SHOULD THE NEA BE ABOLISHED?  
—HISTORICAL ANALYSIS AND PREDICTION OF ART POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES FROM REAGAN TO TRUMP—

TATSUHIRO SHINAGAWA  
Waseda University

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was founded as an independent federal agency in 1965 to support art activities in the United States. The uniqueness of this organization lies in that the art organizations that receive grants from the NEA must be able to raise the same or larger amount of funds from other sources. Even though the NEA is a small organization, there has been lots of discussion about whether the organization should exist or not in its 50 years history. Frédéric Martel says that the organization is already “dead.” This paper focuses on his argument, and analyzes if the NEA is still “dead” after the Obama Presidency by examining his art policy and the NEA. Thereafter, this thesis concludes if the NEA should be abolished or not, as the new U.S. President and his team requests.

INTRODUCTION

Art policy in the United States is unique, and unlike other countries, the United States does not have a ministry of culture, and separate governmental departments or organizations has conducted art policy or culture policy. One of these organizations is the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). The 36th U.S. President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act in 1965, and admitted the foundation of the NEA. The main role of this organization is grantmaking to art activities nationwide. There are both positive and negative opinions about this organization in its effectiveness to support art activities and its value of presence. This study first aims to understand the NEA and the uniqueness of art policy in the United States through historical and comparative analysis, and then answer the first research question whether the NEA is still “dead” after the Obama administration, followed by answering the main research question, whether the U.S. government should abolish the NEA under Trump’s presidency.

There are multiple studies focusing on the role of the NEA in art policy in the United States. One of the previous studies points out that “the NEA lower the quality of American
Art.”¹ From a different perspective, Frédéric Martel suggests one of the most remarkable outcomes in his book, *De la Culture en Amérique* (2009). By analyzing art policy and the NEA in the United States up until the administration of George W. Bush, Martel states that the NEA is already “dead” since it can no longer accomplish its foundational roles. This thesis will conclude whether the NEA is still “dead” under the Obama administration by analyzing these claims and art policy conducted by the President Obama.

Furthermore, this paper will discuss the possible future of the NEA under the new U.S. President. After Donald J. Trump became the 45th president of the United States in January 2017, the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) might “eliminated entirely”² in the near future in order to reduce governmental expenditure. Accordingly, the petition to stop the defunding of the NEA had been created using the “We the People” online platform, launched under the administration of the former president, Barack Obama. Using research gathered from the current state of the NEA, this thesis analyzes its future and aims to figure out whether the NEA should be abolished or not.

1. ART POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

Before discussing the NEA, this section briefly discusses the uniqueness of art policy in the United States. A unique point of the art policy is its small-scale of the governmental support for art activities, unlike large-scale supports within European countries, such as France and Germany, which expends enormous amount of money as a part of the culture budget, considering the entire governmental budget. In fiscal year 2015, the ratio of the culture budget to the entire governmental budget was 1.09% ($4.7 billion) in France and 0.44% ($1.4 billion) in Germany. In contrast, in the United States, it was only 0.04% ($1.14 billion).³ Therefore, governmental support for art activities is more important in some European countries, such as Germany and France, compared with the United States.

Even compared with other financial support for art activities within the United States, governmental support is relatively small. According to a National Endowment for the Arts report, federal level financial support for nonprofit performing arts groups and museums only constitutes 1.2% of the total revenue.⁴ This small-scale support is based on the idea of the

independent operation of art activities, separated from the government. Shibuya points out that this basic idea derives from the foundation of the United States, where immigrants, wanting freedom, built an independent country in the new land. In addition, the goal of art policy in the United States is not merely for stimulating art activities. The support for art activities should also result in solving or improving problems that other policies deal with, such as educational divide and poverty, which U.S. citizens regard as more important than art policy itself. In the New Deal, the U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt conducted very extensive projects to support art activities, such as the Public Works of Art Project, in which artists were asked to draw murals on the walls of public buildings. The reason for creating these support projects is to help solve the loss of jobs that artists faced after the Great Depression (1929-1939). Even in the beginning, as Martel writes, the idea of creating the NEA along with the National Endowment for the Humanities made the foundation of the NEA possible. By creating them at the same time, President Johnson was able to get enough support for the foundation of the NEA. Therefore, there is a tendency that if governmental support merely art activities, such as supporting an art exhibition, it is difficult to gain wide support from people. If the art exhibition, for example, leads to local revitalization, it is much easier to get support.

The other important thing to understand in art policy at the federal-level in the United States is tax deduction. Historically, in the United States, the idea that the government should not directly help art activities and other organizations should do instead is common in order to assure their freedom. Based on this idea, large amounts of philanthropy from foundations, endowments, and other organizations are very common in the United States. The local, state, and federal government spending on arts constitutes only 6.8% of the total revenue, while foundations, corporations, and individuals in total constitute 38.2%. “Americans donate approximately $13 billion to the category ‘Arts, Culture, and the Humanities’ in 2011.” This amount of money further exceeds the budget of the NEA, which was only $147 million in 2016. Tax deduction policy contributes to the popularity of donations in the United States. If charitable contributions are claimed as donations, this allows “adjusted gross income” to be deductible “by up to 50%.” As for individual charitable contributions, there is a tendency that the higher the income, the more likely they donate to arts and cultural organizations, as opposed to religious organizations.

In conclusion, the scale of governmental support for art

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7 How the United States, p.1
8 Ibid.
10 How the United States. p.19
activities in the U.S. is relatively small compared with some European countries. The reasons for this small scale of support are negative impression towards direct governmental support for art activities, and donations from outside of the government far exceed the governmental support. Tax deduction helps the popularity of donation.

2. THE ROLE OF THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS THAT CONSTITUTE ART POLICY IN THE UNITED STATES

The previous section explains the uniqueness of art policy in the United States. This section explains the NEA and how other organizations and individuals affect art policy in the United States. These other organizations and individuals include the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Smithsonian Institute, the First Lady, and the President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities. The foundation of the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) was in 1965 under the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson. The NEA “was not intended to solve a problem, but rather to embody a hope.”

The aim of the foundation of this organization was to enable U.S. citizens to access to art activities, which, they believed, would contribute to the “artistic prosperity.” In regards to art policy in the federal-level, the National Endowment for the Arts plays an iconic role, though some argue that it has never been the most important aspect of art policies in the United States. Without a doubt, the NEA attracts the attention of both Congress and people to art policy and art activities. Though founded in 1965 under President Johnson’s administration, the concept of the NEA had been evolving for decades. In Congress, Jacob K. Javits proposed the idea of a federal-level art organization in 1949 when he was the member of the U.S House of Representatives. He emphasized the importance of making “an integrated, country-wide organization aided by the Federal government.”

Under the presidency of John F. Kennedy, the idea became more concrete, and under the Johnson Presidency, the concept became reality, as the NEA, an independent federal agency. Congress authorizes and appropriates the budget of the NEA. In 2016, the budget was $147,949,000, and its cost per American was only $0.46. Therefore, as a relatively small budget, it accounted “for just over .002 percent of federal discretionary spending.”

12 Ibid.
Regardless of its size, this agency has caused both positive effects and controversy in not only art field but also political field in the United States.

The main goal of this organization is to fund, promote, and strengthen “the creative capacity of our communities by providing all Americans with diverse opportunities for arts participation.” In addition, nurturing artists or people engaged in art is another important goal of this organization, and by 2011, the mission statement of this organization included providing “leadership in arts education.” The main roles of the NEA are grantmaking, creating partnerships, conducting research, and creating platforms where artists can communicate. Among them grantmaking is the most important role. The National Council on the Arts acts as an advisory board to the chairman and currently, the council consists of 18 members. The roles of this council are to do “reviews and makes recommendations to the Chairman on applications for grants, funding guidelines, and leadership initiatives.”

The U.S. president nominates the chairman to a four-year-term. Congress must confirm the nomination. Because of the process of confirmation, the U.S. President has historically had difficulties in getting confirmation of the nomination, which caused the position absent multiple times. Since the appropriation is proposed by the U.S. President but has to be admitted by Congress, it is difficult to increase the appropriation unless both the U.S. President and Congress would like to increase that.

In order to successfully receive grants, an art organization has to apply for a grant, and then a panel reviews the application, then the National Council on the Arts, and finally, the chairman of the NEA. Grantmaking by the NEA takes the form of matching funds. In order to receive grants, art organizations must be able to raise the same or larger amount of funds from other sources. Martel writes that this style of fundraising is appropriate for the United States, because it can hedge the risk of the heavy reliance by artists or art organizations on the nation for supporting their activities, which can assure the independent operation of activities without the interference from the government.

Even though direct support to art activities by the federal government is limited to a low level compared with other countries, the federal government directly supports some art facilities financially. These organizations include a performing arts center and federal museums. The appropriation for The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., which was in development under John F. Kennedy and named in his honor after his assassination, was $23 million in 2012. The appropriation for the Smithsonian Institution,

19 Martel, De la Culture, p.91
which operates some of the largest museums in the U.S., especially in Washington, D.C., was $812 million in 2012, which far exceeded the appropriation for the NEA.20

Besides these organizations, the First Lady and President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities contribute to the federal-level art policy. The First Lady has historically influenced art policies in the United States. In other words, First Lady supplements the role related to art policies that should be conducted by the president, who is too busy to do so. Former First Lady Laura Bush admitted that her husband, former President George W. Bush, was too busy to focus on the art during his term in office, but now he is interested in art.21 The expectation for the First Lady is to lead the President’s Committee on the Arts and the Humanities as an honorary chairman with other chairmen. The establishment of this committee was in 1982 under President Ronald Reagan, and his wife, Nancy Reagan became the first honorary chairman. With this organization, the First Lady is expected to attend art events, welcome artists at the White House, start art-related programs, and collaborates with the NEA. Even though the First Lady do multiple roles in this committee, rather than directly leading this committee by proposing actions to support art activities, the First Lady plays a role of spokesman in this organization. In multiple ceremonies, the First Lady mentions the activities of this committee to gain nationwide citizens’ attention. The budget of the NEA reflects the costs of this committee, and the committee has a very strong relationship with the NEA accordingly. Therefore, historically, the NEA has a stronger relationship with the First Lady, rather than with the U.S. president. One of the accomplishments of this committee, for example, is to catalyze “the federal Save America’s Treasures (1999) to leverage public/private investment in our nations cultural and historic resources.”22 Therefore, the First Lady has played a symbolic role in art policy in the United States, and has attracted attention.

In sum, while the NEA has played an important role in art policy in the United States by grantmaking, there are other organizations involved in the policy, and the appropriation for the Smithsonian Institute far exceeds that for the NEA. In addition, it is important to note that the First Lady has played an important role in the policy.

20 How the United States. p.14
3. IS THE NEA “DEAD”?

Thus far, this paper explicated art policy in the United States, and the role of the NEA and other organizations in the policy. This section is dedicated to explain the history of the NEA under the presidency of Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton, when the position of the NEA dramatically changed. After these periods, Frédéric Martel argues that the NEA is “dead” in his book, De la Culture en Amérique (2009). Therefore, while explaining the history of the NEA, this section explicates the situation that the NEA is “dead.”

Before focusing on the NEA under each U.S. president, “Culture Wars” is an important concept to understand in order to discuss the history of the NEA in the time periods. This concept was widespread when Buchanan used it in the Republican National Convention. “There is a religious war going on in this country. It is a cultural war, as critical to the kind of nation we shall be as was the Cold War itself, for this war is for the soul of America.”23 After this declaration, “the idea of a clash of cultures has become a common theme in discussions of American politics.”24 In Hunter’s book, Culture wars: the struggle to define America (1991), in Culture Wars, there are two poles, “Orthodox” and “Progressive,” and the conflict between these two polls happened multiple times under the three presidents’ administration.25 In the NEA case in these time periods, “Progressive” are especially artists who advocates the idea of progressive or sometimes obscene art, and “Orthodox” are Congressmen and some Presidents who are against progressive arts. The situation under each presidency can be referred as “the trigger of the collapse of the NEA,” “the acceleration to the collapse,” and “the aftermath of the collapse,” respectively.

Ronald Reagan is the first U.S. president who expressed interest in eliminating the NEA, as testified by Mr. McHenry, “Some people in the coming Administration wanted the endowment to disappear.”26 The background idea of this suggestion came from the conservatives’ criticism of the NEA as supporting unqualified artists or art organizations. The main criticism over the NEA is that it “has only stimulated institutions and many artists themselves to cooperate in the paying of undisguised public tributes to those who are neither

artists nor even patrons, but rather representatives of the people.”

This idea to eliminate the NEA, however, was torn down after “its special task force on the arts and humanities discovered ‘the needs involved and the benefits of past assistance.’”

Even though the NEA was able to survive, the decision of the NEA about which artworks to support often got controversial. Under such circumstances, Martel states that during this presidency, we can see the birth of a censorship issue that later caused further controversy in the 1980s and eventually led to the separation of the NEA from its original goal.

Under the presidency of George H. W. Bush, the structure of the culture war between “Orthodox” and “Progressive” became clearer. “Orthodox” consisted of conservatives and others who are against the NEA, and “Progressive” consisted of majority of artists, and advocates of the NEA. Under his presidency, the criticism over the NEA got tougher for supporting art activities that were not morally appropriate for “Orthodox,” such as art including sexual expression. Due to this culture war, the White House got more deeply involved in the operation of the NEA in order to calm the controversy. The NEA shifted its direction to limit support to art activities criticized by “Orthodox,” but this only caused further criticism from “Progressive.”

The NEA was in danger of collapse, but it was promptly resolved after the Independent Commission submitted a report about the effectiveness of the NEA. This commission was formed “for the purpose of (A) Reviewing the National Endowment for the Arts grant making procedures, including those of its panel system; and (B) considering whether the standard for publicly funded art should be different than the standard for privately funded art.”

The report submitted by this commission in 1990 made sure that “the NEA must not operate solely in the interest of its direct beneficiaries,” and art activities supported should be selected “with respect for the differing beliefs and values of the American people.” Furthermore, the prohibition “for underwriting projects that could be considered obscene, sadomasochistic or homoerotic, the ban was dropped.”

A year later, however, “Orthodox” regained its power and again supports for radical artists were further criticized. This further criticism caused two consequences, the first of which was the resignation of the chairman of the NEA, and the second was the acceptance of restricting the content of art activities supported by the NEA. In 1991, the amendment that “prohibits the endowment from using any of its funds to promote or disseminate materials ‘that depict or describe, in a patently offensive way, sexual or excretory activities or organs’” was voted to

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30 Ibid.

Martel mentioned this final result as the loss of every artist engaged in the culture war.

Artists welcomed Bill Clinton because of his and his wife’s, Hillary Clinton, love of the arts, but it was not enough to change the aftermath of the controversy. Because of the dominance of Republicans in Congress, the budget of the NEA dropped from $160 million to $100 million. Such an undesired outcome shifted the attention of the president away from art policy in the end. Martel mentioned Bill Clinton as someone who preferred socializing with artists, rather than conducting art policy. The NEA got more and more out of concern of the U.S. president and his team.

In the end, Martel explains the current situation of the NEA by pointing out that the NEA is dead. This means that the NEA can no longer accomplish the roles that it had from inception to the Reagan Presidency. The roles were to support private level initiatives and philanthropy, strengthen support in the local level, and supplement the market for supporting art activities while assuring the non-interference by the federal government. The role of assuring the non-interference by the government is no longer secure because of the admittance of interference in the content of the art activities supported by the NEA by the acceptance of the amendment in 1991. This means that the NEA can no longer be the source of vitality of art activities in the U.S. Though Martel highly evaluated the contribution of the NEA to give recognition to artists and arts, he also implied that the collapse of the NEA returned America’s art environment and support back to its original form by saying that everything attempted through the NEA ended up as failures. In this case, the original form means the supporting structure for art activities through philanthropy and donations, rather than through funding and interference by the government.

4. ART POLICY AND THE NEA UNDER THE OBAMA PRESIDENCY

The statement that the NEA is “dead” by Martel derived from analysis before Barack Obama became the 44th U.S. president in 2009. This section analyzes art activities and art policies including the NEA under the Obama Presidency. Based on the understanding in this section, the next section aims to answer the first research question, whether the NEA is “dead” even after the Obama Presidency.

Obama showed his commitment to support art activities even before he became the U.S. president. Obama became the first presidential nominee who had clearly supported art

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33 Martel, De la Culture. p.92
policies in his presidential campaign under the name of “Champions for Arts and Culture.” In order to reflect his idea to support art on this policy, he formed Obama National Arts Policy Committee during the campaign. The policy itself, however, is fundamentally an extension of his other main policies. In other words, in this “Champions for Arts and Culture,” Obama was able to show how his main policies can be applied to artists and that he cared about their livelihood. This idea is clear from one of the items included in this policy, “Provide Health Care to Artists,” an extension of his main accomplishment, the Affordable Care Act, known as Obamacare. This and his revolutionary image as the first African American presidential candidate effectively attracted advocates from famous artists, such as Aretha Franklin, one of many who attended his inaugural ceremony and pre-inaugural concert. He was also very successful in validating his stance to support art by connecting it with other important issues in this policy. As was mentioned, in the United States, it is very important to show how art policies can be connected to other important policies. This can be seen from multiple items in the policy, such as “Reinvest in Arts Education,” and “Attract Foreign Talent,” which are connected to educational problem and immigration issues respectively. He also promised to support increased funding for the NEA.

After elected, he was able to accomplish some items listed in Champions for Arts and Culture. For example, he promised to “Create an Artist Corps” in his campaign. After he became the president, “he signed the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, which ‘increases the number of positions within the AmeriCorps program from 75,000 to 250,000 by 2017,’ ” and he kept his promise to create an artist corps. President Obama accomplished in increasing budget for the NEA in 2010, which he promised in the policy, but he was not able to sustain that budget because of his deteriorating relationship with Congress. In 2010, the budget had reached $167 million, but it dropped to $138 million in 2013.

Each figure about the NEA shows that it has remained stable under the Obama Presidency. By the end of the Obama Presidency, the budget of the NEA had only dropped $13 million, or 8%, which was not as dramatic as it had been during the Clinton Presidency. In contrast, it is important to note that the appropriation for the Smithsonian Institute was increased significantly from $761 million in 2010 to $920 million in 2015, a 20% increase.

The number of grants offered by the NEA was stable as well, around 2,300; though the number of exhibitions supported remarkably decreased from over 4,000 in 2012 to around 1,600 in 2013, reflecting the decrease in the appropriation of the NEA from $146 million to $138 million. Overall, it can be said that the NEA has been stable under the Obama administration. Another remarkable figure is that of matching funds. The official report of the

NEA says that “the ratio of matching to federal funds is approximately 7-10 to one” \(^{36}\) in 2014, and “10:1”\(^{37}\) in 2015, even though the required ratio is one to one. Therefore, art organizations effectively get support from outside of the NEA while utilizing the grants provided by the NEA.

Two individuals, Rocco Landesman, and Jane Chu, worked as a chairman of the NEA under the Obama Presidency, and they took different approaches. President Obama appointed Rocco Landesman as the chairman of the NEA in 2009, but he resigned in 2012, after he finished his four-year term. Afterwards, it took so long to find the next president of the NEA that there was a two-year gap in which an acting chairman filled the position. Finally in 2014, President Obama appointed Jane Chu as chairman.

There are both positive and negative reviews about the NEA under Landesman administration, but one thing that is agreed upon is that he tried to change the NEA from its original structure, but he was disappointed with what the NEA could do because of the small budget of the organization. Landesman was famous as a producer of musicals such as “The Producers,” reminiscent of the first president of the NEA, Roger L. Stevens, who was also the producer of musicals. Initially, he was motivated, answered lengthy interviews conducted by multiple members of the media, and talked about his intention to empower the NEA. He said that “the mission of the NEA is to support artists, and the best way to do that is to support them directly,”\(^{38}\) which is not necessarily true from what the NEA has accomplished historically. Rather than emphasizing directly supporting artists, the NEA has pulled support from philanthropy by supporting such initiative. Dobrzynski praised Landesman’s practicality.\(^{39}\) From the beginning, he visited multiple art sights in the United States, which was named the “Art Works” tour. In addition, he proposed practical art programs, such as MICD25, which supported creative place-making projects in twenty-one communities in the United States.

There was one issue during his administration. Multiple news sources pointed out the possibility of corruption in the NEA, by pointing out that it encouraged “artists to create work that promote[d] the Obama agenda” in an August 10 conference call.\(^{40}\) Since the conference call had happened before his arrival at the NEA, he was not directly involved in

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this incident. In the official statement, while he admitted that some inappropriate words had been uttered in the conference, he made sure that the grantmaking process of the NEA was unrelated to that incident. This issue, however, gave the impression that the NEA was interfering in the content of art activities it supported, and led to the further loss of trust in the organization.

After finishing four-year term, he decided not to renew for a second term. In his resignation statement, he said that his “intention has always been to serve one term,” but he did not clarify this position when he started his term as a chairman, and the reason for stepping down could be something else. The reason for his resignation is considered to have been his disappointment with what he and the NEA was able to do in the political world with the small budget, though it was also he who was not able to keep the budget once it had been increased in 2010. He was “not exactly the Washington type; he is a fast-moving, risk-taking entrepreneur who is colorful…and blunt.” In addition, he specialized in musical, for profit art activities, which is diversely different from the not-for-profit art activities, with which the NEA is most concerned about. He himself understood this point, and so before his resignation, Landesman said, “an artist or someone with deep connection to artists and the nonprofit world would be an ideal choice” for the next chairman of the NEA.

The next chairman was “an artist someone with deep connection” to “the nonprofit world,” as Landesman suggested. President Obama finally appointed Jane Chu as the first Asian American chairman of the NEA in 2014 after a two-year vacancy of this position. She was a musician as well as was engaged in the Kauffman Center for the Performing Arts in Kansas City as a president, and was very knowledgeable about philanthropy and not-for-profit art activities. Obama nominated her, saying that “Jane’s lifelong passion for the arts and her background in philanthropy have made her a powerful advocate for artists and arts education in Kansas City.” Unlike her predecessor, Chu is seeking stability, rather than change. After she joined, the NEA played more of a role as a representation of art and art activities in the United States. One of typical activities is the “Tell Us Your Story!” Program started to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the NEA. In this program, artists were, with the help of the NEA, sharing their activities through the NEA website and social media. Through

44 Ibid.
activities like this, Chu has been accelerating the role of the NEA as representation of art activities in the United States. In addition, Chu’s administration further accelerated the use of online communication, which had been a focus when Landesman was the chairman. This included starting social media accounts, and since then online strategy has played a larger and larger role. The organization has started to offer webinar so that people can get more information about art from their homes.

President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities was active under Michelle Obama’s lead. The First Lady’s strategy to activate the committee was to connect art activities with education. Michelle Obama was famous for her accomplishments in education, and she was able to successfully connect art activities with her interest, education. Collaborating with the NEA, for example, the committee started the National Arts & Humanities Youth Program Awards, in order to praise “outstanding afterschool and out-of-school programs that are transforming the lives of young people.” In addition, in the creation of Artist Corps, which President Obama promised in Champions for Arts and Culture and realized, the Committee’s research activities and reports, “Reinvesting in Arts Education: Winning America’s Future Through Creative Schools” contributed to create the corps. Furthermore, the committee accomplished a noticeable achievement in art diplomacy. The delegation, consisting mostly of the committee and the NEA, visited Cuba to stimulate cultural exchange between the United States and Cuba. This visit led to “the public announcement of seven bilateral collaborations, the first government-to-government initiatives to advance the policy of normalizing relations with Cuba.”

The other point to note is Obama’s tax reform plan, though it had not been realized. He had tried to raise tax on the wealthy people, but there were criticisms that such a tax reform plan would lead to the reduction of money used on philanthropy or charitable giving. This tax reform did not pass because of rejection from Congress, and the amount of money used for charitable giving was steadily increased during the Obama Presidency, from $290.89 billion in 2010 to $373.25 in 2015.

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5. OBAMA’S INFLUENCE ON ART POLICY AND THE NEA

In section 4, this report discusses how President Obama conducted art policy and operated the NEA. In this section, this report analyzes his art policy and the operation of the NEA by answering the first research question, whether the NEA is still dead after the Obama Presidency.

Before answering the question, first, did Obama change art policy in the United States, or did he impact art policy positively? The overall answer is No. It is true that he and his team made some accomplishments, such as creating Artist Corps in this field. Michelle Obama and the President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities found its way to support art activities by combining them with educational purposes, to avoid possible criticisms from others, especially those who are still against the idea of direct federal-level support of art activities. However, President Obama was not able to increase the budget for the NEA in the end, and he was not able to change art policy itself and people’s opinions about art policy in the U.S.

Then, is the NEA still dead after the Obama Presidency? Yes, because the U.S. President was less and less interested in the NEA, and the art activities that the NEA can support remains to be relatively limited. By the end of the Obama administration, it was clear that the separation between the NEA and the presidency increased. Even though he had proposed the increase in the budget of the NEA in his presidential election campaign, Champions for Arts and Culture, this was not realized, though the budget for the Smithsonian Institution was increased. This reality explains the decrease in the president’s interest in the small organization, the NEA. This organization remained to be less prioritized. It is also clear from the fact that the chairman position of the NEA remained unfilled for two years, and the budget request from the President to Congress remained stationary at a low level, rather than requesting the budget increase directly to Congress. In addition, the two chairmen under Obama administration could not ask for the review of “decency clause,” which was included in the 1990 bill to take “into consideration general standards of decency,” and were not able to support a wide range of art activities, as the NEA president under George W. Bush was not able to accomplish. Therefore, the NEA under the Obama Presidency merely validated Martel’s statement, the NEA is dead.

6. POSSIBLE FUTURE OF THE NEA AND ART POLICY

UNDER THE TRUMP PRESIDENCY

This section discusses the possible future of the NEA and the concerns of art policy under the new president, Donald J. Trump. The future will not be bright. With Barack Obama having finished his presidency, what will Trump, who was able to garner attention without the need of celebrities during his presidential campaign, do instead? His team already implied the huge budget cuts of the NEA, which will lead to the elimination of the NEA.\(^{51}\) The main reason reported for this proposal is to cut federal spending. The other reason is that the elimination and budget cut of the NEA is what Trump and some Congressmen have wanted to accomplish for a long time after they found out that the NEA supported offensive or obscene art. Trump had already showed a similar idea in 1999. When it was revealed that the NEA supported offensive art, he made it clear that he believed federal funds for such art must be cut. When Ronald Reagan had discussed abolishing the NEA with his team, the idea was overthrown by the proposal of the special task force, but will that happen this time around? No. The present NEA is different from the one under the Reagan Presidency. There is little possibility that such a task force will appear and so the NEA will likely have to go through this crisis. This is also clear from the ongoing result of the petition asking not to defund the NEA or NEH. As of January 30th, it has only received 1,308 signatures, though it aims to get 100,000.\(^{52}\) The people already forget the NEA, and there are few people who really care about the loss of the NEA.

Besides the NEA, there are two concerns about art policy conducted under the new President Trump. The first one is about the First Lady and the President’s Committee on the Arts and Humanities. The new first lady finally moved to the White House in June, months after the inauguration ceremony of the new U.S. President, and she became a new honorary chairman of the Committee. There are no clues, however, regarding how she would engage art policy or she would lead the President’s Committee on Arts and Humanities as an honorary chairman. The second reason is that well-respected artists do not favor the new U.S. President. Many artists rejected the offers to perform in the inauguration ceremony and pre-inaugural concert. Because of the situation, there is a huge question remaining about art policy under the Trump Presidency.

7. SHOULD THE NEA BE ABOLISHED?

\(^{51}\) Depending on the source, the expression is different. Some sources say that the huge budget cut will eliminate the NEA, and other sources say that Trump will eliminate the NEA.

The previous section referred to the strong possibility that the NEA will be eliminated, or almost eliminated because of the huge budget cuts under the Trump Presidency in the near future. Under this context, should the NEA be abolished? The position of this paper is that it is better to be abolished since judging from the current situation, in order to survive, the NEA might be used just for in favor of politicians and cannot assure the independence of art activities from the interference from politicians, despite the benefit that the organization can bring to society. In this section, this paper introduces both positions that why the NEA should be abolished and why the NEA should not be abolished, and based on that this paper explicates the position that the NEA is better to be abolished.

Those who believe the NEA should be abolished share the same reasons as that of Trump’s team came up with. They believe that federal money should not be used for supporting art activities, especially for the NEA. Packard says in 1997 in Congress, “we need to put an end to this inefficient cycle by admitting that the Federal Government has no business funding the arts and eliminate the NEA.” However, those who believe that the NEA should not be abolished points out the benefits that the NEA can bring thanks to the fact that it is a nation-level governmental organization, and people often overlook such benefits. The benefits include its effectiveness to attract support despite its small budget, its role as a representative symbol of art activities in the United States, and its role in nurturing the self-management skill of art organization. First, the NEA’s system of fund matching effectively worked in the United States, and can attract further donation or philanthropy to art activities. As was mentioned in the 2015 Annual Report of the NEA, now the ratio of funding from outside of the NEA to the grants approved by the NEA to the funding from the NEA is 10:1. As was stated before, when the art organization receives grants from the NEA, it has to get the same amount of financial support from outside of the NEA. According to this data, currently when the organization gets $5,000 grants from the NEA, it gets $50,000 grants from outside of the NEA. This shows that the NEA grants still attract further support to the art activities. Second, even though the NEA is “dead” as described by Martel, the representational role of art activities in the United States is still not negligible as he supposed. The NEA has historically given recognition to many different art activities. Even in the middle of controversy, small-scale ‘obscene’ art activities got recognition because of the criticism by the conservatives, ironically. Especially in this digital era, the NEA has started to use online communication effectively, and there is an opportunity to increase such a representational roles. In addition, Katayama mentions the fact that the NEA has nurtured

its self-management skills of art organizations is one of the points that validate the NEA.\textsuperscript{54} In order to get through the process of receiving grants from the NEA, the art organizations have to clearly explain why the grants are necessary, and raise the same amount of funds from other sources. He mentions that this rigid system helps art organizations develop its self-management skill.

These benefits that the NEA can bring are strong enough to support the existence of the NEA, but it is also true that the influence of the NEA is relatively insignificant and cannot deny the possibility of interference by the President or Congress in terms of the art activities that the organization supports. President Obama could not change the situation that the NEA is dead. The budget remained low, and the NEA could not remove decency clause that required that art activities supported by the organization must meet general standards of decency. In addition, the present government does not fully understand the positive influence of the NEA, and the organization is on the verge of elimination. The NEA no longer has strong influence and so the organization itself cannot make the present government realize the importance of the organization. One of the solutions for the NEA to survive is to increase the number of grants given to Trump’s supporters and cooperate with states or local agencies that have a large support base for Trump after the election. By doing that, the NEA would allow the new U.S. President’s team to understand the importance of its organization. The other solution is for the NEA to increase its support for art activities that are not radical or obscene, favored by some conservative Congressmen, which in turn would help the NEA get support from Congress, which has the right to admit the proposed appropriation of the NEA, instead of the U.S. president. Either solution, however, would just end up accelerating the death of the NEA, and the organization would merely become the supporters for Trump or conservative Congressmen. The possibility of such case was already evident under Obama administration. Even though the former NEA president Landesman partly denied, the NEA was partly used for the Obama Administration to further “propaganda for its pet causes – health care, energy, and the environment.”\textsuperscript{55} It is difficult to deny that the same thing will happen in the present administration. Considering the situation under Trump, it will be the best to accept the abolition of the NEA, rather than allowing a single political party or President to use it as a political tool because it will not be able to promote art independence from the government and provide the assurance of freedom for the artists. Fortunately, the supporting structure for art activities and others are strongly structured in the United States, partly because of the contribution by the NEA, and the support for art activities will not be eliminated in the near future even without the NEA, though the level of the support may decrease since the NEA can no longer offer matching grant function. In addition, the loss of the NEA will be a disadvantage for artists in that they lose one representative voice in the

\textsuperscript{54} Katayama. Amerika no. p.217

government.

CONCLUSION

The present thesis answers the two research questions, whether the NEA is still “dead” after the Obama Presidency, and whether the U.S. government should abolish the NEA under Trump’s presidency. First, the NEA remains “dead” after Obama’s administration. The NEA under Obama could not remove the possibility of political interference on the art activities supported by the NEA. The NEA could no longer help art activities while assuring the freedom of artists or art organizations. Furthermore, the U.S. President got less and less interested in this small organization, the NEA, since the budget is relatively limited and even though it is small, the possibility that this organization becomes the source of controversy is strong.

Then, should the U.S. government abolish the NEA under Trump’s presidency? The answer is it is better to abolish the organization. The NEA should not be abolished in nature, judging from the positive effects that can cause to art activities, but considering current situation, there is a strong possibility that continuing the existence of the NEA will result in political interference on the art activities. In order to avoid that, it is better to abolish the NEA. Even though the NEA is “dead,” and can no longer be the very effective organization to support art activities, the accomplishments of the organization, such as attracting further support for art activities, should never be underestimated. Even though the organization has been plagued with many crises, it has endured and continued to play key roles in art awareness and grantmaking. The key roles reveal the strength and importance of the NEA, however the situation has changed. It is better for the NEA to accept its elimination rather than straying away from its fundamental principals which include supporting art activities without the interference of the government and assurance of freedom for the artists. One of the possible ways for the NEA to survive is to support art activities that the current leader or congressmen of the United States favors, but this means that the organization became merely satisfying the government, not artists. Therefore, the NEA is better to be eliminated in the current situation.

This thesis strives to analyze past, current, and future events at the federal level, and does not delve into those at the local or state-level. In addition, this thesis does not go into the role of other organizations, such as foundations for supporting art activities. If the NEA were to be eliminated, these other organizations will be expected to fill the role of the NEA. In regards to further research, how these organizations can complement the loss of the NEA could be further researched.
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