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Arts and Humanities: Background (1975-1995): Correspondence 01

Jane Alexander

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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE
ARTS

*The Federal agency
that supports the
visual, literary and
performing arts to
benefit all Americans*

SEP - 6 1994

The Honorable Claiborne Pell
Chairman
United States Senate
Subcommittee on Education, Art,
and Humanities
Washington, DC 20510-6300

Dear Senator Pell:

Arts in Education

*Challenge &
Advancement*

Dance

Design Arts

Expansion Arts

Folk Arts

International

Literature

Locals

Media Arts

Museum

Music

*Opera/Musical
Theater*

*Presenting &
Commissioning*

State & Regional

Theater

Visual Arts

Thank you for your letter of July 27 requesting information concerning representational and abstract art funded by our Visual Arts Program.

The Visual Artists Fellowships category is one of the oldest at the Endowment, having been a part of the Visual Arts Program since its inception. The first fellowships were awarded in 1967. Application to the category is open to any professional artist regardless of style or medium. Over its two-year funding cycle, about 10,000 applications are received and 200 fellowships of \$20,000 each awarded.

Although we do not maintain records according to artistic style, as that is not a review criterion panelists take into consideration, the Visual Arts Program estimates that over one-half of all applications and grants could be considered representational. This estimate includes work in all visual arts media (painting, sculpture, crafts, photography, works on paper, and other genres), and is based on a widely accepted understanding.

As you know, fellowship recipients are recommended by panels of five artists, a curator, and a layperson. In composing fellowship panels, the Visual Arts Program is careful to include a balance of representational and abstract artists. For instance, on last year's Painting panel, the five artist members included two representational painters (Melissa Miller and Catherine Murphy), two abstract painters (Dan Ramirez and Robert Reed), and one painter who crosses both styles (Roger Herman).

Melissa Miller is a figurative painter from Austin, Texas, whose work is in the collections of the Albright-Knox Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art. Catherine Murphy is a realist painter from Poughkeepsie, New York, whose work is in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Phillips Collection. She has been a visiting artist at Yale University.

Among the representational painters who received fellowships last year were Robert Berling (NY), Susanna Coffey (IL), Ronald Cohen (IA), Harold Gregor (IL), Lari Pittman (CA), Marjorie Portnow (CA), Mel Rosas (MI), and Joseph Santore (NY). Some of these are well-known landscape and figurative painters. We would be glad to share slides of their work with you.

Also worth noting is that on our National Council on the Arts, the sole visual artist member is representational painter William Bailey.

I hope this is helpful. Please let me know if you would like additional information, and thank you for your support of the Arts Endowment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Alexander", written over a large, loopy flourish.

Jane Alexander
Chairman

JA/RW/sm