

*A political economy of art with instrumental value to the state,
with case studies from the New Deal*

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Abstract

Weber (2017, *Research in the History of Economic Thought and Methodology*) proposes that the cultural economics research program has not adequately addressed a self-interested state using art production to grow the state's discretionary power. Although cultural economists have focused on art as a public good deserving state-funding and other values beyond exchange in the research program, instrumental value in use by the state can be better articulated in the literature. This paper contributes towards this research by modeling how a self-interested state might behave (e.g., Wagner 2009, *Fiscal Sociology and the Theory of Public Finance*), and then how the state might use art towards creating preferences for a larger role for the state in society. This model for socially-formed preference creation addresses Throsby (2001, *Economics and Culture*) and Potts (2014, *Handbook of the Economics of Art and Culture, Vol. II*) on shared preference creation. After presenting this model of "art-statism" we give examples from the archives illustrating how the Public Art Project under the New Deal in the United States uses art instrumentally. It is hoped that this research might motivate other cultural economists to explore the nexus between the state and art's instrumental value in socially-formed preference creation.