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November 2016

Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 40

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Recommended Citation

Pell, Claiborne, "Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996): Speech 40" (2016). *Senate Speeches on the Arts and Humanities (1994-1996)*. Paper 38.
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TALKING POINTS RE: WALKER INSTITUTE

o The Walker Art Center was founded in 1879 and is widely recognized as one of the finest and most important arts organizations in the U.S. and the most prestigious cultural institution in Minnesota. The Walker showcases an outstanding collection of contemporary American art and has a long history of commitment to presenting quality performing arts that would otherwise be unavailable to the citizens of the region. Recent seasons have featured the works of such noted artists as Phillip Glass, Meredith Monk and the Kronos Quartet. Included in the Walker's 1993-4 season were performances in dance, music and theater, including family programs, professional workshops, master classes and panels. Programs at the Walker are often presented in collaboration with other organizations, including the College of St. Catherine and the University of Minnesota.

o The NEA awarded a matching grant for \$104,500 to the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota to support a season of more than 100 performing arts events. On March 5, 1994, the Walker presented the work of artist Ron Athey. Athey's work is a commentary on the anxiety surrounding the AIDS epidemic. The performance included a ritual body mortification using sharp instruments and blotting of the cuts that were made with towels. Despite some reports, no blood dripped from the towels onto audience members.

o The Walker Institute clearly advised viewer discretion in all press materials and its monthly calendar of events. There was absolutely no risk to the

audience, the performers, or the crew backstage. The organization followed all health precautions as advised by health professionals prior to the performance and the Minnesota Health Department has said that the Walker took appropriate health and safety precautions.

- o Letters to the local newspaper from citizens present at the performance expressed disappointment with the inaccurate coverage of the event.