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**DONATIONS, FOUNDATIONS, SOME EXAMPLES OF PRIVATE
INITIATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES**

"To-day everybody has a foundation as one used to have dogs or canaries."

One of the new young race of protectors of the arts - they hate to be called "patrons", promoters would be more correct- described his activities to me in this way.

It is true that foundations have been multiplying in the United States for some time now, and not only for the arts but also in all other fields. It is already an established phenomenon.

Let us place it in a wider context.

First the American mentality, according to tradition, puts its trust in private initiative. It seems to me that this fact strikes every European who comes to the United States. One starts with confidence, then one judges afterwards, even if one has to clean up pitilessly and without possibility of appeal. This produces a great stimulus for the arts.

Secondly, American tax legislation is extremely favorable. I shall be brief. Every monetary donation that can be considered as a service to the American nation is tax deductible. I learnt with some surprise that American citizens can even deduct the tiny amounts given to collection at church on Sundays and that these amounts if reasonable are accepted without proof. Therefore there are great numbers of small sums.

The foundation is only one of an infinite variety of ways in which one can make philanthropic gifts tax deductible. One has agencies that collect donations, others that distribute them, other, again, that employed them : a wide range of activities, without any official supervision other than a formal verification that all is done in accordance with the law.

In this context, the foundation is only a special case; in effect the word itself is unknown in legislation; the law knows only "non-profit organisations". For example, the retirement funds are considered by the state on the same level as cultural foundations and treated according to the same principles. Inasmuch as a foundation is in accordance with the rules established by the laws for such organisations, they enjoy the same advantages especially as regards taxation. Let me define the foundation in a non-legal fashion as " a sum of money controlled by a certain number of persons for non-profit purposes and according to the law".

- I. I shall distinguish three types of organisations, all non-profit making connected with this circulation of donations and exchanges of services, left to private initiative and particularly important to the world of the arts.

a) "Flow-through" organisations. They collect and channel the donations. They may even organize fund-raising campaigns. The sums are passed on to user organisations which are also non-profit-making, and have a cultural purpose, research, creativity etc. The United Fund is the biggest of these organisations, but there are many others. For a huge number of small donors those whom I mentioned at the start, these organisations provide a guaranty that their donations are used correctly.

b) There are organisations that play the same rôle but are financially autonomous. They derive their income from the return on their own capital (and not from a crowd of anonymous donors). They also distribute this manna to other organisations in the form of grants, subsidies, supporting campaigns, acquisitions of materials or of works of art. There are almost a hundred of such organisations each of which carries the name of a great family or of a patron: The Ford Foundation, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Andrew Mellon Foundation, the Samuel Kress Foundation, etc... Thanks to them, gigantic sums are used for philanthropic, charitable, scientific or cultural purposes instead of being collected by the state in the form of astronomic taxes or death duties.

Who benefits from this substantial private support?

To start with, I should point out that in the United States, as in Britain, there is an incredible number of organisations. They are often minute and their aims could not be more diverse. Ranging from ecology to cultural initiative, from religious meditation to the raising of begonias, they are ^{run}by volunteers and have a small budget, often not more than \$ 10,000 by year, fed by the distributing organisations.

Other organisations having a wider range of purposes benefit also from these funds. I shall call them operational organisations. They could be hospitals, universities or museums. Most museums are supported by a number of sources but certain among them, relatively few, are the preserve of a "prince" and obtain their entire budget from a single source as in the case of the Paul Getty Museum. Such museums belong to a third category we shall study later. Acquisitions and operations, in general, are made possible by private donations as well as donations from business firms who wish to enjoy the same tax exemptions (the business Committee for the Arts is very active in this respect), or by subventions from the State or Federal Government via the National Endowment for the Arts, especially for the organisation of exhibitions; I do not count the income derived from the provisions of services, entrance fees, publications or interest on capital. The foundations play also a rôle in other activities of museums: preservation, restauration, archives, catalogues, research and additions to the collections. More than three thousand works of art have been given to seventy-six museums across the United States by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the Ford Foundation and the Samuel H. Kress Foundation.

c) Finally there are organisations or foundations which derive their resources from their own investment income or from their endowment but which take also the initiative as regards the use of these funds. This is true in particular in the world of the arts. Fabulous sums, coming from a single private person, sometimes allow the establishment and continuing life of a museum. We have already mentioned the Paul Getty Museum at Malibu near Los Angeles; we could also mention the Hirshhorn Museum at Washington.

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Spectacular ventures, sometimes of an extremely controversial nature, have been undertaken on private initiative. Thus, after being discussed in all New York newspapers the colossal Annenberg Fund is about to establish itself in Philadelphia and to set up an audio-visual center under the direction of Hoving, former director of the Metropolitan. In general terms it is the intention to set up an ideal museum with photographic reproductions, color slides, films and tape recordings. Foundation funded by a simple lover of the arts, commission works of art or participate in the financing at all levels of expenditure (an example is DIA ART of which we shall speak later). Such Foundations are behind research publications, the purchase of works of art for local museums or the museums of the town where they have their offices, teaching experiments, travelling exhibitions, creating museums or universities. That is the case of the Menil Foundation which will be also one of our examples.

In most cases the founding family has become a shareholder and the foundation is managed by a board depending in size on that of ^{the} foundation. This is true for organisations of type b) as well as of type c).

N.B. If we do not consider the aims and activities of the non-profit-making organisations we have just reviewed rapidly, but look at them instead from the point of view of management we can distinguish between two types of foundations:

- the "public foundations" which derive their income from a very large number of shareholders, the percentage per donor being limited by their statutes.
- the "private foundations" directed by a person or by a small group. For these, the checks by the tax inspectors are extremely detailed and severe in order to prevent

all abuses. It would be too easy, for example, to make a donation to one's own foundation, thus reducing one's taxable income, in order to award a fellowship to a member of one's own family.

II The Rôle of the Foundations

Without taking sides myself, I shall give the American point of view and the way in which the system was explained to me. It was presented as a marriage between private interest, that of the founder or donor, and general interest, that of the State and the public.

For the private person, the profitability is, strictly speaking negligible apart from being pure generosity. In any case the money invested in the foundation would have gone to the State in the form of taxes; on the other hand, the founder or donor buys himself in this way a personality or a brand image. He becomes a philanthropist, a benefactor, without counting the intellectual interest and the pleasure he derives from the activities he launches when he participates in the work of his foundation or when he builds up a collection. In a certain way he becomes a creator.

The state also benefits: it leaves to private individuals the responsibility for sectors which have never been profitable: museums, the support of artistic creation and research. They are considered as burdens or services, never as sources of profit. In the eyes of Europeans, of Frenchmen in particular, the United States seem to delegate a large part of their powers in the

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field of cultural activities, to citizens sufficiently rich and enterprising to take on these tasks, to the extent of leaving them the use of the money which would otherwise be collected as taxes. It is a kind of loan with "carte blanche" as regards the use to which the money is put.

The public and artistic life are the beneficiaries of this system.

-The competition between the various organisations instigates and stimulates initiative. In the search of an original brand image everyone has to show imagination. On the other hand the examples given by others stimulate and encourage.

-Members of the public take risks the State would not take.

The State, responsible for the money of the public, does not wish to risk it in doubtful or haphazard undertakings, requiring means and expenditures out of proportion with respect to the expected result. This is particularly true for "earth art" or "total art".

The artists, finally, can allow themselves to be daring thanks to the financial support from the foundations or private donors. They escape the forces of the market and can give their best according to their own ideas.

III THREE EXAMPLES

Three foundations are particularly interested in building up collections:

- The Menil Foundation at Houston
- DIA ART at New York
- The Lone Star Foundation at New York

a) The Menil Foundation

is now fifteen years old.

-Its first activity was to start a collection. The work of art, essentially of the 20th century were to be the essential constituents of the future museum. At present, most of them have been lent to foreign exhibitions. I should like to remind you of Look back, a selection of cubist works, Max Ernst at the Orangerie, or the participation at larger exhibitions such as Max Ernst at the Grand Palais or Dada and Surrealism last winter in London.

They also exhibit at the little museum next ^{to} Rice University which helps in the courses given at the Institute for the Arts of this University.

Other exhibitions are organised or partly financed by the foundation with works borrowed from elsewhere combined with those lent from the collection. They are presented at the Rice Museum, where they are also useful for the student or they may be travelling in Texas or even across the United States.

Some titles:

- "Drawings by visionary architects"
- "Grey is the colour" (an exhibition of grisaille)
- "Magritte"
- "Joseph Cornell"
- and in April "Fernand Léger" in the Texan Collections.

The purchase of works of art serves also the city of Houston: several sculptures by Toni Smith and "The Broken Obelisque" by Barnett Newmann in the area near the Rothko Chapel;

a particularly spectacular very large sculpture is planned for the future improvement of the space in front of the museum of Fine Arts.

Research is the second major activity of the foundation.

- The major project, The Image of the Black in Western Art is planned to run to several volumes. The first one appeared in autumn 1977. The second one is in preparation. For it, a permanent office in Paris, collects documentation. It is in the process of setting up a library of photographs and a documentation center for the research workers. Copies are sent to the New York office. Experts and specialists are writing and carrying out research all over the world.

- Two exhaustive catalogues are in preparation. They will be supplemented by essays and studies on the subject of the artists:

. The Complete Works of Magritte, in connection with which a documentation center on Surrealism was set up in London by David Silvester.

. The Complete Works of Max Ernst by Werner Spiess and Günther Metken.

- Catalogues are in preparation for the sections of the collection edited by art historians or specialists. They deal with african art, byzantine art, paintings and drawings and finally etchings and photographs.

-The last task, the most unexpected, is the management of a neighbourhood. It surrounds the Rothko Chapel and the University of Saint Thomas. The work consists of the rehabilitation of the houses, gardens, the protection and maintenance of the frame of life and even the promotion of a certain way of life by promoting better human relations between the inhabitants. The activities of the Rothko Chapel play a rôle in this, but they are not essential. The Chapel belongs to a different organisation and is managed by a board which has nothing to do with that of the Menil Foundation, even though the founders are the same.

b) DIA ART

founded in september 1974 with offices in New York.

Its peculiarity:

It is assisted by an advisory council consisting of collectors and of directors of galleries and museums.

Its aims:

This is not a " grant -giving foundation "; it commissions works of art or participates in the financing of large projects; it finances, administers and participates in the creation by supplying material, technical and administrative support; it takes responsibility and remains the proprietor of the works and charges itself with the publicity.

Its methods:

close collaboration with the artists.

Its activities:

covering very various fields of artistic creation:

-music: for a music festival in 1975, it provided support, for example for the "Dream House" and the "Wiltan Piano" of La Monte Young.

-theater: in the following year it supported the production of six plays in collaboration with the author Robert Withman and students chosen by him.

-visual arts: with the help from DIA, Dan Flavin produced another work at Grand Central Station in New York, which will now be extended to certain sections of the subway.

- 8 sculptures by John Chamberlain, called "Texan Pieces" in the mental hospital of Wood Island off Manhattan.

-last year "The One Mile piece of Brass" by Walter de Maria in front of the Museum at Kassel, 50 % financed by Documenta.

-most recently "The Lining Field" also by Walter de Maria, a large area 2/3 of a mile by one mile covered with pylons about one yard high and spaced one yard apart. This is situated not far from Albuquerque in the South of New Mexico and was opened to the public in June.

c) The Lone Foundation

founded in 1976 with offices in New York.

Two facts should be stated at the beginning:

Firstly one can not understand the works by an artist unless one compares a number of them. To see one or two in isolation, as is generally the case in a museum, is not sufficient. Secondly, certain modern works take up a considerable amount of space and are difficult to set up in a conventional museum.

Thus the activities of the Foundation are twofold:

-The acquisition of premises distributed across the United States, and then the premises are put at the disposal of artists which whom the Foundation has commissioned works. These will be exhibited permanently in them.

For example:

The foundation owns two buildings in New York already. In one of them, in Franklin Street, a complete floor is devoted to each artist.

In the other, Walter de Maria has filled certain rooms with earth, these are called Earth Rooms. Dan Flavin will also produce a work for it.

A building has been reserved for Don Judd in Texas.

A space has been reserved in New Mexico and another space is being put in order in Arizona to receive "The Sun & Moon Space" by Jim Torrell.

A house in Soho, New York, will be reserved for performances and dance.

All these places are also satellite museums which receive, from time to time, aid or support from official museums or private funds, subsidies from the National Endowment for the Arts (\$ 20,000 for the work by Dan Flavin at Grand Central) and it is envisaged perhaps to exhibit works on loan.

Finally because of the geographical distribution of all these Open Museums, one will attempt to obtain contributions from the State Councils of the States concerned. But this is only a project for the time being.

Points common to the latter two Foundations:

For every work commissioned the Foundation gives technical and logistic support, charges itself with the management somehow and the artist works in close collaboration with it.

In this way he can create works of art, environments or pieces of exceptional size or works in the open ^{he} would never have been able to produce otherwise.

The Foundation, like ^{any} museum, reserves itself the right to sell the works of which it is the owner.

In two cases the commission was given to recognized artists.

The Foundation cannot allow itself great expenditures on large-scale works except in the case of artists who ^{are} already established. As examples I can give:

Cy Twombly

Andy Warhol

Dan Flaving

Walter de Maria

Beuys

Don Judd

John Chamberlain.

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