

1971

## Conservation: Hearings, Reports (1966-1973): Correspondence 03

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1971

*1 don't want to rise up*  
**PRIORITY**

April 7, 1971

To: Senator Pell

From: Stephen

Subject: Thoughts on the Tour on the Conservation Labs

*on idea of either Smithsonian - Nat'l  
Gallery housing a Conservation Center with  
a 3 (or 5) way Board of Directors - i.e.  
Ryley, Brown & Hawks and many branches  
through Nat'l Museum Act. This is a*

I. I thought the tour was a most successful one, and comments I have received from staff at both the Gallery and the Smithsonian indicate that they felt it was a useful session. Indeed, they are most excited that someone of your stature would take an interest in the subject of conservation. The question now arises: what to do?

*project to be discussed at a luncheon of*

One of the most important lessons I gained from the tour was an understanding of the fact that each gallery has a need for some type of conservation facility of its own. The special areas of interest of each gallery dictate this, and even more important, the fragile nature of works of art make their transfer over any great distance unwise. Also, it was clear that there is very little interchange between the various labs.

*Ryley, Brown, Olin, you, me & others  
also Ryley & Brown strongly incl. to bring. Would*

II. The following ideas are to implement what I understand your goal to be: the establishment of some type of program which would (a) create a national center for conservation, and (b) educate those who wish to become conservators.

*like to keep as small as possible. Perhaps - 3rd  
week of May.*

A. The ideal end result would be the establishment of a major facility for research and the training of art conservators. The question then develops: where could such a school facility be housed? HEW does not run programs like this, and given the state of institutional egos, neither the Smithsonian nor the National Gallery could be given the prime function, as the one not chosen would probably be reluctant to cooperate. This is unfortunate, since the National Museum Act could probably be utilized to implement such a Center. The National Endowment for the Arts could be a vehicle to run such a program, but I doubt whether they see their role as one of running an individual program of this sort. Such a move could also upset the balance with the Humanities Endowment.

B. One idea could possibly be the use of the National Archives, for one could cast the conservation of art as an effort to rescue a unique American resource. There is probably as much logic to placing the Center in the Archives Area as can be found in placing the

Historical Documents Commission there.

C. There is one more possibility which I have not discussed with Richard, but it does come to mind. The Congress since 1958 has often legislated categorical programs to teach specific subjects. This has been done in the field of higher education with the establishment of graduate fellowships (NDEA Institutes - Guidance & Counseling - English - Foreign Languages - Science). Could we not amend the Higher Education Act to establish a program of training art conservators, with a passthrough of funds from HEW to a governing board made up of representatives from HEW, the Smithsonian, and the National Gallery.

III. I have asked the agencies for a list of all the people whom we met on the tour, and will prepare appropriate letters of thanks. On the letters to Dillon Ripley and Carter Brown, I would like to attach a supplemental sheet with the following specific questions:

- (a) size of lab
- (b) total budget
- (c) staff
- (d) chief area of interest
- (e) cooperation with other ~~in~~ Governmental Agencies
- (f) cooperation with industry