Advancing American Art and Its Afterlife: from the State Department to the University Museum

Title: Advancing American Art and Its Afterlife: from the State Department to the University Museum.

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The chief objective of this study is to examine the post-1948 life of forty-six paintings, originally a part of the United States Department of State's Advancing American Art collection. When given a second life after the collection's aborted international tour and subsequent auction, these paintings helped shape the university/museum collections and identities of four regional academic institutions: Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama; the University of Georgia, Athens; the University of Oklahoma, Norman; and the University of Washington, Seattle. No one has yet treated the domestic aftermath of the Advancing American Art exhibition and the fate of the State Department's collection. Yet the acquisition of paintings from Advancing American Art by colleges and universities formed the nuclei of their collections of American art. In the process, the acquired works vivified the study of American contemporary art in the 1940s and 1950s, helped develop the modernist canon in the United States, advanced the careers of American artists associated with the exhibition, and contributed to the development of American art.
associated with the exhibition, and contributed to the development of prominent regional cultural facilities, and by extension the universities' respective identities. In addition, an analysis of the post-exhibition lives of these paintings amplifies the socio-political context of the exhibition beyond what has been written. Traditional study of American art has focused on the artists and stylistic movements emerging from major metropolitan areas, particularly in the northeastern U.S., thus marginalizing other sections of the country. Little has been written about the role played by regional fine art collections and the museums that house them in defining the nation's art history. The Advancing American Art exhibition offers an important opportunity to study that role. Instead of making the controversial paintings disappear into the depths of storage vaults, universities displayed them as important examples of avant-garde American art. Furthermore, the dissemination of the paintings to the South, Midwest, and Northwest broadened the audience for vanguard art domestically. Thus, this study of regional collections, using the wealth of virtually untapped archival resources available, aids understanding of the reception of contemporary art outside larger metropolitan areas. A rigorous reconsideration of the subject demonstrates that the dispersal of paintings to four forward-thinking regional public academic institutions contributes to our more nuanced understanding of the regional reception of modernist art. More important, a study of the unanticipated consequences of the cancellation of the touring exhibition also provides insight into the institutional histories of regional American museums. Regional universities had a critical need for original paintings, as they developed new curricula in contemporary visual arts to accommodate increased student enrollment due to returning military personnel from World War II. Thus, the dispersal of the collection contributed to the growth of academic programs, the stimulation of interest in current American art, and the development of the prominent fine art museums now located on these campuses. Based in part upon previously untapped archival resources, this study considers for the first time these four institutional recipients of paintings from the Advancing American Art collection and paves the way for future scholarship on the exhibition's regional impact.

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A number of American universities and colleges are home to Confucius Institutes, partially funded and controlled by the PRC. What I have come to learn through running economic diplomacy for the State Department is that nowhere are the CCP’s human rights abuses more pronounced than in the mass internment camps of the Xinjiang region and the indentured servitude of its population shipped all over China. This is due to Article 177 of the PRC Securities Law and its longstanding prohibition on PRC firms providing work papers to foreign regulatory agencies on the basis of concerns about “state secrets” in financial documentation. In the fight against authoritarianism, universities can continue to benefit from the largess of an Advancing American Art and its Afterlife: from the State Department to the University Museum. Article. Jan 2010. Lana Ann Burgess. The Advancing American Art exhibition offers an important opportunity to study that role. Instead of making the controversial paintings disappear into the depths of storage vaults, universities displayed them as important examples of avant-garde American art. Furthermore, the dissemination of the paintings to the South, Midwest, and Northwest broadened the audience for vanguard art domestically. Thus, this study of regional collections, using the wealth of virtually untapped archival resources available, aids understanding of the reception of contemporary art outside larger metropolitan areas. Unknown to the artists, the new American art was secretly promoted under a policy known as the "long leash" - arrangements similar in some ways to the indirect CIA backing of the journal Encounter, edited by Stephen Spender. The decision to include culture and art in the US Cold War arsenal was taken as soon as the CIA was founded in 1947. In 1947 the State Department organised and paid for a touring international exhibition entitled "Advancing American Art", with the aim of rebutting Soviet suggestions that America was a cultural desert. To pursue its underground interest in America’s lefty avant-garde, the CIA had to be sure its patronage could not be discovered.