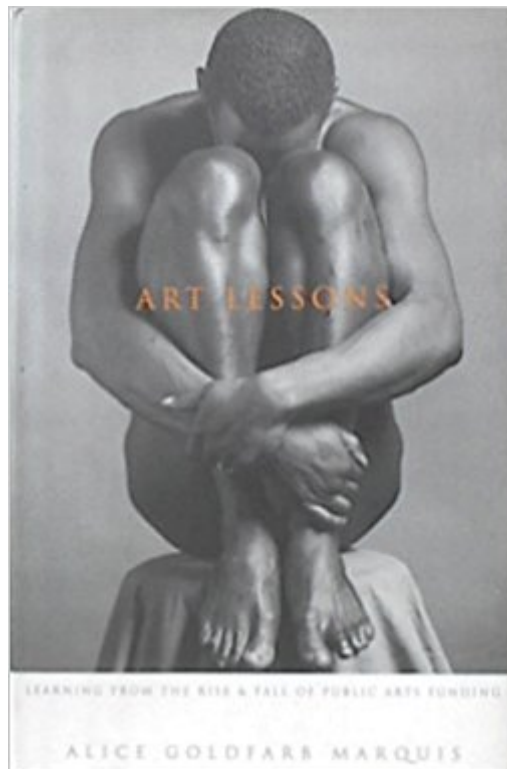




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Art Lessons: Learning From The Rise And Fall Of Public Arts Funding



Synopsis

Offering a fresh look at what's wrong with how Americans fund the arts--and why--this book, based on wide-ranging interviews and massive research, goes beyond identifying the failures of the present system to offer a plan for fixing it. --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Marquis characterizes the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) as a cultural bureaucracy dominated by powerful interests?corporate arts patrons, state and local arts councils, unions, advocates for various disciplines. In a lively, slashing history of public arts funding in the U.S. from the end of WWII to the present, she finds that "Americans venerate the arts... even though they seldom attend or participate." Highbrow arts institutions, knowing they can depend on NEA grants and wealthy donors, cling timidly to tradition, in her analysis. Meanwhile, the relatively small amounts spent on the "cutting edge" support a vested "avant-garde mainstream" of generally baffling, boring or repellent works, according to Marquis (The Art Biz). She spells out a revolutionary blueprint for democratizing public support for the arts, whereby professional arts managers in every locality or neighborhood would fill public spaces?schools, auditoriums, community centers, parks, plazas?with cultural presentations. In her plan, Congress would get out of the culture business, and a 5% tax on movie tickets, video rentals and sports would create a new, nonelitist endowment for the arts. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

While so much journalism concerning public funding of the arts amounts to little more than polemics

and personal vendetta, this is instead an absorbing account of the National Endowment of the Arts (NEA). Like any good history book, it is well researched, clearly written, loaded with factual information?and somehow a pleasure to read. Goldfarb-Marquis (history, Univ. of California; Hope and Ashes, LJ 12/86) is honest about who are friends, enemies, and in between. But, more importantly, she offers detailed backgrounds of the board members and political power brokers who actually helped shape the NEA from its inception. She places equal focus on social factors such as the Cold War, television, and corporate philanthropy that have affected the agency. At times, the degree of bureaucratic error is devastatingly humorous. Though Goldfarb-Marquis makes her thoughts clear on the the direction the agency should take, her book is most useful as a source for a much-needed social history of arts funding in the United States since World War II. It will help to balance all collections.?Susan M. Olcott, Columbus Metropolitan Lib., OhioCopyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc.

GREAT

It is a shame the publisher reportedly pulped the unsold copies of this seminal book instead of permitting the author -- and others -- to purchase them. This book gives the best account of the background to the NEA controversy and explains why the National Endowment for the Arts has been a bureaucratic mess since it was first set up in the Johnson administration. If anyone wants to know why there is still controversy about the subject, this book is the place to begin.

Finally, an objective and impartial history of the troubled National Endowment for the Arts.

Fascinating to read, engrossing in its details, brilliant in its analysis, ART LESSONS is a "must read" for anyone who wants to understand why the NEA has gotten in the trouble it finds itself. A perfect

10

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