government and the arts:

A SELECTIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY
PREPARED BY IRVING KREUTZ

Art and Government; report to the President by the Commission of Fine Arts on activities of Federal Government in the field of art.
Superintendent of Documents, Washington, D.C., 1953

Dorothy Graffy  "The art mountain conceives a mouse"  American Artist, December, 1953
The author, an editor of American Artist, looks at the Commission of Fine Arts' report to President Eisenhower and finds it wanting: "What we need in order to face existing art deficiencies in Government isn't more investigations but more courage of convictions backed by the will to make them effective."
"Toward a Federal art program" American Artist, October, 1954
A favorable view of the "Report of the Committee on Government and Art" (May 1954) by the "unofficial" Goodrich Committee and its unfavorable opinion of the report of President Truman's Commission of Fine Arts to President Eisenhower.

Margaret French Cresson  "A minority opinion on the Goodrich report"  American Artist, November 1954
The author, the daughter of Daniel Chester French and herself a member of the National Sculpture Society, takes strong exception to the recommendations of the Goodrich Committee: "For if the recommendations . . . were ever put into effect in this country, it would be the end of all freedom of expression and the biased and ruthless shackles of modern art would make conformity to that point of view absolute."

Lloyd Goodrich and Alfred Barr  "Mrs. Cresson draws fire"  American Artist, January, 1955
Sharp answers to Mrs. Cresson from Goodrich himself (Chairman of the Commission on Government and Art, and Director of the Whitney Museum) and from Alfred Barr (Director of Collections, Museum of Modern Art.)

Edward Etingdene, Lord Bridges  State and the arts  Oxford, 1958
A printing of Lord Bridges' Romanes lecture, delivered in the Sheldonian theatre, Oxford, in June, 1958. An editorial devoted to the lecture can be found in the Times Literary Supplement, August 22, 1958.

Rupert Brooke  Democracy and the arts  London, 1946
The poet's mother gave the manuscript of this lecture (to the Fabian Society) to Geoffrey Keynes, and in 1946—"with the dawning of the Socialist State in England of which Brooke was one of the Minor Prophets"—Keynes felt it his duty to present the paper for publication in print. The poet's ideas are idealistic and, in the light of what has happened since his death in 1915, not a little naive: "But if we're going to do away with the very clumsy and inefficient machinery of patrons (who don't work at all now) and inherited capital, we, the community, must endow the artist."
Richard Carless and Patricia Brewster  
*Patronage and the arts*  
London, 1959

"This book represents an attempt to make a factual survey of all the various sources and methods of patronage of the arts as they exist in Great Britain and to suggest ways of improving them." (from the introduction)

John Drinkwater  
*Art and the state*  
Liverpool, 1930.

A lecture delivered in 1929, in which the writer pleads for the English National Theatre which his country was finally to get in 1963, twenty-six years after his death.

Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt  
*Art under a dictatorship*  
Oxford, 1954

"This book is the culmination of an artistic youth spent in Germany, a tour of duty as a Civil Art Administration officer for the U. S. Military Government in Berlin, and two years spent in study under a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. Perhaps its main value is that its focus is spread far beyond Naziism. The author’s purpose is much broader and deeper—to isolate and synthesize the relation between art and the state in all totalitarian governments—and in pursuing it he ranges all the way from the French Revolution, through the German, Italian, and Russian varieties, to certain embryonic manifestations he finds in contemporary American society." (*The New Yorker*, May 29, 1954)

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy  
"The artist’s master" (a review of Lehmann-Haupt’s *Art under a dictatorship*)  
*Saturday Review*, June 19, 1954

Admiring the author’s diligence, the reviewer denies the validity of most of his theories. "The facts of history," she says, "are almost completely against the author’s theory that the plight of the arts under the Nazi dictatorship was unprecedented and of far-reaching consequences . . ." In fact, she declares, " . . . art did not fare badly under the Hitler regime, because in its purest form it cannot be polluted under any dictatorship."

Alfred Werner  
"Art under a dictatorship" (a letter to the editor)  
*Saturday Review*, August 14, 1954


Sibyl Moholy-Nagy  
"Mrs. Moholy-Nagy replies" (a letter to the editor)  
*Saturday Review*, August 14, 1954

And the original reviewer answers Mr. Werner.

Grace Overmeyer  
*Government and the arts*  
New York, 1939

"Prefaced by a brief historical sketch of art patronage, this book consists in the main of facts concerning the history, plan of organization, financing and present operation of systems used in various countries for the official encouragement and support of the fine arts. More than fifty countries and the United States of America are included in the study. Bibliography." (*Book Review Digest*, 1939)

J. B. Priestley  
*The arts under socialism*  
London, 1947

Priestley, in a 1947 lecture to the Fabian Society, is less starry-eyed than most in his summary of the problems facing the artist and the arts in a Socialist state, but he is firm in his conviction that "the State exists for the artist, and not the artist for the State."
"To quote from the book's introduction: 'Professor Purcell traces the continuing though fluctuating interest of American government—national, state, and local—in art since the earliest days of the republic.' Singled out for extended treatment is the Federal Arts Project of the WPA." (American Political Scientist, March, 1957)

John M. Harrison "Creativity: the state's role" (a review of Purcell's Government and art) Saturday Review, February 2, 1957
The reviewer finds convincing Mr. Purcell's arguments for an increased role for the Government in art, although he does suggest that the author "might have given more specific consideration to the misfortunes which have attended some government ventures into sponsorship of art in various State Department and U. S. Information Agency programs."

* * * *

Periodicals and Newspapers

"America the beautiful" New Republic December 5, 1960
"... Still, governmental support of culture is not merely Socialist; it is monarchist, imperialist, republican, democratic, Shintoist, Syndicalist, Fascist, Falangist, and tribal, since, with the exception of our own, just about every government the world has ever known has taken patronage of the arts for granted."

"Arts in politics" Newsweek, January 17, 1963
A brief story on the resignation of August Heckscher from his post as Special Consultant on the Arts, with a few thoughtful fragments from two speeches he has made since then. For example—"A nation that seriously and deeply sought to combine democracy with culture would find that its life was being changed as it pursued its goal; many of its institutions were being made over and its habits were profoundly altered."

"Arts in America ... who should foot the bill?" Senior Scholastic, May 4, 1960
For the high School senior, this is a simple (but not simple-minded) presentation of arguments for and against government aid to the arts.

"Aid to the arts: what kind and how? pro and con discussion" Senior Scholastic, May 2, 1962
A repetition and continuation of the above article, but suggesting "federal encouragement" as a middle way between "direct federal aid" and "private aid only."

"Arts under authority" Times Literary Supplement, May 4, 1962
A sharply critical look at the fortunes of France's "culture" under the aegis of Andre Malraux, the Minister of Cultural Affairs. It is censorship, suppression, and sometimes prosecution which the anonymous author deplores, for, as he says, "when a government has a major writer among its members it is simply
not good enough for it to have, at one and the same time, an attitude towards
the printed word which makes those who prosecuted the publishers of Madame
Bovary and Les Fleurs du Mal seem enlightened by comparison.”

"The candidates and the arts" (Two letters
from Richard Nixon and John F. Kennedy
to Irving Kolodin) Saturday Review,
October 29, 1960

In answer to a questionnaire, the two then candidates for President express
their views on, in Kolodin’s phrase, "the claim of art and artists to government
recognition, encouragement, and assistance."

"Patterns of patronage; public responsibility
for the arts in Europe" Times Literary
Supplement, October 13, 1961

In its plea for greater help by the Government in nurturing and promoting
the arts in Great Britain, TLS surveys other European countries, both in front
of and behind the Iron Curtain, and finds that Britain occupies "a lowly tenth
position, and would get the wooden spoon of patronage if these grants were
expressed in per capita terms of population."

John Berger "Free to starve" New Statesman, November 8, 1958
A comment by a British art critic on an annual report for the Arts Council of
Great Britain. The writer’s plainly partisan stand on such matters is perhaps
epitomised by one of his statements in the article: "I do not believe that there
is the slightest chance of the arts in England now being energetically sponsored
until a powerful political opposition, which is to say the organized working
class, realises that the arts can usefully serve and promote their own interest."

Ray Allen Billington "Government and the arts: the WPA experience" American
Quarterly, Winter, 1961
A retrospective look at the Arts Project of the WPA by a man who was a
director of the Massachusetts Writers’ Project, but a clear-eyed and unsentimental
summary nevertheless. Particularly valuable for the wealth of detail
about all phases of the Project.

Daniel M. Fox "The achievement of the Federal Writers’ Project" American
Quarterly, Spring, 1961
A careful analysis of the Federal Writers’ Project, whose work is now so often
cited both as a justification for or argument against federal aid and subsidy in
the arts. "Their contribution stands today," Mr. Fox concludes, "as an increas-
ingly dated example of American ingenuity and literary skill, and an unfinished
reminder of the tension between culture and the American political system."

Robert Frost "I want poets declared equal to—" New York Times Magazine,
May 18, 1960
In a brisk dialogue with members of the Senate Committee on Labor and Public
Welfare the poet campaigned for a National Academy of Culture.

Frank Getlein "Federal aid to art: distribution" New Republic, August 8, 1960
Getlein’s sly and telling point here is that, since the Federal Government spends
a relatively large amount of money in tax dollars on "art" in the shape of,
among other things, public buildings and the decoration of them, it is only
reasonable that "they'd be spent more intelligently if the official attention to art were more conscious than it has been. One of the most urgent duties of any new government art project is to see that the American people get full value for money spent on their art and full art representation in their buildings. It is only recent custom, not law, that says government art must be hack work."

"Gesture toward the arts: advisory commission on the arts for the Federal Government"  Commonweal, December 6, 1957
Written on the occasion of President Eisenhower's appointment late in 1951 of an advisory committee on the arts, the subtitle of Mr. Getlein's article insists that the creation of the committee amounts to little more than "ritual piety."

A recommendation by the Secretary of Labor for "a six-point partnership for the support of the arts in America." This round-dance would ideally involve the public, the individual patrons and benefactors, the corporation, the labor union, the local government—and finally the Federal Government, with the establishment of a Federal Advisory Council on the Arts.

The eminent director, in hopes of our emulating England's example, analyzes the form and function of the Arts Council in Great Britain, "a mechanism," he says, whereby the state, out of taxpayers' money supports the arts—theatre, music, opera, ballet, poetry, painting, and sculpture . . . . It was devised with two principal objects: first, that recipients of subsidy should be selected by a more qualified body than a government department; second, that such subsidy should not be subject to the prejudices and fluctuations of party politics."

Alexander Janta  "Art as its own patron"  Saturday Review, June 18, 1960
To assist creative minds "in every field of artistic endeavor," the author not implausibly suggests the establishment of a fund for this purpose, said fund to be derived from a fraction of the taxable profits made on works in the public domain. "Thus part of the earnings produced by creative works would be plowed back into the very field from which they came."

Katherine Kuh  "Art in America in 1962: with a note on government and art"  Saturday Review, June 18, 1960
This noted art critic's opinion: "There is no doubt that intelligent government administration of art is, by and large, preferable to the American trustee system, where too often personal vagaries assume frightening proportions. But one should not underestimate the word 'intelligent.'"

Russell Lynes  "Government as a patron of the arts"  Yale Review, September, 1952
A fervent vote against government patronage of the arts. His principal argument lies in his analysis of the relation of the individual (or consumer) to the art which he chooses to enjoy. "In matters of the public good," he writes, "decisions in a democracy are left to the individual . . . . and in questions of the private good, whether it is the selection of a wife, or of a hat, or of a work of art, the individual's choice is supreme."
"The case against government aid to the arts"  

Mr. Lynes feels just as he did ten years ago, nor have his metaphors changed much. But his arguments are still persuasive: "It is . . . a curious contradiction that the enthusiasm for the arts in America today is so great that if one suggests that the arts should not be directly subsidized by the Government, one runs the risk of being branded a Philistine."

Rene d’Harnoncourt (a letter)  

In the letters column, Mr. d’Harnoncourt, Director of the Museum of Modern Art, replies briefly to Mr. Lynes, especially to his contention that government subsidies would mean "creeping mediocrity" in the arts.

Helen Hill Miller  
"American culture in search of angels"  
*New Republic*, June 23, 1958

A brief survey of governmental help to the arts (federal, state, and local) both past and present.

Robert Moses  
"Needed: new Medicis for art centers"  
*New York Times Magazine*, May 10, 1959

With considerable dash, the unsinkable Park Commissioner talks of the tribulations attendant upon the planning and accomplishment of the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, and along the way issues a hard-headed, if sympathetic warning to those who would, in his words, ask too much underwriting by the local taxpayer: "In this age of mass media and in the heyday of the lowest common denominator I urge my artistic friends not to provoke a showdown with the city on the precise amount of public money it should spend on our somewhat dubious claim to culture."

Howard Taubman  
"Who should pay the bill for the arts?"  

Recalling that the Italian Government had just granted a subsidy of $16,000 to Chicago’s Lyric Opera Company, Mr. Taubman, the *New York Times* critic, moves on from this depressing irony to a fairly blistering attack on our attitude toward the arts, which, he says, will undergo a change "when we learn to admire whole-heartedly achievements of the mind that do not produce an immediate monetary gain, when a Trendex count is not used to thrust low-grade conformity on the bulk of what is presented on a mass medium like television."