PS for 12/20/90

Where Oh Where Does Our Tax Money Go?

The National Endowment for the Arts got off easy in the uproar earlier this year about its tax-funding of obscene art. Another serious charge that should be made against this Ministry of Culture, which purports to decide which art should be government sponsored, is that it is using our tax dollars to advance the personal pecuniary fortunes of scores of individuals.

Congress created the NEA in 1965 to enrich the lives of Americans through the arts. The NEA was certainly not set up to be a rich uncle for individuals who call themselves "artists," but whose major talent is cultivating a little group of money dispensers who control the cash box.

But that's what's going on. Out of the millions of persons in the United States who call themselves "artists," a few thousand are anointed by the NEA with taxpayer funding. They feed at the public trough because they figured out how the racket works and have pals on the "peer panels" that make the decisions.

Here are a few of the hundreds of similar grants that were given in just one year. The following is quoted directly from the NEA's 1989 annual report.

Concert Dance Company, Inc., Cambridge, MA: $12,000. To support acquisition, production, and production of new work by choreographer/body musician/vaudevillian Keith Terry.

Dancers and Drums of Africa, Inc., Brooklyn NY: $15,000. To support rehearsal and performance periods for the Charles Moore Dance Theatre.

Foundation for Independent Artists, Inc., New York, NY: $10,000. To support the administrative salaries, domestic touring, and the creation and performance of new work for Urban Bush Women.

School of Hard Knocks, Inc., New York, NY: $11,000. To support administrative salaries and costs associated with the completion of "The Man Who Never Wasn't" by Artistic Director Yoshiko Chuma.

Charles M. Atlas, New York, NY: $10,000. To support the creation of a 27-minute media dance, “Rule,” which will be a composite portrait of American disco style dancing.

Field Papers, Inc., New York, NY: $17,500. To support the creation of an environmental dance production featuring dance artists Dana Reitz, Steve Paxton, Polly Motley, and Laurie Booth.

Elizabeth E. Diller, New York, NY: $7,500. To support an architectural exhibition addressing the relationship between architecture and the human body.

Jonathan M. Fishman, Washington, DC: $15,000. To support an exhibition and catalogue of six significant sites in India’s Mogul Gardens.

Dia Art Foundation, New York, NY: $35,000. To support a commission for artist Dan Graham to create a rooftop urban park and performance space in Manhattan.

Ellen S. Posner, New York, NY: $20,000. To support extensive travel within the United States in order to increase first-hand knowledge of the American built environment.

Chinese for Affirmative Action, San Francisco, CA: $13,500. To support a series of concerts, performances, lectures, and exhibitions featuring Asian-American artists at the Kearny Street Workshop.

Commonwealth Council for Arts & Culture, Saipan, CM: $7,000. To support the promotion and presentation of traditional and contemporary expression of the art forms indigenous to the Northern Mariana Islands.

Culture and Council Foundation, New York, NY: $10,000. To support arts programming including workshops and presentations for communities in the Lower East Side of Manhattan.

Opus, Inc., Hartford, CT: $9,000. To support the salary of the director, and performances and residencies by professional elderly Connecticut artists in nontraditional settings.

Ko-Thi, Inc., Milwaukee, WI: $8,000. To support “Get to Know Ko-Thi and Guest Series” and related costs.

Alternative Roots, Inc., Atlanta, GA: $15,400. To support the annual meeting, national newsletters and member bulletins, and other administrative expenses. Management Support Incubator.

Arab Community Center for Economic & Social Services, Dearborn, MI: $24,000. To support a series of classes in Arab traditional music, dance, storytelling, and crafts instructed by the local Arab American master artists and artisans.

Crosspulse, El Sobrante, CA: $20,000. To support a new collaborative work by percussionist/rhythm dancer Keith Terry and Indonesian choreographer/performer I WayanDibia.

Pyramid Arts Center, Inc. for Karen Finley, Rochester, NY: $12,000. To support a new installation/performance work by artist Karen Finley.

California Lawyers for the Arts, Inc., San Francisco, CA: $12,000. To support a project that will assist southern California artists with needed information on housing issues.

The Names Project Foundation, San Francisco, CA: $10,000. To support the 1989 return tour to Washington, DC of the AIDS Memorial Quilt of the Names Project Foundation.

Culture Shock Foundation, Baton Rouge, LA: $10,000. To support contributors' feeds, production, and printing costs for six issues of **Exquisite Corpse**.

City University of New York, New York, NY: $25,000. To support royalties and production costs for books produced by the Feminist Press.

Frameline, San Francisco, CA: $10,000. To support the 13th annual San Francisco International Lesbian and Gay Film Festival.

American Federation of Arts, New York, NY: $35,000. To support the Independent Film/Video Distribution Program and circulating film exhibition program "Animated Films from the People's Republic of China."