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Phil Kaelin

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Office of Citizens
Consular Services
Dept. of State
Washington, D.C. 20520

October 16, 1970

Dear Ms. Hobgood:

I understand through Richard Corey, a fellow plaintiff in the matter of the American Painters in Paris Exhibition and its subsequent scandal, that his efforts to stimulate U.S. Government action on this matter has not been in vain. It has been brought to my attention that your office will present our complaints to the government of France.

As you may know, our suit filed in Superior Court in New York City will not be served as we are unable to raise the necessary funds for counsel and such as it is in this country today. We are unable to "afford" a just settlement.

Those Government of France and private French sponsors whom we feel are responsible to the seven hundred -plus artists (American) to reach a settlement have recognized us as we are; a poor and thus politically powerless although numerically significant chunk of society. We don't frighten the French government and other sponsors of this exhibition and as far as they are concerned, we don't exist.

I was one exhibitor who was luckier than most. Although I had been warned about the "too good to be true" nature of the publicity, an inquiry to Air France about the legitimacy of the exhibition encouraged me to apply. I decided to gamble my \$200.00 and send one of my three accepted works to France on the chance that I might be selected as one of the top five prize-winning artists and have my work promoted in the U.S. and Europe.

I am certain that by now your office is aware of the fact that no winners were ever selected and that many entrants had their work damaged or destroyed. Damage was to be insured by Lloyd's of London and as you know, the insurance contract with Lloyd's was never signed by A.R.G.R.A.F. Therefore, many artists have suffered great losses and until a settlement is reached will have to remain in this condition; victims of the same machine which constantly asks the artist to underwrite the few 'opportunities' available to him or her. Let me tell you Ms. Hobgood, no one needs these kinds of opportunities.

I was fortunate that my work did not suffer damage as a result of this exhibition. My complaint is that I gave A.R.G.R.A.F. and its cohorts \$200.00 to disappear with under the pretense of an opportunity to further my career as an artist. I fully understand that A.R.G.R.A.F. with whom we all signed contracts never had any intention of helping me do this or to in any way represent my interests.

I realize that most Western societies thrive on the romantic notion of artists suffering in poverty for purity and truth. I like to think of all of us searching for these ideals, but in my mind artists are workers too and should be compensated as such. I am appalled at the resistance that the U.S. and French Governments have shown so far in the settling this estimated quarter million dollar swindle. I suggest that if the victims were lawyers rather than artists the resolution would have been swift.

I resent a society that feels that it is part of my duty as an artist to be kicked down again and again and asked to work for nothing; something which no other worker would be asked to do; let alone settle for.

As a result of any judiciary action I expect to be reimbursed for my entry fee, and to see the responsible parties punished. I believe that it is a right of mine as a citizen of the United States to request that my Government work on my behalf.

I am about as cynical about government as I can possibly be; my trust in our system of justice is at rock bottom. Please help us do something positive for American artists and therefore all of us. Help us by doing all that is in your power to reach a just settlement with the French Government and private agencies who along with A.R.S.R.A.F. called on us to participate in this "Great Bicentennial Event" only to steal from us.

Thank You.

Sincerely,



Phil Keelin

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