

The Art of the Sale

Future of NEA secure if big-money solicitors put money where their mouths are

This is Arts Awareness Week, but for most Aggies, the closest the arts come to them is when they walk past the galleries in the MSC.



ROBBY RAY
columnist

In the world outside the confines of the college campus, however, the arts have been very much in the news this year. Specifically, there has been considerable debate in Congress concerning the continuation of federal funding for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The biggest problem is that those who are complaining the loudest are not pulling their weight when it comes to giving their money. The heart of the debate stems from the fact that most Americans feel the NEA does not support programs they would agree with. In fact, many feel the NEA is being used to fund so-called "art" that is not only not artistic, but also offensive and completely contrary to their values.

This "art" is little more than anti-religious propaganda and hard-core pornography and is not worthy of public funds.

There is no doubt that much of the money being spent by the NEA is not being spent on these obscene, pornographic exhibits the public would not support if given a choice. Rather, most is being spent on

worthwhile things like ballets and symphonies.

But there is no way to separate the worthwhile from the excrement. Repeated attempts in the past to regulate the flow of NEA dollars have met with obstinate resistance on the grounds that the taxpayers have no right to infringe on the artists' freedom of expression. We will ignore for the moment the fact that it was religious and political, not artistic expression, that was meant to be constitutionally protected.

But the point is if taxpayers are not allowed to determine where their money goes, then the entire program should be eliminated.

This is not to say all funding for the arts should end, just that it should come from the private sector, from those who complain so loudly that the public should pay for the arts, yet are able to personally finance the national debt.

An example might be one Bill Cosby, who is set to be featured in a series of public service announcements on CBS encouraging people to support public funding for the arts. It isn't that the arts aren't worthy of money, but he made over \$30 million last year. The total NEA budget was only \$99.4 million last year.

If Cosby and a few of his friends would stop asking taxpayers to give money they don't have and would start giving from their overabundance, then we would no longer need to support the arts with government funds.

For instance, the top twenty or so Hollywood moneymakers made

over \$1 billion last year. If just these few people were to give a paltry 10% of their income, the NEA would be paid for, and it could be taken off the tax rolls. Just think what could happen if even more than these twenty were to donate; the individual percentage would keep going down.

In fact, if this policy were to be implemented, the annual budget available to the NEA should actually increase.

There are those who would argue this same logic should be applied to the Defense Department, that those who think that the United States should have more Stealth airplanes should pay for these planes themselves. But that logic is seriously flawed.

If we were to follow this system, there would be no military whatsoever. The difference between the military and the arts is that without the arts, the country would still exist, though it would most certainly be a less civilized place to live. Without the military, the country would very soon cease to exist.

The bottom line is that while there does need to be funding for the arts, in this time of billion-dollar budget deficits and high taxes, there is no excuse for spending taxpayer money in an area which would be better served by private donations. Those multi-millionaires who keep encouraging taxpayers to dig ever deeper into our shallow pockets should put their own money where their mouths are.

Robby Ray is a senior speech communications major.



Holiday season marks a time for contemplation and thanks

Warm blankets, Aggie Bonfire, sweaters, excellent red wine and those oh-so-special nights by the fire can only mean one thing—the two greatest American holidays, Thanksgiving and Christmas, are rapidly approaching.



LEN CALLAWAY
columnist

As I venture across our beloved campus and through the daily routine of my personal life, I am repeatedly encountered with the fact that so many of us have a plethora of things and people for which to be thankful.

I find myself becoming down-trodden and feeling sorry for myself at times over some trivial something or other, then I remember—I remember the spirit of these holidays.

We have Texas A&M University and all of its traditions and honor for which to be thankful and proud. Thankful and proud of the fact that they both exist and thankful and proud that we each are allowed the opportunity to experience and enjoy A&M as we spend our years as students.

We have each other, we are not all friends, nor do we all know one another, but it has been proven time and time again that when one Aggie is in serious need, the rest will take up the slack and provide what they can.

Point in case, recently an A&M student named Jennifer Jackson, needed to raise \$40,000 for an operation.

Needless to say, all of the money was raised, and she will have the surgery in a couple of weeks.

Good luck Jennifer, we are

all pulling for you and trust that everything will be alright.

We have the intelligence to have earned the right to be Texas Aggies, and as a result, we have earned the right to have a wonderful and successful life.

Many of us have close friends and loved ones that we all too often take for granted.

One day some set of circumstances could take those people from us. It would be very unfortunate and a shame for one to feel as if they had not allowed the other to know how much they really cared, or how much they really loved them when they were here.

Turkey, dressing and all of the rest is just rhetoric... The real point is for people to reflect and be thankful for whatever positives they may have in their lives.

We have a wealth of professors and support staff, many of whom are willing to be more than just the person at the front of the room espousing about some topic or another.

The list of possible positives in all of our lives is simply too long to list.

Thanksgiving and Christmas are different holidays, but they both have come to have a similar undertone: Love and appreciation.

Thanksgiving is a time for all to recall each element of their lives which they might normally take for granted and make an effort to give thanks, even if it is just a mental recognition, of all the positive that one may have in their life.

Turkey, dressing and all of

the rest is just rhetoric, however if you are eating at my house, it is good rhetoric.

The real point is for people to reflect and be thankful for whatever positives they may have in their lives. Sometimes life can give you a lot of negatives, but more often than not, positive mental attitudes and a little TLC from those around you can make all of the difference.

Christmas began as a religious celebration, but over the years it has become commercialized and even non-Christians enjoy the holiday, because it is an opportunity to gather with friends and loved ones and spend quality time. Not time in class, not time with an agenda, not even time on the phone. Live, in person, quality time.

Christmas is also a time to exchange gifts—not always expensive gifts but gifts that mean something or hold some importance between the giver and the recipient. Gifts that one can reflect on in the years to come and have a smile or a laugh.

Many of us have wonderful families and networks of caring individuals that are there for those moments in life when only an ally can make the true difference.

For those that are fortunate enough to have a significant other make an effort on a regular basis to let them know how much they are valued. For in the words of the great Eddie Vedder "Hail Hail the lucky ones, I refer to those in love."

We all have regrets and events that we wish could have happened differently, but for the most part, we collectively have good lives, and that is something for which we should all be appreciative.

Len Callaway is a junior journalism major.

Casino of College requires taking chances, going against the odds

You gotta know when to hold 'em and know when to fold 'em, sang Kenny Rogers in his infamous hit of the early eighties. But it seems now that "The Gambler" has become a more appropriate title for the college student.

Recently, it has become a commonly held belief among university students that their degrees are no longer a row of cherries symbolizing the jackpot of education. Instead of graduating from college as winners, students feel cheated out of what they perceive as a valuable education.

However, instead of taking the risk to change the odds, students accept the cards they are dealt and take no action to improve their hands. Students go to the Casino of College and are dealt a hand of cards. Whether they keep what they are provided with or take a chance against probability is their choice. Unfortunately, students at A&M choose to stand more often than they choose to take a hit.

Most students have placed their bets that the odds of winning the game of education are stacked against them. When dealt a hand they do not like, they choose to play it safe, afraid of taking a risk. They feel they are cheated out of a fair education and claim that professors do not encourage independent thinking.

The fallacy with this is that it is the responsibility of the student to think for himself or herself, not the professor's responsibility. Independent thinking is not something that is taught, but something that is developed. Education is not something that happens to students, rather it is the students that happen to education.



KENDALL KELLY
columnist

Students are dealt cards that they must keep... in the game of college, these are the required classes. They must inevitably keep these in order to win a degree from A&M.

Students therefore enroll only in classes necessary for their degree, then blame the educational system because they feel cheated. If students feel their classes are not contributing to a quality education, then they should enroll in classes that call for the "independent thinking" they are missing from their standard curriculum.

Aggies are a at world-class university that offers everything from three-hour courses in philosophy and creative writing to non-credit clay pottery and Japanese classes. It is classes such as these that truly allow people to think for themselves and provide some kind of recreation for the mind. But the chances of a student enrolling in an "extra" classes such as these to recreate their mind and think independently is about as large as winning the lottery.

The great majority of college student players state that they can't enroll in these extra classes because they carry a full house of 15 hours. By being satisfied with what they are dealt and not taking action to increase our odds of conquering the black and white curriculum of some college degrees, they are victims of this dependent thinking.

Students can keep blaming the system for their luck, but the reality is that their educations are not defined merely by chance, but by choice. Those unsatisfied should press their luck every couple of semesters and bid a little higher than usual when registering for classes.

For the students who depend only chance to educate to fully educate themselves, their education may as well be craps.

Kendall Kelly is a junior Spanish major.

