



FROM THE CENTER OUT

Arts Addendum

In July of 1983, the North Carolina Museum of Art, in a new \$16 million Raleigh home, will present the paintings of Yanceyville artist Maud Gatewood as the premier show in its North Carolina Gallery. A peak in Gatewood's career, the show could have pushed her towards the highly competitive New York art world. But her achievement seems to have caused her instead to embrace the strengths of the North Carolina cultural milieu. "Artists must be willing to risk an edge of insecurity in order to stand back, observe, and comment on the world," writes Gatewood in this issue of *N.C. Insight*.

Risking with Maud Gatewood "an edge of insecurity," we present a special five-year anniversary issue on the arts. The biggest show of our young career, this 80-page edition is far larger than any of our 19 previous efforts. To assist us in our task, we called on artists, arts administrators, and arts supporters to critique drafts of our prospectus, supply us with information, suggest writers and leads, and review manuscripts, tables, and photographs.

Like all maturing artists, we confronted difficult choices. How could we present the rich veins of the folk and fine arts traditions that have grown up in North Carolina? How could we view these two complex, interrelated traditions within the broader context of cultural resources—libraries, public television and radio, the humanities, historic preservation, and the effect of the arts on downtown revitalization? In our search for models and guides, we found no overview of arts policies in North Carolina (see "resources" box to the right for an annotated list of some of the documents we used). Consequently, we decided to focus on the arts—folk and fine—in the hopes of providing a lasting, comprehensive resource on state government's involvement in at least a portion of the world of culture. Other articles on broader cultural concerns would have to wait for another performance.

Offstage now, we began to review closely what policymakers love to call the "state of the arts." Like an overused reprise in a Broadway musical, the "state of the arts" sounds forth from virtually every arts-related speech in North Carolina. Our central task, then, was to test the proposition: Is North Carolina a leader in the

arts and if so, why?

No easy answer exists to this question. A recent survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) found North Carolina and California to have more good arts legislation than any other state.¹ North Carolina and California have enacted legislation in 5 of the 10 areas considered important by the NCSL, areas ranging from "state school for the arts" to "decentralization programs." Eight states, including only one southern state, South Carolina, have legislation in 4 of the 10 areas.

In another 1982 national survey, this one conducted by the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, North Carolina ranked 21st among 56 states and territories in per capita spending for the arts (44 cents per person).² The rankings were based on state appropriations to the official "arts agency" in each state. The figures include all 1982-83 special-bill line items for the arts but not state appropriations for the N.C. Symphony (\$1.9 million) or the N.C. Museum of Art (\$1.9 million). Other states have funding structures similar to North Carolina and hence made state appropriations to the arts which may not have been included in this survey. No state-by-state analysis exists that includes all types of state funding for the arts.

Regardless of how the state matches up in the arts—at the top with California in good legislation or somewhere in the top half in per capita funding—quantifying the arts is difficult. As policy analysts, we depended in large part on data in this milestone, 80-page issue. But as artists and writers, we found that figures may not tell the whole story.

"The fundamental role of the arts is different from the standard goals of business or politics," writes Gatewood. "Both government and business often use quantitative factors in determining courses of action or in measuring success. Artistic value cannot be measured numerically. Quality cannot be determined by popular demand."
—Bill Finger

FOOTNOTES

¹Reported in "Crescendo: The Growth of State Support for the Arts" by Deborah Bennington, *State Legislatures*, September 1982, p. 22.

²National Assembly of State Arts Agencies Annual Survey, October 15, 1982.