NARAL vs. Abrams: The Issue Is Abortion (Tomasky, P.13)
Endowing Art Matters

Americans are do-it-yourselfers. Now that the National Endowment for the Arts is no more likely to fund contentious contemporary art than a Baghdad Biennial, Art Matters Inc. has announced the creation of an alternative private funding body, called Art Matters Inc./National Trust for the Visual Arts. The trust plans to raise $100 million over the next five years. How's that for ambitious?

According to Art Matters Inc. board member and part-time AM/TVFA project head Ceci Brown, the $100 million endowment will yield $7 million annually for operations and grants. The grants will go to culturally diverse artists, organizations directly supporting artists, and to educational projects designed to enlighten an unenlightened citizenry about what contemporary art actually is. Brown is concerned that important art of the '90s will be lost to recession and retracement because of homelessness, AIDS, and other social issues, she observed. "There will be more and more difficult work produced.

Whether their work is difficult or not, artists are already suffering from public sector budget cuts. "Let me emphasize," Brown reiterated, "that AMTVFA is not intended to replace government funding." Would that it could.

Abortion Project

There wasn't much buzz about the "Abortion Project" show at Artists Space last month; the Oil War drowned it out. Organized by Chrysanne Stathacos and Kathie Burkhardt, the first phase of the three-part program commemorated the 20th anniversary of Simone de Beauvoir's pro-choice offensive involving 343 women who admitted to having had abortions, then illegal in France. Burkhardt and Stathacos reproduced the signatures of 688 abortion veterans from around the world on the gallery's walls, creating what they call a "manifesto.

Phase two—"The Back Room"—opens at the Simon Watson Gallery on April 2. Work by 30 artists ranging from Sue Coe to Kiki Smith will be shown in the back, loonist-motorcyclist-billionaire still managed to find time to indulge his love of kitsch. He directed his staff to collect balloon-embazoned objects, including shower curtains and coasters, and even to order a birthday cake for Liz Taylor depicting her Lily-of-the-Valley Fabergé egg. As the re- doubtable Kelly explained, it was another whimsical touch.