Art Community Discusses Role of NEA Funding

By Eva Mey

Should the federal government fund artists based on the content of their work? How should the NEA's funding support the arts' race? Should it support esthetic excellence or social relevance? Or should it fund art at all?

About 300 artists, art educators and others interested in the NEA and private citizens from across the nation invaded Boston's Auditorium last weekend to discuss these issues at "The Public Patron: Drafting a Mandate for the Arts," organized by the MIT Office of the Arts. The conference debated the role of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) in light of recent judicial decisions within the past few years, overshadowing its previous operations, and the financial aid given to the arts.

Robert Hughes, Time magazine art critic, discussed the financial performance of the government as a patron of the arts. "The NEA is a vital catalyst to non-governmental support for the arts," he said. "For a role, corporate sponsors like prestige ventures, prover experience, whereas it's essential to the NEA's mandate to keep this European for what is considered a personal interest cannot, or cannot ever, succeed in the marketplace."

Hughes called for arts "elitism," which he said is the job of democracy, in the field of art, to make the world wide for elite.

Not an elitist bias, that is, based on price or social position, but on skill and imagination. But he added, "I am also a populist in that I believe these standards can survive and can serve any nation, and that any race, will be found by you, and I must admit, the ultimate price of education is a matter of personal taste."

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Director of the List Visual Arts Center for its exhibition, Corporal Politics. Seidman also discounted that the Overlap meetings fixed the price of education-and that the Overlap group circumvented market forces.

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