5-8-1981

Letters (1981): Correspondence 01

Pamela Wilson

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_44

Recommended Citation
https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_I_44/29

This Correspondence is brought to you for free and open access by the Education: National Endowment for the Arts and Humanities, Subject Files I (1973-1996) at DigitalCommons@URI. It has been accepted for inclusion in Letters (1981) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu.
May 8, 1981

Dear Senator Pell,

Attached is a concept paper on a newly established organization I am working with. Its Director, Peter Schmootz of The State Department, asked if I would pass this on to you. As you will see, Arts International hopes to have a close working relationship with the Federal government (ICA and State Department, especially). Apparently Lee Kambe is trying to organize something like Arts International and was dismayed to hear that his group is already in existence. I hope that she will cooperate.

Thanks for looking over the paper. We did want you to be informed of the organization.

Affectionately,

Pamela (Walker)
THE ARTS INTERNATIONAL CONCEPT
Arts International is a new, private, non-profit organization located in Washington, with the mission of encouraging exchanges in the visual and performing arts between the United States and other nations. Arts International is based on the premise that international exchanges in the arts are valuable for three distinct reasons:

The Importance of Artistic Exchanges

1. International interchange in the arts directly benefits the development of the arts themselves. Participating artists are inspired and educated by contact with other artists and new audiences. The audiences are exposed to new art forms, thus broadening their experience and interest. Artists who may be considered "prophets in their own land" are given opportunities to prove themselves elsewhere. For example, American opera singers have often had to establish themselves through European engagements before they were recognized at home.

2. There is frequently a discernable economic benefit to institutions and communities in which important international artistic events take place. In the best documented (and perhaps most dramatic) example, the recent Tutankhamun exhibition is reported to have added up to $100 million to the tourist revenues in each of the cities in which it was shown.

3. International artistic activities can make a significant contribution to the growth of understanding among the peoples of different nations. This benefit is more difficult to demonstrate, but is nevertheless clearly felt by those who have experienced it at first hand. A good example can be found in the television film recording the visit of the Boston Symphony Orchestra to China in 1979. The radiant faces of the Chinese who came into contact with the American musicians made quite vivid that their feelings about Americans and western culture were significantly affected by the experience. This kind of joint participation in artistic activities creates emotional ties which help to resist the forces driving people and nations apart.

The Need for Arts International

While public and private support for domestic artistic activities has grown significantly in recent years, there has not been a similar growth in the international sector. Federal programs have been extremely limited in scope, and
generally confined to exchanges in the out-bound direction. There is a dearth of information on how international exchanges in the arts can be arranged, and no central place in which such information is collected. While the domestic arts have had vocal constituencies, there has been no corresponding voice on behalf of international exchanges. Arts International's purpose is to fill these voids.

The Arts International Program

Information Center One of the principal obstacles to expanded international exchanges in the arts has always been the lack of accurate and detailed information on the resources available for such exchanges, including: available talent, potential sponsors, relevant public and private programs, and applicable laws and regulations. Arts International will aggressively seek this information, organize and catalogue it in a data bank, and disseminate it in response to specific inquiries and through appropriate publications, such as periodic newsletters or a directory.

Brokerage Function Arts International will actively pursue opportunities to increase artistic exchanges by acting as "marriage broker". For example, corporations having active international operations will be contacted to see if they have any interest in sponsoring artistic events. If company X responds that it is opening a branch in Brazil and would consider supporting a suitable attraction there, Arts International will use its expertise, its range of contacts and data bank to find an appropriate American performing group or exhibit--ideally one that is already headed for that area. Similarly, the data bank will include information on foreign attractions which are available or already expected to be traveling in the U.S. This type of information would be used if an American institution, for example a museum opening a new ethnic wing, is looking for a complementary event. In this way, Arts International will serve both the artists and the potential sponsors.

In carrying out this function, Arts International will play the role of an active broker, but will not normally assume any administrative responsibility for the projects. Thus, in a given case, Arts International would seek out sponsoring institutions for an exhibition, but would not undertake a curatorial role nor become involved in making shipping arrangements.
Advocacy, Education & Representation Those concerned with domestic artistic activity are well represented on the national scene. Arts International will act as a voice for the internationally-oriented constituency, taking part in public debate on arts issues, maintaining close contact with public officials and building awareness through the media of the need for international exchanges in the arts. This activity on behalf of the private sector becomes increasingly important as the limited government programs in the field are further reduced.

Arts International will keep its constituency informed of important developments, and will conduct a variety of events for selected audiences, such as seminars, workshops and functions, which build understanding generally, or which address particular problems. For example, with rare exceptions, the foreign diplomatic community in Washington does not really understand how the diverse U.S. cultural system works. This frequently leads to missed opportunities for significant international exchanges. Arts International will help to bridge this gap by advising foreign officials.

Projects on Behalf of Government Agencies There is a range of activities concerning international arts exchanges which in the past have fallen uncomfortably between the public and private sectors. For example, where a foreign government seeks to place an art exhibit or performing arts group in the United States, the U.S. Government is often expected to make the arrangements because that is what is done in most other countries. However, the U.S. Government, because of legislative restrictions and the decentralized nature of the U.S. cultural system, is not able to accommodate. Arts International could be designated to assist in these placements, so long as its independent status is not compromised and the cost of the activity is borne by the agency concerned. The Department of State and the International Communication Agency have expressed considerable interest in such an arrangement.

Relationship to Other Organizations

The creation of Arts International fills a vacuum which has been clearly perceived by many of those actively interested in international arts exchanges. It will complement the work of existing arts organizations which may touch on international exchanges in their work, but none of which have undertaken to approach international arts exchanges broadly. Arts International is intended to be the one place that anyone with an international arts
question will go first. Depending on the nature of the request, the inquirer may be referred to one of the existing organizations, which tend to be focused on a particular art form, or on a particular geographic area.

There is not now any one place where such assistance can be sought. Persons interested in developing international exchanges in the arts tend to get bounced around from one institution or government agency to another, until they happen to land in the right spot (if there is one), or often until they give up.

Arts International Organization

The Arts International project is the result of years of study of the problem by interested representatives from foundations, major corporations and government agencies. A board of directors is currently in the process of formation under the chairmanship of Michael Straight, former Deputy Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts. Those who have so far agreed to serve as members of the board include:

- J. Carter Brown Director of the National Gallery of Art;
- Alistair Cooke Journalist, author, television personality;
- Nancy Hanks Former Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts;
- Thomas Messer Director of the Guggenheim Museum and of the Guggenheim Foundation;
- John Richardson, Jr. President of Youth for Understanding, former Assistant Secretary of State for Educational and Cultural Affairs;
- Roger Stevens Chairman of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts.

Peter Solmssen, for the past seven years Advisor on the Arts to the Department of State and the International Communication Agency, has been loaned to Arts International by the Department of State to act as its Director.

The organizers believe that Arts International will function best as an independent, non-profit and tax-exempt corporation. Until such time as the corporation can be formed, Arts International will operate temporarily as a division of the Center for Inter-American Relations.

Arts International has opened a temporary office until permanent quarters can be arranged. The address is:

Funding

The Rockefeller Brothers Fund has made a grant of $150,000 as its contribution to the operating costs of Arts International for the first three years. The annual operating costs are expected to be on the order of $200,000, and additional funding is now being sought from other foundations, corporations and individual donors.