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National Endowment for the Arts Fact Sheet
on
Southern Exposure/Modern Primitives Exhibition

- The Arts Endowment did not fund any part of the events in San Francisco described by Congressman Rohrabacher in his March 12 "Dear Colleague." The local sponsor of the events, Southern Exposure (a gallery in San Francisco) has already issued a statement indicating that these events were funded entirely by the local patrons who paid to attend.

These locally-funded events were planned and presented by Southern Exposure to coincide with an exhibition, "Modern Primitives," which also took place in San Francisco last year with no support from the Endowment.

The gallery received $5,000 from the Endowment in Fiscal 1989, but none of those funds went toward anything named or described by the Congressman.

- The sentence by Endowment Chairman John Frohnmayer quoted by Congressman Rohrabacher in his March 12 "Dear Colleague" announcement was apparently taken from a December 8, 1989 letter from Chairman Frohnmayer to Senator Jesse Helms in response to a series of questions from the Senator. Mr. Frohnmayer's response stated that it was "conceivable" that part of the Endowment's grant might have supported the exhibition (not the local events). Subsequently, however, Southern Exposure clarified that this was not the case.

- While the events described by the Congressman were developed locally in San Francisco, the exhibition with which they were presented was brought to San Francisco from the Center on Contemporary Art in Seattle, where the exhibition had already been shown, with funding by Allied Arts of Seattle, other local patrons, and a portion of the $17,500 grant provided by the Arts Endowment to the Center in Fiscal 1989 for an entire year of programming, of which this exhibition was one part.

When the exhibition was presented in Seattle, it was not accompanied by any of the San Francisco events described by Congressman Rohrabacher.
In sum, the Arts Endowment gave $5,000 to Southern Exposure in Fiscal 1989. None of it was used for material described by Congressman Rohrabacher.

The Arts Endowment gave $17,500 to the Center on Contemporary Art in Seattle in Fiscal 1989, a portion of which was used for the exhibition, "Modern Primitives." None of the events described by Congressman Rohrabacher was part of that exhibition.

Congressman Rohrabacher also states that Arts Endowment Chairman John Frohnmayer "recently said federal funding for the arts was important because it helped 'provide a catalyst for salaries to allow local arts leaders to be paid.'" The Chairman made this comment in Idaho and was specifically addressing an endowment program a few years back that helped develop local arts agencies. There was a decreasing match of funds for 3 years after which the established agencies funded their own administrator. This program was a remarkable success in John Frohnmayer's home state of Oregon.