

The Instrumentalization of the Arts: Congressional Aesthetics and  
the National Endowment for the Arts in the 1990s

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis is an art-historical inquiry into the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and its controversies in the 1990s. A socio-economic model of instrumentalization of the arts based on Pierre Bourdieu's and David Throsby's conceptualizations of cultural capital is first developed. The model is then used to explore the notion of "congressional aesthetics," or a particular brand of arts-instrumentalization adopted by the U.S. Congress for post-WWII federal projects involving art, and two cases of its implementation. The first case is the successful implementation of congressional aesthetics in the instrumentalization of the arts in Sino-American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. The kind of American art in the 1950s enabled the successful implementation of congressional aesthetics. The opposite case is then investigated: the failed implementation of congressional aesthetics in the operation of the NEA in the 1980s. Specifically, the NEA controversies of the 1990s can be traced to the agency's failure to conform to congressional aesthetics. Failed congressional aesthetics also results largely from the type of American art being produced in the 1980s.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

When President Johnson signed into law National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities (Public Law 89-209) in September 1965, he created the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to administer direct government support for the arts in the United States. The federal agency led a quiet, comfortable existence of modestly increasing appropriations from Congress for the first 25 years of its existence. Then, suddenly, the NEA became an epicenter of the culture wars in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the agency was associated with the support of art of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano, then later in the 1990s the “NEA Four” of John Fleck, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and Karen Finley. “By July 1989,” Zeigler writes, “the contenders in the crisis had been identified: the National Endowment for the Arts; the arts community of institutions and individual artists; Congress; the media; and the religious right. The last of these groups was among the most vicious: for the right, the NEA was a target that could replace communism (removed by the end of the Cold War)” (1994, p. 76). During the culture wars the NEA’s critics charged the federal agency with assaulting “public decency” and generating “moral indignation.” Although in actuality the NEA did not provide direct funding to these artists, it was depicted as solely responsible for their public support and thrust into the middle of the related debates. Exploiting the NEA’s vulnerability from these controversies, the Republican takeover in the congressional elections of November 1994 was poised to launch a fatal political attack on the agency. A section of a pivotal 1995 House budget resolution entitled “Terminate Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities” asserted that “there is



serious philosophical debate about whether financing artistic creation is an appropriate government activity in the first place.” Moreover, First Amendment issues on government support for the arts multiplied: “On every front,” Storr wrote in 1991, “legal challenges are being made to the freedom of serious artists, clever opportunists, dedicated amateurs, and ordinary people to represent the world as they see it” (Storr, 1991, p. 12). It seemed that the government was trying to extricate itself strenuously from supporting the arts and indeed, possibly censoring or otherwise suppressing and limiting the arts in the U.S.

Almost two and one-half millennia before the NEA and the American culture wars, Plato, the classical Greek philosopher of the late 5<sup>th</sup>, early 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C., was immersed in a classical culture war of sorts when he composed the *Republic*. The *Republic* is “Plato’s reflection on the conduct, execution, and impact of a particular war, the pan-Hellenic Peloponnesian War, in whose aftermath he wrote the dialogue and against whose backdrop it is set” (Frank, 2007, p. 445). The untruthful arts, Plato believes, are both symptomatic of and a likely cause of the unhealthy, weak city-state that Athens had become after losing the Peloponnesian War to Sparta. In Book 10, Plato explores the intersection of politics and the arts by having Socrates compose a letter to the Homer, the epic poet of the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C. who metonymically stands for “art” in the *Republic*. Plato through Socrates posits the following question: “If Homeric poetry could improve the state by revealing or reflecting civic practices conducive to the happiness and virtue of the citizenry, then what state has benefited from Homer’s art?” (p. 10.599d).

Plato's answer is that no state's citizens have benefitted from Homer. Insofar as the arts impart no truth and considerable falsehood, Plato's arts policy is concerned with the art's public effects on the virtue of a state's citizenry. "What Plato is saying of these poets...is that they have bad effects. They promote ignorance, stultify philosophic inquiry by surrounding falsehood with an aura of piety, and reinforce poor morality by exhibiting the gods as exemplars of the worst sort of misconduct" (Elias, 1984, p. 213). To protect the citizenry's virtue as well as to ameliorate a fatal Athenian infirmity contributing to its decline), Plato banishes Homeric poetry from his ideal state. Much like conservative lawmakers did to the NEA during the American culture wars, Plato censors Homeric poetry – and indeed all of art – in the *Republic* as rulers must make laws for an ordered and balanced state. *Instrumentalizing art, Plato thus severs the link between art and politics in his ideal state because art is not useful to the state.* The parallels between Homer and the NEA, Plato and Congress are suggestive of the instrumentalization of the arts: art and politics can peacefully co-exist if the arts are useful to the state.

For my thesis, I propose an art-historical inquiry into the NEA controversies in the 1990s based on a cultural-capital conceptualization of the instrumentalization of the arts. In addition to this introduction and a conclusion, the thesis will be divided into three chapters. The first chapter will develop a socio-economic model of instrumentalization of the arts based on Pierre Bourdieu's and David Throsby's conceptualizations of cultural capital. The second and third chapters utilize the model to explore what I call "congressional aesthetics," or a particular brand of arts-instrumentalization adopted by the U.S. Congress for post-WWII federal projects involving art. Chapter 2 describes the

successful implementation of congressional aesthetics in the instrumentalization of the arts in Cold War cultural diplomacy between China and the US. I argue in Chapter 2 that the kind of American art in the 1950s enabled the successful implementation of congressional aesthetics in Cold War cultural diplomacy. Further, the Chinese government was also able to instrumentalize the arts to their ends as well. Chapter 3 then details the opposite case: the failed implementation of congressional aesthetics in the operation of the NEA. More specifically, I argue that the NEA controversies of the 1990s can be traced to the agency's failure to conform to congressional aesthetics. Failed congressional aesthetics results largely from postmodern art of the 1980s.

## CHAPTER 2

### BOURDIEU'S AND THROSBY'S CULTURAL CAPITAL: A SOCIO-ECONOMIC MODEL OF THE INSTRUMENTALIZATION OF THE ARTS

The notion of instrumentalizing the arts can be traced all the way back to Plato's *Republic*. According to Karl Popper, Plato created his ideal state in the *Republic* as a totalitarian one to fix the excesses of Athenian democracy that led to Athens' defeat to Sparta defeat in the Peloponnesian War (Popper, 1966, p. 13). The *Republic* was Plato's "call to justice" for its *pleonexia* (Frank, 2007, p. 445). A large part of Athenian excess was due to the arts, particularly the great epic poet of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Homer was central to the *paideia*, the aristocratic ideal of education in ancient Athens (Jaeger, 1967, p. 5). In Book 10 of the *Republic*, Plato explores the intersection of politics and the arts by having Socrates compose a letter to the Homer, who metonymically represents "art" in the *Republic*. Socrates rhetorically posits the following question questioning the utility of the arts: If Homeric poetry could improve the state by revealing or reflecting civic practices conducive to the happiness and virtue of the citizenry, as components of Plato's ideally virtuous state must do, then what state has benefited from Homer's art?

'Dear Homer, if you are not third from the truth about virtue, a craftsman of a phantom, just the one we defined as an imitator, but are also second and able to recognize what sorts of practices make human beings better or worse in private and in public, tell us which of the cities was better governed thanks to you...?' (1968, p. 10.599d)

Plato thus introduces the notion of the instrumentalization of the arts. If the arts contribute to the virtue of a state, Socrates queries, then why can we not name even one state that has received such a contribution? Plato's reason is that art does not – and possibly cannot – contribute to the virtue of its citizenry. Homer has been apotheosized

(Fig. x), yet his art had a corrupting influence on Athens. Far from being useful to the state, Plato believed that the arts were largely responsible for Athens' defeat to Sparta. Therefore, the arts must be banished from the state.

Figure 1. Archelaus of Priene, *Apotheosis of Homer*, third century B.C. British Museum in London. Marble relief, 24.26 cm x 30.48 cm.



In this chapter I develop a socio-economic model of instrumentalization of the arts based on Pierre Bourdieu's and David Throsby's conceptualizations of cultural capital. The model blends two conceptualizations of cultural capital – an economic one

and a sociological one – that are connected by micro-macro linkages. The economic conceptualization of cultural capital is developed by Throsby (1995, 1999, 2001). A repository of cultural and economic value, Throsbeian cultural capital is economic capital in the neoclassical sense of the means of production but with a penumbra of cultural value. I argue that Throsby operationalizes his economic conception of cultural capital at the macro level of cultural phenomena. Next I juxtapose Bourdieu’s sociological conception of cultural capital with Throsby’s economic conception. To Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), where he arguably most fully develops the concept, cultural capital might be generally described as “forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions” (Johnson, 1993, p. 7).<sup>1</sup> I argue that Bourdieu operationalizes his conception of cultural capital at the micro level of the individual. Linking these two conceptions of cultural capital together with a micro-macro framework descriptively models how the arts can be instrumentalized and put in service of the state. I hasten to add that *this is a descriptive model; in no way am I putting forth a normative model of instrumentalizing the arts*. The modern state has too enthusiastically taken up that responsibility as the conclusion will address.

## **Two Conceptions of Cultural Capital**

### **Bourdieu’s economism.**

Although “Bourdieu denies economism most strongly” (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, p. 4), Bourdieu’s economism continues to elicit a full range of scholarly attention. Some

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<sup>1</sup> Complicating matters, Bourdieu himself is not always consistent in his definition of “cultural capital.” Further, he sometimes also uses the term “symbolic capital” synonymously with cultural capital—and sometimes not synonymously. The issue of defining Bourdieu’s cultural capital is further addressed below.

scholars dislike Bourdieu's economism. For example, Crowther (1994) disdains Bourdieu's reduction of the true Kantian aesthetic experience to mere class-based distinctions of taste: "Rather than see [taste]—falsely—as constituted by class identity, we would ask what is it about the experience which enables it to function in such identity, i.e., why it is able to be regarded as a source of 'symbolic capital'" (pp. 166-167).

Likewise, Lamont and Lareau (1988) would prefer to constrain Bourdieu's economism: "Because of these incompatibilities between functions and forms of cultural capital, and because of the confusion with the original model, there is a need to simplify the latter and use the term cultural capital to refer to the performance of a narrower set of functions" (p. 156). Some scholars thus disapprove of Bourdieu's economism.

Other scholars approve of Bourdieu's economism. Fowler (1997), for example, finds comfort in an "equivalence" between Marxian economics and Bourdieu's sociology of culture: "Bourdieu's method is to use Marx's critique in another sphere of production in the bourgeois period, that of cultural goods" (p. 43). Similarly, Beasley-Murray (2000a) insists: "The argument for cultural capital *as* capital crucially underpins his analysis, even if this fact remains undertheorized in Bourdieu's work" (p. 102),<sup>2</sup> and then he attempts to ameliorate Bourdieu's undertheorized economism. Still other scholars might be best described as amused with Bourdieu's economism. Ironically, amid all of Bourdieu's economism, Calhoun (1993) observes: "What Bourdieu's newer approach to capital lacks, then, is an idea of capitalism" (p. 68). This "tantalizing lacuna" Calhoun discovers in Bourdieu's economism moves Guillory (1997) to search for the "strategic

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that all italics that appear in quotations in this paper are italicized in the source, unless specified otherwise.

value” in such an omission: “The very choice of [the concept of capital] to define the stakes in the ‘field’ compels us to consider the absence of an account [of capitalism] deliberate” (p. 367). From amusement to approval to dislike, Bourdieu’s economism—in particular his conception of cultural capital—continues to evoke a complete range of scholarly responses.

Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital stands at the crossroads of sociology and economics. Gesturing to both academic disciplines, Bourdieu seeks to develop a “general economy of practices” (see Bourdieu, 1980) from a sociology of culture perspective. Yet, his explicit attempts to employ economics are peculiar. Capital in modern economics quite unambiguously refers to either the means of production (neoclassical economics) or a process in time (Austrian economics). Bourdieu, however, avoids using the concept of economic capital in any recognizable sense of modern economics. Thus, capital *as such* never seems to appear in Bourdieu. Although Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital stands at the crossroads of sociology and economics, it seems unable to commit to either one.

I have two purposes in this essay. My first purpose is to explore the concept of cultural capital. Again, Bourdieu’s main problem is that, despite his penchant for economism, capital as such never seems to appear in Bourdieu. Why does Bourdieu choose to employ a conception of capital if he does not employ it in any accepted sense of modern economics? What does the term “capital” mean to Bourdieu? How precisely does Bourdieuan culture capital differ from economic capital? My second purpose in this essay is to examine ways of augmenting Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital. Is there an alternative conception of cultural capital, one that is not economic but rather



truly economic? How does the alternative relate to Bourdieuan cultural capital? Can the two be linked? In short, my dual purpose in this essay is to ask the following general question: Whither Bourdieuan cultural capital? Should Bourdieuan cultural capital choose sociology, economics, or both?

Beasley-Murray's (2000a) specifies Bourdieu's research goal in the field of cultural production as one of seeking "the determination of the economic *within* the cultural" (p. 105). I thus begin this essay by discussing an *economic* conception of cultural capital developed primarily by Throsby (1995, 1999, 2001) in cultural economics. A repository of cultural and economic value, Throsbeian cultural capital is economic capital in the neoclassical sense of the means of production but with a penumbra of cultural value. I argue that Throsby operationalizes his economic conception of cultural capital at the macro level of cultural phenomena. In the following section, I then juxtapose Bourdieu's *economistic* conception of cultural capital with Throsby's economic concept. To Bourdieu in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), where he arguably most fully develops the concept, cultural capital might be generally described as "forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions" (Johnson, 1993, p. 7).<sup>3</sup> I argue that Bourdieu operationalizes his conception of cultural capital at the level of the individual. In the final section the two conceptions are linked together in a micro-macro relationship in order to construct the socio-cultural model of the instrumentalization of the arts.

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<sup>3</sup> Complicating matters, Bourdieu himself is not always consistent in his definition of "cultural capital." Further, he sometimes also uses the term "symbolic capital" synonymously with cultural capital—and sometimes not synonymously. The issue of defining Bourdieu's cultural capital is further addressed below.

### **Throsby's economic conception of cultural capital.**

Throsby's conception of cultural capital is explicitly a theory of economic capital. "Cultural capital in an economic sense," Throsby (2001) writes, "can provide a means of representing culture which enables both tangible and intangible manifestations of culture to be articulated as long-lasting stores of value and providers of benefits for individuals and groups" (p. 44). Serving as a repository of value, that is, as a stock, and facilitating the flow of cultural services are the two primary functions of Throsbeian cultural capital. "[*Stock*] refers to the quantity of such capital in existence at a given time... This capital stock gives rise over time to a *flow* of services which may be consumed or may be used to produce further goods and services" (Throsby, 2001, p. 46). Throsbeian cultural capital thus serves as the means of cultural production and is thus thoroughly economic capital.

Throsby, however, distinguishes his conception of cultural capital from other forms of economic capital (Throsby, 1995, pp. 202-203; 1999, pp. 3-7; 2001, pp. 43-47). Throsby identifies four different types of capital: *physical capital*, which is the "stock of real goods;" *human capital*, which is the "embodiment of skills and experience in people;" *natural capital*, which is the "stock of renewable and nonrenewable resources provided by nature;" and *cultural capital*, which is the "stock of cultural value embodied in an asset" that influences "human progress generally and economic transactions specifically." By distinguishing his conception of cultural capital from these other conceptions of economic capital, Throsby puts his conception on a par with them. Throsby in this way legitimates his conception cultural capital as economic capital.

Throsby elaborates on his conception of cultural capital by distinguishing between two types of cultural capital. First, there is *tangible* cultural capital, such as "buildings,

structures, sites and locations endowed with cultural significance, and artworks and artifacts existing as private goods, such as paintings, sculptures, and other objects.”

Second, there is *intangible* cultural capital, which is the “set of ideas, practices, beliefs, traditions and values which serve to identify and bind together a given group of people...together with the stock of artworks existing in the public domain as public goods.” Each form of capital Throsby identifies exists in an objectified or embodied form. Even intangible cultural capital is reified to a certain extent in the stock of artworks. Much like the intangible and tangible aspects of nature (an analogy Throsby himself repeatedly makes), Throsbeian cultural capital is a stock of objects and embodied ideas and the services that flow from them.

An important distinction in Throsby’s conception of cultural capital is between “cultural value and economic value.” “Cultural capital gives rise to both cultural and economic value, [while] ‘ordinary’ capital provides only economic value” (Throsby, 2001, p. 45). In tangible cultural capital, “cultural value may give rise to economic value.” For example,

The asset [e.g., heritage building] may have economic value, which derives simply from its physical existence as a building and irrespective of its cultural worth. But the economic value of the asset is likely to be augmented, perhaps significantly so, because of its cultural value. (Throsby, 1999, p. 8)

In contrast to tangible cultural capital, intangible cultural capital cannot be exchanged and thus cannot give rise directly to economic value. Rather, the value of intangible cultural capital flows from it:

The stock of existing music and literature, for example, or the stock of cultural mores and beliefs, or the stock of language, has immense cultural value, but no economic value since they cannot be traded as assets. Rather, the flows of

services to which these stocks give rise yield both cultural and economic value. (Throsby, 1999, p. 8)

(Throsby's distinction between cultural value and economic value rather startlingly invokes Marx's distinction between use and exchange value.) The creation of cultural value and economic value together demonstrate the productive function of Throsbeian cultural capital as economic capital.

### **The macro level: cultural policy and the stock and flow of cultural capital**

Throsby's conception of cultural capital is consistent with many common notions of the existence of cultural objects and artifacts to a particular society. At the founding of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965 in the United States, for example, Henry Hyde referred to cultural property as a "commons," that is, "the 'creative wealth of the past' that now 'exists in the present' and on which we continue to build artistically and intellectually" (quoted in Campbell, 1999, p. 5). Similarly, in 2001, Center for Arts and Culture, an arts policy think-tank in Washington, D.C., conceived of America's culture as "a national resource, the accumulated capital of America's ingenuity and creativity" (CAC, 2001, p. 180). Morato's "culture society" (2003) also seems germane to Throsby's conception of cultural capital: "In this new cultural configuration, culture represents a significant resource within the general economic and political sphere" (pp. 250-251).

Other commentators link stocks of cultural capital to the concept of nationhood. Most significantly, Bourdieu in his essay "Manet and the Institutionalization of Anomie" (Bourdieu, 1993b) argues that Academic art in nineteenth-century France served a state purpose of establishing *juste milieu*: "...it is quite clear that the valorization of academic

art is inscribed in the cultural restoration undertaken after the crises of the Revolution and the Empire, through which political regimes, seeking legitimacy, attempted to recreate a consensus around an eclectic culture of a *juste milieu*” (Bourdieu, 1993b). “Art, architecture, literature, theatre, dance and music,” Radbourne and Fraser ” (1996) similarly write, “provide some of the most translatable and permanent media for the expression of national identity” (p. 9). Cultural capital in this usage can contribute to such areas as international prestige, the preservation and reinforcement of cultural identity, education of the young and the “worthy poor,” and the preservation of cultural evidence to foster culture (Shubik, 1999). Quinn (1998) notices a similar realization in Great Britain: “In the period of European restoration which took place after World War Two, the notion of ‘culture’ assumed new significance [for Great Britain] as the ‘essence of a society’s identity’” (p. 75). Therefore, insofar as Throsby is referring to a pre-existing stock of objects, be they artworks, national heritage, and so on, he is operationalizing his conception of cultural capital at the macro level of cultural policy and other “systems-level” cultural phenomena.

In fact, Throsby has conceptualized a set of cultural policies for the “sustainable development of cultural capital” (Throsby, 1995, 2001). Throsby’s set of cultural policies is based on the “whole-systems” approach that he borrows from ecological economics. “We could bring the economy (as defined by economists) and culture (as defined by cultural theorists) together in a single system where interaction and feedback effects were acknowledged, and where in particular the dynamics were made explicit” (Throsby, 1995, p. 200). Sustainable development of cultural capital “marries the ideas of sustainable *economic* development, meaning development that will not slow down or

wither away but will be, in some sense, self-perpetuating, and *ecological* sustainability, meaning the preservation and enhancement of a range of environmental values through maintenance of ecosystems in the natural world” (Throsby, 2001, p. 54). Six principles guide Throsby’s set of cultural policies in support of the sustainable development of cultural capital (Throsby, 2001, pp. 54-57):

1. Material and non-material wellbeing: “The production of material benefits in the form of direct utility to consumers, deriving from these economics and cultural value sources.”
2. Intergenerational equity and dynamic efficiency: “Equity of access to cultural capital can be analysed in the same way as equity in the intergenerational distribution of benefits from any other sort of capital.”
3. Intragenerational equity: “The rights of the present generation to fairness in access to cultural resources and to the benefits flowing from cultural capital, viewed across social classes, income groups, locational categories and so on.”
4. Maintenance of diversity: “A greater diversity of resources will lead to the creation of more varied and more culturally valuable artistic works in the future.”
5. Precautionary principle: “Decisions which may lead to irreversible change should be approached with extreme caution and from a strongly risk-averse position, because of imponderability of the consequences of such decisions.”
6. Maintenance of cultural systems and recognition of interdependence: “No part of any system exists independently of other parts.”

This set of cultural policies are designed to avoid “short-term or temporary solutions that do not address fundamental issues, and also a concern with producing self-generating or self-perpetuating characteristics in systems” (Throsby, 1995, p. 201). Thus these policies operate on cultural capital at the macro level of cultural phenomena.

The weakness of Throsby’s macro-level conception of cultural capital is that, like many macroeconomic concepts, it neglects individual interaction. We recognize in

Throsby's conception the group of artifacts and embodiments that exist in any modern culture, such as historical buildings, works of art, public rituals, and shared beliefs. Throsby's conception of cultural capital in this way conforms to our intuitions and experience of modern culture. The problem, however, lies in Throsby's neglect of the origin and formation of cultural capital. Throsbeian cultural capital exists *exogenously*, that is, as given, already created, always maintained, and perhaps even automatically augmented. But where does cultural capital come from? How is it maintained? How is it acquired and used in social interactions? Most answers to these questions can only be answered at the level of the individual and social interaction. Only individuals can participate in transactions. Only individuals can create art. Only individuals can experience art. The exogenous treatment of any phenomena is mute to these vital considerations at the level of the individual. And Throsby's conception of cultural of capital as economic capital does not provide answers to these micro-level questions.<sup>4</sup>

### **Bourdieu's economistic conception of cultural capital.**

Bourdieu's general conception of capital is economistic. His conception gestures toward economics, but ultimately it is incompatible with modern neoclassical or Austrian economic notions of capital as the means of production or a process in time, respectively. "Capital," Bourdieu writes in "The Forms of Capital" (1986), "is accumulated labor (in

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<sup>4</sup> In prior work, Throsby sees works of art as "cultural goods" endogenously consumed at the level of the individual. For example, he identifies "the endogenization of tastes" in the individual consumption of cultural goods: "The arts can be further distinguished in this theory by their being addictive, in the sense that an increase in an individual's present consumption of the arts will increase her future consumption" (Throsby, 1994, p. 3). The endogenization of tastes thus implies increasing returns to scale with the consumption of cultural goods, increasing value at the individual level that can then contribute to the creation and maintenance of the stock of cultural capital at the system level. Unfortunately, Throsby did not incorporate the endogenization of tastes in his later work on cultural capital and does not develop the theme.

its materialized form or its ‘incorporated,’ embodied form) which, when appropriated on private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 241-242).

Thus, rather than basing his conception on neoclassical or Austrian economics, Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital most closely approximates a Marxian one.

Marxian capital theory is at least in part based on the labor theory of value.

Borrowing from John Locke and Adam Smith, Marx writes in *Capital* (1867/1978): “The value of labour-power is determined, as in the case of every other commodity, by the labour-time necessary for the production, and consequently also the reproduction, of this special article” (p. 339). Capital, then, is formed from the surplus value that the capitalist owner appropriates from the laborer: “Capital is dead labour, that vampire-like, only lives by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (pp. 362-363). In other words, capitalist accumulation is facilitated by the surplus value capitalists extract from purchased labor-power.

Bourdieu, however, misappropriates this aspect of Marxian capital theory. Beasley-Murray (2000a) keenly observes that Bourdieu is providing not a definition of capital but rather a definition of value.<sup>5</sup> “For Marx, this process whereby capital is *produced* is the production process itself; in contrast, what Bourdieu outlines here is rather a theory of (unequal) *distribution* of capital effected through appropriation” (p. 105). Bourdieu misappropriates Marx in *Capital* by generally defining value, not capital, as the accumulated labor embodied in the social agent. The incomplete Marxian

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<sup>5</sup> Also see Beasley-Murray (2000b) for an earlier, online draft version of his paper with a more extensive textual analysis of Bourdieu’s and Marx’s differences in conceptualizing capital.



definition of capital Bourdieu offers in “The Forms of Capital” is thus rendered almost useless as a base on which to construct a conceptualization of cultural capital.

Fortunately, Bourdieu does not base his conception of cultural capital on his (mis)conceptualization of capital.<sup>6</sup> Later in “The Forms of Capital” Bourdieu specifies three types of cultural capital:<sup>7</sup> (1) *embodied* cultural capital, which “in the form of what is called culture, cultivation, *Bildung*, presupposes a process of em-bodiment [*sic*], incorporation” (p. 244); (2) *objectified* cultural capital, which is “defined only in relation with cultural capital in its embodied form;” and (3) *institutionalized* cultural capital, which is academic qualifications (p. 246). According to Holt (1997), Bourdieu’s typology of cultural capital allows for both virtual, abstract cultural capital and concrete, particularized cultural capital: “Cultural capital exists both as a single abstracted form that has only a virtual existence, and as many different realized particular forms as the abstracted form becomes instantiated in social life” (p. 96). Further, cultural value also does not seem to be based strictly on labor. For example, Fowler (1997) notes: “Hence Bourdieu argues that the material value only represents the *outer husk* of art. Its *inner kernel* is collective veneration of spirituality and genius” (p. 79). Bourdieu’s typology of

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6 Unfortunately, some of Bourdieu’s commentators replicate his misappropriation of Marxian capital theory. Frow (1996), for example, describes Bourdieuan cultural capital as follows: “*knowledge is stored labour which is productive*” (p. 96).

7 The definitional problems of Bourdieuan cultural capital are manifold. Some commentators distinguish between cultural capital and symbolic capital. Johnson (1993), for example, defines *symbolic capital* as the “degree of accumulated prestige, celebrity, consecration or honour and is founded on a dialectic of knowledge (*connaissance*) and recognition (*reconnaissance*)” and *cultural capital* as “forms of cultural knowledge, competences or dispositions.” (p. 7). Others do not distinguish between cultural and symbolic capital (e.g., Frow, 1995, footnote 12). Still others define cultural capital for Bourdieu: “We propose to define cultural capital as *institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviors, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion*” (Lamont & Lareau, 1988, p. 156). In this essay I attempt to work through only Bourdieu’s concept of cultural capital as he expressed in *Distinction* (1984) as “the aesthetic disposition.”

cultural capital seems much closer to satisfying Beasley-Murray's criticism because it implies the distribution more than production with value independent of labor-power.

Nevertheless, Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital is not an economic definition of capital. Rather, it is an economic one. It is economic in that it gestures towards (Marxian) economics, but in no way does it conform to any modern, technical definition of economic capital, be it neoclassical, Austrian, or even Marxian.

Apparently, Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital is uniquely his own. Why does Bourdieu choose to employ a conception of capital if he does not employ it in any accepted sense of modern economics? What does the term "capital" mean to Bourdieu? To answer these questions we must turn generally to Bourdieu's sociology and specifically to *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984), one of the masterworks of twentieth-century empirical sociology.

### **Bourdieu's sociology of culture and theory of cultural production.**

Bourdieu's sociology of culture emphasizes the "primacy of relations" that is embodied in the concept of field. In its application to art and the field of cultural production, it is doubly so in what Randall Johnson calls in his introduction to *The Field of Cultural Production* (1993, p. 9) "radical contextualization." Bourdieu writes in "The Field of Cultural Production, or: The Economic World Reversed" (1993a):

The boundary of the field [of cultural production] is a stake of struggles, and the social scientist's task is...to describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents (pp. 42-43; emphasis in the original).

Bourdieu's concept of field "grounds the agent's action in objective social relations, without succumbing to the mechanistic determinism of many forms of sociological and

‘Marxian’ analysis” (Johnson, 1993, p. 2). Bourdieu with Lacquant (1992) maintain that “To think in terms of field is to *think relationally*: In analytic terms, a field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between positions” (p. 97; emphasis in the original). The field thus is analyzed in terms of objective relations; more specifically, a field is a space of power relations. It is “simultaneously a space of conflict and competition...and the power to decree the hierarchy and conversion rates between all forms of authority in the fields of power” (Wacquant, 1992, pp. 17-18). Bourdieu’s theory of practice for the sociology of culture finally “is built on the foundation of the great materialist classifications of social structures” (Fowler, 1996, p. 9).

Bourdieu’s theory of cultural production consists of the triad of the field of cultural production, the habitus, and cultural capital. “In approaching the cultural production of art,” Grenfell and Hardy summarize in *Art Rules* (2007), “Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and field work together to simultaneously represent the cognitive construction of reality and give meaning to the actions that make up the field” (p. 29). First of all, the field of cultural production includes “the set of social conditions for the production, circulation and consumption of symbolic goods” (Johnson, 1993, p. 9). Thus the cultural field encompasses the primacy of relations in cultural production, again, “the area *par excellence* of clashes between the dominant factions of the dominant class...” (Bourdieu, 1993d, p. 102; emphasis in the original). The analyses of cultural fields can explore questions as fundamental as What is art? and Who is the artist? For example, in “The Production of Belief: Contribution to an Economy of Symbolic Goods” (1993d), Bourdieu inquires into the production of belief and asks, “Who creates the ‘creator’?”. His answer the “circle of belief” that constitutes the field of production, understood as the

system of objective relations between these agents or institutions and as the site of the struggles for the monopoly of the power to consecrate, in which the value of works of art and belief in that value are continuously generated” (p. 78). “Since fields are objective structures,” Danto (1999) observes, “the question of what is art and who are artists are themselves objective matters, and Bourdieu has sought to put in place the kind of science required for understanding both: it is an historical science of cultural fields” (p. 216).

Habitus, Bourdieu’s other central analytic concept, exists within a field as “structured, structuring dispositions”:

Theory of practice as practice insists, contrary to positivist materialism, that the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively records, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism, that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 52).

Habitus is dynamic. “Social structure is not typological, but dynamical. This, ultimately, is the powerful message in the phrase ‘structured structuring structures’” (Dyke, 1999, p. 211). Habitus serves many functions in the logic of practice. Habitus is a repository for history: “[Habitus] ensures the active presence of past experiences” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 54). Habitus reflects power: “Property and properties—expressions of the habitus perceived through the categories of the habitus—symbolize the differential capacity to appropriate, that is, capital and social power...” (Bourdieu, 1980, p. 140). Habitus approximates ideology: “Bourdieu submits that the correspondence between social and mental structures fulfills crucial political functions. Symbolic systems are not instruments of knowledge; they are also instruments of domination” (Wacquant, 1992, p. 13). In summary, with habitus “Bourdieu wants to re-establish a sociology based on the study of objective as well as subjective possibilities” (Fowler, 1996, p. 9). Bourdieu’s

concept of habitus incorporates “a notion of the agent—which structuralism had excluded from social analysis—without falling into the idealism of Romantic conceptions of the artist as creator (or *subject*) which still informs much literary and art criticism” (Johnson, 1993, p. 2).

It is arguably in *Distinction* where Bourdieu develops his theory of cultural consumption and production most elegantly and applies his concepts of the field of cultural production, cultural habitus, and cultural capital most forcefully (Grenfell & Hardy, 2007, Chapter 3). Fowler (1994) describes the main idea of *Distinction* as follows: “Elaborating how the ‘good taste’ which privileges form consists of a complex web of identities and oppositions, all molded by class habitus” (p. 144). The field of cultural production in *Distinction* is the location of “competitive struggle,” or “the form of class struggle which the dominated classes allow to be imposed on them when they accept the stakes offered by the dominant classes” (p. 165). Habitus in *Distinction* is “both the generative principle of objectively classifiable judgments and the system of classification (*principium divisionis*) of these practices” (p. 170). Alternatively, Grenfell and Hardy (2007) maintain,

The main message of *La Distinction* is that this aesthetic extends to all aspects of life: what we eat, how we talk, our opinions, what we wear, how we use our knife and fork. In short, a certain habitus implies a certain lifestyle. And habitus is a kind of incarnation of social history, actualized at a certain point in time, and within the field in which it finds itself, realized as a particular instance within a specific field. (p. 45)

In short, *Distinction* is about social distinction.

Bourdieu employs cultural capital in *Distinction* as “the aesthetic sense as the sense of distinction” as shaped by the cultural habitus. Bourdieu writes:

The aesthetic disposition is one dimension of a distant, self-assured relation to the world and to others which presupposes objective assurance and distance... But it is also a distinctive expression of a privileged position in social space whose distinctive value is objectively established in its relationship to expressions generated from different conditions. (p. 56)

Cultural capital, however, is more than an aesthetic disposition that distinguishes its holder; it is also an instrument of domination (see Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) or, expressed more gently, a device of elitism: “Bourdieu’s theory [of cultural capital] posits more than an interest in, and appreciation of, culture. For him elites possess considerable artistic knowledge and a distinctive aesthetic outlook that is difficult for others to obtain” (Ostrower, 1998, p. 46). Thus Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital in *Distinction* is essentially a class-based<sup>8</sup> epistemology of tastes: “To the socially recognized hierarchy of the arts, and within each of them, of genres, schools or periods, corresponds a social hierarchy of consumers. This predisposes tastes to function as markers of class” (pp. 1-2). And the class consumption of cultural capital gives rise to *legitimacy*: “Thus, nothing more rigorously distinguishes the different classes than the disposition objectively demanded by the legitimate consumption of legitimate works” (p. 40). As Grenfell and Hardy (2007) summarize, “aesthetic practice – attendance at museums, theatres, art galleries, concerts, reading, listening to music, lectures, and so on – is bound up with a whole universe of material objects – furniture, clothes, painting, books – making up a certain ‘cultural capital’, which has symbolic value in the way it ‘buys’ social distinction”

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<sup>8</sup> It should be noted that Bourdieu’s and Marx’s notions of class are not the same: “If there exists a form of capital which is specifically symbolic or cultural, the production, exchange, distribution, and consumption of this capital presupposes the division of society into groups that can be called classes. Bourdieu’s sociology assumes such a division, but it does not assume that an economic account of classes is sufficient in itself [as does Marx].” (Guillory, 1993, p. viii)

(p. 44). Perhaps “nothing more rigorously distinguishes” Bourdieu’s economic conception of cultural capital from Throsby’s economic conception of cultural capital.

**The micro level: individual acquisition, conversion, and reproduction of cultural capital.**

“What differences make a difference?” Dyke (1999, p. 194) asks. What benefits come from “distinction through cultural capital” confer? Or, expressed reflexively, why does Bourdieu choose to employ a conception of capital if he does not employ it in the sense of modern economics? What does the term “capital” mean to Bourdieu? “Bourdieu’s general answer...is that various forms of capital—social, cultural, and economic—make a difference as individuals pursue trajectories and assume positions within a generalized social space” (Dyke, 1999, p. 194). A major theme of *Distinction* might be summarized as demonstrating that the social interactions in the form of individual acquisition, conversion, and reproduction of cultural capital enable individuals to adjust their position-taking in the social space. Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital is therefore a micro-level theory of social interaction.

First, there are *acquisitions* of cultural capital. Bourdieuan cultural capital is acquired individually at the micro level. Individuals are not naturally endowed with cultural capital; rather, they socially acquire the cultural capital of its habitus as “the product of upbringing and education” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 1) or “domestic transmission and scholarly culture” (Fowler, 1997, p. 47). Artistic competence, the aesthetic disposition, or the individual accumulation of cultural capital “is the result of a long process of inculcation which begins (or not) in the family, often in conformity with its level of economic, academic and cultural capital, and is reinforced by the educational

system. It also involves prolonged exposure to works of art” (Johnson, 1993, p. 23).

Thus the “two modalities of cultural competence” are “inherited capital,” which comes from individuals experience within their family, and “acquired capital,” which comes from individual effort in higher education. From these intra-family and extra-familial social interactions individuals acquire cultural capital is the derivative result.

Cultural capital is also instrumentally involved in specific social interactions that Bourdieu calls conversions and reproduction strategies in the social space. On the one hand, *conversions* change capital “held in one form to another, more accessible, more profitable or more legitimate form” and “tends to induce a transformation of asset structure” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 131). Cultural capital is transformed into economic capital such that “the volume and composition of capital give specific form and value to the determinations which the other factors (age, sex, place of residence etc.) impose on practices” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 107).<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, *reproduction strategies* are “the set of outwardly very different practices whereby individuals or families tend, unconsciously or consciously, to maintain or improve their position in the class structure” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 125). Individually acquired cultural capital thus begins to materialize in social life through conversions and reproduction strategies.

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<sup>9</sup> Frow (1995) argues that Bourdieu’s conversion argument is “incomplete”: “In the first place because the conversion of capitals can take place only under certain conditions and at certain restricted levels of the market, and in the second place because conversion is not reciprocal (it is possible to convert cultural into economic capital, but not vice versa)” (p. 40). Bourdieu anticipated such a criticism and offers the following rebuttal: “‘Economic’ capital cannot guarantee the specific profits offered by the field—and by the same token the ‘economic’ profits that they will often bring in time—unless it is reconverted into symbolic capital” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 148).



Conversions and reproduction strategies occur along trajectories in social life.

*Trajectories* are the “volume and structure of capital, defined synchronically and diachronically,” and result from family influences and reflexively the trajectory itself:

The correlation between a practice and social origin (measured by the father’s position, the real value of which may have suffered a decline concealed by constant nominal value) is the resultant of two effects (which may either reinforce or offset each other): on the one hand, the inclusion effect of directly exerted by the family or the original conditions of existence; on the other hand, the specific effect of social trajectory, that is, the effects of social rise or decline on dispositions and opinions, position of origin being, in this logic, merely the starting point of a trajectory, the reference whereby the slope of the social career is defined (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 111).

The result is a three-dimensional space for the conditions of production of habitus consisting of (1) the volume of capital, (2) composition of capital, and (3) change in these two properties over time (manifested by past and potential trajectory in social space)” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 114). Bourdieu thus attempts to hypostatize cultural capital through the conversion and reproduction strategies of cultural capital along trajectories in the social space.

It now should be evident that Bourdieu never intended that his conception of cultural capital be construed in any technical sense of modern economics. In fact, Bourdieuan cultural capital might not even be economic. Rather, Bourdieu’s conception of cultural capital seems to be reaching back to its etymological roots in the Latin *caput*, which can mean life, existence, rights, or status.<sup>10</sup> As Fowler (1994) observes, Bourdieuan cultural capital is a pre-capitalist notion that does not necessarily relate to the modern sense of economic capital or even Marxian creation of capital

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<sup>10</sup> Some Ciceronian examples illustrate this meaning of *caput*: (a) *capiti diminui*—to lose *caput*, to suffer a loss of status; *capitis minor*—loss of *caput*, status.

through surplus value (*contra* Beasley-Murray): “For the rest, the major motivation is the acquisition of symbolic capital. This is not unrelated to power or even material class advantages, but it is independent of surplus extraction via market or industrial profit” (p. 136). Therefore, Bourdieuan cultural capital refers to individual power, legitimacy, and distinction in the social space.

Bourdieu, then, is using cultural capital in another Marxian sense: Capital as a social relation. For Marx, “capital is not a thing, but rather a definite set of social relations which belong to a definite historical period in human development, and which give the things enmeshed within these social relations their specific content” (Shaikh, 1990, p. 73). Marxian capital in this sense is the objectification of the relations between the capitalists and laborers, or what Bourdieu terms “objectified cultural capital” in his tripartite typology. Marx writes in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* (1888/1988) [*sic*]:

In proportion as the bourgeoisie, i.e., capital, is developed, in the same proportion is the proletariat, the modern working class, develop—a class of labourers, who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. (p. 60; sic)

Syllogistically, Marx concludes: “Capital, therefore, is not a personal, it is a social power” (p. 68). Further, just as cultural habitus and cultural capital are intimately related in Bourdieu through conversions and reproduction strategies, class and capital relate to each in Marx’s conceptualization of the capitalist epoch: “The reproduction of any given society in turn requires not only the reproduction of its people, but also of the things they need for their existence, and of the social relations which surround both people and things” (Shaikh, 1990, p. 73). Individual power, legitimacy, domination through social

relations—these are the objectification of Bourdieuan cultural capital via a Marxian maieutic. Therefore, Bourdieu’s economistic conception of cultural capital refers not to the means of production or a process in time; rather, it refers to social interaction.

**Micro-Macro Linkages:  
A Socio-Economic Model of the Instrumentalization of the Arts**

Recent theoretical work in sociology has developed micro-macro linkages to bi-directionally connect micro-level phenomena to macro-level phenomena. Previously, reductionism was the most common theoretical move between multi-level phenomena, and it still remains popular. Reductionism, particular *economic* reductionism, has always been controversial. But now, Alexander and Giesen (1987) assert, “the conflict over reduction is replaced by the search for linkage” (p. 3). Unfortunately, micro-macro linkages have not completely replaced reductionism, but they offer a tempting theoretical alternative. And, more to the point, micro-macro linkages might provide a useful theoretical device for connecting Bourdieu’s micro-level conception of cultural capital to Throsby’s macro-level conception of cultural capital in a socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts.

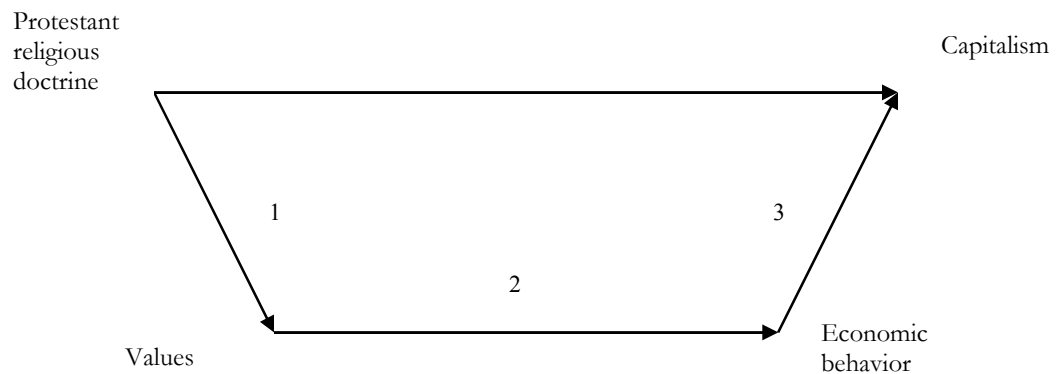
An important possible criticism must first be addressed. It might reasonably be argued that cultural capital in conjunction with Bourdieu’s concept of field might itself encompass a macro conception of cultural capital, thus obviating Throsby’s cultural capital being offered here. Consider, for example, the following rendering that seems to strongly argue for a micro-macro connection within Bourdieuan theory, which Bourdieu himself seems to intimate in “The Market of Symbolic Goods” (1993c), when he distinguishes “the field of restricted production” (i.e., high art) vs. “field of large-scale

cultural production” (i.e., popular art) (p. 115). Based on the Bourdieu’s formula in *Distinction* (1984, p. 101) that *practice = [(habitus) (capital)] + field*, Grenfell and Hardy (2007) correctly map the relation between field and habitus: “On the one side, there is the cognitive construction of reality (habitus) by those whose total actions make up the field; on the other, there is a structured world of sense and meaning, which is already representing the ‘immanent logic,’ indeed necessity, of that field” (p. 29). Yet, even in this rendering, we can see that it is still the habitus is still the generative force in the relationship. The habitus supplies the content on the field’s “immanent logic;” therefore, it is still a subjective, micro conceptualization. Throsby’s conceptualization contains no such subjective, micro link. Throsbeian cultural capital is exogenously constituted, while Bourdieu’s cultural capital is endogenously constituted.

The socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts linking Throsby’s and Bourdieu’s conceptions of cultural capital rests on Coleman’s micro-macro interpretation of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Coleman, 1987, 1994). As shown in Fig. x below, Coleman describes his interpretation as the “internal analysis of system behavior” that is useful for “examining processes internal to the system, involving component parts, or units at a level below that of the system” (Coleman, 1994, p. 2). The kind of behavior Coleman’s model is appropriate for is emergent behavior (i.e., Weberian methodological individualism), not aggregated behavior: “The interaction among individuals is seen to result in emergent phenomena at the system level, that is, phenomena that were neither intended nor predicted by the individuals” (Coleman, 1994, p. 5). Coleman’s model seems particularly promising by

framing the Throsbeian macro-level cultural capital as the “emergent phenomena” from the Bourdieuan micro-level cultural capital, thus connecting the two conceptions.

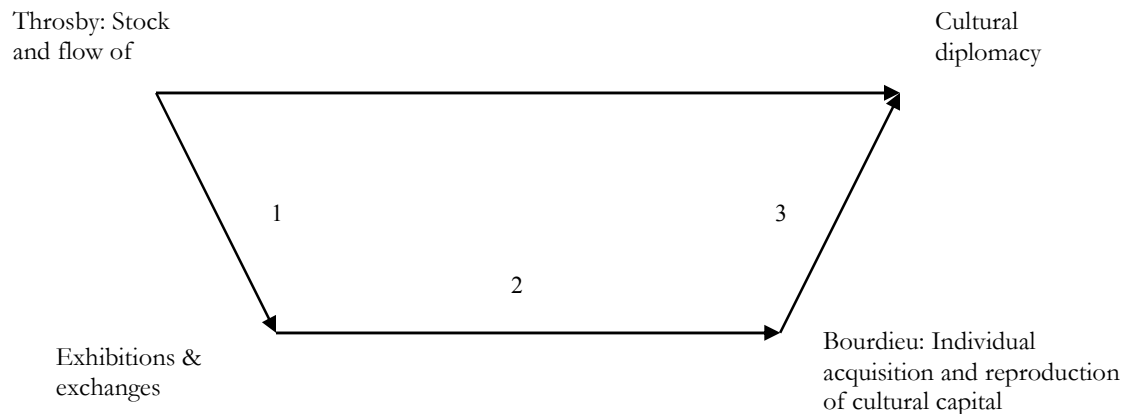
Figure 2: Coleman-Weber model of Protestant religious doctrine determining capitalist economic organization



The key to Coleman-Weber model framework is that, as Julia Gricheva (2010) notes in terms of cultural diplomacy, a state’s interest is primarily concerned with the “high arts, as opposed to popular culture and mass cultural products... Art always has been an expression of national cultures and traditions, which is why arts play such an important role in the cultural diplomacy practices” (p. 171). And the notion of the high arts as the “expression of national cultures and traditions” very closely approximates Throsby’s economic conceptualization of cultural capital. This is the stock of cultural capital that, on the one hand, flows at the macro level into cultural diplomacy because these are the objects that represent a nation and its traditions. On the other hand, this stock and flow of cultural capital also fits into the “augmented public access to art” (Kammen, 2006, p. xi) and around the world. Bourdieu’s sociological conceptualization of cultural capital, then, fits into the framework at the micro level. As people experience

art, they acquire and reproduce cultural capital, feeding into the aims of cultural diplomacy. Art has therefore been instrumentalized in this cultural-capital framework as it serves the state’s interests at both the micro and macro levels. In the U.S., it was assumed that “art and artists would serve the needs of country in terms of propaganda and international public relations” (Wallis, 2002, p. 171). These four nodes together constitute a socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts.

Figure 3: A socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts based on Bourdieu’s and Throsby’s conceptualizations of cultural capital



### Conclusion

Again, I must insist that this socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts is a descriptive – not a normative – model of how the state uses the arts to support and promote its interests. Bourdieu, Throsby, and most of all Plato, most likely would have unfavorable reactions to their ideas on cultural capital and the arts being used in this way. But the socio-economic model does not seek to justify the state’s use of art or instruct on how to use art; rather, it demonstrates how the state uses the arts to advance its interests. The strength of Throsby’s conception of cultural capital at the macro level of

cultural phenomena is his identification of an existing stock of tangible and intangible cultural capital that characterizes any modern culture, such as historical buildings, works of art, public rituals, and shared beliefs. The weakness of Throsby's conception is its exogeneity. Throsby's conception of cultural capital does not address questions such as, where does cultural capital come from? How is it maintained? How is it acquired and used in individual interactions? Most of answers to these questions can only be answered at the level of social interaction, which is precisely the strength of Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital. In Bourdieu's concept, individuals either inherit or acquire cultural capital and then employ it in conversions and reproduction strategies to improve their position-takings in the social space. Throsby's conception also strengthens Bourdieu's as the individual use of Bourdieuan cultural capital presumes that a larger, society-wide stock of cultural capital exists to develop the aesthetic disposition on the individual level. If a stock of cultural capital consisting of historical buildings, works of art, public rituals, and shared beliefs did not exist, then individuals could not achieve distinction. Throsby's and Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital thus form a micro-macro dichotomy that lies at the heart of this socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts.

The instrumentalization of the arts invokes Foucault's notion of "governmentality." To Foucault, the modern state subsumes most everything to its interests:

It is the tactics of government which make possible the continual definition and redefinition of what is within the competence of the state and what is not, the public versus the private, and so on; thus the state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality. (Foucault, 1991, p. 103)

If governmentality predominates in the modern state to ensure the state's survival, then the instrumentalization of the arts to serve its interests represents a logical relationship between politics and the arts. Indeed, as Tony Bennett writes of nineteenth-century Great Britain, "the mechanisms through which culture was distributed entailed both its bureaucratisation and its subordination to a utilitarian calculus" (Bennett, 1995, p. 884). Governmentality and the state's instrumentalization of the arts could result in relatively benign applications (e.g., Shockley, 2004). Or it could lead to nefarious uses of the arts. Bennett (2000) demonstrates how the British state utilization of the arts as a civilizing agent to regulate the poor and maintain order. Governmentality and the instrumentalization of the arts to a large degree must have motivated the Nazi's "degenerate art" exhibitions in order to protect what Max Nordau called in 1892 "the vanishing of ideals in art" (Nordau, 1998, p. 799) and to preserve the "long anti-modern tradition" in German culture (Nicholas, 1994, p. 7). The didacticism of Soviet socialist realism also involved the government's instrumentalization of the arts. "The truthfulness and historical concreteness of the artistic portrayal," Andrei Zhdanov said in his 1934 speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers, "should be combined with the ideological remoulding and education of the toiling people in the spirit of socialism" (Zhdanov, 2003, p. 428). Lee (1997) and Brustein (1992) found hints of socialist realism in governments' relations to the arts in Anglo-American culture. "Once subsidized artistic activity becomes subject to government manipulation, we resemble the official culture of Stalinist Russia" (Brustein, 1992, p. 43). In its more malignant forms, governmentality and the instrumentalization of the arts compromises art and leaves it "committed," to borrow Adorno's pejorative term (see Adorno, 1982).



CHAPTER 3  
CONGRESSIONAL AESTHETICS AND SINO-AMERICAN CULTURAL  
DIPLOMACY

An implicit agreement underlay postwar government support for the arts in the United States: the federal government would support the arts, but it would do so only if the arts were useful for American foreign policy. This implicit agreement based on the instrumentalization of the arts I call “congressional aesthetics.” An exemplar of congressional aesthetics for the federal government is the case of Sino-American cultural diplomacy in the Cold War. Both to China and the US, the arts were instrumentalized as cultural capital in their largely successful efforts in cultural policy in the 1950s. Michael Sullivan asserts in his seminal book *The Meeting of Eastern and Western Art* (1989) that East-West encounters in art have been occurring for half of a millennium: “The active dialogue between Western and Far Eastern art began after 1500 [and in many instances developed into] an active, generative force” (p. 4). Catholic missionaries initiated the first contact: “The Jesuits formed the spearhead of European cultural penetration of China, as they did in Japan” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 41). Howard Rogers narrates the case of Giuseppe Castiglione, the Jesuit missionary to China in the early seventeenth century. Renamed Lang Shining by the Qianlong emperor, Castiglione was a painter in service to the Qing court. “The function of court painters was, in a general sense, to make manifest and to consecrate the glory of the emperor and his reign” (Rogers, 1988, p. 154). The Qianlong emperor especially preferred Castiglione/Lang for the “verisimilitude of Lang’s painting” and for his knowledge of Western architecture styles (Rogers, 1988, p. 154). However, “Lang was not motivated by purely aesthetic goals and artistic concerns. His

sole purpose in serving the emperor so assiduously was of course to further the goals of the Jesuit mission in China” (Rogers, 1988, p. 157). Thus Castiglione/Lang in the Qing court was in service to both the Christian faith and the Qianlong emperor in this early East-West encounter.

East-West encounters also occurred in the twentieth century. In fact, Chinese communism is the product of an East-encounter as China borrowed “Western ideologies to serve Chinese revolutionary ends” (Meisner, 1986, p. 3). From China’s perspective, “Marxism was seen as the most advanced intellectual product of the modern West, but one that rejected the Western world in its capitalist form and its imperialist relationship with China” (Meisner, 1986, p. 18). The origin of the Chinese Communist Party can be traced to the general intellectual ferment of early twentieth-century China and the May Fourth incident<sup>11</sup> of 1919. At this historical moment, “a portion of the Chinese intelligentsia began to turn to the example of the Russian Revolution and the Marxist promise of worldwide revolutionary transformation” (Meisner, 1986). The Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s would demonstrate that China, not the imperialist Soviet Union, was the true home Marxism. “It was assumed that the success of socialism in China, to be ensured and demonstrated by the success of the Cultural Revolution, would serve as the model and stimulus for successful socialist revolutions elsewhere” (Meisner, 1986, p. 398). This East-West encounter took the form of Chinese appropriation of Marxism such that Mao’s Cultural Revolution would make China more Marxist than the

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<sup>11</sup> On May 4, 1919, over 3,000 university students protested certain provisions in the Versailles peace conference ending the Great War “to transfer the former German imperialist concessions in Shantung province to Japan as war booty” (Meisner, 1986, p. 17).

West. “A socialist China would thus become the ‘revolutionary homeland’” (Meisner, 1986, p. 398).

It is perhaps surprising that both of these East-West encounters – Castiglione/Lang in the Qing court and the Chinese appropriation of Marxism – are forms of cultural diplomacy. All forms of diplomacy concern “engaging foreign audiences” (Finn, 2003) in the words or “the formal interaction of states” (Chang, 2011). *Cultural* diplomacy, however, is a special case of diplomacy in which...

art is itself a medium, a platform that can serve to advance dialogue across various sorts of boundaries rooted in traditions, beliefs, social practices, geographies, times, and values. Art is an avenue of cultural exchange and interaction. And specific works of art can themselves embody those very conversations, with the creation of the new, unexpected, and arresting. (Chang, 2011, p. 139)

The instrumentalization of art is the essence of cultural diplomacy. Castiglione/Lang in the Qing court introduced Western painting techniques to China to facilitate his primary work as a Jesuit missionary ministering to China. In Chang’s words, Castiglione/Lang’s cultural diplomacy resulted in the “creation of the new, unexpected, and arresting” in Chinese art. The Chinese appropriation of Marxism is no less cultural diplomacy, though possibly not as obvious. In Chang’s words, the art of Karl Marx “serve[d] to advance dialogue across various sorts of boundaries rooted in traditions, beliefs, social practices, geographies, times, and values.” The appropriation of Marxism, however, is distinct from Soviet socialist realism in which artists and art were called directly to serve the state. As Andrei Zhdanov said in his 1934 speech to the Congress of Soviet Writers: “Comrade Stalin has called our writers engineers of the human souls...it means knowing life so as to be able to depict it truthfully in works of art, not to depict it in a dead,

scholastic way, not simply as ‘objective reality,’ but to depict reality in its revolutionary development” (Zdhanov, 2003, p. 427).

My purpose in Chapter 2 is to examine the successful instrumentalization of the arts in Sino-American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. Roughly falling between the late 1940s in the wake of World War II and 1989 (i.e., the fall of the Berlin Wall), the Cold War is portrayed in general terms as the epic struggle between democracy and communism, or the USA/Western Europe vs. the Soviet Union/China/Eastern Europe. The eminent Cold War historian John Gaddis (2005) quotes President Ronald Reagan drawing Cold War lines in his speech at Notre Dame University on May 17, 1981: “The West won’t contain communism, it will transcend communism. It won’t bother to...denounce it, it will dismiss it as some bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written” (p. 223). The medium of modern art was instrumental in the cultural diplomacy of both sides. As art historian Claudia Mesch puts it: “During the Cold War both the US and the Soviet States used modern art as a means of persuading a world public of their new global identification with one or another side of the conflict, either US-style democracy or Soviet-style State socialism” (Mesch, 2013, p. 4). China, however, had an interesting role in the Cold War because it was not fully aligned with either side. After World War II, China’s contact with the West quickly disappeared as the Kuomintang regime collapsed. China’s isolation continued in its art through the Cultural Revolution. “The Cultural Revolution severed all China’s remaining artistic contacts with the West” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 190). But, to China, the Soviet Union’s invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 was evidence of its imperialism and the impurity of its Marxism, though the “Sino-Soviet split” probably started appearing a

decade earlier. “The Chinese Communists first place Soviet ‘social imperialism’ on a footing with American imperialism, both principal enemies of the oppressed nationals and of China” (Meisner, 1986, p. 399). Soon after the Cultural Revolution began, however, China’s emerging foreign policy and global economic strategy “defined the Soviet Union as the principal enemy, and correspondingly, dictated a tactical accommodation with the United States” (Meisner, 1986, p. 400). And the Chinese arts and cultural diplomacy became vital in China’s efforts. Thus both Chinese and American cultural diplomacy satisfy congressional aesthetics of putting the arts in serving the interests of the state. I apply the socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts developed in Chapter 2 to examine Sino-American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.

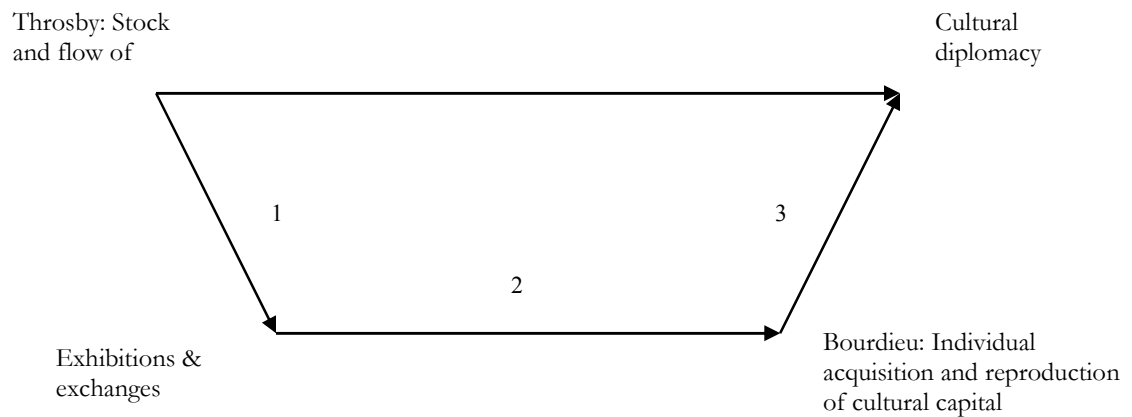
### **A Socio-Economic Model of the Instrumentalization of the Arts**

The socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts linking Throsby’s and Bourdieu’s conceptions of cultural capital is developed in Chapter 2. Here I will only summarize the end-result. The model rests on Coleman’s micro-macro interpretation of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Coleman, 1987, 1994). Coleman describes his interpretation as the “internal analysis of system behavior” that is useful for “examining processes internal to the system, involving component parts, or units at a level below that of the system” (Coleman, 1994, p. 2). The kind of behavior Coleman’s model is appropriate for is emergent behavior (i.e., Weberian methodological individualism), not aggregated behavior: “The interaction among individuals is seen to result in emergent phenomena at the system level, that is,

phenomena that were neither intended nor predicted by the individuals” (Coleman, 1994, p. 5). Coleman’s model seems particularly promising by framing the Throsbeian macro-level cultural capital as the “emergent phenomena” from the Bourdieuan micro-level cultural capital, thus connecting the two conceptions.

The Coleman-Weber model is particularly instructive in providing a descriptive cultural-capital framework for understanding the operation of cultural diplomacy. The key to this framework is that, as Julia Gricheva (2010) notes, cultural diplomacy is primarily concerned with the “high arts, as opposed to popular culture and mass cultural products... Art always has been an expression of national cultures and traditions, which is why arts play such an important role in the cultural diplomacy practices” (p. 171). And the notion of the high arts as the “expression of national cultures and traditions” very closely approximates Throsby’s economic conception of cultural capital. This is the stock of cultural capital that, on the one hand, flows at the macro level into cultural diplomacy because these are the objects that represent a nation and its traditions. On the other hand, this stock and flow of cultural capital also fits into the most common types of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War: exhibitions and exchanges. Bourdieu’s sociological conception of cultural capital, then, fits into the framework at the micro level. As people from the host countries (i.e., hosting the exhibitions and exchanges) visit the exhibitions and/or interact with artists during exchanges, they acquire and reproduce cultural capital, feeding into the aims of cultural diplomacy. Cultural capital has therefore been instrumentalized in this cultural-capital framework as it serves and supports cultural diplomacy at both the micro and macro levels.

Figure 4: A socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts based on Bourdieu's and Throsby's conceptualizations of cultural capital



### Chinese Cultural Capital and Cultural Diplomacy

Chinese cultural capital almost did not develop in the twentieth century. A startling fact about modern Chinese history is that in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, Chinese cultural traditions were viewed negatively as a problem and impediment to the nation's development, not something to preserve and integral to national identity. "The tendency was to discard traditional values and culture as unsuitable for China's survival, and later to condemn them as the source of China's problems" (Meisner, 1986, p. 12). Moreover, in an ironic East-Western encounter, Chinese traditions and values were viewed within China as inferior to the West's. Meisner (1986) identifies two iconoclastic strains. First, "the values necessary for national strength in the modern world were to be sought in the wisdom of Western theories and ideologies, which had provided foreign powers with their economic and political predominance" (Meisner, 1986, p. 13). Second, "the necessity to discard traditional Chinese beliefs and values that could not serve the overriding interests of

political power” (Meisner, 1986, p. 13). Chinese traditions and culture, which is the stuff out of which cultural capital in a Throsbeian sense is made, was not valued and developed in fin-de-siècle China.

Although the art of calligraphy has always persisted and some Chinese painters continued to work in ink, Mao Tse-tung and the Cultural Revolution in the late 1960s revived an interest in the Chinese traditions and culture. Mao “made it clear that traditional forms need not be abandoned; what had to be changed was the attitude of social and intellectual exclusiveness...” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 188). In his *Yenan Talks on Literature and Art* in 1942, Chairman Mao reversed the relative value of Chinese culture vis-à-vis Western culture by “making foreign things serve China”:

In theory, any Western art form might be adopted, or adapted, to meet China’s needs, while the use of the word *serve* showed that the foreign element, however important, would always be considered as the offering of an inferior, just as the gifts brought by foreign ambassadors were always regarded as ‘tribute.’ (Sullivan, 1989, p. 188; emphasis in the original)

Mao seemed to have understood the difference between, in James Cuno’s (2008) words, *culture* and *national culture*. “The former has always been porous, constantly evolving and dynamic human creation, the result of numerous and endless influences from generations of contact with ‘foreign’ people” (Cuno, 2008, p. 92). The latter, however, “is always a political construction. It is a fixed concept coincident with the cultural identity the nation’s ruling forces claim for themselves and the nation” (Cuno, 2008, p. 92). And the latter – national culture – that chairman Mao privileged over the former. It was at precisely this moment that Chinese cultural capital began to form (the north-west angle of Figure 2). It should be remembered, however, that Maoist China remained culturally and artistically isolated as it was to be the Marxist “revolutionary homeland.”



“Chinese national isolation during the cultural revolution...was undertaken in the name of ‘proletarian internationalism’” (Meisner, 1986, p. 398).

It was therefore only after Mao that China commenced in earnest its efforts in Cold-War cultural diplomacy (the north-east angle of Figure 4), which would be significantly later than the USA, as will be seen below. In the 1950s and 1960s, China conducted cultural diplomacy in Latin America (see Ratliff, 1969) as well as in Eastern Europe based on the works of Qi Baishi. But the formation of Chinese cultural capital begun under Mao developed rapidly with the Chinese economy: “Chinese interest in protecting and preserving cultural relics, and cultural property generally, has increased coincident with the nation’s economic development” (Cuno, 2008, p. 97). Moreover, China began to see the advantages of instrumentalizing its cultural capital in cultural diplomacy as...

Sino-Soviet leaders utilize the exchange of information, ideas, persons, and culture as a systematic and unified arm of foreign policy. . . . Activities which for democratic societies are basically uncontrolled are within the Soviet-style framework an essential ingredient of foreign relations and the conduct of diplomacy. (Walker, 1969, p. 45)

The Forbidden City exhibitions that toured the world to be discussed immediately below exemplify Chinese post-Mao, Cold War cultural diplomacy (Naquin, 2004, p. 365). Two other examples of Chinese cultural diplomacy during the Cold War – the cultural exchange of Zhang Shuqi and *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People’s Republic of China* at two venues in the USA – are also discussed.

## **Examples of Chinese cultural diplomacy during the Cold War.**

### **1. *The Forbidden City exhibitions.***

The Forbidden City exhibitions, the first of which was sent to Japan in 1974 (Naquin, 2004, p. 345), exemplified China's post-Mao cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. Susan Naquin, whose article "The Forbidden City Goes Abroad: Qing History and the Foreign Exhibitions of the Palace Museum, 1974-2004" (2004) provides most of the material for this section, contextualizes China's cultural diplomacy: "The story of the Beijing Palace Museum's Forbidden City foreign exhibitions reveals how, in the context of an expanding web of bilateral diplomatic relations, a repertory of objects was progressively refined and used to introduce Chinese history and cultural to the West" (Naquin, 2004, p. 345). These exhibitions that toured the West derived from China's nascent cultural capital.

Building on the established prestige of ancient Chinese artifacts, these exhibitions not only celebrated China's involvement with the non-communist world, they reasserted its claims to being a great and venerable civilization and they associated the Maoist government with the preservation of China's cultural heritage. (Naquin, 2004, p. 343)

Instead of being an impediment to China's modernization, China's rich traditions and culture as embodied in the cultural capital on display Forbidden City exhibitions could serve the purpose of promoting China to the West. "Through tourism and these high profile Palace Museum shows, the Forbidden City, whether as the Cidade Proibida, Cité Interdite, Shikinjō, Verbotene Stadt, Verboden Stad, was now a familiar symbol of China" (Naquin, 2004, p. 356).

The Forbidden City exhibitions thus instrumentalized China's developing cultural capital. Exhibition visitors from the host countries could acquire and reproduce the

cultural capital embodied in the objects (the south-east angle of Figure 4). Thirty-three Palace Museum exhibitions of between 70 and 120 items travelled abroad from 1974 through 2004 in 13 countries plus Hong Kong and Macao: Seven to Europe (for a total of 25 months), seven to Japan (36 months), four to Hong Kong, and five to the USA (48 months) (Naquin, 2004, pp. 364-365). There was a “formulaic” Forbidden City exhibition (see Figure 4):

Past emperors were embodied in two imperial seals and a bright gold dragon robe, but the centerpiece was a ‘throne’...from one of the palace halls. A variety of expensive objects—bowls and boxes of cloisonné lacquer, enamelware, and jade—exemplified eighteenth century ‘craftsmanship.’ A few Ming bowls and paintings were outnumbered by examples of Qing porcelain and court paintings. A long handscroll illustrated the 1751 birthday celebration of the mother of the Qianlong emperor... (Naquin, 2004, p. 346)

The most common themes of exhibitions included “a world of ceremony and ritual [that] revolved around the Emperor,’ the creative genius and technical virtuosity...of thousands of anonymous artisans, and friendship and cultural exchange” with, for example, the Chinese people who lived in the U.S. when the exhibitions were held there (Naquin, 2004, p. 361).<sup>12</sup> There were many other Chinese archaeological exhibitions that complemented the Forbidden City exhibitions, such as *Great Bronze Age of China* at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City in 1980.

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<sup>12</sup> There were shifts in exhibition themes from 1974 to 2004 “toward a great appreciation of court life, Central Asian elements in Qing culture, China’s links with Europe, and the cultural richness of the Qianlong reign” (Naquin, 2004, p. 379)

Figure 5. A “formulaic” Forbidden City exhibition. [Imperial Throne for Qing Qianlong (1736-1795)]



## **2. *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People’s Republic of China.***

Another post-Mao exhibition similar to the Forbidden City exhibitions was *The Exhibition of Archaeological Finds of the People’s Republic of China (Archaeological Finds)* at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC (1974-5) and the Nelson Gallery-Atkins Museum, Kansas City, Missouri (1975). The exhibition catalog reads:

A few years ago, word reached this country of the recent extraordinary archaeological discoveries that had been made throughout the People’s Republic of China—finds that were not only of great archaeological interest but often of incomparable beauty. These exceptional objects, spanning some 600,000 years of China’s past, are now being shown in the Capital and subsequently in Kansas City. (Boutoun, Amussen, & Warwick, 1974, p. 11)

As in the Forbidden City exhibitions, visitors to *Archaeological Finds* can acquire and reproduce the cultural capital embodied in the objects (the south-east angle of Figure 2). This exhibition was sent to America at the same time as the Forbidden City was first sent to Japan and most likely shared the same cultural-capital aims described by Naquin for the Forbidden City exhibitions as “building on the established prestige of ancient Chinese artifacts,” “celebrat[ing] China’s involvement with the non-communist world,” and “reassert[ing China’s] claims to being a great and venerable civilization and they associated the Maoist government with the preservation of China’s cultural heritage. (Naquin, 2004, p. 343). In other words, *Archaeological Finds* instrumentalized cultural capital to serve China’s cultural diplomacy (see Figure 4 for the cover image of the exhibition catalog).

Figure 6. Cover image from the *Archaeological Finds of the People’s Republic of China* exhibition catalog.



Figure 6. Bronze Galloping Horse was unearthed in 1969 in the Leitai Tomb of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220 A.D.) in Wuwei County, Gansu Province. The bronze statue is a famous representative sculpture of the Han Dynasty.

### 3. *Zhang Shuqi.*

The artist Zhang Shuqi sent from China on a cultural exchange to the United States in the early part of World War II. Cultural exchange represents an interesting form of cultural diplomacy in which it is not inanimate objects that embody cultural capital but rather a living artist who represents as well as possesses the cultural capital in his person and his craft (the north-west angle of Figure 4). Moreover, the artist can stimulate the acquisition of cultural capital in those with whom he or she interacts (the south-east angle of Figure 4). The artist himself or herself can also acquire cultural capital (also the south-east angle of Figure 4). “As with a civilization,” Sullivan writes, “whether or not an artist responds voluntarily to the challenge of an alien form, style or technique depends ultimately on whether it fulfils a need for him” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 274).

The story of Zhang Shuqi’s cultural exchange with the USA is an interesting one [most of this section is derived from Gordon Chang’s 2011 article “Chinese Painting Comes to America: Zhang Shuqi and the Diplomacy of Art” ]. One of the most interesting features of Zhang’s cultural exchange is that it transcends communism: Zhang’s cultural diplomacy predates Chinese communism but continues through it. In the fall of 1941, China sent Zhang with a diplomatic visa to the USA to follow his popular painting *Messengers of Peace* (1940; Figure 7), which reportedly was first hung in the White House after its initial acceptance and then permanently displayed in the exhibition hall of the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York, where it remains today (Chang, 2011, p. 132). Zhang’s mission was one of cultural diplomacy as his exchange was “to introduce Chinese culture to the American people and promote friendship in what quickly became a common cause after

Japan's December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor" (Chang, 2011, p. 132). Unable to return to China after the Pearl Harbor attack, he stayed for five more years. Zhang "helped to bring Chinese painting to America. He brought not just paintings as objects—which museums had long held, elite patrons admired, and scholars had studied. Under the exigencies of global conflict, he brought Chinese painting as event, as activity, and as something accessible to a broad spectrum of Americans." (Chang, 2011, p. 146).

Figure 7. Zhang Shuqi, *Messengers of Peace* (also known as *A Hundred Doves*), 1940. Ink and color on silk mounted on paper, 64 × 140 in. Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library and Museum, Hyde Park, NY



In addition to embodying Chinese cultural capital, Zhang also embodied the East-West encounter as he "was a serious artist who constantly studied both Chinese and Western art texts and paintings..." (Chang, 2011, p. 133). Despite the allures of "Western notions of abstraction," Zhang "never broke with representational painting [in

which he was] so skillful with the Chinese brush” or Chinese naturalism (Chang, 2011, p. 133). (See Figure 6.) While *Birds and Sunflower* evokes the impasto of Van Gogh’s sunflowers, “Zhang also employs the vigorous use of black ink calligraphic brush strokes. The rendering of the flowers, in contrast, is accomplished...with thick, layered pigment that may recall the impasto of western oil paints.” (Chang, 2011, pp. 133-134). As part of his cultural exchange Zhang included live demonstrations of him producing his work: “Many things intrigued his American audiences at the demonstrations, including his unusual handling of materials, especially the brush, the application of paints, and his composition” (Chang, 2011, p. 136). Zhang thus stimulated the acquisition and reproduction of cultural capital (the south-east angle of Figure 2).

Figure 8. Zhang Shuqi, *Birds and Sunflower*, hanging scroll, ink and color on paper, 1941. 41.7 x 23.2 in.





## **American Cultural Capital and Cultural Diplomacy**

Cultural capital developed in the USA – coincidentally, the land of capitalism – much earlier than in China. In fact, unlike China’s nineteenth when its traditions and culture were negatively perceived as impediments to advancement, the USA actively and entrepreneurially engaged in cultural-capital formation during its industrialization in the nineteenth century. The American cultural sociologist Paul DiMaggio (1986a) writes that “cultural capitalists” were responsible for the classification of high and popular art and its institutionalization (p. 43). Also known as the “Boston Brahmins,” these individuals promoted for cultural-spatial formation in both the Throsbeian and Bourdieuan senses (both the upper-west and lower-east angles of Figure 2). American capital also transferred European culture capital to the USA. Elsewhere DiMaggio (2000) writes of the cultural-capital accumulation in the USA:

Thus, it happened that by 1930 a particular selection of European artworks and styles was constituted as cultural capital in the United States-that is, it became hierarchically differentiated from other kinds of culture, symbolically potent, and universally acknowledged. (p. 44)

Not unlike China at least 50 years later, cultural capital in the USA developed simultaneously with the development of capitalism. This represents the institutionalization of cultural capital at the national level, “which entailed both near-universal apprehension (and acknowledgment as legitimate) of the scheme of classification of symbolic goods and the emergence of institutions with the cultural authority to sustain and regulate the currency” (DiMaggio, 2000, p. 42). It is important to note that government policies have contributed to the institutionalization of cultural capital in the USA (DiMaggio, 1986b, p. 205).

America also produced its own, indigenous cultural capital in form of abstract expressionism. Originating in the United States, abstract expressionism includes “Pollock, Soulages, Kline, for example, and sometimes Tobey and de Kooning, but not Rothko, Debuffet or Appel” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 3). While abstract expressionism originated in pre-war USA, it “in its many forms became a vital strand in contemporary art the world over” (Sullivan, 1989, p. 3). Under the auspices of critics such as Clement Greenberg (e.g., Greenberg, 1961a), American art of 1950s, particularly abstract expressionism, lent itself to instrumentalization. As “part of a general tendency in intellectual circles toward ‘objectivity,’” abstract expressionism separated art from politics and “perfectly served America's needs in the cold war” (Cockcroft, 1994, p. 89). For example, not only does the flatness of modernist art in a way render it packageable, but also its self-containment, or movement towards the “autonomous and irreducible in the medium or purely *of* the medium” (Sandler, 1996, p. 2), could be seen as almost commoditizing it. In this era of cultural-capital formation abstract expressionism “dominated because they were thought to best represent not only aesthetic excellence but also the free expression symbolic of American society, especially during the Cold War” (Binkiewicz, 2004, p. 112). In his famous essay “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (1961b), Greenberg traces the origins of art to bourgeois society: “In seeking to go beyond Alexandrianism [i.e., classicism], a part of Western bourgeois society has produced something unheard of heretofore: —avant-garde culture. A superior consciousness of history—more precisely, the appearance of a new kind of criticism of society, an historical criticism—made this possible” (p. 4). Greenberg was the quintessential critic with “a superior consciousness of history” who served as a potent catalyst in the further

development of abstract expressionism-based cultural capital in the USA (north-west angle of Figure 2).

The USA was equally precocious in cultural diplomacy during the Cold War. The federal government made a concerted effort to instrumentalize the stock of American cultural capital in the service of its cultural diplomacy. As Mesch (2013) puts it, “During the Cold War the US successfully deployed and (re)politicized the forms of dissenting modern art in order to promote its own goals with global, Cold War alliances” (Mesch, 2013, p. 5). “To put it in crass terms, art became a weapon in the cold war” from the Eisenhower administration onwards (Smith, 2008, p. 38). These early government efforts at cultural diplomacy were funded by the Central Intelligence Agency, for example, as well as the U.S. State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations (Finn, 2003, p. 15). American cultural diplomacy stood for democracy; its cultural diplomacy, then, was aimed at undermining communism. “Throughout the postwar era, desperate and disenfranchised young people in developing countries sought solace in communism. Rather than allowing this trend to continue unchecked, American officials mounted a determined, and ultimately successful, ideological campaign in response.” (Finn, 2003, p. 15). And the anticommunist was directed at the Chinese as well. “The U.S. State Department...found it politically expedient to include accounts of successfully assimilated Chinese Americans in Cold War narratives of race in the United States as evidence of the superiority of liberal democracy to communism” (Wu, 2008, p. 393). Cold War cultural diplomacy even influenced the establishment of the National Endowment for the Arts in 1965, the federal agency directly supporting the art in the USA. “One of the key assumptions here is that America, however much it might be

momentarily compromised by Cold War methods it was forced to adopt by the policies of the Soviet Union, is a country whose destiny is to exist in a state outside or beyond ideology. Another is that what guarantees Americans' access to this state is art."

(Brenson, 2001, p. 18) Below are discussed two crucial pieces of American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War: American exhibitions of abstract expressionism abroad as well as an instance of cultural exchange with China.

### **Examples of American Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War.**

#### **1. *Abstract Expressionism.***

Abstract expressionism was the center of American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War (north-west angle of Figure 2). Abstract expressionism was supposed to represent "the best and brightest hope of high culture in America" that could stand alongside European modernism (Binkiewicz, 2004, p. 98; Smith, 2008, p. 42). Indeed, Sullivan (1989) argues that Abstract expressionism was an East-West encounter unto itself: "...the movement that linked East and West was nonfigurative and based on the dynamic or calligraphic gesture, whether the hand that made the gesture held a brush or a dripping can" (Sullivan, 1989, p. 3). (See Figure 9.) The United States Information Agency (USIA), established in 1953, and the International Program (later in 1956 the International Council) of Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) took over the promotion of American modernism abroad by organized its traveling exhibitions of American high, such as *Twelve Modern American Painters and Sculptors* (1953), *Modern Art in the US* (1956), *The New American Painting* (1958-9), and *Jackson Pollock, 1912-1956* (1958-9). "It did then appear that by 1959 the US—that is to say New York's MoMA, in conjunction with the federal USIA—had in some ways 'stolen the idea of modern art'

from Europe, or had at least established itself for the first time as the major center of a progressive modernism in the West” (Mesch, 2013, p. 35). *The New American Painting* exhibition, for example, associated “Pollock’s style, along with that of the other abstract expressionist painters, with democracy” (Mesch, 2013, p. 35). Through the cultural diplomacy of these exhibitions the United States endeavored to stimulate the acquisition and reproduction of American cultural capital embodying American values in visitors at the micro level (south-west angle of Figure 4).

Figure 9. Franz Kline, *Cardinal*, 1950. Exhibited at *The New American Painting* (1958-9)



Figure 10. Installation view of *Twelve Modern American Painters and Sculptors*, Musée National d'Art Modern, Paris, 1953.



## 2. *Jade Snow Wong.*

Like China's cultural exchange of Zhang Shuqi with the United States, the United States also had cultural exchanges with China, such as that of Jade Snow Wong (Figure 9). [Most of this section is based on Ellen Wu's article "'America's Chinese': Anti-Communism, Citizenship, and Cultural Diplomacy during the Cold War" (2008).] "With the 'loss' of China to Mao Tse-tung in 1949, the State Department turned its attention to ethnic Chinese throughout Asia as a specific target audience for anti-communist propaganda campaigns" (Wu, 2008, p. 397). Wong was a Chinese-American artist (Figure 9) and writer (most famously the author of the book *Fifth Chinese Daughter*, 1945).

The State Department's decision to utilize Chinese Americans in its Cold War narrative of race and democracy in the United States also included sending Chinese Americans on cultural diplomacy tours of Asia in the 1950s. Anti-communism intersected with changing currents of American liberalism and an unprecedented salience of cultural pluralism, providing new opportunities for the legitimization of Chinese American citizenship and important bases for inclusion in the nation in the mid-twentieth century," such as writer and artist Jade Snow Wong. (Wu, 2008, p. 42)

Wong played her part as cultural diplomat perfectly as her "messages to her audiences throughout Asia celebrated the promises of liberal democracy and cultural pluralism in the United States." Her standard speech on tour in China sounded something like this:

Perhaps if I tell you of my early childhood, which was not so different from that of many other children born to immigrants in America, Asian or otherwise, and how such a ginning could grow into the miracle of standing before you now, I could somehow tell you the truth concerning America as I have known it. (Wu, 2008, p. 409)

As discussed above with respect to Zhang, the artists in cultural exchanges both embodied cultural capital (the north-west angle of Figure 2) and stimulated the acquisition and reproduction of cultural capital (the south-east angle of Figure 2).

Alluding to the artist's own acquisition of cultural capital, Sullivan (1989) observes: "Where East and West meet is in the mind of the artist himself, and the processes of acceptance and transformation depend ultimately on the choices he makes" (Sullivan, 1989, p. 274).

Figure 11. Jade Snow Wong at the ceramics wheel



## Conclusion

Congressional aesthetics maintains that the federal government would support the arts, but it would do so only if the arts were useful for the state's interests. An exemplar of congressional aesthetics is the case of Sino-American cultural diplomacy in the Cold War. From both the American and Chinese sides, art was instrumentalized to serve both states' endeavors in cultural diplomacy. The socio-economic model of the instrumentalization of the arts demonstrates how cultural diplomacy utilized American abstract expressionism, Chinese archaeological findings, and artist exchanges to promote their interests during the Cold War. Cultural diplomacy is primarily concerned with art that honorifically expresses nation's culture and traditions that very closely approximates Throsby's economic conception of cultural capital. This is the stock of cultural capital



that, on the one hand, flows at the macro level into cultural diplomacy because these are the objects that represent a nation and its traditions. On the other hand, this stock and flow of cultural capital also fits into the most common types of cultural diplomacy during the Cold War: exhibitions and exchanges. Bourdieu's sociological conception of cultural capital, then, fits into the framework at the micro level. As people from the host countries (i.e., hosting the exhibitions and exchanges) visit the exhibitions and/or interact with artists during exchanges, they acquire and reproduce cultural capital, feeding into the aims of cultural diplomacy. Cultural capital has therefore been instrumentalized in this cultural-capital framework as it serves and supports cultural diplomacy at both the micro and macro levels.

## CHAPTER 4

### CONGRESSIONAL AESTHETICS AND THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS IN THE 1990S

When Congress passed the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities National Endowment for the Arts (Public Law 89-209) in 1965, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was created to administer direct government support for the arts in the United States. An implicit agreement of “congressional aesthetics” underlay postwar government support for the arts in the U.S.: the federal government would support the arts, but it would do so only if the arts served the state’s interests. Chapter 2 demonstrated the exemplar of the congressional aesthetics, Sino-American cultural diplomacy during the Cold War that successfully instrumentalized the arts to promote both states’ interests. Created in this Cold War environment of successful congressional aesthetics, the NEA led a quiet, comfortable existence of modestly increasing appropriations from Congress for the first 25 years of its existence. Then, suddenly, the NEA became an epicenter of the culture wars in the late 1980s and early 1990s when the agency was associated with the support of art of Robert Mapplethorpe, Andres Serrano (Fig. x), then later in the 1990s the “NEA Four” of John Fleck, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and Karen Finley. These NEA controversies demonstrated how far the NEA had strayed from congressional aesthetics and broken that implicit agreement that art would serve the state’s interests. I argue in this chapter that the NEA controversies in the 1990s had its roots in failed congressional aesthetics.

The NEA’s failed congressional aesthetics and the successful congressional aesthetics of Sino-American cultural diplomacy derive in large part from the different

types of art produced in the 1950s and 1980s. Under the auspices of critics such as Clement Greenberg (e.g., Greenberg, 1961a), American art of 1950s lent itself to instrumentalization. By contrast, American art of the 1980s art under the auspices of critics such as Rosalind Krauss (e.g., Krauss, 1985) and the *October* group defied it. As art historian Irving Sandler (1996) puts it: “If the generative terms of the modernist paradigm were ‘autonomy’ and ‘quality,’ the competing term was ‘relevance,’ attained by confronting social issues or expressing the zeitgeist” (p. 4). “Autonomy” and “quality” bounded by two-dimensional flatness of abstract expressionism, for example, could be contained and controlled and thus instrumentalized while the social commentary and issue salience of 1980s art could not be. The “subversive complicity” of 1980s art, such as that of Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring (Pearlman, 2003, pp. 99-100), challenged and threatened mainstream culture (Pearlman, 2003, pp. 99-100) and thus could not instrumentalized for governmental ends. Art in the 1980s invoked social activism, identity politics, homosexuality, and AIDS – none of which could promote the state like Jackson Pollock painting. Moreover, the shift from painting in the 1950s to photography and similar Benjaminian reproducible mediums in subsequent decades also defied governmental instrumentalization. Critic Susan Sontag (1989) finds that photography is uncontrollable and uncontainable because “photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (Sontag, 1989, p. 23). The controversial works of Serrano and Mapplethorpe reveal the problem posed by photography to congressional aesthetics.

As a direct consequence of failing congressional aesthetics, the NEA became a bright “red” target for many political conservative members of Congress as well as the

public. In Wyszomirski's (1995b) words, the institutional environment of the NEA transmogrified from subgovernment into an issue network as many more political entities such as Congress suddenly started to watch the agency—and mostly did not like what they saw. The attention was unwelcomed as suddenly the federal agency was under constant and credible threats to its very existence through the mid-1990s, entering what Baumgartner and Jones (1991, 2002) term a policy “punctuation” in which the political environment around a policy becomes unstable (Shockley, 2011). At the very beginning of the tumult, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) said on the floor of Congress: “If Senators want the Federal Government funding pornography, sadomasochism, and art for pedophiles, they should vote against my amendment” to severely limit the kinds of art that could receive federal funding (quoted in Bolton, 1992, p. 4). Between 1990 and 1995 Rep. Robert Crane (R-IL) introduced legislation to eliminate the NEA at least once a year and sometimes twice (i.e., in 1993). Then Newt Gingrich and the Republican revolution of the 104th Congress struck, vowing to eliminate the agency under the Contract with America. Again in Wyszomirski's (1999) words, “Between 1989 and 1996, the level and significance of both internal dissonance and external change seriously disrupted the American arts policy system. A closer look reveals changes have been occurring in the character of the system's core values” (p. 27). Those core values implied congressional aesthetics. Unlike Sino-American cultural diplomacy, the NEA had failed congressional aesthetics. This chapter will detail NEA's failed to implement congressional aesthetics, both in the how the NEA developed as a federal agency as well as the evolution of the postmodern art world in which the NEA became enmeshed. I will conclude this chapter

with an analysis of the NEA controversies in the 1990s, which I argue is the consequence of the NEA's failed congressional aesthetics.

### **Congressional Aesthetics and the NEA's Early Years**

Congressional aesthetics, of the instrumentalization of the arts to serve the state's interests, arose by design in the United States after World War II. Even without the European traditions of government patronage of the arts (see Cummings Jr., 1991; Toepler, 2001; Townsend, 1985), government support for the arts in the US preceded the Cold War. The sterling example is the President Roosevelt's New Deal arts program managed by the Works Project Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. Using the arts to stimulate employment, Roosevelt's WPA arts program was "the largest art program ever in the world" employing approximately 40,000 artists and commissioning 1,371 murals (Cummings Jr., 1991). Ancillary federal programs also were important, such as the Federal Theater Project and the Federal Writers Project. The WPA in a way instrumentalized the arts by using them to provide jobs to Americans. The crucial difference between the WPA's instrumentalization of the arts and Sino-American (see Chapter 2) is that the former was not concerned with the content of the arts as was the latter. In the WPA program, the arts simply were another economic sector that needed Keynesian stimulus. In Sino-American cultural diplomacy, the arts themselves (abstract expressionism, archaeological objects) were put to work – instrumentalized – in service to the state. The instrumentalization of the arts in Sino-American cultural diplomacy is the exemplar of congressional aesthetics.

I maintain that congressional aesthetics was what Congress intended for the federal agency when they passed into law the National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities (NFAH; Public Law 89-209) amid President Johnson's Great Society programs in September 1965. Supporters of the legislation made two egalitarian arguments to justify direct government support for the arts: that artistic achievement should be available to all and that there should be a "funding equivalence" between science and art (Moen, 1997, pp. 186-187). "Other past legislation, such as the WPA art programs, was aimed at economic conditions of the artist," recalls Christopher Mark in *Reluctant Bureaucrats: The Struggle To Establish the National Endowment for the Arts* (1991), a first-hand account of the NEA's early years. "This legislation, broad as it was, recognized our cultural pursuits as a bonafide concern of the government" (Mark, 1991, p. 19). In *Twigs for an Eagle's Nest: Government and the Arts (1965-1978)* (1979), which is another first-hand account of the NEA's years, Michael Straight identifies six principles embodied in NFAH: excellence in the arts, professionalism, independence for the agency, non-intervention, non-domination, and fiscal decentralization. Not simply a means to stimulate employment, the NEA's founding legislation suggests that now government expected to be involved directly in the nation's art. But a *quid-pro-quo* relationship in which the federal government expected the arts to support as the state supported the arts by promoting "American cultural values across the world" (Wallis, 2002, p. 171). President Johnson himself harbored "Cold War concerns" for the NEA in addition to his "national push for the human welfare of the Great Society" (Binkiewicz, 2004, p. 75). The kind of art the federal government expected the arts to produce was abstract expressionism, "the best and brightest hope of high culture in America" that

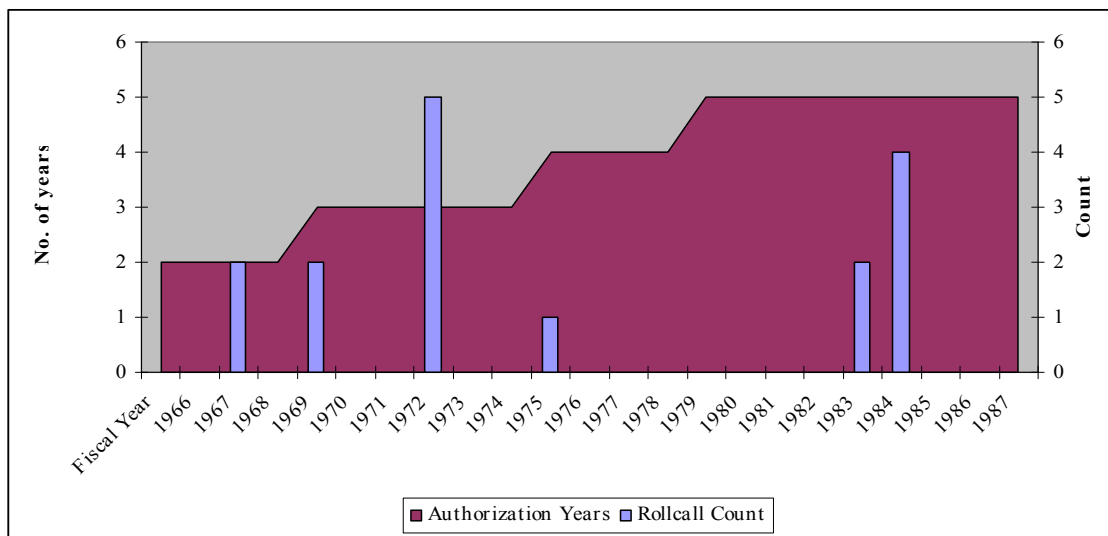
could stand alongside European modernism (Smith, 2008, p. 42). “Abstract expressionists dominated because they were thought to best represent not only aesthetic excellence but also the free expression symbolic of American society, especially during the Cold War” (Binkiewicz, 2004, p. 112). Abstract expressionism is the quintessential art for congressional aesthetics to instrumentalize in service to the state.

The presumption that the NEA would implement congressional aesthetics in the manner of Sino-American cultural diplomacy is evident in Congress’ inattention to the agency for the first 25 years of the agency’s existence. One important tool available to Congress in its oversight of any federal agency is periodic reauthorization of the agency’s programs and overall performance. Generally, Congress cannot appropriate funds to an agency until it has reauthorized it, though agencies can be funded through appropriations language without reauthorization. During reauthorization Congress can insist on program deletions, additions, and modifications. The length of the reauthorization period suggests Congress’ perceptions of an agency at any given time: shorter reauthorization periods (e.g., one or two years) could mean Congress distrusts an agency and wants to review its programs more frequently while longer reauthorization periods (e.g., five years) suggest that Congress is not concerned with an agency. Generally, Congress cannot appropriate funds to an agency unless it has reauthorized it, though agencies can be funded through appropriations language without reauthorization. Figure 12 shows that Congress extended the NEA’s reauthorization period from two years in 1966 to five years by the end of the 1980s. Wyszomirski (1988) observes that the growth and stabilization of NEA appropriations and the extension of its reauthorization period from two to five years are “evidence of the agency’s evolution from a controversial Great Society experiment

into an established agency administering a legitimate federal policy” (pp. 10-11).

Another indicator of congressional oversight is the number of times a roll call votes is called on the floor of Congress regarding an agency: frequent roll call votes suggests that an agency is being watched while only a few roll call votes suggest that an agency is not being watched. Figure 12 also shows that very few roll call votes regarding the NEA were called during the first 25 years of the agency’s existence. One interpretation of the NEA’s lengthening reauthorization period and infrequent is that Congress presumed that the agency would implement congressional aesthetics after its establishment.

Figure 12: The presumption of the NEA’s congressional aesthetics: lengthening reauthorization period and infrequent roll call votes



Source: Shockley (2011) based on data compiled from *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (1966 – 1987)

The NEA’s early leadership shaped the agency’s ability, capacity, and willingness to implement congressional aesthetics. The NEA was set up according to the Fordist foundation model of administering grants to artists and art organizations rather than adopting a government patronage model from Europe (Cummings Jr., 1991). But the

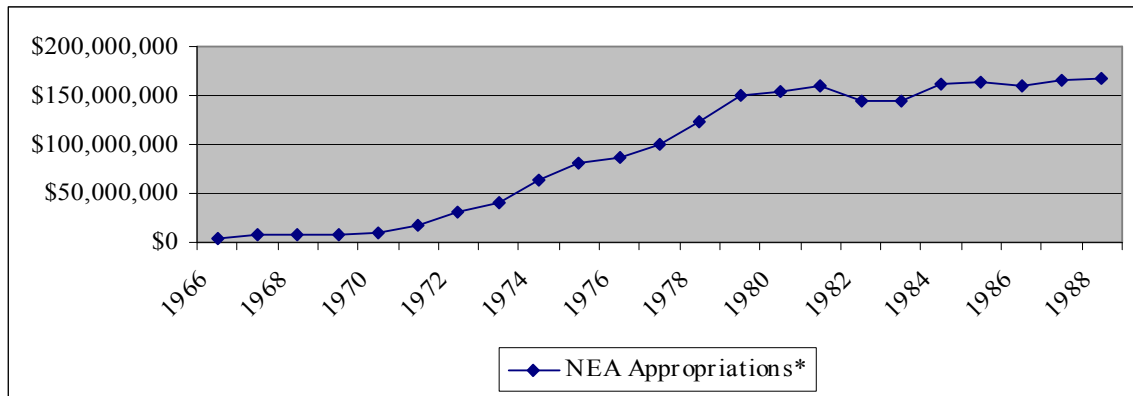


Fordist foundation model allowed for considerable flexibility in arts policy. Roger Stevens and Nancy Hanks, the first two chairs of the NEA, had different visions for the role the NEA should play in American arts. Stevens (1965-1969) envisioned an active role for the NEA to “set out to create new organizations and institutions which would look to government for guidance and for predominant support” (Straight, 1979, p. 75). On the other hand, Hanks (1969-1977) wanted the agency more to facilitate the arts rather than guide them. She saw the “central purpose of government funding for the arts was to generate support from private sources” (Straight, 1979, p. 76). Steven’s more heavy-handed vision for the NEA would have been more conducive to implementing congressional aesthetics because the agency could have injected them in grants and policies in providing “guidance and predominant support” to the American arts. The lighter touch of Hank’s vision of the NEA as facilitator of the Americans arts would make it much more difficult and unlikely to implement congressional aesthetics. Hanks vision for the agency won out over Steven’s as a guide and ultimately shaped the NEA. It would also leave the agency vulnerable to the controversies that would engulf it in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

The tenure of Nancy Hanks was “marked by the maturation of each of the components of the potential arts-policy triangle, as well as by the enhancement of presidential support for the new agency and its programs” (Wyszomirski, 1988, p. 19). During the early decades of stability, the NEA was comfortably ensconced at the vertex of an iron triangle. The other two vertices were occupied by interest groups, such as state and local arts agencies and arts service organizations, and the relevant authorizing and appropriations congressional subcommittees in the House and Senate (Rourke, 1987, p.

227). Mulcahy (1988) describes this era in the Arts Endowment's policy history as "cultural subgovernment." The NEA operated according to a "logic of constituency formation" in which the agency worked to build a national constituency to support its efforts to garner larger appropriations from Congress" (DiMaggio, 2000, p. 52). In Lowi's typology (see Lowi, 1964; 1972), the first-quarter century of U.S. arts policy was a simple distributive policy with very low levels of conflict (Burgess, 2004). Wyszomirski (1995b) writes that the Arts Endowment's management of direct government support for the arts was a "relatively simple distributive policy sub-government focused on increasing financial resources for the NEA and, through it, to the arts constituency" (p. 47). Also according to Wyszomirski (1995a), the first two decades of direct federal support for the arts comprised a positive feedback loop generated by such axioms as "growing public interest and financial support;" "increasingly positive political regard with low visibility;" and "largely unchallenged artistic control of the grant decision making process" (p. 72). In short, Hanks made the NEA a successful federal agency that earned high regard from the arts world and almost absolute autonomy from Congress, as the general trend of increasing appropriation levels for the NEA in Figure indicates.

Figure 13: NEA appropriations during the presumption of congressional aesthetics (nominal dollars)



Source: Shockley (2011) based on data compiled from published U.S. federal budgets (FY 1965 – 1989)

Cracks, however, began to appear in the NEA’s relationship to American arts. Brian Wallis, for example, chronicles the NEA’s program for alternative art space begun in earnest in 1978 under the Nixon administration. The program arose during Nixonian Cold War policy of containment and so were “governed by a plethora of bureaucratic rules designed both to regulate the industry and to draw artists into a language of administration” (Wallis, 2002, p. 173). Thus the alternative spaces the program supported were being encouraged to become exactly like the rationalized, “white-cube” art spaces like galleries and museums they opposed. Further, the principles of independence, non-intervention, non-domination enshrined in NFAH and fully developed under Hanks tenure meant that the NEA had no influence in the kind of art being produced and exhibited with NEA support. The NEA left artists and art alone. And art and artists were changing. In fact, some involved with the NEA recognized that art and artists had been changing since the 1960s (see Mark, 1991, p. xiii). A tiny minority of Congress recognized this. Sen. Claiborne Pell (D-RI) in a report accompanying NFAH in

1965 recognized the anti-instrumentalization of contemporary art: “Moreover, modes of expression are not static but are constantly evolving...Therefore, the committee affirms that the intent of this act should be the encouragement of free inquiry and expression” (quoted in Spooner, 1997, p. 333). But these were just a few voices in the raging storm that would be art in the 1980s.

### **Postmodern Art and Criticism in the 1980s**

The idea of congressional aesthetics persisted in the criticism of the 1980s but was undermined by the nature of postmodern art from the 1960s onwards. The major proponents of congressional aesthetics were naturally champions of modernism, Samuel Lipman and Hilton Kramer of *The New Criterion*. Lipman, for example, supported the idea of the NEA but advocated for its divorce from contemporary 1980s art and culture and their penchant for affirmative action in hiring, a bias towards multiculturalism, and public advocacy towards and financial support for “cutting-edge art” (Lipman, 1992a, p. 216). Rather than supporting contemporary art, the NEA should support the “dead art” of the past in museums. “Instead,” Lipman wrote, “public art support might more fully concentrate on what it does so well: the championing of great art of the past, its regeneration in the present and its transmission to the future” (Lipman, 1992b, p. 42). “This would mean saying yes to civilization,” Lipman concluded, and “saying no to trash.” Perhaps there is no better statement of congressional aesthetics. Congressional aesthetics thus represents an archaic, if not primitive, aesthetics. Ironically, congressional aesthetics was suspicious of early modernism’s origin in Europe. “Because Cubism, Futurism, Dadaism, Expressionism, Abstraction, and Surrealism, which had

shaped generations of American modernists, originated in Europe, modern art was un-American” (Brenson, 2001, p. 5). But when American modernism, particularly abstract expressionism, took the torch from Europe, congressional aesthetics represented civilization to Lipman, Kramer, and those like-minded.

Figure 14. Richard Serra, *Tilted Arc* (installed in 1981; destroyed in 1989)



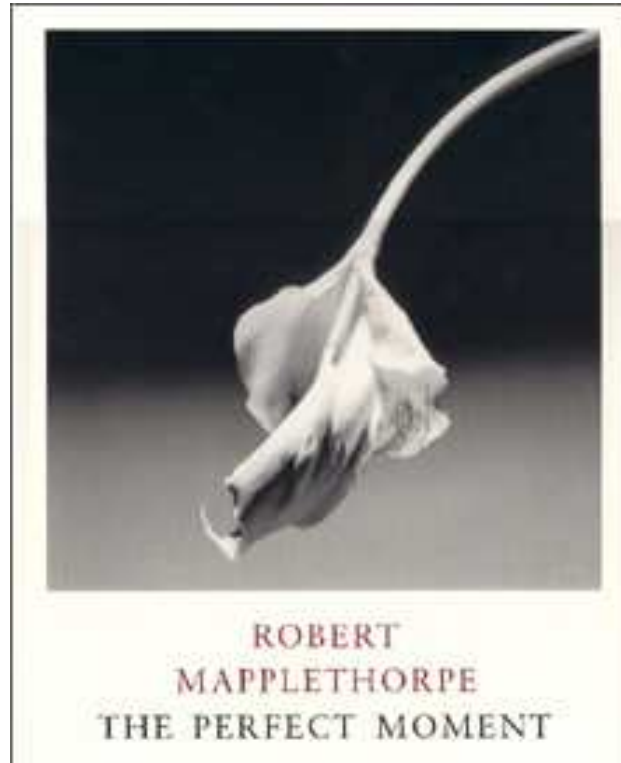
From the 1960s onwards, however, pop art, minimalist sculpture, conceptualism, and seemingly all styles of postmodernism had moved far beyond congressional aesthetics, museum exhibitions, cultural diplomacy, and instrumentalizability of the arts exemplified by abstract expressionism. Wendy Steiner identifies an “aesthetic paradox” in postmodernist art that was not present in the instrumentalizable American modernism of the 1950s. Contemporary art “appears to provide a particularly intense experience of reality while not belonging to that reality in a straightforward manner” (Steiner, 1995, p. 76). This paradox of reality/unreality Steiner calls the “virtuality of art,” that is, art’s “symbolic reality, its subtle contradictoriness are simplified into a literalism that confounds practitioners, experts, and laypeople alike” (Steiner, 1995, p. 10). And one might add members of Congress to the list of those confounded by postmodern art. Thus art in the 1980s defies instrumentalizability and thus congressional aesthetics. The

controversy over Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* (1981), a site-specific, minimalist sculpture commissioned by the federal government for the Foley Federal Plaza in New York City, illustrates the aesthetic paradox of postmodern art. In Kramer's words, "What proved to be so bitterly offensive to the community that *Tilted Arc* was commissioned to serve was its total lack of amenity..." (Kramer, 1992, p. 51). To Kramer, Serra's minimalist sculpture was simply a monumental piece of distraction.

If Clement Greenberg's criticism carried the banner for American modernism in the 1950s, Rosalind Krauss and her journal *October* carried it for postmodern art. "Krauss's strategy was to embrace postmodernism, denounce modernism as the enemy, and use a deconstructive method to repudiate it" (Sandler, 1996, p. 341). In her one of her most influential essays "The Originality of the Avant-Garde" (1985), Krauss deconstructs perhaps the grandest of the modernist myths: the myth of originality. Acknowledging Rodin's death in 1918 and a bronze-casting of *The Gates of Hell* in 1978, Krauss asks: "In what sense is the new cast an original?" (p. 151) She argues that the modernist "cult of originality" is more than a declaration of inventiveness; it is "an organicist metaphor referring not so much to formal invention as to sources of life (p. 157). Deconstruction was the preferred analytical method of Krauss and *October* to "dismantle or demystify modernism, its cannon, and every one of its values" (Sandler, 1996, p. 343), such as the myth of originality. They also embraced new media, particularly photography, which "was viewed as central not only to advanced art but to society as well" (Sandler, 1996, p. 346). The postmodern criticism of Krauss and *October* undid all of the certainty the Greenberg had built.

The onset of the AIDS pandemic added gun powder to the combustibility of 1980s and its art, and the photography of Robert Mapplethorpe was the accelerator. AIDS, art critic Michael Brenson writes, was “an actual disease whose potency was demonstrated by Mapplethorpe’s death from AIDS in March 1989, just before the national spotlight began to shine on his exhibition” (Brenson, 2001, p. 94). Mapplethorpe’s *The Perfect Moment* exhibition was scheduled to stop in seven U.S. cities: Philadelphia, Chicago, Washington, D.C., Hartford, Cincinnati, and Boston. The cancelation of his show by the Corcoran Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C. and the trial concerning *The Perfect Moment* exhibition at the Contemporary Art Center in Cincinnati that put the “national spotlight” on his photography. The \$30,000 grant by NEA to support *The Perfect Moment* exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia put the national and congressional spotlight on the NEA. Mapplethorpe’s explicit photographs of sado-masochism and gay underground culture converged with the awareness of the AIDS pandemic that sparked the conflagration of the NEA controversies.

Figure 15. Front cover of *The Perfect Moment* exhibition catalog. Published by the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia in 1988 on the occasion of Mapplethorpe's exhibition partially supported by the NEA.



Mapplethorpe's photography, including the *XYZ Portfolio* drawn on for *The Perfect Moment* exhibition, was known and variously admired and controversial even before the NEA controversy. Somewhat ironically, Mapplethorpe downplayed explicit homosexuality in the 1980s and instead focused on flowers like Georgia O'Keefe and nude black men more as classical sculptures than as sex objects. But sex was his contribution to photography (Sandler, 1996, p. 533). There is artistic merit to Mapplethorpe's photography. For example, Brenson observes: "The effectiveness with which [Mapplethorpe] captures the sexual, racial and social instability of the 1980s is one reason his work is so valuable and threatening" (Brenson, 1992, p. 69). Similarly,



Sandler remarks: “Indeed, part of the attraction of his pictures is the way in which often repellant subjects, for example, sadomasochistic sexual acts, such as a fist or a whip shoved up the rectum, are anaesthetized” (Sandler, 1996, p. 533). But conservative members of Congress and the vast majority of the public could not reach the artistic beyond “the challenge inherent within Mapplethorpe’s photographs to at least two important social hierarchies, sexual and racial” (Dubin, 1997, p. 369). Although they might be able to articulate it in finer language, conservative art critics also could not see Mapplethorpe’s artistic merit. According to Kramer of *The New Criterion*: “What one finds in many Mapplethorpe photographs is something else – so absolute and extreme a concentration on male sexual endowments that every other of the human subject is reduced to insignificance” (Kramer, 1992, p. 53). The association of Mapplethorpe’s photography with the NEA destroyed Congress’ presumption that the NEA had successfully implemented congressional aesthetics.

The postmodern art of the 1980s can be characterized by social activism, identity politics, homosexuality, and AIDS. “In the 1980s artists would comment not only on sexism [that began in the 1970s], but on racism, homophobia, and ecological construction...” (Sandler, 1996, p. 18). There was “unprecedented artistic activity” at this time, including an “expanding spectrum of artists” as well as “new sites, new media, new venues, and new issues ...” (Yenawine, 1999, p. 9). Again, the AIDS pandemic was particularly explosive. As art critic and activist Lucy Lippard notes: “Fueled by rage and fear of real and present danger, rather than hypothetical and distant disaster, AIDS activists used graphic arts, media savvy, and mass mobilization to great effect” (Lippard, 1999, p. 52). Appropriation (of the Marcel Duchamp and Jasper Johns variety rather than

the Warhol variety of iconic consumerism) served as a key artistic technique (Sandler, 1996, p. 312) in the work of, for example, Peter Halley and Jeff Koons (Pearlman, 2003, p. 20). Contrary to the perception of 1980s art as being “an indiscriminate, anything-goes type of nihilism and historical amnesia,” 1980s artists consciously and “habitually use signifiers of style to evoke social types and systems associated with the consumption of particular styles” (Pearlman, 2003, pp. 145, 152). Artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat and Keith Haring along with Simulationists employed, in art historian Alison Pearlman’s locution, “subversive complicity” in the “deviant subcultures of style” such as Punk, Mod, Glam, Skinhead, and S&M (Pearlman, 2003, pp. 99-100). Obviously, the postmodern art of the 1980s had fallen far away from the modernism of congressional aesthetics. The process orientation and site specificity of conceptual art and alternative spaces, such as Artists Space that took over The Perfect Moment when the Corcoran cancelled it, also resisted instrumentalization required by congressional aesthetics (Wallis, 2002, p. 167). “Adherents of conservative but still dominant modernism found themselves being deconstructed, subverted, appropriated, and repositioned by postmodernist perspectives so diverse as to defy categorization” (Yenawine, 1999, p. 9).

The gay subculture and, more generally, homosexuality was the most potent force of subversion to the modernist aesthetic of congressional aesthetics. Mapplethorpe’s photography was not the only art doing it. The New Queer Art preceded the NEA controversies of the 1990s: “Arguably Johns and Warhol were among a younger generation of painters in New York whose art turned against dominant notions of artistic masculinity as it had been set in place by the New York School, or abstract expressionism, of the 1940s and 1950s” (Mesch, 2013, p. 128). But in the 1980s the

subversion of art with homosexual content increased in intensity. For example, Glenn Ligon's *Notes on the Margin of the Black Book* (1991-3) critiques Mapplethorpe's *Black Book* (1986) (Mesch, 2013, p. 141), though not in a way that conservative members would champion. The "humor and cartoonlike sentiment" of Keith Haring's work challenged homophobia, among other topics, and warned against AIDS (Sandler, 1996, p. 471). While David Wojnarowicz's work differs significantly from Mapplethorpe's, both artists "insist on homoeroticism as a valid subject of art" (Carr, 1992, p. 236).

Wojnarowicz's work defies "representations of sexuality that do not conform to the normative fantasies of white male heterosexuality" (Mesch, 2013, p. 143). Wojnarowicz also proclaimed his work an "X-ray of civilization" examining the foundations of a disintegrating society (Spooner, 1997, p. 335), which is certainly not conducive to instrumentalization and serving the interests of the state. In fact, Wojnarowicz was another regular target of conservative members of Congress during the NEA controversies. Rep. Dan Rohrbacher (R-CA) characterized Wojnarowicz's exhibition *Tongues of Flame* as "an orgy of degenerate depravity" and his art generally as "sickeningly violent, sexually explicit, homoerotic, anti-religious and nihilistic" (quoted in Spooner, 1997, p. 335). At the time, Lipman ruefully commented on this strain of postmodern art: "The simple fact that it is cutting-edge art, flagrantly exemplified in the Serrano, Mapplethorpe, Artists Space, and Sprinkle cases, more subtly presented in the genre as a whole, is concerned not with art but with advocacy, not with the creation of permanent beauty but with the imposition of hitherto rejected modes of behavior and ways of living" (Lipman, 1992a, p. 218). "Permanent beauty" could serve the state's

interests; representations of “hitherto rejected modes of behavior and ways of living” could not.

The medium of photography was also complicit in the subversion of modernism and congressional aesthetics. The photography of Andres Serrano, the indirect beneficiary of the \$15,000 NEA grant to exhibit his work at the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art, exemplifies the danger it presents to the modernist aesthetic. Cultural critic Susan Sontag asserts: “Photographs, which cannot themselves explain anything, are inexhaustible invitations to deduction, speculation, and fantasy” (Sontag, 1989, p. 23). Sontag also observes that photography is a predatory and voyeuristic act of appropriation: “To photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed. It means putting oneself into a certain relation with the world that feels like knowledge-and, therefore, like power” (Sontag, 1989, p. 4). Serrano’s appropriation of Christian icon of the cross submerged in urine in *Piss Christ* illustrates Sontag’s observations.

Figure 16: Andres Serrano, *Piss Christ*, 1987. Southeast Center for Contemporary Art, Durham, NC. Cibachrome print. 60" x 40"



Lippard recounts a brief history of the photograph: “In 1988, Serrano decided that he needed a new color in his palette. ‘Piss was the natural choice.’ It offered particularly dense luminosity, and being less ‘acceptable’ than blood and milk, raised the ante on content.” (Lippard, 1992, p. 203) The aesthetic ante was raised too high for Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC), perhaps the most strident critic of the NEA. Sen. Helms commented on Serrano in Senate hearing on May 18, 1989: “I do not know Mr. Andres Serrano, and I hope I never meet him. Because he is not an artist, he is a jerk.” (Helms, 1992b, p. 30)

In his autobiography Sen. Helms justifies his anti-Serrano stance by implicating the NEA in the production of *Piss Christ*:

The federal government *had* funded an ‘artist’ who had put a ‘crucifix’ in a bottle of *his* urine, photographed it, and given it the mocking title *Piss Christ*. The photographer obviously went out of his way to insult the Christian community, and that insult was compounded by the fact that Christian taxpayers had been forced, by their own government officials, to pay for it. (Helms, 2005, p. 142; emphasis in the original)

Helms applied the logic of congressional aesthetics to the NEA and Serrano. Rather than supporting art that served the interests of the state, the NEA was supporting art that offended him, other conservative members of Congress, and a large portion of American public. The NEA had failed in implementing congressional aesthetics, and there would be a price to pay.

#### **Failed Congressional Aesthetics: The NEA in the 1990s**

“The NEA's early and continued support of postmodern academic art led the agency, by the early nineties, into an almost constant state of controversy,” conservative commentator Lynne Munson declared. “Two artists in particular came to symbolize the Endowment’s problems: Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano” (Munson, 2000, p. 70).

The subversive complicity 1980s postmodern art combined with the dangers of photography exposed the failed implementation of congressional aesthetics. Congress neglected the NEA for almost a quarter-century after its founding as it developed into a fiscally healthy federal agency when Congress assumed that art was still controllable and packageable like abstract expressionism. Yet, under the leadership of Nancy Hanks, the agency became enmeshed in the contemporary art world without being able to guide it.

Hanks successfully cultivated disciplinary and governmental arts constituencies such that government support for the arts flourished in the United States for nearly a quarter-century (DiMaggio, 2000; Mulcahy, 1988; Margaret Jane Wyszomirski, 1988a, 1988b). If not directly redounding to the prestige of America, at least the NEA-associated art did not detract from it. But the art world in the late 1980s and early 1990s had changed radically from that of the 1950s. Again, the provocative art of Mapplethorpe and Serrano demonstrated how far from congressional aesthetics the agency had strayed. Putting forth his “Helms amendment,” Sen. Helms recounts a brief episode with Sen. Robert Byrd (D-WV), then chair of the Senate Appropriations Committee: “I showed the Senator some of the so-called ‘art.’ Senator Byrd took one look at it, shook his head, and said, ‘Good golly, I will support your amendment!’ And that is when the ballet began.” (Helms, 2005, p. 138). Congress would punish the NEA for its failed congressional aesthetics. Thus would commence the NEA controversies of the 1990s.

The Helms amendment to restrict the content of the art that the NEA could support was the first measure Congress sought to impose on the NEA. “Specifically, my amendment,” explains Sen. Helms, “prohibits the use of NEA funds to support obscene or indecent materials, or materials which denigrate the objects or beliefs of a particular religion” (Helms, 1992a, p. 74). The Helms amendment did not seek to dismantle the NEA. Rather, in its essence, it can be seen to seek to return the NEA to congressional aesthetics. “Since the NEA refused to acknowledge the unfairness of its policy,” Sen. Helms explained, “the only solution was to provide it with the rules that it could not violate without breaking the law and facing arrest for having done so” (Helms, 2005, p. 136). Those rules would prevent the NEA from having the government support the

subversive postmodern art of the 1980s. The Helms Amendment of 1991 that was adopted (HR 2686; September 19, 1991) exacerbated the NEA's circumstances when the so-called "NEA Four"<sup>13</sup> took legal action against the agency on First Amendment grounds. Reaching the U.S. Supreme Court as *NEA v. Finley*<sup>14</sup> (524 U.S. 569), this case brought still more attention to the NEA's failed congressional aesthetics. The Supreme Court in a resounding 8-1 decision endorsed the idea behind the Helms amendment that, in the senator's words, "the NEA could indeed follow Congressional directives that set standards of decency as a criteria for the federal funding of art" (Helms, 2005, p. 143). The Helms amendment/*Finley* decision thus can be seen as an attempt to push the NEA back towards congressional aesthetics.

The same data that showed the presumption of congressional aesthetics for the NEA's early years also shows its failed congressional aesthetics. Figure 17 indicates that floor votes on the NEA were much more frequent from 1989 through the mid-1990s. Increased frequency of roll call votes suggests that Congress is paying attention. However, Figure 17 does not show that for the first time these congressional floor votes were concerned with the legitimacy of government support for the arts, the NEA operations, and other substantive policy matters involved in direct federal support for the

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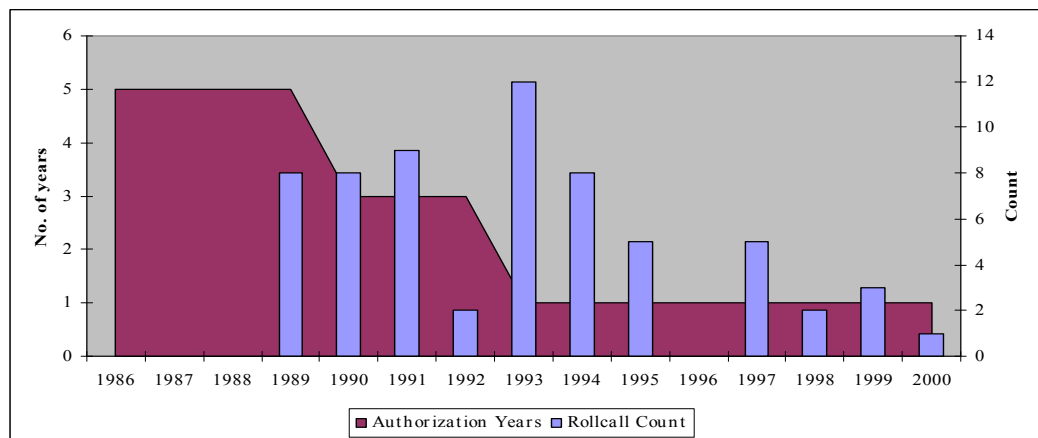
<sup>13</sup> John Fleck, Holly Hughes, Tim Miller, and Karen Finley were four individual artists whose grant applications were approved by Arts Endowment peer panels but were ultimately denied by the Arts Endowment. The first-amendment case *NEA v. Finley* was a direct result of the NEA Four.

<sup>14</sup> *NEA v. Finley* was decided by the Supreme Court on June 28, 1998. Ruling in the Arts Endowment's favor, Justice O'Connor's majority opinion held, "Any content-based considerations that may be taken into account in the grant-making process are a consequence of the nature of arts funding. The NEA has limited resources and it must deny the majority of the grant applications that it receives, including many that it receives, including many that propose 'artistically excellent' projects" ("*NEA v. Finley*," 1998).



arts.<sup>15</sup> Two of the more notorious pieces of anti-NEA legislation were the series of annual Crane Amendments from 1990 to 1994, which sought the most severe punishment for the agency by seeking its elimination and terminating direct federal support for the arts, and the Helms amendments of 1990 and 1991 discussed above. Further, Figure 17 also shows that the reauthorization period shrunk from a high of five years just before the NEA controversies to one year after them. In fact, Congress never reauthorized the NEA in the 1990s. The presumption of congressional aesthetics disappeared.

Figure 17: Failed congressional aesthetics: shrinking reauthorization period and frequent roll call votes



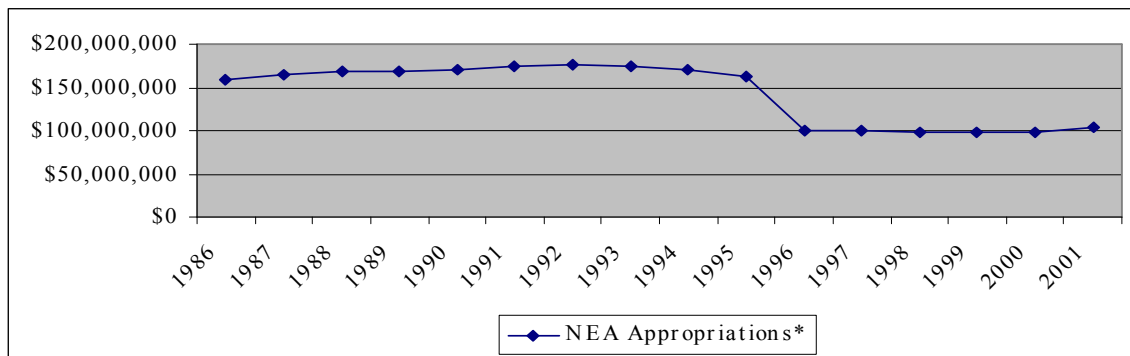
Source: Shockley (2011) based on data compiled from *Congressional Quarterly Almanac* (1986 – 2000)

The Helms amendment/*Finley* decision, shrinking the reauthorization period, and frequent roll call votes on the NEA were not the only consequences of the NEA’s failed congressional aesthetics. Figure 18 indicates that 104<sup>th</sup> Congress was able to slash the NEA’s appropriation for FY 1996 by 39 percent from FY 1995’s level. In addition to the

<sup>15</sup> No floor votes regarding the Arts Endowment occurred in 1996 because an agreement was reached in 1995 whereby the Arts Endowment would be allowed to operate for two more years (1995 and 1996) but would be terminated beginning in 1997.

symbolic message conveyed by cutting appropriations, it had the real effects of forcing the NEA Endowment to lay off 89 staff members (a staff reduction of 37 percent) and limiting both the quantity and size of the grants it could award.

Figure 18: NEA appropriations during failed congressional aesthetics (nominal dollars)



Source: Shockley (2011) based on data compiled from published U.S. federal budgets (FY 1986 – 2002)

The Republican-controlled 104<sup>th</sup> Congress also sought to exact the ultimate price: elimination of the NEA and termination of direct federal support for the arts. The threat was credible. The new Speaker of the House Gingrich (R-GA), junior House Republicans (Janowitz, 1995b), as well as the Republican-controlled Senate were intent on eliminating the NEA along with several other agencies as part of the “Contract with America.”<sup>16</sup> De Leon (1997) observes, “the ‘termination blues’ [were] an integral part of

<sup>16</sup> For example, consider the following “Sense of the Senate” amended to a concurrent budget resolution for FY 1996: “It is the sense of the Senate that to balance the budget the Congress should –  
 (1) “Restructure federal programs to meet identified national priorities in the most effective and efficient manner so that program dollars get to the intended purpose or recipient;  
 (2) “Terminate programs that have largely met their goals, that have outlived their original purpose, or that have been superseded by other programs;  
 (3) “Seek to end significant duplication among federal programs, which results in excessive administrative costs and ill serve the American people; and  
 (4) “Eliminate lower priority programs.” (“Senate Amendment to Concurrent Resolution on the Budget -- Fiscal Years 1996 - 2002,” 1995)

the hymnal for the Republican ‘Contract with America’” (p. 2197). Enacting their agenda through the House appropriations committee (Aldrich & Rohde, 2000) and “generally unorthodox lawmaking” (Sinclair, 2000, Chapter 11), Republicans targeted three categories of federal agencies for elimination: (1) “the symbolic budget trophy” agencies, such as the Office of Technology Assessment; (2) “those with significant budgets,” such as the Department of Energy; and (3) “those whose missions conflicted with the new conservatism brought to Congress by the class of 1994,” such as the NEA (Bimber, 1998, pp. 204-205). Overall, as Pfiffner (2000) reports, the Senate sought to abolish more than 100 programs and agencies while the House more than 280. These “termination blues” included the NEA: for example, a section of a concurrent budget resolution for FY 1996 was entitled “Terminate Funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities.”<sup>17</sup> Eliminating the NEA would have unambiguously meant that Congress no longer believed the federal government should have an interest in American arts. But Congress did not eliminate the NEA.

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<sup>17</sup> Under this proposal, Federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities would be eliminated. Federal funding for the arts and humanities is not affordable in a time of fiscal stringency, especially when programs addressing central Federal concerns are not fully funded. In addition, many arts and humanities programs benefit predominantly higher-income people, who could pay higher admission or ticket prices. Finally, there is serious philosophical debate about whether financing artistic creation is an appropriate government activity in the first place. (GPO, 1995)

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Might the arts be allowed to return in the parallel cultural policies of Plato and the NEA? Plato seems to encourage art in Book X of the *Republic*: “All the same, let it be said that, if poetry directed to pleasure and imitation have any good argument to give showing that they should be delighted to receive them back from exile...” (p. 10.607c). If the bad effects of art can be mitigated, or, better yet, eliminated and an art that was good for the virtue of citizens can be promulgated, then Plato would seem to allow it to return to his state. Yet, art that is acceptable to Plato is politically correct art; art that is “morally responsible” (Gulley, 1977, p. 161); in short, art that serves the interests of the state. Particularly well-trained art critics are required. Plato describes them in the *Laws*:

Almost the finest Muse is she who pleases the best men and the adequately educated men, and especially finest is she who pleases the one man who is distinguished in virtue and education. The reason why we assert that the judges of these matters should have virtue is that they must partake of the rest prudence and especially of courage. The true judge should not learn from the audience how to judge, swept away by the noise of the many and his own lack of education. (1980, p. 2.659a)

The philosopher Allan Bloom summarizes Plato’s position: “If a poet shares the perspective of the philosophic legislator, if he is capable of the moral and intellectual virtue required for such a liberation, and if that perspective can inform his poetry, Socrates has no quarrel with him” (Bloom, 1968, p. 432). Elias (1984, p. 226) calls this a “weak” defense of poetry in which “the role of myths is to act as a pedagogical device.” (See also Rucker, 1966, p. 168.) Plato stops well short of Elias’ strong defense of art in which art can represent new forms of knowledge or, indeed, wisdom (1984, p. 233). Plato seems to be saying that the arts can return, but it is utterly subject to the necessities

of politics. “Poetry will return, but only after having learned to subordinate itself, to mitigate its unguided tendencies toward indulgence and fanaticism. When the poets depict the gods they must no longer look to laughter and pity but to ideas” (Bloom, 1968, p. 434). But if the arts can be instrumentalized and used to serve the interests of the state, then Plato allows art and politics to peacefully co-exist.

Could Congress once again trust the NEA? Could art, particularly challenging art, and government be reunited in the U.S.? “For many of these same conservatives, controversial art remained the single greatest barrier to embracing the NEA” (p. 253). The controversies surrounding the NEA in the 1990s were “interlaced with the notion of what constitutes Americanness...” (Miller, 2000, p. 1432). As Plato found them in *Republic*, the arts are a “relatively defenseless sphere of activity” (Dubin, 1992, p. 18). Most of the measures that Congress imposed on the NEA could be seen as attempts to return the NEA to congressional aesthetics. They were meant to instrumentalize the arts to serve the state just as they were in Sino-American cultural diplomacy. Consider the Helms amendment/*Finley* decision. Justice O’Connor wrote in her majority opinion:

Any content-based considerations that may be taken into account in the grant-making process are a consequence of the nature of arts funding. The NEA has limited resources and it must deny the majority of the grant applications that it receives, including many that it receives, including many that propose “artistically excellent” projects.

Similarly, the Independent Commission of 1990 (p. 90) observed:

Congress has, after all, enjoined the Endowment to foster excellence in the arts. The Chairperson must constantly make judgments about the nature and content of projects. Yet if the standards for making these decisions are codified as explicit content restrictions, it seems clear that the result will be not more elevated art but debilitating administrative and legal difficulties.

But these congressional efforts raise serious questions. Is constraining the NEA's ability to fund certain content practical? As Robert Hughes noted, "The conservative agenda of pre-vetting all grants for the moral content of their supposed results would make NEA sponsorship wholly impractical" (MIT, 1993, p. 18). Does the federal government really want the NEA to instrumentalize the arts and implement congressional aesthetics? If it does, then "the focus for future discussion should be not what the NEA has funded but rather those qualities the NEA has *neglected to fund*" (Jarvik, London, & Cooper, 1995, p. 60). As with Plato, art can return if it, in Blooms' phrasing, learns to subordinate itself to the necessities of politics. Does this kind of art truly serve the interests of the state?

Table 1: Selected NEA policy changes to direct federal support for the arts (1991-1996)

<i>1991 Changes: First Order</i>	<i>1993 – 1994 Changes: Second Order</i>	<i>1995 – 1996 Changes: Third Order</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>First order:</b> Including knowledgeable lay persons in panel membership</li> <li>• <b>First order:</b> Limiting panel service to no more than 3 consecutive years</li> <li>• <b>First order:</b> Removing conflicts of interest in panel service</li> <li>• <b>First order:</b> Requiring all applicants to provide a project description</li> <li>• <b>First order:</b> Requiring interim reports from grantees and disbursing grant monies in installments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Second order:</b> Eliminating individual fellowships, except for literature, jazz, and heritage</li> <li>• <b>Second order:</b> Eliminating sub-granting</li> <li>• <b>Second order:</b> Consolidating 17 grant discipline-based categories to 14<sup>19</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Third order:</b> Restructuring grant programming from 17 discipline-based grant categories to 4 thematic ones<sup>18</sup></li> <li>• <b>Second order:</b> Eliminating seasonal support</li> </ul>

Sources: (AAMD, 2004; J. Alexander, 2000; GAO, 1991; Janowitz, 1995a; Kimbis, 1997a, 1997b)

In the mid-1990s, the NEA made the radical decision to implement a programmatic restructuring of 17 discipline-based grant categories to four thematic ones. Beginning in FY 1996, the Arts Endowment abandoned its direct support of the *artistic disciplines*, such as dance, design, music, the visual arts, theater, media arts, etc., in favor of funding only a few generic *art-related activities* carried out in America’s vast nonprofit arts sector, such as historic preservation, arts education, and access to the arts. “The government decided,” the art critic Michael Brenson (2001) argues, “that in order to

<sup>18</sup> Dance, Design, Folk & Traditional, Literature, Museum, Music, Opera-Musical Theater, Presenting, Visual Arts, Media Arts, Theater, Arts in Education, Challenge/Advancement, Expansion Arts, International, Local Arts Agencies, Special Constituencies, and State and Regional consolidated into Creation and Presentation, Heritage and Preservation, Education and Access, and Planning and Stabilization (including all partnerships).

<sup>19</sup> Music would also include Opera-Musical Theater and Presenting; Visual Arts would also include Museums.

save the Endowment, it had to stop investing in artists and invest its cultural authority in institutions” (p. 89). This change registered a seismic shift in arts policy away from supporting the kind of projects that signaled the NEA’s failed congressional aesthetics, such as the work of Mapplethorpe, Serrano, and the NEA Four. As Kimbis (1997b) remarks, “In order to remake the agency’s image into that of a more politically stable, inoffensive entity, the Endowment determined that its first priority was to reshape its role and agenda” (p. 149), which the Arts Endowment did by implementing the programmatic restructuring. Does a compromised NEA truly serve the interests of the state?



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