

University of Rhode Island

DigitalCommons@URI

Museum Services Act (1984)

Education: National Endowment for the Arts
and Humanities, Subject Files II (1962-1996)

4-1978

1Museum Services Act (1984): News Article 01

Barbaralee Diamonstein

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_46

Recommended Citation

Diamonstein, Barbaralee, "1Museum Services Act (1984): News Article 01" (1978). *Museum Services Act (1984)*. Paper 5.

https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/pell_neh_II_46/5

This News Article is brought to you by the University of Rhode Island. It has been accepted for inclusion in Museum Services Act (1984) by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@URI. For more information, please contact digitalcommons-group@uri.edu. For permission to reuse copyrighted content, contact the author directly.

The Museum Services Institute: A profound effect on the future of American museums?

APR 24 1978

With a modest first appropriation of \$4 million this year, the new institute will offer crucial aid to museums for operating expenses. The hope is that funding will grow

F.Y.I.

Barbaralee
Diamonstein

by BARBARALEE DIAMONSTEIN

Back in 1969, Lee Kimche turned to the Yellow Pages, called the American Association of Museums in Washington, and was hired as a \$50-a-week staff assistant. Last December she was sworn in as the \$47,500-a-year executive director of the Museum Services Institute, the new federal agency created to assist the nearly 9,000 museums throughout the country.

Despite a modest beginning—its appropriation for fiscal 1978 is \$4 million (the Carter administration has proposed \$7.7 million for 1979), the institute could have a profound effect on the future of American museums. Some observers believe the institute's funding could reach the levels of the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities,

both of which, with a \$150 million budget each for fiscal 1979, were started 12 years ago with less than \$1 million each. Kimche is determined to prove the need for an annual appropriation of \$150 million for the institute, too, within the next five years.

Kimche was sworn in by Representative John Brademas, Democrat of Indiana, who is co-author with Senator Claiborne Pell, Democrat of Rhode Island, of the act's enabling legislation. "The act," said Brademas, is "aimed at providing grants to museums of every kind, of every size, public and private, in addition to zoos and botanical gardens, for meeting their basic operating expenses, as determined by them. This legislation is the first to provide direct assistance for the nation's museums (which

are visited by 300 to 500 million people each year) to encourage their educational and conservation role, to help modernize their methods and facilities, and to ease their financial burdens . . . as a result of their increasing use by the public." The agency, which will operate under the auspices of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, has a "commitment to the idea that museums are vital educational resources," and will finance such activities as exhibitions, staff training, administrative costs and the development of special programs.

Congressman Brademas said that he was "especially pleased" that the first director "was a person who was present at the beginning . . . whose counsel and advice from the start contributed substantially to the drafting of the legislation."

Mother of four and a former suburban housewife, Kimche is 48, tall, slim and self-assured. Her natural friendliness has taken her far beyond her George Washington University psychology degree and early volunteer work. For years she worked in various political fund-raising campaigns including organizing the eminently successful LBJ barbecues. Kimche always wanted to work in art, and in 1969 she ran a large art auction for UNESCO and Brandeis University. She still lives in the suburbs, and recently completed the furnishing of her new ten-room rented house. (She and her dentist husband separated in 1970—Lee took the children and left the household behind.) Early on, the series of jobs and activities that Kimche held informed her of the chronic problem of museums of all kinds—limited operating funds. And her political work put her in touch with people who could do something about it.

Only 20 percent of the museums in the country are devoted to art; besides those institutions the board represents history, technology and science museums, plus children's museums and zoos. Four of the



© JONATHAN ALKIN 1978

Barbaralee Diamonstein, editor of The Art World: A Seventy-five Year Treasury of ARTnews, is also a television interviewer and producer and a lecturer at the New School and Duke University.

John Brademas, Joan Mondale, Joseph Califano and Claiborne Pell prior to swearing-in ceremonies for the Museum Institute at the Brooklyn Children's Museum.

St. Albus Fine Arts



Maxfield Parrish
American and
European Masters
of the 19th and
Early 20th Centuries

25x30

620 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
(312) 337-3282

APPRAISALS PAINTINGS PURCHASED RESTORATION

WILLIAM PEREHUDOFF

Recent Paintings
April 1-20

DOROTHY HOOD

Recent Paintings
April 22 - May 11

**MEREDITH
LONG
CONTEMPORARY**

7 West 57th Street NYC 212-752-6244

15 presidentially appointed board members are ex-officio representatives of federal agencies. Kimche says the board will make policy decisions and that grants will be awarded on merit rather than by quota. "I think it's very important for the institute to work with museum professionals," Kimche said. "For example, the institute would be a natural place to work with museums to provide international exhibitions. We should have a panel review system made up of museum experts, because the board is not empowered to decide on the grants; the board decides on policy."

According to the legislation, policy is up to the director to implement, and that is why Kimche believes that the panel system pat-



Lee Kimche, director of the Museum Services Institute, Washington, D.C.

terned after NEA, NEH and the National Science Foundation would be the most effective means of review. "Congress doesn't want us to duplicate, and the one place where no one is giving money is for operating expenses. Another institute activity will be to coordinate with other agencies, such as HUD and the Department of the Interior—it would be nice to have their consciousness raised." Kimche says research is needed to determine who goes to museums and what happens to them when they get there—is it *really* an educational experience?

Since the federal legislation was enacted last fall, the state of Illinois has adopted a policy for assisting in museum operating expenses. Kimche hopes that this is the direction of the future "because Federal support by itself will never be enough." (During the last session of the Illinois legislature, two bills were passed providing a total of \$3 million for operating expenses to museums operated by a unit of local government or located on public land. At the last moment, Governor James Thompson

amended the appropriation by reducing it to \$500,000, and changed the agency responsible for distribution of the funds—from the State Arts Council to the state agency that regulates licensing, the Board of Registration and Education.)

George C. Seybolt, the newly appointed first chairman—for a five-year term—of the advisory board of the institute, shares Kimche's views. Seybolt is president and board chairman of the William Underwood Company of Massachusetts, the nation's oldest canning company, which markets deviled ham, baked beans and other food products. He has been active in cultural and educational institutions since 1964, beginning at the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, for whom he organized and directed its first public fund-raising campaign. He was its president from 1968 to 1973, and is now a trustee and president emeritus. In 1974 he was appointed by President Ford to the National Council on the Arts, and has been chairman of the trustees committee of the AAM since 1973.

Seybolt does not mince words. The advisory board, he says, "is a policy-making board whose general directive is to supply operating support for all kinds of institutions—in plain language, that is. A new boiler isn't going to show up in a museum, but without a boiler you don't have a museum." However optimistic he is about the institute's future, he is a realist about its current role. "Its basic mandate is to supply operating support to museums. With only \$4 million it's a real problem in terms of effectiveness. One half of the money is to be spent in matching grants. I think we're going to have problems in finding equitable programs with so little money available. There are thousands of museums and there are no standards as to certification like hospitals or universities." Does that mean standards are coming? Who will be used as the authority? "There is no ready-made way of distinguishing between the different needs—they all need," says Seybolt. "One of the solutions that the board has to discuss is criteria—whether they will deal with all museums across the board horizontally, having different segments of the staff assigned to a particular kind of institution, or adopt a vertical approach, where paper is paper, textiles are textiles and conservation is conservation, regardless of the type of institution. The bulk of these institutions have to deal with similar problems such as energy, fund-raising, staffing." Seybolt prefers a vertical approach and believes the whole field of culture, specifically museums, "has begun a very bright decade of use and appreciation. Now the public is really voting by its attendance. A museum can respond to the challenge by improving their offerings and ability to serve that public."

The board decided at its first meeting to allocate 75 percent of the funds to help offset museums' operating costs and 25 percent for special exhibitions, conservation and community services and programs. The

Stremmel Galleries Ltd.

1460 South Virginia Street Reno, Nevada 89502 Telephone (702) 786-0558

Recent Paintings By

LEN CHMIEL

EXHIBITION: MAY 3 - 24, 1978



"Mule deer-Looking for Winter Range" — 40" x 30"

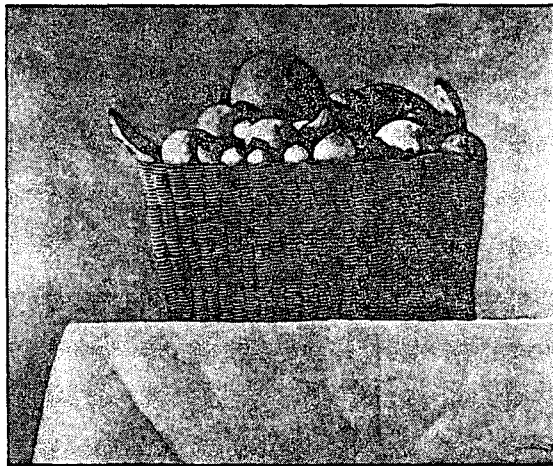
Audrey Flack

VANITAS

LOUIS K. MEISEL gallery

141 prince street ny 10012

Julio Fernandez Larraz



"FINISTERRE" 60 x 72 inches oil on canvas

Other paintings from our collection by:

David Adickes	Andre Gisson	Fritz Scholder
William Anzalone	Woody Gwyn	E. W. Redfield
Constantine Cherkas	Julio Larraz	Chauncy Ryder
Edouard Cortes	Edward Potthast	Veloy Vigil
Leon Gaspard	George Shawe	Guy Wiggins

Plus many other American & French paintings
from the 19th & 20th centuries.

H
HALL GALLERIES

4719 Camp Bowie Boulevard
Fort Worth, Texas 76107
(817) 788-5041

HERBERT FERBER

Recent Sculpture

April 1-20

M. Knoedler & Co.

19 East 70 New York 10021

Telephone (212) 794-0550

institute will make its first awards by September 15.

Museum personnel are all for new funding sources, but the more cautious say that what remains to be established is a definition of the institute's scope, and its relation to other funding sources. One thoughtful critic fears that, "it will be very difficult for art museums to relate to endowments where the parameters are not the arts; in the Museum Services Act the parameters are museums . . . HEW hasn't been tested. What will the emphasis be? If there are peer judgments, who are the peers?" He adds, "Art museums are preeminently against populism. There is the possibility of misapplied democratic thinking, or a dangerous assertion of business standards to the cultural world. And that would be lethal." Seybolt anticipates resistance from some quarters. He says, "I feel very strongly that we have no place, nor does government in any of its forms have anything to do, with pure esthetics. We see our function as being supportive and dealing with problems of an operational, administrative or functional nature. I don't see us attempting, or in any way deciding, between quality of art, or performance."

The institute, incidentally, was officially announced by Joseph Califano, secretary of HEW, at the new Brooklyn Children's Museum. Califano said he had selected the site because he grew up across the street and had spent many memorable days at the original Children's Museum.

In addition to Seybolt, the institute's board members include Dr. Mamie Phipps Clark, executive director of the Northside Center for Child Development in New York; Gary K. Clarke, director of Kansas' Topeka Zoological Park; Lewis Davis of Davis, Brody & Associates, a prominent New York architectural firm; Douglas Dillon, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Charlotte Ferst, trustee of the High Museum of Art, Atlanta; Dr. Neil Harris, professor of history at the University of Chicago; Benjamin Hazard, curator, special exhibits and education at the Oakland Museum; Lloyd Hezekiah, director of the Brooklyn Children's Museum; George Horse Capture, Indian curriculum researcher and instructor at the College of Great Falls in Montana; Raul A. Lopez, curator of Latin American archeology and ethnography, Museum of Cultural History, University of California at Los Angeles; Joan Mondale; Nancy Negley, president's advisor, San Antonio Conservation Society; Peter Raven, director of the Missouri Botanical Garden; E. Leland Webber, president of the Field Museum of Natural History.

Ex-officio members are Dr. Richard C. Atkinson, director of the National Science Foundation; Livingston L. Biddle, Jr., chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts; Dr. Ernest L. Boyer, U.S. Commissioner of Education; Joseph D. Duffey, chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities; and S. Dillon Ripley, secretary of the Smithsonian Institution. ■