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Funding of the Arts:



Is More Better?

At a time when many sectors of our economy are struggling to survive, funding of the creative and performing arts (with particular emphasis on the latter) has been increasing at an astonishing rate. For the past fifteen years, the "arts market" has been expanding at a pace far exceeding the rate of inflation. In 1967, the National Endowment for the Arts distributed \$7.9 million in grants, while the nation's business community spent \$22 million on the arts. By 1979, both figures had increased approximately 20 times; government subsidies for the arts had risen to \$150 million and business support of the arts had reached \$436 million.

In the light of this increase, and of President Reagan's decision to substantially reduce federal funding of the arts, ICEPS recently assembled a group of highly distinguished art critics and experts on arts funding to discuss the changing nature of art patronage over the years. Included among our panelists were: Hilton Kramer, chief art critic for the New York Times; Samuel Lipman, concert pianist and music critic for Commentary magazine; Michael Joyce, Executive Director of the John M. Olin Foundation; and, Lewis Lapham, editor of Harper's magazine.

Although there were sharp differences among the panelists, there was general accordance on one point: Art is not a commodity which one can improve or increase merely by investing more money. One should not assume, therefore, that significant increases in federal or corporate funding of the arts have improved either the quality or the appreciation of art in this country.

William M. H. Hammett—Our chairman today is Frank Shakespeare. Frank has had a wide array of experience which qualifies him to lead the discussion of this topic today. From 1950 to 1967 he worked at CBS, an experience which culminated in his becoming president of CBS Television Services. In 1967, he joined the United States Information Agency as Director, serving with that Agency until 1973. As Director of the USIA he was, among other things, responsible for United States cultural liaisons at embassies worldwide. Since 1975, Frank has been President of RKO General. He is also Vice Chairman of the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C. and a trustee of Hillsdale College.

Frank Shakespeare—I want to express special thanks to Bill Hammett, president of the International Center for Economic Policy Studies. His organization is hosting this symposium on "The Future of the Arts in an Era of Reduced Federal Spending," and we are grateful to ICEPS for bringing together this group of distinguished cultural leaders.

It is clear that next year will be something of a turning point in the relationship between the federal government and the culture of our country. We have had, for approximately a decade, a steadily ascending spiral of federal contributions to the arts and humanities in the United States. Now, with the real danger of government bankruptcy, on both the federal and the local levels, it is necessary to take a new look at funding. Concomitant with that view, we must re-examine the proper, ongoing relationship between the federal government of the United States and the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities. Our purpose today is to hear from a really extraordinary array of American citizens whose lives, expertise and experience are directly related to this significant issue.

Our first speaker is Hilton Kramer. Mr. Kramer was, at various times, editor of *Arts* magazine, the art critic of the *Nation*, and the art and literary critic of the *New Leader*. For some eight

years, he has been the chief art critic for the *New York Times*. Ladies and gentlemen, the man who many believe to be the most distinguished art critic in the United States, Mr. Hilton Kramer.

Hilton Kramer—Thank you very much. It seems to me that my proper role in this discussion today on the future of the arts is to talk about what it is we mean by the word "arts" when we talk about the future of the arts in this kind of discussion. So many things have come into play, so many cultural phenomena have been drafted into service under the rubric of art and the arts—since both government programs and foundation and corporate programs for the support of the arts have grown to be a large phenomenon—I think it is very important for us in this discussion to be reminded of what it was initially that we set out to preserve and enhance by these programs in support of the arts. What we really meant was high culture. We meant the great arts; we weren't talking about social service, we weren't talking about—if I may say so—television. The fact of the matter is that for some of us, all those great names like NBC and CBS and even PBS have absolutely no cultural weight in our lives whatever. They have nothing to do with the life of the arts in our culture. Wherever they touch the life of high culture, they damage it. They tell us lies about it. And to conceive that the future vitality of the arts in our society is in any way dependent on what happens in television—cable or otherwise—is to take a more despairing view of the cultural enterprise than I care to.

When we talk about the arts, we're talking about high culture. We're talking about culture that is neither commercial nor consumer-oriented. We are talking about culture that exists because the creative intelligence and creative energies insisted that it exist. It is not prompted by audience need at the moment of its creation. We are talking about artistic aspiration. We're talking about the high life of the mind as it expresses itself in visions that are not susceptible

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"Where funding programs have taken maximum accessibility as their criterion for success, artistic standards of quality have been reduced." — Hilton Kramer

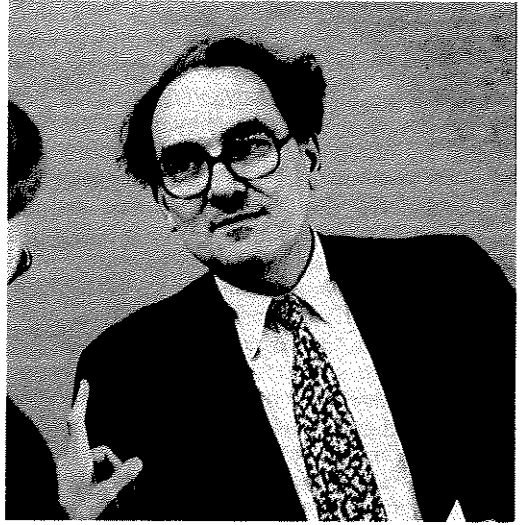
to other realms of discourse.

One of the new problems in this whole discussion is the awful erosion that the concept of high culture and the concept of quality that is inseparable from it have suffered in recent years. There are so few agencies of our culture and of our society left which really vigorously engage in the defense and definition of high culture. We can no longer look to the universities as we once could to safeguard the concept of high culture. What are they teaching? Movies have as large a role in the curriculum as Shakespeare and Milton—perhaps larger. If you have ever attended a meeting of the Modern Language Association, which is ostensibly the academic body in which the highest standards of literary culture are upheld, you will find an incredible amount of attention lavished upon comic books. With friends like those, high culture needs no enemies. Since the late '60s some of the most prestigious literary intellectuals in our culture have felt it not only an obligation but a mission to convert their readers to a belief that popular culture exists on the same plane of significance as high culture.

Parallel to this, and very much a part of the picture, has been a serious decline in the field of criticism. Those of us who went to school in the '40s and entered professional life in the '50s could still count upon a rather vigorous body of ongoing, serious, what used to be called "high-brow" criticism, which didn't take place in mass circulation newspapers and magazines, but rather in literary quarterlies and certain weeklies, monthlies and fortnightlies. It was in the standard set by that criticism that the whole concept of the arts as high culture was upheld. Those standards have now been deserted. I think that in discussing support for the arts, we must first of all be clear about what we mean by art. I didn't come prepared to do more than mention television in passing, but I feel in this context it might be important to discuss it.

There is no possibility that television can bring us the truth about the arts. You can put an opera on television; you can put a ballet on television. But it is the cameraman who is experiencing the work for you. It is the sound engineer who is listening to it for you. It is a secondary experience. It always reminds me of the great definition that Delmor Schwartz once gave when he was asked what an existentialist was. Delmor said, "An existentialist is a man who believes that nobody can take a bath for you."

It's the same in the realm of high culture. Nobody can take a bath for you. The cameraman can't do it and the sound engineer can't do it. It's something you have to do for yourself. If a program for the future of the arts does not keep



Hilton Kramer, *New York Times*

its attention fastened rigorously and unremittably to the artist in his studio creating the art, to the person in the museum—in some respects just as alone as the artist, no matter how many people are around him—to the poet writing the poem and the person alone reading it, then you're talking about a fiction and you're going to be funding a fiction.

Frank Shakespeare—Before we go to our next speaker, I want to identify two of our guests, Congressman Ted Weiss and Congressman Bill Green. Between them they share the districts which cover the theatres, museums and institutions in Manhattan. Congressman Weiss is also a member of the subcommittee which has jurisdiction over the National Endowments.

Our next speaker is Mr. Samuel Lipman. Mr. Lipman is something of a Renaissance man, as I'm sure you know. He is a writer, a musician, and a teacher. He is known throughout the country for his many concerts as a pianist and his recitals with major orchestras. He is a member of the Aspen Music Festival Faculty and has been for ten years. He is, of course, the regular music critic of *Commentary* magazine and is a regular contributor to the *London Times* Literary Supplement. He was, most relevantly here, a major contributor to the Heritage Foundation study of one year ago, the Heritage Foundation being a Washington think tank that did a particular study on the relevance of the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, and one of its major contributors was Mr. Samuel Lipman. Mr. Lipman.

Samuel Lipman—Thank you, Mr. Shakespeare. I would like to begin with two statements, which

are at once platitudes and heresies. They are to be heard as platitudes from the soothing voices of arts advocates all across the land. Were they to be taken seriously, however, they would be recognized for the heresies they are. These statements can be simply put. Support should go to the arts because they are art, and those doing the supporting should be committed, sophisticated and discriminating in their choice of causes for patronage. Yet, despite how simply all this can be put, it is clear that the relationship between art and its support in our times bears little relation to the wisdom contained in these two maxims.

Let us first look at the idea that art should be the chief criterion for its support. If we are to act on the basis that this is really so, then before art can be supported, there must be art to support. And so we are told—on all sides—that this is an exceptional time for art and artists. New programs have issued forth from the National Endowment as if the greatest goods were all there just waiting to be called into being at the wave of a public official's wand. A touching pride is taken from news in the census bureau that "Over-all artist population increased from 400,000 in 1970 to 1,000,000 by 1980—a 67 percent increase." But what if the reality is, in fact, a bit different? What if, for reasons of internal factors in art and external factors in society, the present is a rather unexceptional period in the history of the creation of art? What if we might just possibly have been for the last 25 years in something of a creative valley? Such would certainly seem to be the case in my own field of music.

Many years have gone by without significant new works being added to the permanent repertory of serious music. Indeed, even musical optimists readily admit the dearth of worthwhile composition. These optimists suggest, as if in recompense, that ours is an age of performance and point with pride to the expansion of musicians, groups and audiences in recent years. Their faith seems, in fact, more grounded in hope than in reality. Even such a positively-inclined observer of the musical scene as W. McNeil Lowry—the executive at the Ford Foundation who is more than anyone else responsible for giving away close to one hundred million dollars (that's in 1960s dollars) to American orchestras—seems disillusioned. In a speech given last week at the American Symphony Orchestra League meeting in Dallas, he made the following evaluation, and I quote, "I have not lost my contacts with serious musicians, and most of these are unable to name a leading orchestra that is as good as it was twenty years ago."

In other areas the problem seems much the same. Because time is so short here today, in the field of letters, I will only mention poetry, where we are told so widely we have been undergoing a creative explosion. Here Karl Shapiro, the noted and significant American poet, minced no words in a recent issue of the *American Scholar*. He writes, "There is still no poetry audience. Only a greater population of people who claim the title of poet. In my experience nobody in this country reads poetry except poets, writers, and teachers of poetry. There is, however, a poetry inflation, which has been brought out by the political pump-priming of culture bureaus and creative writing lobbies. I find little of value in their product."

In the visual arts—to cite another area—the very real achievements of the post-World War II school have been followed by the publicity flurries and market successes of "Pop" and "Op" and by the dubious intellectual confessions of conceptual art and happenings. The present search for trends is producing little of major interest. In this regard, I can do no better than mention my colleague Hilton Kramer's judgment in a *Times* year-end survey of the 1980 art scene. He found—and he sounded sad about it—that in New York last year there had been no individual showing of a living artist which could rival the importance of the exhibitions of the past, which have become the staples of our art world.

What, then, is a patron now to do? If there is, indeed, a current quiescence of creativity, if there is a shortage of works of the highest long-term interest, should the same amount of money be made available? The answer of our arts advocates would have it both ways. If there is real art, then of course it should be supported. If, on the other hand, there isn't much at the moment, then more still must be given so that the flow of art can be induced to resume. Unfortunately, what actually seems to be happening is that the money which can't find important new work to support goes into a variety of secondary activities, among them cultivation of the past, emphasis on performance and exhibition, and, in particular, the merchandising and marketing of art, so nicely called "access" and "outreach." The result is Karl Shapiro's opinion about poetry writ large. More and more money is spent to arrange the "experiencing" of art by more and more people. Just what the art is these people "experience" seems much less important than that they are doing it at all.

Thus far, I have looked at the problems of art from the standpoint of patronage. Now I would like to discuss briefly the other half of the equation—what much of today's world of pa-

"Government officials are rarely qualified to make artistic judgments." — Frank Shakespeare

tronage looks like from the standpoint of the artist. Our cultural patrons now run the gamut from civil servants to politicians, from governments to corporations, from foundations to individuals, from those who are paid for being advocates to those who actually give money. But whatever the specific kind of backer, we are facing a crisis in the seriousness, knowledge, and discernment of those who now support culture. The sad fact is that patrons with the desire to give money on the basis of their own cultivated tastes, or, indeed, patrons with any taste at all, are in dangerously and increasingly short supply.

Every musician knows just how lonely it is when he must speak to the board of directors of a musical institution about art, quality, permanence and profundity. Because so many board members today lack the sophisticated instinct formed by years and even generations of sympathy and education, they find all talk of the eternal verities unreal. Real to them are only two facts—the fame of the artists involved and the bottom line of income after expenses. The result, I am afraid, is a lowering of cultural tone on the part of even our greatest institutions. The Los Angeles Philharmonic and even the august Cleveland Orchestra give concerts of music from "Star Wars." Across the country an increasing proportion of orchestra concerts are "pop" concerts, undertaken to fulfill two tasks—neither of them artistic—employment of orchestra players, and the swelling of audience statistics. Telling evidence for this decline in artistic ambition can be found in some of the very arguments now being used to urge government support. At a House subcommittee hearing last

March on the proposed budget cuts for the NEA, for example, theatrical producer Alexander Cohen, Chairman of the League of Broadway Theaters, pointed out with satisfaction that of the 28 attractions then playing on Broadway, nine had been at least indirectly funded by government—among them such productions as "Chorus Line," "Annie," "Ain't Misbehavin'," and "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." And at a level even beyond entertainment, the same hearing heard Edward Block, Vice President of Illinois Bell, Vice President of AT&T for Corporate Giving, and President of the American Council for the Arts, say, "What I suggest is that the public interest will best be served if the issue is clearly specified as one of economic policy and only that."

Overall, the debate over the role of the NEA is marked by an unseemly dependence on the part of private funding sources for what has unblushingly been called "the government goodhousekeeping seal of approval." This seal of approval is now being required by even the richest constituents of our society, both as a general blessing of the arts and, even more importantly, as a validation of specific projects, programs and institutions. What I have just said will be characterized as negative, harmful and irrelevant. Such a characterization might even be justified if optimism and a resolute effort to be positive were of very much value in understanding reality and formulating policy. Alas, before one can move forward—even in the arts—one must know where one stands.

I have sketched what seems to me the present climate of the relationship between art and patronage. To look at the relation and find its excellence marred only by David Stockman and his cohorts at OMB is to substitute crass boosterism for common sense—and for artistic judgment. Thank you.

Frank Shakespeare—Our next speaker is Dr. Michael S. Joyce, who is a teacher, a lecturer, and an author. He is executive director of the John M. Olin Foundation, and chaired the Heritage Foundation's task force studying the endowment of the arts and humanities. In 1981, Ronald Reagan and George Bush chose him as a key member of their transition team to analyze the future of the endowments of the arts and the humanities in this country. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Michael Joyce.

Michael Joyce—Thank you, Frank. The long history of cultural patronage by the state is highly relevant if one is to understand the American cultural experience. State patronage of high culture is classically an aristocratic phenomenon. It usually looks to the production



Frank Shakespeare, RKO General, Inc.

"Our bureaucratic 'new class' is torn between funding PBS, which it likes and cannot justify, and various populist grants toward which it feels some sort of ideological commitment." — Michael Joyce

of beautiful and expensive things that the rulers can enjoy themselves and that, while meeting their standards of taste, they feel obligated, perhaps by religious duty, to have provided for everybody else. Where state patronage becomes bureaucratic, as for example in ancient China, one is likely to have essentially an internal activity of the ruling class. In a democratic society, state patronage is almost by definition going to be bureaucratic. What its content should be, on the other hand, is highly problematic.

Democratic societies, too, have ruling elites. America's present ruling elite has been described as the new class, but this elite is different from historic, aristocratic ruling elites. Its character is substantially less cultivated than historic aristocracies. Perhaps because it lacks the legitimacy of birth, it seeks to deny to itself — and to everyone else — that it is, indeed, a ruling elite. To the extent that this class has elite tastes, it will not be able to give a justification of them, and so it is likely to disguise them with egalitarian arguments, since these alone can serve to legitimize this class's position. Our bureaucratic class lacks a publicly proclaimed cultural standard. It is torn, for example, between supporting PBS, which it likes and cannot justify, and various populist grants toward which it feels some sort of moral and ideological commitment.

I think the obvious point is that you want many sponsors, many different centers of authority in as many non-bureaucratic forms as possible. The less diversity in patronage, the fewer alternatives for the artist, and the more likely the patron will be to abuse his position. It is only a recognition of reality to say that government has always been in the arts, and it's likely that it always will be. Therefore, we must ask ourselves, what is the proper role of government in supporting culture? We must, I repeat, encourage the existence of a diversity of patrons. This suggests a private sector flourishing economically and even, I must say, ideologically. This private role should be as patron of first resort. Historically, such private support has been, contrary to all the present propaganda, responsible for the establishment and maintenance of many cultural institutions in this country which have been, long before the establishment of NEA, in the front ranks of world excellence.

There are, however, some areas which the private sector may, from time to time, be unwilling to support to the necessary extent. Here the federal government must be the patron of last resort, passing on from the past to the future our great patrimony of culture. The problem still remains, however, as to who will direct the state in its necessary cultural tastes.



Michael Joyce, John M. Olin Foundation

First, in the short term, there is an immediate need for statesmanship. It matters greatly who is appointed to lead the two federal endowments. What is needed is leadership, and it can only come from those who have an uncompromising attachment to serious culture. And what qualifies one for leadership in the realm of the life of the mind in a democratic society? Irving Babbitt identified the essential and defining characteristics in his classic work, *Democracy and Leadership*, nearly 50 years ago, and I quote, "A man needs to look up to standards set so much above his ordinary self as to make him feel that he is himself the underdog. The man who thus looks up is becoming worthy to be looked up to in turn, and to this extent qualifying for leadership."

Second, there is the long and arduous process of education. I am speaking about the western world's tradition of high culture, which has made us what we are and suggests what we may be. I refer here to what used to be called "liberal education," an education concerned not with immediate ends and the efficient adaptation of the individual to existing surroundings, but with values independent of time or particular conditions. Truly, this is our great cultural legacy. Knowledge capable of being its own end. Knowledge which is desirable, though nothing may come of it, as being in itself a treasure and a reward enough for a lifetime of hard labor. Thank you.

Frank Shakespeare—Mike, thank you very much. Our last speaker is Mr. Lewis Lapham. He was educated at Hotchkiss, Yale and Cambridge. He was at various times a reporter or an editor at the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *Herald Tribune*, the *Saturday Evening Post*. He has been since 1975 the distinguished editor of *Harper's Magazine*. He is a fellow of Calhoun College at Yale, a member of the Lehrman Institute, and a

member of the Council on Foreign Relations. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Lewis Lapham.

Lewis Lapham—Thank you. As much as I dislike having to say such a thing to so august a company, I would eliminate all federal funding to the arts. Despite its benevolent intentions, the government doesn't know how to play the role of patron; neither do the foundations or the corporations. Because the bureaucrats cannot help but commission mediocre work, their absence from Parnassus undoubtedly would improve matters. I think you would find something of a renaissance in music, painting, poetry and the other arts. That at least is my hope, and so I would subscribe to everything that Mr. Lipman said, but I would not look on his remarks as gloomy or negative.

I think it necessary to distinguish between patronage and encouragement. In other words, the government can encourage artistic expression — and by encourage, I mean provide subsidies to libraries, breaks with the postal rates, changes of the tax laws, funding of schools, subsidiary things that a government, I think, properly can do. These are all predicated on the traditional American notion that the enlargement of learning and the expansion of knowledge is beneficial to the nation. The more books people read, the better for the citizens, the more the discussion in the marketplace, the better for the republic. I believe in that. I believe that government can help. When the government gets involved in the business of patronage, however, I am not very impressed. The United States government traditionally has been in the business of patronizing architecture, and I think all you have to do is go to Washington and look around or look at the number of government buildings that have been built in this country over the last 200 years and understand the usual level of mediocrity.

Mr. Ronald Berman (for seven years director of the National Endowment for the Humanities) a year or so ago wrote a very fine article in *Commentary* magazine in which he makes a distinction between art and the arts. The "arts," he describes as the bureaucrat's definition of art. The "arts" comprise crafts, handicrafts, hobbies, anything that will keep people off the streets.

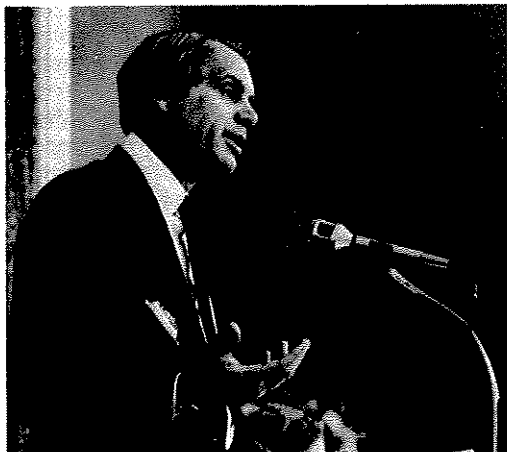
Allow me to come back to the point of patronage and the attitude of contempt. Kennedy as you know used to fall asleep listening to Casals. "Wake up, Jack, for Christ's sake, it's culture," they'd have to tell him. If Kennedy had wanted to commission Ian Fleming, I would have had no objection. None. If Mr. Reagan wants to commission Zane Grey, I have no objection. For God's sake, let them commission

something that they read, something that they know about. If the president of the Mobil Oil Corporation wants to commission Arnaud de Borchgrave, fine. I have no objection to that. Under the aristocratic modes of patronage, you find three successive Holy Roman emperors who were actually composers. You find many German princes who may have been blockheads in many ways, but at least they knew opera. You find the same discrimination among the Elizabethans; the patrons of the various poets themselves could write sonnets and play the viols. Bernini comes to the Pope and says, "I want to build you a capitol that is worthy of the name of Rome," and the Pope and the Pope at least knows what Bernini is talking about. The patron, it seems to me, should have some familiarity with the subject under discussion. But Americans don't have the confidence for this.

Americans look upon art with a mixture of fear and contempt. They know that art is very, very serious — perhaps even sacred or magical — but they're not quite sure of what it consists. Their uncertainty puts them on the defensive. This is traditional. John Adams hoped that art would have no place in the new republic because, in his words, "from the dawn of history the arts had been the product of despotism and superstition." Benjamin Franklin seconded the opinion. "To Americans," he said, "one schoolmaster is worth a dozen poets, and the invention of a machine or the improvement of an implement is of far more importance than a masterpiece of Raphael." The distrust of the arts runs in the American grain. We have tried for 200 years to improve the country's sensibility, saying to ourselves "We have money; we have commerce; we have good people — why can't we make art?" Nobody can answer the question, and so, traditionally, the Americans have applied to Europe for poets, painters, dancing masters, violinists, interior decorators, and anybody else who promises to civilize the barbarians.

Another reason that Mr. Lipman's musicians have so much trouble with boards of trustees is that the worthy gentlemen who distribute the money cannot bring themselves to believe that an artist is a serious person. Establishment opinion tends to place artists in the same category with women, children and homosexuals; people vaguely creative and sometimes crazy, whose work is praised in the same way that the daubs on nursery school walls are praised. The artist in America is not a person of weight, probity and substance. He is a child who must be humored or paid off with the equivalent of a new toy. The National Endowments provide a means of humoring the unhappy creatures. I think that this kind of patronage has a debilitat-

"Because the bureaucrats cannot help but commission mediocre work, their absence from Parnassus undoubtedly would improve matters."
—Lewis Lapham



Lewis Lapham, *Harper's*

ing effect on all concerned. The less of it there is, the better for the country; not only for its hope of artistic achievement, but also for its self-respect. I suspect that reduction of patronage on all levels might bring about a rejuvenation of the American cultural enterprise. Thank you.

Hilton Kramer—I was enormously interested in Lewis Lapham's remarks. Almost as interesting as the remarks themselves was the response they elicited from this audience, which I felt was something that might be characterized as a "gut" response. I myself am not of the persuasion that the gut is the best organ of the human body to reflect upon these matters. If only what Lewis Lapham said was true—that is, that funding arts in this country was so irrelevant and foolish and wasteful and that such funding has little to do with the enduring, creative life of our culture. If this were true, it would be very simple. But, alas, nothing in the area that we're talking about is simple at all. What I think Mr. Lapham has expressed contempt for, without quite realizing it, is the democratic process itself. He seemed to acknowledge that, if you have a democratic system, it is very difficult to make wise judgments in matters where there are cultural discriminations to be made. Well, such judgments are difficult to make. And I am not persuaded myself that that's a real reason for abandoning the effort to make them. If a democratic system cannot support a system of critical discrimination in the area of culture, then it really suffers from a greater degree of spiritual debility than any of us in this room have quite been able to bring ourselves to acknowledge.

Now, we may enjoy our little jokes about what the Endowments have done, and I, as well as other people in this room, have written very severe criticisms of various policies. But the

great Cezanne exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in recent years and the great Picasso exhibition of last year cannot be laughed out of this room. They can not be laughed at because they form the absolute crux of the creative life of the artist in this country, as well as the audience for art. We haven't talked very much about the artist in this discussion, and we haven't really acknowledged the degree to which the artist—the individual artist who, after all, has formed to the creative nexus of the culture we're talking about—has been standing on the sidelines for 15 years, feeling rather wry, if not bitter, about the increasing budgets that have gone to the arts, wild beyond their dreams of 15 years ago, with very little of it coming directly to the artist himself. On the other hand, that same artist knows that something like the great Cezanne exhibition of a few years ago at the Museum of Modern Art—to speak only of painters—is a creative event in the spiritual and creative life of the artist that comes once in a lifetime. Picasso coming to Paris as a young man and seeing the great Cezanne retrospective in 1907—the year after Cezanne died—was for Picasso and many other artists, a transfiguring event. When we talk about the life of art in our culture and the future of the arts, and what we're funding and thinking about funding, these are the kinds of things one has to keep in mind.

Samuel Lipman—I think we owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Lapham for having presented arguments with, I would say, both clarity and brilliance. Those are not easy virtues these days. I do feel, however, that it's absolutely vital—at least as far as my own sense of responsibility is concerned—to correct what I feel is a major confusion or exaggeration which Mr. Lapham seems to have displayed today. "Art isn't for Americans," says Mr. Lapham. We send to Europe for our dancing masters and of course the implication is that there are dancing masters only in Europe. The problem, of course, is not that the National Endowment has been so terribly harmful to art and to artists. It has simply helped to lower our expectations. The fact is, art the world over is in approximately the same state. If we were to look at what's going on in music, I don't think that there's anyone who would say that Europe is any better off than we are. If, indeed, we would look at painting, I would suspect about the same would be said. As far as poetry is concerned, even after my quoting Karl Shapiro's strictures, the fact is that the greatest poets, perhaps, of the century among the very greatest have been two transplanted Americans—T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound. The problem is simply to say that the patient is sick, not that the patient deserves mercy-killing.

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— Samuel Lipman

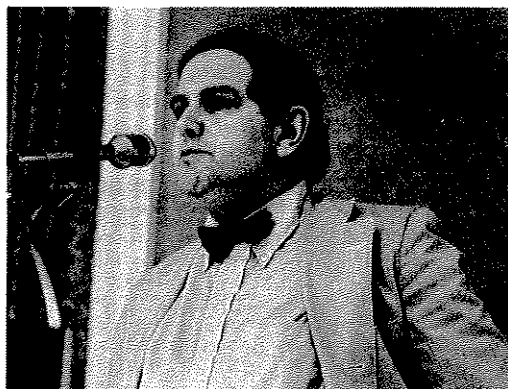
Lewis Lapham—I'm astonished that Mr. Kramer should condemn me as an aristocrat. Mr. Kramer starts off his remarks by expressing great contempt for American television, saying that anything that television touches, dies. I don't take that position. I think there's much more hope for the United States than does Mr. Kramer. I don't believe in this necessary split between high culture and popular culture. Duccio's Madonna was carried through the streets of Florence; the citizens of Athens subscribed in their tiny sums to the building of the Parthenon.

We are in an unfortunate period when we have a very precious group of people on the one hand—claiming something called "high culture"—and taking a position vis-a-vis the rest of us that I don't take. As I said earlier, I think the great art form of the 20th century is probably science. I think American equations will be quoted three, four, five hundred years hence when nobody will be able to remember a line of American poetry, at least not the poetry written in the last 20 or 30 years. I also think Americans have distinguished themselves in popular music. If you wanted to count American jazz as an art form, I think you would find that the development of modern jazz is a fairly substantial accomplishment that attracted wide following in many parts of the world. The same thing with American musical comedy. There's a question of how you define art. If you want to define it as a repetition of forms that one has inherited, and if you want to preserve these forms in amber and be paid for doing it by the federal government, and if you want to have people sit down and bow and scrape and pretend to be amazed and carried away by something they don't understand, then more power to you. But that's not how I would define art.

Frank Shakespeare—Let me just share with you a personal comment. Bill Hammett, in introducing me, said that I had been USIA director at one point—and I had—and all of the cultural attaches at our embassies worldwide report up through that office. It's responsible for the exhibits which are presenting American culture to foreign audiences. I went in there from the private sector with a relatively limited exposure to art (other than the performing arts). I only want to share one observation with you which I think is relevant to your considerations. That is, when you want guidance to present American culture to foreign audiences as part of your responsibilities, you cannot go as a government official to the government itself. You can't go to the administration. You can't go to the senior members of the House and Senate and get the type of guidance you want. Why? Because their life experiences and studies only rarely qualify

them to give you that sort of judgment. And for a very understandable reason. They've been lawyers or businessmen or political leaders or that sort of thing and they are not steeped in culture.

Now, I make a very obvious point. In a democratic society today, there does not exist at the highest levels of government the meaningful ability to make relevant cultural decisions. By and large, the leaders of the state, until very recently, were people who were educated and steeped in culture. They lived in palaces. They were brought up in diverse languages. They were brought up with great painting and great archi-



Samuel Lipman, *Commentary*

ecture. And when the state involved itself in culture in aristocratic societies, the leaders of the state were people who, by experience and training, were qualified to make direct judgments. And, thus, the popes had Michelangelo—and even Versailles was produced by a French king. Mr. Kramer pointed out that he thought that Mr. Lapham had a lack of confidence in the democratic process. Perhaps so. My point is merely that in considering the role of the federal government in the leading democratic society in all the world, one does need also to focus on what will be the management process involved, if indeed you wish to have federal funds flow to the private sector. The management factor being the decision as to who gets what and why. And will that be made ultimately by people who are not necessarily qualified to make it? I make that only as a passing observation, and now we go directly to your questions. Before we begin with questions from the audience, Daniel Terra, who was just appointed Ambassador-at-large for Cultural Affairs, will entertain questions from the floor.

Margaret Ayers, *Robert Sterling Clark Foundation*—I'd like to read this question because I don't want to leave any of it out. I'm glad to hear that the Reagan administration has undertaken a

"Are corporations morally entitled to spend the money of their stockholders in ways that these stockholders are most unlikely to approve?" — Ernest van den Haag

serious examination of the possibility of developing new mechanisms involving the corporate sector in the funding of the arts. Presumably this will require a serious and sophisticated staff. In regard to the panel, the task force, and the staff, I would like to know the answers to the following questions: How many staff people will be hired as full-time staff? What is the budget that will be allocated for the operation of the panel? And, from where will the expertise be drawn that will serve on that staff? And I'm not talking about the panel itself. I'm talking about the staffing of that panel.

Terra—All right. Let's try to take them in turn. The staff will be composed of about 30 people, about half of whom are volunteers. Now, these are people on loan from major corporations. We have a young woman from the Chase bank who is very skilled in the arts. I really don't have a list with me or I would be glad to read it off to you. There are really some very, very fine people that are behind this task force. The budget is about \$120,000. The members of the task force are paying their own expenses to attend meetings. I think they have a right to put in an expense for traveling. My understanding is that not one of them has elected to do so at this time. The \$120,000 is being taken out of the National Endowment for the Arts. This is the only source that we had to draw from.



Ernest van den Haag

Ernest van den Haag, *New School for Social Research*—Ambassador Terra, you pointed out that the American corporations are the best equipped institutions to help the arts. There are two questions I would like to ask you. What leads you to believe that the corporations are morally entitled to spend the money of their stockholders in ways that these stockholders certainly are most unlikely to approve and which, in any case, they have no way of influencing? Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, what leads you to believe that the corporations are particularly competent in selecting and distinguishing significant art?

Terra—Let me first address the subject of what right a corporate manager has to distribute funds which might be considered rightfully belonging to the shareholders. I believe that there is a social consciousness that's sweeping this country, and you find this in about 100 of the top 500 corporations. I think this is one of the most constructive things that has happened in this country. I think we're just beginning to scratch the surface in the awakening of the cultural heritage of this country. Secondly, we are a young country. But we're growing up now, and I think everyone has to do their share. I believe that the corporations are best equipped to distribute money to cultural affairs. A corporate manager, when he makes a contribution to cultural activity, is also charged with the responsibility of making up that expenditure, and he very often does. The government doesn't have to make up anything it spends.

Now, on the question of professional competency, I happen to believe that when corporate managers study a situation, for the most part, they come up with good decisions. I also think you can rely on corporate management to seek the advice of professionals in the arts, as they seek the help from professionals in every area where they do business.

Leonard Peikoff, *Writer*—I have a philosophic question to the panel as a whole. Conservatives some time ago used to oppose government funding of the arts as a matter of principle. As I understand it, no one on the panel here takes that view. They simply argue the impropriety of specific programs and the hopelessness of the way the government does it, but they accede to the desirability of the principle if they could do it effectively. I'd like to know how that principle would be justified, even assuming that government picked a truly magnificent work of art to support. Government support still means coercion. It still means extorting tax money from people, who in this case do not see or value the product.

Shakespeare—Mr. Joyce, will you speak in that regard?

Michael Joyce—I think that's an argument against taxation, isn't it?

Peikoff—No, it's not. It's against government support of the arts.

Joyce—But did you not say that taxation was defined as coercion?

Peikoff—Taxation does not have to be coercion. It is when we have *federal* income tax.

Joyce—So you're against federal income taxes in principle.

Peikoff—Yes, I am.

Joyce—I think this is not the right place to debate that.

Shakespeare—Well, that was a brief answer. Are there any other questions to the panel from anyone?

Michael A. d'Amelio, *Business Committee for the Arts*—I just want to make a statement that I agree with much of what has been said on the podium this afternoon, but I take exception to the idea that there is no one in either government or the business sector who can make judgments with respect to art. As Mr. Kramer has indicated, two exhibitions—namely the Cezanne and the Picasso shows at the Museum of Modern Art—were very important to artists and were sponsored by both the National Endowment and by the business community, specifically by IBM. Thank you.

Samuel Lipman—When I said that patrons were in increasingly short supply, I believe that suggests that there still are patrons. It won't do, however, to make the case for business connoisseurship by pointing to the Cezanne and Picasso exhibitions. Those were opportunities which—if you will pardon the mixed metaphor—a blind person couldn't have refused. Picasso was something like an Einstein that everybody knows. So that doesn't vindicate the case for business knowledge.

The second thing is that I'm hoping to direct businessmen toward the idea that what they're supporting, or ought to be supporting, is not an audience but art itself. Businesses make a very great mistake, just as advocates for business support make a very great mistake, when they make the incessant economic argument for doing it. When they say that this is good for your image, it's good for the economy, and so on. It is this kind of argument which muddies the waters of support.

Julie Motz, *Hudson River Film Company*—My name is Julie Motz, and I'm a film and television producer, which will reveal my bias about it directly. It's rather disappointing to see Mr.



Ted Weiss, *U.S. Congress*

Kramer write off film and television, not as a vehicle for presenting other art forms but as an art form in and of itself.

Hilton Kramer—Well, I think it should be understood that my remarks were addressed not toward television as a medium in its full scope, such as it is, but to television as a medium in which the arts were expected to be rendered visible to an audience. Now, my point was perhaps a smaller one but a very important one. Now, both of the endowments, a great many corporations, a great many foundations have expended enormous sums of money on their so-called media programs. But nobody can take a bath for you. That is, it's a fiction to assume that what you're actually seeing on television is art. You're looking at what the cameraman chooses for you to look at. And that is a totally different account of the creative act. Now, as for television, it cannot look at a painting. It was very interesting in Robert Hughes' "The Shock of the New" that the people who did earth works and other such great outdoor projects, as well as architects, were given much more protracted attention than, say, Cezanne or Brancusi, because the television camera cannot look at a Cezanne for more than 10 seconds. You have to look at the Cezanne yourself. And everything else is a counterfeit. Television can do you no good when it comes to really entering into some kind of communion with Cezanne's creation.

Now, as for television in its larger sense—and here I point out that Mr. Lapham, I'm afraid, misrepresented me, because I was not talking about television at large but television in its uses in the so-called media programs in the arts. As for television in itself as a creative medium, all I can say is, where is it? We've been promised it all these years. We've been waiting for it. There's an enormous audience hungering for it. But *il n'existe pas*.

Richard Bruno, *New York City Department of Cultural Affairs*—I was interested to hear Mr. Kramer's remarks about the potential importance of the Picasso exhibit for artists viewing it. It's been estimated that if there had not been federal support for the Picasso exhibit, it still would have taken place, but tickets would have gone for about \$19.00 each, which would certainly determine the audience that would have attended it. I think my question, which is addressed generally, has to do with the whole concept of access, which more than one speaker denigrated in various ways—and it's a very easy concept to denigrate. But I do think that one of the chief responsibilities of the NEA and one that is fulfilled, to my mind, is in the area of making the arts accessible to all Americans and not just those who are either economically or culturally predisposed to the arts.

Hilton Kramer—I think the whole question of the government's role in increasing access to art is something that is not as easily defined as your question suggests. I myself doubt whether the majority of the people who went to the Picasso exhibition and paid \$5.00 rather than \$20.00

were needy people who were incapable of paying \$20.00. I myself know of dozens of people who came to New York to see the Picasso exhibition, paid their \$5.00 and then paid \$30.00 for a ticket to a lousy Broadway show. I see no reason in the world why people like that should not have been required to pay \$20.00 to see the Picasso exhibition when they're paying \$30.00 to see a rotten Broadway musical. You can't really talk about access until you talk about access in relation to quality. Where programs have taken maximum accessibility as their criterion, the standards of quality in art have been reduced. That's the difficult part of the question. The Picasso exhibition is really too easy.

Frank Shakespeare—We want to thank Mr. Hilton Kramer, Mr. Samuel Lipman, Mr. Michael Joyce, Mr. Lewis Lapham, and Ambassador Terra for taking their time to share with us today their thoughts on a most important subject. And most of all, we thank the International Center for Economic Policy Studies for conceiving, designing, and pulling together all the elements which made up this gathering. Thank you all.

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