



# ArtFBI

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A Faxazine of Arts Information from Cyberspace to the Mid-Atlantic Community

## ARTS FUNDING GENERATES CONTROVERSY IN CHARLOTTE, NC

Despite a large turnout by Charlotte's arts community at the Mecklenburg County Commissioners meeting and a flood of letters, calls and faxes supporting the arts, in the last week of March, Mecklenburg County commissioners voted 5-4 to withdraw \$2.5 million in funding to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Arts & Science Council. The resolution cuts money to groups presenting what commissioners rule "perverted forms of sexuality," according to the Charlotte Observer.

The \$2.5 million cut is approximately one quarter of the \$11 million budget of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Arts & Science Council, a nonprofit agency that raises public and private money and redistributes it to area arts groups.

Arts education programs will take the biggest hit, according to the Observer. \$1.2 million of the money cut was slated for Spirit Square, a city-owned theater that is being converted to an arts education center. Spirit Square gets

more than half its annual operating budget from the county. Without it, the center could close. Also at risk is an elementary school literacy program partnered by the arts council and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg schools.

The arts debate began last Spring, the Observer reports, when the Charlotte Repertory Theatre staged the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Angels In America* — a play about homosexuality by Tony Kushner.

About half of the money cut supports a general operating grant fund for 19 arts organizations. The vote means that groups like the Charlotte Rep now have to petition commissioners for funding. "As far as I'm concerned, those guys [the Charlotte Rep] are dead on arrival," said Republican commissioner Bill James, according to the Observer. "If they don't know they're the walking dead now, I suggest they get a clue pretty quick."

Some council members would prefer to completely eliminate arts funding rather



BOOK AS ART:  
10th ANNIVERSARY  
EXHIBITION

than to judge arts groups on a case by case basis. "It very well may be the result of all this will be to remove funding altogether," the Observer quotes commissioners' Chairman Parks Helms, a Democrat, as saying. "I am unwilling to be a party to passing judgment on arts groups... Before I would spend time doing that, I would simply not give them any money."

Artist reaction has been wide spread. Paul Sires, co-owner of the Center of the Earth gallery on North Davidson Street is shutting down for a week. Sires hopes all the art institutes and associations in Charlotte will respond to the cuts, the Observer reports.

"I'm going to urge as many gay arts groups and arts groups in general to apply for county commission grants and see who the commission funds and doesn't fund," the Observer quotes Gay activist David Ferebee as saying. "And, if they are discriminatory in their funding, we will sue."

The Observer reports that in addition to arts groups, hundreds of non-arts groups such as Planned Parenthood, Mecklenburg Council on Adolescent Pregnancy and the Metrolina AIDS Project may be affected because the resolution that cut the arts council's funding also prevents any private or nonprofit agency from getting county money unless commissioners approve a separate allocation for each one.

Although City Council members say that they don't have the votes

to succeed, the Observer also reports that arts funding opponents are now challenging the Charlotte City Council's \$2.1 million annual contribution to the arts.

Perry Mixer, Director of the Office of Cultural Affairs at Appalachian State University in Boone, NC, writes on Arts Wire News that "It is a dark day here in North Carolina."




Sources: Taylor Batten "One option: Zero public money for arts" Charlotte Observer (<http://www.charlotte.com/observer/arts/>) April 3, 1997

Tony Brown and Mary Elizabeth Deangelis "Will city cut arts funds, too? Support firm, but agencies' fear persists" Charlotte Observer (<http://www.charlotte.com/observer/arts/>) April 4, 1997

Posted by Perry Mixer on Arts Wire

### Hoekstra Calls For Review Of NEA Lit Grants

Rep. Pete Hoekstra (R-MI) has called for a review of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Literature Programs funding, according to **Publishers Weekly**. (PW) Hoekstra questioned a \$25,000 grant awarded to Fiction Collective 2 (FC2)/Black Ice Books in 1996.

PW reports that in a letter to Jane Alexander, Hoekstra states that the FC2 books, 

To celebrate the Tenth Anniversary of the National Museum of Women in the Arts, the Museum's Library and Research Center will present BOOK AS ART: TENTH ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITION. The exhibition will include the best artists' books from the LRC's permanent collection plus books of enchantment and inspiration from all over the world.

A HISTORY OF WOMEN PHOTOGRAPHERS, an exhibition that chronicles of women's photography over the course of photography's first 150 years, is also at the Museum through May 4. Organized by the Akron Art Museum, the exhibition includes more than 200 vintage photographs by 125 artists, including Julia Margaret Cameron, Dorothea Lange, Berenice Abbott, Diane Arbus, Annie Liebowitz, Mary Ellen Mark, and Cindy Sherman.

For further information contact the museum at: 202.783.5000.

ART & COMMUNITY

The Arts Extension Service, University of Massachusetts Amherst (AES) will hold its annual conference, CONNECTING ART AND COMMUNITY, CULTURAL APPROACHES TO SOCIAL CHANGE, June 26-28. The program invites community cultural leaders to explore the range of cultural programs and services which use art as a tool for social change.

The Summer Program is divided into three areas: Introduction to Arts Management (which included tracts on marketing, planning, working with volunteers, and effective management of programs), Arts Management Refreshers for experienced arts managers, and Civic Sector Perspectives, which explore cultural approaches undertaken by health, human services and community development organizations.

For information call AES at 413.545.2360 or send email to aes@admin.umass.edu

• which credit NEA support, are  
• “an offense to the senses of this  
• Subcommittee, and I would pre-  
• sume to the taxpayers that have  
• been unwittingly forced to pay.”  
• The books he singles out are S&M  
• by Jeffrey DeShell, **Blood Of Mug-  
• wump: A Tiresian Tale Of Incest**  
• by Doug Rice; **Mexico Trilogy** by  
• D.N. Stuefloten and **Chick-lit 2:  
• Chick Vics**, edited by Cris Mazza,  
• Elizabeth Sheffield and DeShell.

• Formerly called Fiction Collective,  
• FC2 (<http://users.quake.net/~jacq/>) was founded in 1974 in  
• order to publish formal literary  
• experimentation. The small press  
• publishes about 10 books a year  
• by minority, women and gay and  
• lesbian writers. Print runs aver-  
• age 2000 copies.

• Gigi Bradford, director of  
• the NEA literature pro-  
• gram, has praised FC2,  
• for giving “voice to those  
• Americans who are not  
• well connected to the dwin-  
• dling number of for-profit  
• presses,” accord-  
• ing to PW.

• On the grounds  
• that the site could include  
• material from FC2 books,  
• Rep. Hoekstra also questioned a  
• \$45,000 grant to support a web site  
• for the Unit for Contemporary Lit-  
• erature at Illinois State in Normal.  
• But, the web site was never in-  
• tended for publishing sexually  
• explicit material, FC2 Co-Director  
• White stated, according to PW.

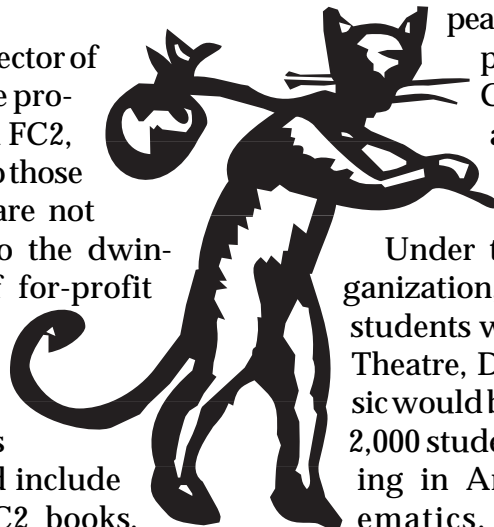
• Charles Harris, Director of the Unit  
• for Contemporary Literature, ex-  
• plained to PW that it is an um-  
• brella group for a group of literary  
• publishers that are housed at but

not connected with the Univer-  
sity. The publishers include FC2,  
Dalkey Archive Press, the Exquis-  
ite Corpse and the **American Book  
Review**. Hoekstra’s review will  
affect these programs as well as  
the campus Gallery.

Source: Bridget Kinsella “Congress  
Challenges NEA Lit Grants to Illi-  
nois Press” Publishers Weekly  
March 17, 1997

### Howard U. Students Protest Art Dept. Merger

For two days, from March 11 to  
March 12, a group of about 300  
about students occupied Howard  
University’s (HU) Mordecai A.  
Johnson administration building in a  
peaceful protest of the  
planned merger of the  
College of Fine Arts  
and the College of Arts  
and Sciences.



Under the proposed reor-  
ganization, approximately 700  
students who are majoring in  
Theatre, Dance, Art and Mu-  
sic would be merged with over  
2,000 students who are major-  
ing in Archaeology, Math-  
ematics, Language and  
Science. The CollegePost reports  
that HU president H. Patrick  
Swygert told some of the students  
who took over the structure Tues-  
day that the proposed merger “is  
not for debate.”

Arts Wire received an email copy  
of a letter to Members of the HU  
Board of Trustees, signed by Stu-  
dents of the Mecca, a group formed  
as a result of the protest. In the  
letter, the students ask  
for “a window of time to



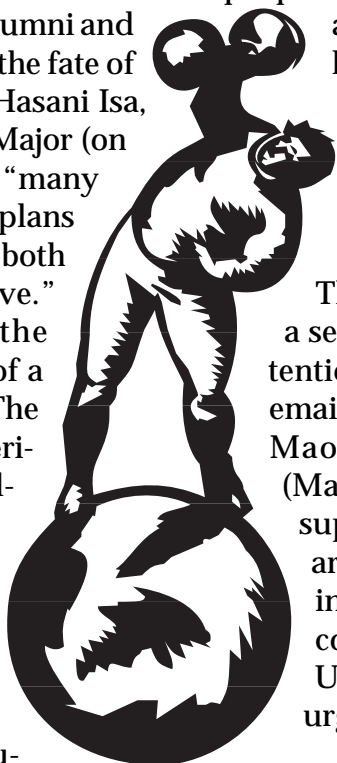
unite as one and educate ourselves completely about the issues surrounding the merging of any of the schools and colleges,” and request that the implementation of the merger be halted until complete knowledge is established by the student body.

In an email letter to “Alumni and others concerned with the fate of Howard University,” Hasani Isa, Howard Theatre Arts Major (on sabbatical) states that “many of President Swygert’s plans for the University are both original and innovative.” Hasani points to the planned construction of a new complex called The Center for African-American Heritage and Culture. The center would house, the Institute of African and African-American Studies, the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, the Howard Galleries Museum and Collections as well as various performance and multi-use spaces. “This center has the potential for being a world-renowned complex, but it is missing one piece that could truly make it a powerhouse and that is the College of Fine Arts,” Isa says.

According to Isa, a group of art faculty and department heads including Jeff Donaldson, Dean of the College of Fine Arts, have drafted a proposal that would place the Fine Arts program within the structure of The Center for African-American Heritage and Culture. The name of the school would be changed to The Institute for Design and Performing Arts (IDPA) and would include, among

other things, a new graduate program in theatre.

“Howard University’s College of Fine Arts is a unique entity. It is the only Fine Arts College in the country that trains and produces artists who, to a large extent, are people of color. To close off an artery that pumps such a large supply of talent is very dangerous if we are to continue to diversify the meaning of art in this country,” Isa writes.



The students are planning a series of events to focus attention on the situation. By email, art history student K. Maori Holmes (Maorik@aol.com) asks for support from the national arts community. “Help us in our plight to save our college and to keep our University great,” she urges.

Sources: Natalie P. McNeal “Students Meet Howard President in Occupied Administration Building” CollegePost March 12

Valerie Strauss “Howard U. President Is No Stranger to Protest” The Washington Post (<http://www.washingtonpost.com>) Sunday, March 16 1997; Page B03

Posted on Arts Wire

### ARE YOU ON OR HAVE YOU EVER BEEN ON THE INTERNET?

In an effort to better serve our communities and help make the transition to the Information Age as easy as possible, ArtFBI and the Maryland State Art Council are interested in your relationship with the Internet!

Recently, numerous organizations and individuals meet to discuss how we could better use the Net to communicate between us, inform the general public about our activities, and to get information about what’s going on in our art communities.

Included with this month’s ArtFax (except the PDF online version) is a short questionnaire designed to find out just which of you (both individuals and organizations) are connected and what your plans and needs are in this area.

If you retrieve ArtFax via our web site, e-mail us for a copy of this questionnaire.