

ART & POLITICS: California Calling

Whatever the world thinks about Jane Fonda, the actress, we in California certainly know what some politicians think about Fonda as a patriotic American citizen. Having been named to the California Arts Council by Governor Jerry Brown, Fonda soon found out who were her friends and her detractors. After the California Senate voted against the appointment in bitter debate, Fonda thereupon answered her critics in a calm, articulate manner reflecting her intelligence and strength in the midst of great personal attack.

Several California Senate members questioned the patriotism of the actress, which seemed to have no relevance to her appointment as a member of the California Arts Council. To blacklist a woman who spoke her mind during the Vietnam crisis seems to be harking back to McCarthyism in its darkest hour. She firmly argued that the Senate had no right to disqualify her on the basis of her political activities, only on the basis of her work as an artist. They also did not give her recourse to defend herself in the midst of this disgraceful accusatory posture, certainly in conflict with every aspect of the Bill of Rights.

Fonda is an articulate and sensitive champion of causes. Whether you agree or disagree with her, there is nothing in the Constitution of the United States that says you must be right about an issue before you are privileged to speak about it.

The public loses, the United States loses, the California Arts Council has lost, and perhaps freedom and liberty have been damaged as well.

NEW MODERN MUSEUMS SLATED FOR LOS ANGELES

In time of need, ask not what you can do for Los Angeles, ask what Los Angeles can do for you as a contemporary artist. With all the energy, dynamics and wealth of talent in contemporary art in Los Angeles, there still does not seem to be a representative institution that can house, exhibit and preserve contemporary art in that megalopolis. Although there is a contemporary art section of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, the museum has many large collections which necessitate a diffusion of emphasis and energy, and a lack-lustre staff and space to do the job. The Newport Harbor Museum of Art has built a brilliant new space, but it is more than an hour's drive from Los Angeles. The La Jolla Museum of Contemporary Art has rehabilitated its space and opened recently with a spectacular new contemporary art facility, but that is more than two hours away from Los Angeles. And the Pasadena Museum of Art has closed, becoming the Norton Simon Museum with no inclusion of contemporary art as a mainstay of the collection.

The problem has been manifest for several years. The solutions which have been proposed almost simultaneously lead one to ponder the situation at length. Two various camps have proposed a remedy to the gap in the contemporary art scene in Los Angeles: the first, led by Marcia Weisman and her husband (she's the sister of Norton Simon) proposes a Museum of Modern Art in downtown Los Angeles in a real estate complex to be built in a redevelopment project, where a projected \$500 million office-commercial-residential complex would include 1.5% of a project's total cost to be put into fine arts. A group of six collectors have gathered to fur-

ther this cause, hoping that a developer will agree to provide the estimated \$7.5 million to \$8 million needed to build the museum in an urban park. The downtown location would attract visitors to the city from afar, and would be a vital force in a changing downtown population—changing to artists and other creative people who are moving into industrial lofts and older buildings and refurbishing them. A committee of artists would be consulting with the group of collectors at every point in development, from selecting the architect to deciding exhibition policy. In addition, Mayor Bradley of Los Angeles has given the project his blessing, and hopes are for opening the building in late 1981, after finding sufficient funds to endow the museum and provide operating funds for it.

In addition, the Atlantic Richfield Corporation has given the Los Angeles County Museum of Art \$3 million to build a new gallery space for its contemporary art collection, which would be built as an addition to the present building, with plans for its inclusion in Hancock Park which it adjoins. The question is: is there room for two contemporary art facilities in Los Angeles?

One of the reasons for the move to a downtown private facility has been a personality conflict with some of the staff at the County Museum of Art. Disenchanted, some of the collectors who have sterling museum-like contemporary art collections just want to move and get a museum established and operating. To be sure, there are other problems—egos to be fed, and money to be raised. Major fundraising drives may have cross-purposes, but there does not seem to be a remote possibility that the two factions will join forces.

The ARCO Gallery seems to be more likely to materialize since it will be an addition to an already existing facility, but the movers for the Bunker Hill project for the Los Angeles Museum of Modern Art are not sitting back. They are raising funds, holding meetings, and creating interest in various sectors of the Los Angeles community.

To solidify hopes into reality will be the goal of both these projects and only time will tell if the pulse of the community can be taken and Los Angeles can truly have a home for its dynamic contemporary art and artists.

ART SPOKEN HERE