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Arts and Humanities: Reauthorization (1975): Correspondence 05

Jacqueline Skiles

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Nov. 21, 1975

The Honorable
Senator Claiborne Pell, Chairman
United States Senate
Special Subcommittee on
Arts and Humanities

Dear Senator Pell:

Enclosed please find a copy of the Art Workers News containing my "Open Letter to Nancy Hanks" referred to in a recent issue of the Washington Star (according to a friend) (I have also sent copies of all members of your committee). We have been most distressed by the treatment we have received at the hands of Brian O'Doherty, head of the Visual Arts Program at the Arts Endowment, this past year.

We would like to see the Endowment reauthorized, at the highest possible appropriation, providing something is done about its bureaucratic sluggishness and disdain for artists (as experienced by us this past year).

It was our suggestion to Artists Equity Assn. president John Blair Mitchell that one thing that must be instituted at NEA is a structured and recognize appeal system so that an organization has some recourse when a proposal is felt to be unfairly judged or a group has not received a fair hearing. Mitchell incorporated this point in his testimony before Congressman Brademas's committee.

We would also like to see more advocacy in NEA on the behalf of the individual creative artist—normally somewhat marginal economically except when there are enough teaching jobs to go 'round, which of course there are not now, and suffering special hardships in the current economic situation. Without the artist there is no art and no future for institutions dedicated to preserving our artistic heritage.

Our organization promotes the rights and welfare of visual artists, broadly defined. We would like to see NEA do likewise.

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Skiles