

THIRD NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EXCHANGE OF PERSONS

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Report of Workshop # I - 2. ARTS: Creative

Chairman:

Edward M. M. Warburg
Member, Board of Regents, University of the State of New York

Rapporteur:

Donald B. Cook
Staff Director, U.S. Advisory Commission on Educational Exchange

Although participants in this workshop were flattered at the implied comparison with its sister meeting on the "performing arts," they agreed that they would stake out no exclusive claims to the adjective "creative".

The chairman nevertheless focused the discussion on exchanges in creative writing, architecture, painting and sculpture, the graphic and industrial arts, photography, and music composition. Exchanges of the artists themselves, and only secondarily of their art, was given major emphasis.

Discussions at the Second National Conference in 1956 were recalled, with recognition that progress had been made since that date. Particular milestones noted included publication by the Institute of International Education of a Directory of International Scholarships in the Arts; the recent Ford Foundation grant to the Institute of Contemporary Art and the IIE to bring European artists to this country; and recent activities of the American Committee of the International Association of the Plastic Arts.

Conceding the great potential value of the arts for promoting better international understanding, however, there was agreement that a great deal remains to be done and that, in particular, the numbers of creative arts exchanges in the programs of both government and private agencies should be markedly increased. The difficulty of achieving the desired emphasis in official programs unless available funds for exchanges can in some way be expanded was, of course, recognized.

It was noted that--contrary to general trends--many fewer nationals of other countries visit the United States to study and observe the arts than Americans go abroad for a similar purpose. In the light of the contemporary cultural vitality of our country this imbalance is revealed as an anachronism, and greater efforts to bring foreign cultural leaders to this country were especially encouraged.

At the same time, workshop discussions underlined the need for care and finesse in programming these visitors. Points emphasized included the following:

1. Programs for mature foreign artists should not be too vigorous or too concentrated; we should not exploit their presence at the expense of opportunities for them to observe our culture.

2. We need far more information, compiled in useable form, than even knowledgeable Americans now possess about the location, content, and accessibility for the visitor of the great specialized collections of art extant either in public or private hands.

3. We must seek to extend the hospitality offered the visiting artist, as a person, in our homes and within the family circle, and as an artist who seeks to demonstrate his work to his host. The problems of arranging for exhibitions of the art he brings with him, or of orchestral performances of his scores, were recognized. Nevertheless, it was agreed either that ways around such obstacles should be found or that in the artist's pre-departure orientation he should realistically be discouraged in his expectancies.

4. Everything possible should be done for the improvement of programming, to obtain better advance information about the arrival of foreign art leaders.

5. For foreign students of art we should decide whether the market place or the ivory tower offers the best answer to their needs. The list maintained by the American Institute of Architects of architectural firms willing to employ architects from other countries was cited as an example of meeting a need in the former sphere of activity. The practice of architects enrolling as resident visitors at the University of California is perhaps a model arrangement within the academic milieu.

The workshop also gave attention to the American artist who goes abroad, and advanced the following recommendations or suggestions:

1. It is imperative that only art and artists of the highest quality be sent abroad, especially where official sponsorship, direct or indirect, is involved. Particular caution should be employed where the more popular manifestations of American culture are covered.

2. Given the great popularity of America's foremost creative writers abroad, it is desirable that foreign readers and fellow writers have an opportunity to meet these people personally. More of them, therefore, should be sent abroad under our exchange programs.

3. American students in the arts should receive help to round out their foreign experience through exhibiting their paintings, having their compositions performed, and the like.

4. The possible establishment of an overseas residential center for students of the visual arts might be considered.

The workshop did not lose sight of the broader issues, and warned of the need for increased dedication in both domestic life and international relationships if we are not to find ourselves the victims of a "cultural sputnik". Confidence was expressed, however, that through a cementing of the traditional partnership between Government and the citizen, and through greater coordinated effort of private agencies interested in the creative arts, we need not fear - and should indeed welcome - such competition.