were at stake. The spring and summer of 1990 witnessed a chain of dramatic and unpredictable events that left the outcome in constant doubt. The Assembly developed an agenda that sought to accommodate the fluid situation in Washington, but also to look ahead to issues of arts policy that would endure beyond the immediate crisis. As the calendar would have it, the legislative resolution of the controversy occurred only two weeks before the Assembly met. The House and Senate agreed on a bill reauthorizing the N.E.A. for three years and appropriating funds for the coming year at approximately the current level.

Understandably, therefore, the topicality of this Assembly, which included participants who were almost all directly involved in some aspect of the drama just concluded, resulted in a lively and sometimes contentious meeting. Even so, a degree of consensus emerged, most prominently expressed in a statement of basic principles that reflect many of the discussions and underlie this report's Findings and Recommendations.

**PRINCIPLES**

- A flourishing artistic life is in the best interests of a democratic society. The arts and the artist contribute to the nation's identity and to the education and happiness of its citizens. It is, therefore, appropriate that government at all levels
join with the private sector to further the nation’s artistic life and to provide access to the arts to all citizens.

- Excellence and the defining standards of excellence, which exist for every culture and for every art form, must be the touchstone of all government funding for the arts and artists.

- Constitutional principles of freedom of expression, essential to a democratic society, are of special importance to a thriving artistic climate. Government policies and private actions that threaten to curb artistic "speech" or to constrict in any way the marketplace of ideas for the arts have no place in American society and must be vigorously opposed.

- Government arts programs should support new work of promise that may prove risky or unpopular. Some art has always been controversial and will continue to be, especially as cultures and art forms become more diverse and the boundaries of art continue to expand.

- Public funding policies must be administered according to the principle that no artist's work may be compromised, suppressed, or unrecognized because of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual preference, or political or religious beliefs.

- With public support goes public responsibility. Artists fulfill this responsibility by pursuing the highest quality work of which they are capable; arts organizations fulfill it by carrying out their stated missions and by developing broader and more critically aware publics for their work.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The National Endowment for the Arts

The National Endowment for the Arts, in its twenty-five years of operation, has proved an effective vehicle for promoting the support and appreciation of the arts in the United
States. It has broadened access, bringing the arts for the first time to millions of Americans. It has provided encouragement and support to institutions old and new, large and small, and has become the largest single source of support for the creative work of individual artists across the land.

The N.E.A., from its inception, has emphasized excellence in artistic achievement and the promise of achievement as the armature which connects all of its activities. The central mechanism for judgements of quality and promise has been the grant advisory panels of peers and other professionals. The system has generally worked well to identify changing needs and develop new programs. Proposals for the improvement of the panel system to make it more responsive deserve attention and should be examined. But care must be taken that the N.E.A.'s integrity as an institution be maintained and efforts resisted that would weaken its role as the central vehicle for direct federal support for the arts and artists. At this particular time, the N.E.A. has a specially compelling responsibility to protect freedom of expression, not only for the artists it supports but for every artist.

This Assembly believes the N.E.A. should:

• Strengthen the institutions through which the arts are produced and presented to the public, reflecting in all its actions the full range of traditions and artistic forms that comprise this country’s cultural vitality.

• Promote greater access to the arts by new and underserved communities and assist them in their efforts to build and stabilize their own institutions.

• Continue to support, through grants, fellowships, and other assistance, artists of accomplishment and promise, whether working in traditional, non-traditional, experimental, or innovative forms.

• Work to increase appropriations to the N.E.A. so as to restore, at a minimum, the real purchasing power of its budget at the beginning of the 1980s.

• Exercise leadership in exploring and developing the central issues of cultural policy by strengthening the N.E.A.'s research program, funding private research efforts, and convening conferences on major policy issues.
Of particular concern to all those who participated in this Assembly was the role of the N.E.A. and other levels of government in furthering the arts in education. Because of the special importance of the subject, it is addressed in a later section of this report.

**State and Local Arts Support**

As the N.E.A. developed, arts agencies in every state and territory became significant partners, encouraged in many instances by the N.E.A.'s example. In addition, local arts agencies, both public and private, grew rapidly. They now number more than 4,000, and are receiving more than $100 million a year in tax funds. Their contribution to promoting cultural pluralism and nurturing individual artists has become increasingly significant.

While federal appropriations to the N.E.A. stagnated in the 1980s, state arts agencies experienced dramatic growth. Today total state appropriations are 60 percent greater than the N.E.A.'s. The statutory allocation to state arts agencies of at least 20 percent of N.E.A. program funds has substantially aided the efforts by other levels of government to support the arts.

In the reauthorization of the statute in 1990, a new provision was adopted to increase the allocation of N.E.A. program funds to state and local arts agencies to 35 percent by Fiscal Year 1993. The long-term consequences of this action by Congress, part of a last-minute compromise, were not adequately examined. The action carries the risk of diminishing the national leadership role of the N.E.A. and producing adverse results for artists and arts institutions. State and local arts agency funding should continue to be increased, but not at the expense of the N.E.A.'s important national role. This Assembly recommends that:

- The new provision increasing the N.E.A. allocation to the states should be carefully reviewed by the next Congress and modified, if necessary.

- Any increased federal allocations to the states must not be allowed to replace existing state arts agency funds. Consideration should be given to requiring states to match any increase in federal funds with new appropriations.
Advocacy and Political Action

To keep the arts on the public agenda, a broader constituency must be found and developed. The events of the past eighteen months forced supporters of the arts to confront the political process head-on, but the arts community as a whole was not prepared to compete on equal terms with its adversaries. The controversy also revealed vast differences among many Americans about the nature of art and the role of the artist.

The steady overall increase in funding in the 1970s and 1980s from the private and public sectors had tended to obscure the need to bring about better understanding among arts supporters, artists, and the public. In addition, it became clear that arts supporters had to become more politically sophisticated in the techniques used by successful claimants to public support.

It was also the case that fractures occurred in the arts community itself as a result of differing objectives and perspectives. Arts advocacy can only succeed if all participants in the process refrain from asserting their interests at the expense of others. Every group must benefit in an equitable way. Advocacy is stronger to the extent that coalition is complete.

In future, while differences within the arts community must be acknowledged, ways must be found to coalesce around commonly shared goals and to pursue them in a spirit of cooperation.

To improve the case for the arts and its presentation to the public, this Assembly recommends that:

- Arts advocates improve communication to the public about ways that government-supported arts programs and projects are benefiting the economies of, and enhancing the quality of life in, cities, towns, and other localities.

- Arts supporters explore more effective ways to involve citizens at the grassroots level in articulating and working for cultural policies that benefit everyone.

- Arts communities closely monitor proposed federal, state, and local legislation and regulations that have po-
tential application to the arts. Artists and arts institutions should be prepared to support or oppose specific measures, as appropriate.

- Arts communities, including the for-profit arts and entertainment industry, forge working alliances with other groups that intersect with the arts, including labor unions, educational and religious organizations, chambers of commerce, and economic development councils.

- Arts advocates initiate a coalition with corporate chief executive officers who understand the central role of the arts in communities and are prepared to serve as advocates for the arts with all levels of government.

- Arts professionals develop a network of institutions devoted to the basic research, rigorous analysis, and continuing exchange of information needed to define and reinforce advocacy objectives.

**Cultural Diversity and Government Support**

This country’s artistic life has always been distinguished by the remarkable range of cultures from which its artists have drawn their inspiration. In recent years, these cultures have been expanded and enriched by new waves of immigrants. The historic problems of adaptation and community acceptance are as challenging and difficult now as they have ever been. Our best imagination and understanding is required to minimize the social dislocations and conflicts that always accompany immigrations from other cultures.

In the clash of cultures, artists have always had a special capacity to illuminate the differences among peoples and expose the reasons for conflict. They may not provide solutions, but their insights can be crucial in helping us understand and accommodate diversity and change.

If the arts and artists from the many specific cultures contributing to this country’s extraordinary diversity are to make their full contribution to national life, they need help. Aided by a variety of tax incentives to giving, the arts as a whole in the United States receive their primary financial support from the private sector — individuals, foundations, and corporations.
However, because private giving is voluntary, there is no assurance that every deserving need in the spectrum of need will be addressed.

Some communities, despite the richness and quality of their cultural achievements, have yet to gain equal access to many private sources of funding. Public agencies, on the other hand, are often in a position to identify and assist underserved populations. For communities still seeking to share in the private philanthropy that is directed primarily toward larger and better known institutions, public agencies have a responsibility to address their unmet needs. Government recognition and support may also have the effect of encouraging private giving and improving access to private sources. If the cultural requirements of underserved communities are to be effectively addressed by government, this Assembly recommends that:

- Public arts agencies take the steps necessary to ensure recognition for every culture in our society. The statutory definition of the arts must be revised, if necessary, to embrace activities, forms, and expressions that may not be eligible for assistance according to current definitions.

- Guidelines of public funding agencies be developed, and staff and panel members selected, to ensure that the criteria of quality and excellence applied to the art of all cultures reflect an understanding and awareness of their specific values and traditions.

- Public arts agencies encourage opportunities for the professional development of artists and arts administrators from communities with a history of unequal access. Programs should also be developed within such communities that reflect their special character and needs.

**International Cultural Policy**

In the wake of the Cold War, the United States must adopt new international cultural policies for a transformed world. New needs and opportunities exist for the arts as a means of representing this country's national character, its diversity,
ideals, and objectives to the rest of the world. A broad range of initiatives by the appropriate federal agencies is required. This Assembly recommends:

- Expanded cooperative public and private programs for the full and free exchange of art and artists with other countries.

- Developing exchange programs that tap the abundant cultural resources brought by the waves of new immigrants in the past two decades, as well as those of African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans.

- A comprehensive study of international cultural policy by the appropriate federal agencies, drawing on private as well as public sector resources and experience and recommending specific actions.

- Careful consideration by the Administration of the advantages to the United States of rejoining the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

**Tax Policies**

Tax policies are critical to the stability of the arts in the United States. Exemptions, deductions, and other special rules affecting taxable income, property, customs, and other taxes are indirect forms of aid that dwarf direct support in overall amount. Tax provisions that benefit the arts, as well as education and other social needs, constitute an enlightened approach to public policy that is distinctive to this country. Tax law can provide valuable incentives to private giving, decentralize decision-making, and establish a desirable counterweight to direct support.

Changes in the tax law often come about in response to broad political forces. Frequently the impact on arts and culture of such changes is not given sufficient attention. For example, the effect on charitable giving of the dramatic reduction in the top marginal tax rate is still unclear. By contrast, it soon became evident that changed provisions in the 1986 tax code affecting the full deductibility of the market value of gifts of appreciated personal property had caused a sudden and
serious decline in gifts of art and manuscripts to museums and other institutions. Vigorous advocacy by a coalition of museums and charity federations has managed to restore, in part, the prior provision, though for only one year.

A variety of proposals for special tax treatment of the arts continues to be advanced, including some new ideas such as special assessment districts. More than other forms of aid, however, tax-based assistance may set the interests of the arts against those of a larger society.

In light of the above considerations, this Assembly recommends that appropriate research bodies:

- Analyze the advantages and disadvantages for the arts of present and proposed tax provisions.

- Identify successful examples of the creative use of tax laws by arts institutions and public agencies.

**The Arts in Education**

To those who have worked in the field of arts education, the relevance of the arts to human development is unquestionable. Only in recent years, however, has systematic research established that the arts are, in fact, special ways of knowing — ways that are as essential to basic education as the mastery of verbal and numerical skills. It is also the case that for many children, school-based arts programs provide them with their first direct arts experiences and are the beginning of a lifelong commitment. Arts education, therefore, must be a priority for both the arts and education communities and should actively engage federal, state, and local arts and education agencies. Sequential arts education must be encouraged, and such programs should be supported by careful research and adequate resources. This Assembly recommends that:

- The National Endowment for the Arts initiate action to achieve a consensus around national goals for arts education.

- The N.E.A. play an expanded role in the advocacy of arts education, using the authority of the Chairman’s office to raise awareness at the federal, state, and local levels.
• Federal, state, and local agencies identify and fund exemplary arts education models and recognize outstanding individual leadership in every area of achievement.

• All government arts education support be based on equal access, especially to people of color and in less privileged communities, and reflect an awareness of this country's range of cultures and art forms.

• Government programs at all levels be prepared to protect the work of artists, teachers, and other educators as they involve students in making and thinking about works of art that will sometimes be at variance with community values.

A Final Word

The Assembly adjourned to an uncertain domestic and international climate. At home, a period of economic stringency was underway and hard choices to deal with compelling social needs would be required by the country. Abroad, the crisis in the Gulf and its potential consequences were casting an ominous shadow.

Throughout the discussions, Assembly participants recognized that in such a climate of scarcity, the structures that sustain the arts will need all the imagination and ingenuity they can summon. Already limited resources will need to be stretched even farther just to maintain current levels of activity. But despite the outlook, the conviction remained that the power of the arts to heal and help, teach and question is as strong as ever. Now, in fact, may be a time when they are needed more than ever.
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x Delivered a Formal Address
xx Presented a Performance Piece
ABOUT THE AMERICAN ASSEMBLY

The American Assembly was established by Dwight D. Eisenhower at Columbia University in 1950. It holds nonpartisan meetings and publishes authoritative books to illuminate issues of United States policy.

An affiliate of Columbia, with offices in the Helen Goodhart Altschul Hall on the Barnard College campus, the Assembly is a national, educational institution incorporated in the State of New York.

The Assembly seeks to provide information, stimulate discussion, and evoke independent conclusions on matters of vital public interest.

American Assembly Sessions

At least two national programs are initiated each year. Authorities are retained to write background papers presenting essential data and defining the main issues of each subject.

A group of men and women representing a broad range of experience, competence, and American leadership meet for several days to discuss the Assembly topic and consider alternatives for national policy.

All Assemblies follow the same procedure. The background papers are sent to participants in advance of the Assembly. The Assembly meets in small groups for four or five lengthy periods. All groups use the same agenda. At the close of these informal sessions participants adopt in plenary session a final report of findings and recommendations.

Regional, state, and local Assemblies are held following the national session at Arden House. Assemblies have also been held in England, Switzerland, Malaysia, Canada, the Caribbean, South America, Central America, the Philippines, and Japan. Over one hundred sixty institutions have cosponsored one or more Assemblies.

Arden House

Home of The American Assembly and scene of the national sessions is Arden House, which was given to Columbia University in 1950 by W. Averell Harriman. E. Roland Harriman joined his brother in contributing toward adaptation of the property for conference purposes. The buildings and surrounding land, known as the Harriman Campus of Columbia University, are fifty miles north of New York City.

Arden House is a distinguished conference center. It is self-supporting and operates throughout the year for use by organizations with educational objectives. The American Assembly is a tenant of this Columbia University facility only during Assembly sessions.
AMERICAN ASSEMBLY BOOKS

1951 — U.S.-Western Europe Relationships
1952 — Inflation
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