



Smithsonian Institution

Archives of American Art

Jacques Seligmann & Co. records, General Correspondence: American Federation of Arts, 1948-1953

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respect for the United States as this exhibition's circulation abroad. In this connection, I recently appeared before the Ways and Means Committee of the House urging certain modifications in the Customs Simplification Act so as to facilitate the import and export of exhibitions.

However, until Congress changes its point of view toward painting and art programs, the vast cultural resources of American institutions, represented by possibly more than 1,000 exhibitions annually, will never be made available for circulation abroad, even though this material is viewed by hundreds of thousands of our own citizens.

Art as a medium of cultural exchange has been under a Congressional ban since 1947 when a show of modern art was selected by one of the employees of the State Department and purchased by government funds for showing in Czechoslovakia. Some of us objected to this procedure at the time, believing that government funds should not ordinarily be used for purchases of paintings for traveling exhibitions and that such exhibitions should be selected by those outside of the government who have the experience and qualifications to do it. Certain paintings in this show were violently criticized in Congress and the show was promptly recalled. Appropriations by Congress to the State Department were thereafter granted on the basis that "this would prevent the use of funds for pictures or other items or service which do not have the approval of Congress". It is believed that this ban should not apply to the circulation of exhibitions selected by the art institutions of our country out of private or public collections. We trust that our Chapters will help us through their Congressmen in getting this ban lifted. In this connection, your attention is called to the excellent speech at our Convention by our Vice President, Eloise Spaeth, copies of which are available on request.

IN ADDITION TO THE ABOVE, we have a number of other proposals in the developmental stage, such as regional setups for the Federation, reproduction shows, distribution and exhibition of a collection of paintings for a large business enterprise, a show of business architecture, the use of art on T.V., etc., etc., but they can only be mentioned because they are not yet launched. As an outlet for the legitimate programs of business and industry-sponsored art projects, and as an active advocate of the best employment of art in industry, we have, in 1951, worked among others with the following: Neiman-Marcus, Container Corporation, Life Magazine, and the New York Art Directors, in assisting with the preparation and arranging for the circulation of business and industry-sponsored shows.

We are making a special effort to increase the number and quality of services to our individual members and to Chapters, and thereby to secure a broader basis of membership. In this connection, the visits of the private collections in New York in the last two years, available to Contributing members, arranged by Trustee Roy Neuberger, have been of very great interest. Also we had a successful convention in Philadelphia, attended by over 250 persons and 20 out of 30 Trustees. A summary of the program, prepared by Trustee Bartlett Hayes, who was Chairman of the Convention Committee, is being made and should be available shortly.

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We have been handicapped with regard to our New York offices by not having facilities for our Chapters and Members who visit New York. We would particularly like to have a place where we could show some of the exhibitions which circulate throughout the rest of our country and which practically never reach New York. We would also like to have a meeting place and a place to show Art Films and provide like activities for those who come to New York from other parts of the country. We expect to move the principal domestic aspects of our Exhibition Service activities

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