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Biddle, Livy: Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts (1977-1979): News Article 21

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re than a matter of emphasis

Should the government really be involved

F. terHorst
ASHINGTON — Art, we are told, is in the eye of the beholder. Art also increases in the federal budgets. Can the two concepts coexist? Or is there a certainty that art and politics don't mix? These questions are the root of the uneasiness one detects about the federal government's increasing role in the field of the arts and the humani-

discovered that those who most patronize museums, art galleries, theaters and concert halls are persons with higher income and education.

What is surprising is that some officials within the Carter administration think this is deplorable. They cite the study as evidence that federal support of the arts therefore is undemocratic. What the President ought to do, it is said, is to make sure that the two endowment funds shy away from the "elitism" of the past by putting a more "populist" emphasis on spending for the arts.

Well, there is a very simple answer to that question if carried to its logical conclusion. Persons who have the opportunity to learn about Michelangelo, Beethoven and Shakespeare are much more likely to appreciate an art gallery, a symphony, or a dramatic production than those who lack that background.

If mass appeal is to be the only true test of a nation's cultural level, then the administration could solve it simply by channeling its "art" money into things like television

quiz games, popular music, professional sports, and T-shirt slogans. President Carter, of course, isn't

thinking of going that far. But he has expressed a desire that Arts chairman Livingston Biddle and Hu-



The mask of King Tutankhamun
subsidy of the arts goes way back

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