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Congressional Anger Threatens Arts

By WILLIAM H. HONAN

WASHINGTON, June 18—Angrily by words of art that they consider pornographic or offensive, many members of Congress are demanding greater accountability concerning grants made to artists and are threatening to slash the budget of the National Endowment for the Arts.

"A confluence of factors has made this the worst storm for the endowment in its 31 years of existence," said Lyndon B. Johnson, who was chairman of the endowment during the Carter Administration and the author of a history of the agency called "Our Government and the Arts." He listed "the ethics question" in Congress, "budgetary stringency" and the absence of Presidential or Congressional approval as elements that have influenced the situation.

Mr. Biddle added another factor. "The religious element has only come together to play at the right time," he said. "The debate is that Congress will cut the budget, which would be out trend, but that trend won't be continued forced by law."

The immediate point of friction is an exhibition of photographs by Robert Mapplethorpe, a famous portrait photographer. By Andrew Sarsia, one of several supporters of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, which organized the exhibit, the U.S. Supreme Court has thus far refused to hear the case.

The Mapplethorpe show, which was held in the Corcoran Gallery here in July, but was canceled by the gallery after Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, and other members of Congress criticized the exhibition for being pornographic.

"It's a storm that's never been before," said the director of the Southeastern, Dr. Robert Stiegler, who is chairman of the Corcoran's board of directors and a member of Congress. "The endowment has never been in such a storm before."

Although the Corcoran received no endowment from the N.E.A., it is being sued by the National Endowment for the Arts for Being subsidized by the Government, and the Corcoran's board of directors, including Senator Helms, are being sued by the endowment for being subsidized by the Government.

Congress has been asked to investigate the situation, and many members of Congress have expressed their support for the Corcoran's position. The endowment has also been asked to investigate the situation, and many members of Congress have expressed their support for the Corcoran's position.

The Mapplethorpe show was not the first to be canceled by Congress. In 1983, the museum's exhibition of "Starrdom," a collection of photographs by Diane Arbus, was canceled by the museum in response to criticism from Congress.

The Corcoran's exhibit was the first to be canceled by Congress, and the Corcoran is seeking legal protection from the endowment's suit. The Corcoran is seeking legal protection from the endowment's suit.
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is extremely rare," said Representative Sidney R. Yates, the Chicago Democrat, who has long been chair­man of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that oversees the endowment's $150-million-to-$160-million budget. "To hit 30,000 grants, less than 30 have been found to be objectionable. That's one-quarter of one-tenth of a percent. Actually the endowment has done kind of a remarkable job. Sure­ly, Mr. Armey can't afford to punish the symphony and the opera and every other class of art because of this one piece of visual art. I would oppose any such penalty.

Senator D'Amato Wrote

In a letter written May 18 to Mr. Southern, Senator Alfonse M. D'Amato, the New York Republican, and 35 of his Senate colleagues de­manded changes in the endowment's grant-making procedures to deny funds to the sort of "shocking, abnor­mal and offensive" art they say the agency has approved.

"If the endowment does not change its grant-making procedures, Senator D'Amato said in an interview, "they have to be prepared to face legisla­tive censure.""

All About Hal Prince

"I wanted a perfect ending, so I set down to write the book with the ending in place before there even was an ending. Now I've learned, the hard way, that some poems don't rhyme, and some stories don't have a clear beginning, middle and end.

Like my life, this book has ambiguity. Like my life, this book is almost not knowing, having to change, taking the moment and making the best of it, without knowing what's going to happen next!"

"IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING, an extraordinarily candid, painfully graphic account of her struggle, stands as a testament to her courage and comedic spirit." - Lynn Van Meter, Chicago Tribune

"IT'S ALWAYS SOMETHING."

Gilda Radner

"READ IT AND LAUGH, READ IT AND WEEP, READ IT AND DRAW STRENGTH FROM IT!"

Dan Jenkins