



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Fred S.
Bartlett, 1964 November 11

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Fred S. Bartlett on November 11, 1964. The interview was conducted by Sylvia Glidden Loomis for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

SYLVIA LOOMIS: This is an interview with Mr. Fred S. Bartlett, director of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, who was associated with Donald Bear at the Denver Art Museum during the days of the Federal Art Project. The interviewer is Mrs. Sylvia Loomis of the Santa Fe office of the Archives of American Art, and the subject to be discussed will be Mr. Bartlett's association with Mr. Bear during that period. Would you tell us, first, Mr. Bartlett, where were you born, and what was your art background?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I am a native Coloradoan. I was born in Brush, Colorado.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And graduated from the University of Colorado without any specific training in art, and I knew Donald Bear from our childhood. As a matter of fact, we grew up together and knew each other from about the fourth or fifth grade on.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was he also born there?

FRED S. BARTLETT: He was not born in Colorado, but was brought there by his grandmother as a child.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And we went to the same grade school, same high school.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And were very close friends for a great many years until his death. And it was through him, entirely, that I went to work at the Denver Art Museum initially doing educational work and publicity work.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Public relations in a relatively small way, small museum, small staff. The Denver Art Museum had received a grant from the Carnegie Corporation of \$10,000 for a four-year educational project. And I went in on a part-time temporary tryout basis in that—as a docent. And within less than six weeks, found myself being confronted with innumerable school children who were coming in to look at one particular exhibition. I'll never forget, the first exhibition I ever worked on was one of Persian art—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —about which I knew less than nothing. But through fairly diligent boning and working that way, I managed to find out enough to write a syllabus for the schoolteachers, because my training had been primarily in that area, in writing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I managed to write a talk, which I presented to the docents—and other docents, which I also gave, myself, to the school children. So, it began all rather

quickly and suddenly [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Quickly and suddenly.

FRED S. BARTLETT: At that time, I enrolled in classes at Denver University and began to take a certain amount of formal training in art under John Thompson, who had been Donald Bear's teacher. Don was also a painter.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, he was?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. At that time, Don had done work for the Denver Art Museum—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —through—mainly through writing, critical writing, which he had been doing on the side. He, at one time, owned and operated a bookstore himself, and had studied art for, well, from the time he was a child he studied painting, and had gotten into it as people did 35 years ago in the museum field, and—frequently did.

And then, after that, I continued that for three or four years at Denver University, and then I obtained a fellowship at Harvard one summer—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —which I found very valuable and had at least that much so-called formal training that most of my background experience has been on the basis of experience.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Sort of learned as you went along, didn't you?

FRED S. BARTLETT: In many ways, yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, then, oh, you were then at the Denver Art Museum when the first Federal Art Project started, is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. And my recollection is that the first Project, the name of which I've forgotten, came about very shortly after Roosevelt's first inauguration—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and as I remember hearing it described at the time, primarily an activity designed to get money in people's pockets and get them buying groceries again. And the—we suddenly went to work one day and found ourselves confronted with finding work for about 20-25 individuals.

[00:05:08]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Artists? These were all artists?

FRED S. BARTLETT: They were not artists.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: They were people with, well—they were so-called white-collar people—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —clerks, and some of them were students. But persons for whom there was obviously no work—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and many of them with a considerable degree of intelligence. They were put to work, and that was one of my duties at that particular time, to find work for them to do. And I remember one specific task that we attempted to carry out, which was to do research work, so-called. The art library of the Denver Public Library was housed in the same building as the Denver Art Museum, the City Hall —

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —at that time, and facilities were readily available. And many of those people who had some interest or possibly experience in that direction were put to work doing so-called research on individual artists who might be represented in the museum collection.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: They also helped to bring the records up to date, and they did a tremendous amount of collation and pulling together of facts that produced reams of written material, which I presume the museum still has, in its possession.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were there any artists among these?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Not at that particular time, as I recall.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: No artists involved at all.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: There may have been some—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but not specifically as such.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Well, then, when were your first real art assignments given out? When did that happen?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, you're referring, I presume, to the WPA—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well—

FRED S. BARTLETT: —white-collar art project, the AP of the WPA?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, there was the PWAP, there was the Public Works of Art, and that was not a relief measure.

FRED S. BARTLETT: No. Did that come about first?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, that was just before. That was in 1934.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, there—I do have a slight recollection of what went on, at least in a couple of areas, one in particular. Chappell House, which was one of the branches of the Denver Art Museum, at 1300 Logan Street, had a big yard at the side of it, and one of the artists was given a sculpture commission. Gladys Caldwell was her name, she's now dead. And she did the two tremendous mountain sheep, which were placed at the 18th Street entrance of the Denver Post Office, and which are still there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And she was a *taille-directe* sculptor, and she chiseled away for many months—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —as a matter of fact, several years on that, and as I recall, that was a PWAP project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And then, there were others working in various places on murals. Miss Caldwell, who later became Mrs. Fisher, Alan Fisher, also did a large stone plaque, a relief, which was placed at the entrance to the City Hall galleries of the Denver Art Museum.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Whether that is still there or not, I don't know. But these were—she was a frail woman, but she sculpted very large—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and particularly the sheep was a major opus in her career.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: She had a number of student assistants, who may have been receiving federal funds or not.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't know about that. But those were about the only PWAP projects of which I have any recollection.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember Donald Bear's association with that? I mean, was he—

FRED S. BARTLETT: I'm not certain that he had any specific association with that or not.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: He may have had in an advisory capacity.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well—

FRED S. BARTLETT: I should know, but I just don't remember.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, there was a period there, with the Treasury Department was—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —sending out—giving these assignments to the artists directly. You know, they went right directly to the artists from Washington.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And it might have been one of those. Well, then, when the PWAP was set up, the country then was divided into divisions, no, regions, and I know that New Mexico, Arizona was Region 13. Do you remember anything about a region up here?

FRED S. BARTLETT: No, except having heard the term.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But there was a region. And I do recall that there were a number of artists who usually either had outside sources of income—

[00:10:05]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —by teaching or their own means, who were not on the Project, in quotation marks.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And who were receiving PWA money for, largely for post office murals.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Jenne and Ethel Magafan did a number of them. Vance Kirkland, who, for many years, has been head of the Denver University School of Art—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and still is—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —also did several. And the one that I've always heard termed as one of the most important produced on the entire project was the one which Frank Mechau did for the Art and Music department of the Denver Public Library.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Which, at that time, as I said, was housed in the fourth floor of the city and county building. Now, what has become of that picture, which was a great picture called *Horses at Night*.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was a very large easel mural, I would say, about six by 10 or 12 feet.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Is that the one that Bunnell worked on, do you know?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes—no, that was not the one that Charlie Bunnell worked on.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: He worked on two that are located in our post office here in Colorado Springs.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I presume that Frank Mechau probably had some assistants, too.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was a large thing. But actually, it was a large easel picture, a very large one.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And there were other artists who apparently had worked both as WPA artists—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and who also at one time or another, had done PWAP work.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I know there were a good many of them that went from the PWAP into WPA—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —and PWAP, it was not necessary to have relief status to get on that.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. And—well, there was very definitely a social distinction.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I know. It still exists.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And the artists were quite prone to make that clear.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then, when the WPA came on, then, there were certain supervisors that could be on non-relief status.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But mostly, the artists and the other employees had to have the relief status in order to get a job, or even to keep a job, if they'd had one previously with the PWAP.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I remember after this first project of which I spoke began to peter out, then, I believe a good many of these individuals were transferred to WPA.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's right. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Or other white—so-called white-collar projects on the WPA. And there was a nucleus of perhaps four or five that stayed on—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —with the museum for several years. There was another extremely interesting project, and unfortunately, I don't know who supported it, which one of the agencies, but that was one which Donald Bear had some background in formulating and getting started, and that was a group of young architects in Denver—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —who made models, historic models of various buildings. And these were turned over to the Denver Art Museum, and they still have some of them in their possession.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: One was an extremely—a very elaborate and beautiful model. It was done with great accuracy. Chartres Cathedral was probably the major one—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and I'm certain that the Denver Museum still has that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And there was another one of a Pompeian house.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And altogether, there were about half a dozen. But the Chartres Cathedral and the Chateau de Coucy, the two medieval things which they did—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —were the outstanding ones.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. And you don't know whether this is PWAP or WPA?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't know what project this was, but I believe, I'm quite certain that it was WPA.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I know they started out doing some architectural work, and then it went—or some of it, went over to the Historic American Building Survey, and that was a special project of its own. But that would be local architecture, because I know they did that in Santa Fe—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —that they made the drawings and took the measures of certain historic buildings there. So that, it might have been part of that project, you know, during the period when it was purely architectural, because this is the first I've heard about models of famous buildings outside of the United States.

[00:15:20]

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, this, in my mind, was one of the most successful single projects —and these, I can assure you, were extremely valuable teaching aids—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I should imagine so.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —for a great many years, and still are. Allen Evans was the young architect who seemed to be in charge of this project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Okay.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Of course, as time went on, the personnel changed there and the quality of the work went down—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but at its beginning, and for about the first three or four models, it was an extremely good and valuable job which they did. There was also some work on the *Index of American Design* going on at the same time. The only person I knew who was involved in that was an older woman by the name of Maude Valle

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —known to most everyone as Madam Valle.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Ah, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Although she was American, she'd married a Frenchman in her youth.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And she did some superb, very meticulous renderings of santos, retablos.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Are those—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Santos and bultos.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —did she do those in Denver?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, they were from the Denver Museum, Anne Evans Collection.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Well, now, at the time that the WPA started, then Donald Bear was the administrator for five states. Is that correct?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, Don was the regional director.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Regional director.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Whether he was right at first, I don't know.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But I think right from the very beginning, he was at least the state director of the Art Project—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and I'm inclined to think that he became the regional director perhaps a little after that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But very shortly, because I was Don Bear's assistant—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —at the museum in Denver, and Don was travelling a great deal at the time, and so, I was keeping the home fires burning at the museum. But for a very short period of time, I would say, perhaps, well, it was less than a year, to keep a representative in the office of the project in the office in Denver, I was named as acting regional assistant director—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —I believe was the title, on a part-time basis, about two days a week.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: The actual head of the office, the one who was really doing the work in Denver, was a man by the name of Dean Babcock.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: At that time, Dean Babcock was an artist himself, a designer, and had lived in Denver for many years. I don't know what's become of him now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What were the states that were in this region?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, New Mexico, and I imagine Arizona.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Although, as I recall, there was very little going on down there. It may have only been four states. I'm not quite sure.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I've heard before there was five.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, that's probably right. [Cross talk.] The other obvious one, I think, would be Arizona.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I think the one that was missing from my previous information was Wyoming, so that probably fills it out.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I know that he was involved in Wyoming, because that was one of the few places in this area, to my knowledge, which attempted to establish a regional, or at least a city-wide, art gallery under the WPA.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: That was—we talked about it a good deal, I remember, and we were all full of hope that that might initiate in sort of a seed way, an establishment of little public museums or places where people could exhibit their work—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —all over the western part of the country, because, as you well know, there is very little in the way of the public museum—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —in the entire Rocky Mountain region.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: The Denver Museum is an old one, and this is reasonably old, but at that time, there was nothing in Salt Lake, there was

nothing in Phoenix. There was the old museum in Santa Fe—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but that was always pretty much by itself, it didn't extend its influence very far north.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. That was much more historic than art.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, much more historic than any other way.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Where was this in Wyoming?

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was at Laramie, if my memory's right, where the University of Wyoming is.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But it fell by the wayside in due time.

[00:20:01]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: From my recollection, the only art center originally established through the WPA that became established and is still functioning is the Oklahoma Art Center in Oklahoma City.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, well, there's—

FRED S. BARTLETT: There doubtless are others, but that's the only one I ever knew about.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, the one in Roswell, New Mexico is still flourishing.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Did the Roswell museum start that way?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, that's right, it was built by WPA funds—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —and then eventually, the city took it over.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that was the hope, of course, that by planting a little seed through federal money—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well that's—

FRED S. BARTLETT: —that the communities would pick this up and support it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that's what happened there. Paul Horgan was quite instrumental in, well, bringing it back to life. It sort of went down for a few years, and then he brought it back to life, and the some anonymous donor contributed to the Peter Hurd wing—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —and then it was after that the city took over. And since then, it's been really booming. It's a wonderful little museum.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, it's a good museum. I've been down there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, now, what were the projects that were covered in the region? I mean beside the—under the Art Projects. There was the easel and sculpture, and the—

FRED S. BARTLETT: The one with which I was most familiar with was the, obviously, the easel paintings and sculpture project, under the WPA.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What about the Theater and the Writing Projects?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, the other so-called white-collar projects, there was the Writing Project—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and I didn't happen to know any of the individuals involved in that. I did know a few of them who were involved in the Theater Project—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and about all I can say about that is that I always used to go see the productions—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —because they operated pretty much as a stock company.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And there were a good many actors, or people who wanted to be actors,

who were given employment in that way. There were those who had specific stage training in one form or another, or experience, and who were obviously completely out of a job, and they got involved with this project.

Denver has a rather long theatrical history, and had maintained the old Denim Theater stock company for a great many years, and the Elitch Company, in the summer—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —Elitch Gardens Company, which is reputedly the oldest stock company in the United States still operating. Although it's a summer—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —well, not actually a stock company, but the oldest summer theater, I guess. And so, there was a certain body of actors around in the community.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you remember if there were any theater groups in any of the other states of this region?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I never heard them mentioned, I don't know.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I haven't come across any.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't know of any, but Denver did support a federal theater—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and you paid admission. It was a very modern invention.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And, oh, 25¢ or something.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And we used to go almost every week to see what they were doing. They did a certain amount of experimental work. I can't remember specifically any one thing which they did, but always being fond of the theater, I enjoyed going.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Although, it was a pretty dismal, dusty old theater, down in the lower part of Denver, which had been taken over. It hadn't been used as a theater for many years, until this project came along, and then they swept it out—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —put seats in or got seats in there, and cleaned it up a little bit and used it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see, uh-huh [affirmative]. Would you remember approximately how many were involved in this?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I would say it—I knew one individual that was doing some of the directing. Can't remember his name. But he was a friend of Donald Bear's, and he used to come in the museum quite often and do a little research work of his own on sets, this, that, and the other. And I think that there must have been about 25-30 people at least involved—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but that's just a guess.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Well, I wondered if it was just in the dozens, or if it was in the hundreds.

FRED S. BARTLETT: No, I think it would be more in the dozens than the hundreds.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Well, now what other projects were there? Did you have any graphic artists?

FRED S. BARTLETT: No graphic arts as such. As I recall, that was not broken down from the easel painting project. I think it was part of the same thing. Those who preferred to work in the graphic field, I think, were allowed to do that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:25:09]

FRED S. BARTLETT: Many of these works of art which were produced were put in public schools. The works were allocated to individual institutions. But oddly enough, here again, to the best of my knowledge, the Denver Art Museum, as far as I know was never given any—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, really?

FRED S. BARTLETT: —from the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Nor was the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. We have none in our collection upstate from that time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How very odd. I noticed when I was going through the Spanish Colonial Arts collection downstairs, though, that you have one woodcarving that was done under WPA. It was—

FRED S. BARTLETT: A Barela?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, well, it might be—there were three Barelas there, but they didn't—

FRED S. BARTLETT: I think they were purchased, but I'm not sure. [They are permanent loans from the U.S. government. -Ed.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —didn't say anything about it. But there was one large, quite large Madonna, Guadalupe, I think, by George Lopez in New Mexico, and it said, you know, there's a little tag on it saying that it was a "Public Works of Art."

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, that's interesting, I'm glad to learn something about my own institution [they laugh]. Like they say, that's not my department—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I spotted that—

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but I can assure you that, at least as far as I know, we don't have any pictures in our collection—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —that came from the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Although, again, I'm perfectly willing to admit that records were not very accurately kept—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —at that time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, now, wasn't that before, well it was before this building was built.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, this building was opened—it was being built in '34-'35, opened in the spring of '36.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, so, there would have been an opportunity, then.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, there would have been a chance.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I wonder why they—why nothing was allocated here?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I have no idea. As a matter of fact, I've often wondered what became of the bulk of the work which was turned out on the project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Presumably stored someplace, I don't know. Most of what I saw in the very short time in which I was most directly involved was work which was being done, I went to several artists' studios work which was being done for public schools—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —in the Denver area, or nearby.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But it's strange that none of it would have gone to the Denver Art Museum.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I could easily be in error about that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: It may be that some of it was assigned later.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But as far as I know, nothing was.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I'm going there tomorrow, and maybe I can find out.

FRED S. BARTLETT: It could be that—because I would say this, that most of the so-called older established artists in Denver were not on the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: They had teaching jobs.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: I speak primarily of John Thompson, who was, at that time, teaching at the Denver University school, which was known as the Chappell School of Art, and Vance Kirkland, who was at that time running his own school. And others either had means of some sort or, at any rate, were not on the project. This place, here, was opening about that time, and some of them got at least temporary and part-time jobs down here on the faculty.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you remember any of those names?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Frank Mechau, in particular.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, oh yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And there were other, younger artists. Eugene Trentham was the name of one of them. Hayes Lyon, another. Both of them, incidentally, later taught at the University of Texas—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —for some time. Hayes Lyon is back in Denver now, and I don't know what became of Eugene Trentham.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But both of these young men were very promising artists and quite good. Their names are the ones which stick out in my memory of the ones I knew in Denver at that time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And those two were both on the project?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, as far as I can recall. I'm sure that they—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were you acquainted with the artists in Colorado Springs at that time, or was that later?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Oh, a few of them, but not well. I used to come down here fairly often. We were all very much intrigued about this new building going up at that particular time, and the director then was Stanley Lothrop, and we used to come down perhaps, oh, several times a year, at least. And we exchanged exhibitions back and forth on occasion, and we all knew each other.

[00:30:10]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Who would you say were the outstanding artists in Colorado Springs then?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, unquestionably, the major one was Boardman Robinson—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —who was head of the school here for a great many years. Boardman Robinson came out here in 1931 as director of—well not director, but as art master at Fountain Valley School, the boys' school here, south of town. Through the instigation, I think, primarily, of Mrs. Meredith Hare.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mrs. Hare had a great deal to do with the promotion, in a sense, of the building of this Fine Arts Center by Mrs. Taylor.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And she and Boardman Robinson both, I think, had a good deal to do with selling Mrs. Taylor on the idea of the advisability, necessity, and desirability of building this place.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I think it turned out to be considerably larger than Mrs. Taylor had anticipated in the first place.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: But, of course, it's worked out wonderfully well for the entire community.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was a large vision, an amazingly large vision, when you stop to think that in 1930-35, the population of this place was about 35,000.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Gosh, that is amazing.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Three times that, now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And actually, in one sense, at least, physically, the city has now grown up to a size which warrants the size of this place.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. Well—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Other artists—Frank Mechau was probably the best-known name. Frank Mechau had come back from Paris to Denver—where he had lived, he went to Denver University—and had lived as a boy, he came from WaKeeney, Kansas, and then as a boy moved to Glenwood Springs. And then came to Denver University as a wrestler. [Laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Wrestler, goodness. [Cross talk.]

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, he was a wrestler while he was in college.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But then went to Paris and studied art. Whether he studied art in Denver, I don't know, he possibly did early in his career. But at any rate, he, I think, received a good deal of his training in Paris, he was there several years. He got back to Denver in the depths of the Depression and he and his then two children, wife, had a really desperate time of it. And the Museum in Denver helped with the first exhibition which he had in this country, as far as I know, at the Junior League Galleries in Denver.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I remember hanging the shows, I remember it so well.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And they were totally different from the kind of thing which—on which the bulk of Frank's fame, later on, rests. And—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What were they like then?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, they were quite heavily painted, heavy impasto, very brilliant color, and semi-literal forms. It's hard to describe them without making things sound a bit ridiculous, but there were large ovoid egg forms in the pictures and triangular heads. They were captivating, extremely interesting. I asked his wife not more than three or four years ago if any of those were still around and she said she still had a couple—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —dating from those very early days. But that would be the late '20s, I think. Early, very early '30s.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you know who he studied with in Paris?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I have no idea.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't know at all.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Because that might give a clue to—

FRED S. BARTLETT: But later on, Frank decided that his career lay in depicting the Rocky Mountain West, which he did in a very meticulous way, emphasizing the draftsmanship. And in his later years, it's very obvious, the influenced of Japanese in his work—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —as far as the linear quality and the colors are concerned.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And the *Horses at Night*, which I mentioned before, I would judge to be a rather in-between picture from these very early things to the way his work developed up to the time of his death.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: When did he die?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Frank died in 1948, I think, thereabouts. I don't remember the exact date.

[00:35:00]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, approximately.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But about that time. Very suddenly, a heart attack because he was a relatively young man. And at that—by that time, he had a rather extensive teaching career

in New York after he left Denver, went to New York—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —where he taught at Columbia for some years. And then came back to Denver. And he and his family lived over at Redstone—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —near Marble, Colorado in a perfectly beautiful place over there where the Osgood mansion is, the railroad king..

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And they had a house and studio on that estate.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I guess things weren't so desperate then, were they?

FRED S. BARTLETT: No, he had done—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: He did all right.

FRED S. BARTLETT: He had done quite well.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, were there any other artists that were really outstanding in this area that you remember?

FRED S. BARTLETT: There were several students here at that time who later on they made considerable reputations, Bernard Arnest is probably one of them. The most—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What was that name again?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Arnest.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Bernard Arnest who is head of the Art Center School at the present time and has been for the last six, seven years. Kenneth Evett who teaches at Dartmouth.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were these all on the project too?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't think any of them were.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, they weren't.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But they were they were students here at the Fine Art Center School—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —under Boardman Robinson. It's conceivable they might have—some of them—been on the project. There was a girl named Eldora Lorenzini, who I believe was on the project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I think—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Very talented. Manny Bromberg was another one. David Fredenthal—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and it's quite possible that they were on and off the Project during that time. Because the school—under Robinson in those years, the student body was very limited. A great deal of the activity took place in the summer, rather than in the regular winter school and it was operated almost as graduate school.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Did Robinson have any connection with the project at all?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, he—on the PWAP or TRAP [Treasury Relief Art Project] which Evett was—it wasn't the TRAP, I don't believe. Because that was a relief project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. I think it [inaudible].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, it must have been the PWAP then. During the second Roosevelt Administration probably or perhaps late in the first when there was so much government building in Washington—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and he was one of the many artists who did murals for—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —one of the buildings. He did the series called the Lawgivers, which by its title should be in the Justice building, but I think for some reason or another is in the Treasury building—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —I'm not sure.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But they're there. I saw them one time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But then this was his own work. I mean, he didn't do any administrative work.

FRED S. BARTLETT: No, no. As far as I know, this was a direct commission.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And Biddle, who would—George Biddle who had taught out here at one time or another—was also doing some about the same time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I didn't know George Biddle was out here. Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Because it wasn't—as I remember, he was one of the ones that talked Roosevelt into extending the activities of the Art Projects.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yeah. But Biddle had quite a lengthy connection here, on and off.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. From what dates, approximately?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Couldn't tell you. Before my time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, you couldn't tell—oh, I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But it was in, I would say, the late '30s, early '40s.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: I came down here in 1943 the first time—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —stayed a short time, went back to Denver, worked for the government for a couple of years myself during the latter part of the war then came back down here in '45. And I've been here continuously ever since.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But I think probably it was in the late '30s. Because I can remember meeting Biddle. Adolf Dehn was around the same time. And, oh, a number of other people of greater or less renown but it was very lively place—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —during those years.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. I think so. Well, now, were there any other projects under Donald Bear's supervision that you remember?

FRED S. BARTLETT: No. The Art Project was the only one under his direct supervision.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But I mean, under the Art Projects there were several different categories.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, he had his—he had his fingers in the easel painting project primarily and in mural commissions under the WPA for different schools and the *Index of American Design*.

[00:40:10]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Wasn't Theater Project under his—

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't know.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —general supervision?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I think that was—no, I think that was—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: —completely separate.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: At least he—as far as I know had—maybe he delegated the authority completely, but I don't believe that there was any direct connection there at all.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Then, as you recall, late in the game Don went to Washington—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —as acting national director for a time during Eddie Cahill's illness.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: When was that?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I can't tell you the dates there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You don't know the dates.

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was before—it was before 19—I would say it was probably '39, '40. I know it was because it was during the time of the New York World's Fair.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And he was in the East at that time. And if you'll recall, the Project had something to do with the big exhibition at the World's Fair.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I was—

FRED S. BARTLETT: And Don worked on that and was in New York, living there—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —for a time. And so he was away from the museum for a long time. Came back occasionally, but—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, were you left in charge at the time?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Pretty much, yes. Eric Douglas was the curator in the Indian Department of the museum at that time, and was senior to me. We sort of ran, each of us, our own department.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: It actually ran without much of any head. Then Don Bear, after the whole project and everything ended, went to Santa Barbara, was the director there at Santa Barbara Museum—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —in 1941.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And how long was he there?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, he was there until his death in '52.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: '52?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I knew that he died, but I didn't know when it was.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, he died in March, I believe it was. In 1952.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. But in the meantime, you had come down here?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Meantime, I had come down here—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —in '43.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what—in your overall ideas about the Project, what would you say the—well, first the effect on the artists?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I have always felt that in spite of the fact that there were obviously a great many relatively incompetent people on the Project, the reasons for their being are quite understandable. There was not much of anyplace else that seemed a better place to put them—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and those people had to eat like everybody else. The great fault of the Project—and I'm sorry to be starting on a negative point of view—and I know it's one that Don felt, and that was the lack of ability to maintain quality. That is the—by the very nature of the organization, it was necessary to take the relatively incompetent as well as the real competents. In other words, almost anyone who insisted long enough and hard enough that he was an artist and couldn't or wouldn't do anything else, was finally given artist status on the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I doubt if many easel pictures were produced by those people and I think they were doing other work, probably.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: In fact, I know they were. But by and large, in spite of all of this, my feeling is that the project had a tremendous importance—it's very difficult to put one's finger on it. But I can think—and every now and again, I read the name of a successful artists who for one reason I know or another was given government support in those days. And I feel quite certain that many of these if not most of them would have been lost or diverted—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —or simply not been able to carry on their work. And I think too that the recognition of the place of the art, of place of art and the place of the artist in society as an integral part of society—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —was officially recognized for practically the first time in our history.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, good.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And that, to me, seems to be one of the most important things. I mean, people who made their living by painting—

[00:45:00]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —or people who made their living by acting or sculpting or any other of the so-called fields of art were allowed to practice their talent. They were allowed to develop and allowed to do work for which they were best fitted. They weren't shuffled off into raking leaves or doing maid work. And that, I think, is the important thing. And when one looks back now, on the costs, they seem relatively small when we're looking at today's budget. And I think it was worth every penny. And I don't care whether 85 percent of it was eventually burned up—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —I don't think that's terribly important.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No. It served as a different purpose.

FRED S. BARTLETT: It served a different purpose. I think the *Index of American Design*—I think that was probably one of the most important recording services that has ever been done or ever will be done in this country.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: It was one of the few parts of the project that I know in talking with Holger Cahill, whom I got to know later on—talking with him, I know that he felt very strongly about the ultimate importance of that. I don't think Eddie felt particularly concerned about the quality of easel painting that was turned out—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —during the project. Although I think he also felt same time that much of the mural painting which was done had lasting value. From observation, I would say, in parenthesis, that the quality of mural work which was placed in various public buildings was—and had to be because it was permanent—a better quality than a great deal of the easel painting which was done. In other words, the best painters were assigned.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And sometimes it was competitive, of course. Under the PWAP, it became a competitive thing. In fact, I judged a few of them, in my day. [Laughs.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: They have little juries that would look at the work, perhaps half a dozen people and award it to one artist.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. And that was under the Federal Projects or—

FRED S. BARTLETT: That was—as far as I know, at least I was asked to look—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and make some judgment.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were those probably for some local projects?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, but then they were area-wide. I remember one time going with Vance Kirkland on my way to Chicago, and he was on his way to someplace in Kansas to put up a mural. And, of course, Vance lived in Denver, he didn't live in Kansas—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but the mural was going into a post office back there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. I know they went all over the country.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: The various artists that did it. They would submit their sketches for a mural competition. And then if they got it, well, they would just go wherever they—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —[inaudible] or they would do—if they were panels, well, they could do them in their own studio and then have them shipped. Something of that sort. But they did them in very different places from where they lived then—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. And he was he was putting this one up himself. To get back to the ultimate values of things of this kind, it's obviously very intangible.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But I think it had a lasting and important underneath effect that we probably will feel for a great many years. And I think we still do. I think it saved an awful lot of people for art, of course, in such centers of activity as the larger cities, particularly New York, some of the major artists of the last 20 years were people who were on the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Ben Shahn, Jack Levine—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —you can name any number of them who—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Pollock, too, you know.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. Individuals who have built very important reputations. We can easily say that if a person has something really to express in art and painting, that he will do it regardless of all—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —obstacles. But that's only partly true, I think.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, yes, a lot certainly would have gone down under those terrible days of the Depression—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, I think so.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —if there hadn't been some government help. Well, would you say that you think this might be responsible in New York for the shifting of the art center of the world from Paris to New York or don't you agree with the fact that it has?

[00:49:58]

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, there again, I think that's terribly difficult to lay your finger on. There probably are other factors operating which are just as important in bringing about that change. One is the war. One is the problem that France which was reputedly the last art capital of the world, Paris, before New York. The decline of France as a great nation of the world—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —has perhaps had as much to do. The underlying factors in France alone have led to their being, in their own minds at least, very unhappily put into second place now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But I think, undoubtedly, there must have been some effect that can date from the '30s.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: I always—it always seemed to me that if you look back at the great days of the Italian Renaissance, when we look back in the art history books now and we can pick out perhaps the 50 or even 100 of the greatest artists through a period of 2[00], 300 years—in the major cities of Italy, only 2[00] or 300. And yet, there were probably 5,000 practicing artists.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Now all of those, in my mind, it seems to me, build up a kind of tradition and in a sense, to oversimplify, the cream rises to the top.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And it is only by having the skimmed milk, so to speak, at the bottom—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: —that you ever get the cream at the top.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. It creates a base.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. And I think in a sense that has probably happened in this country. But there again, perhaps even more importantly, it depends on the fact that this country was not occupied, this country was not invaded, it was not bombed, and happily has had the greatest, longest period of economic prosperity of any nation in the history of the world in spite of some of the recessions.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And all of this creates a favorable climate. More vitality, more originality, more willingness to experiment. And I think that as much as anything else has probably caused the shift from Paris to New York.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Where does it go next? Maybe from New York to Los Angeles.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, do you think—

FRED S. BARTLETT: They would like to think so. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Well, certainly the West Coast tries to make a claim to it. But well, I know my student days as an artist, why if you didn't go to Paris, well, you—

FRED S. BARTLETT: You hadn't been anyplace.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —just weren't—you hadn't been anywhere. You just weren't even an artist.

FRED S. BARTLETT: That's right.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: So. But I don't think that situation exists anymore. I don't know where people go, maybe they come to Colorado Springs.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, some of them do.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, it does seem to spread out more.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, I think I think it has spread out more. And I don't believe there's any doubt in the world that through a combination of all kinds of factors working together that there's an infinitely greater awareness—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —of what goes on in the world of art today than there than there ever has been before. And I think it's steadily increasing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: More people are interested in looking at art, I see that in my own job here. For example, only seven, eight years ago, our annual attendance was oh, at the outside, 80[000], 90,000 a year, which is pretty big of this kind. And the attendance for this present year—and I'm speaking November 11, 1964—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —for the past calendar year has been 155,000.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Gracious, [inaudible].

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I cite that simply as the as indication of the fact that we have an active institution which brings in a lot of people.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: We always have a lot of things for them to look at.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And we still, I trust, stress the qualitative aspects of things.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And in addition to that, there is constant bombardment by the reading public from all of the women's magazines and from such general publications, particularly *Time* and *Life*, and they are exposed to art, not only contemporary art but art in many different aspects.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And to say nothing of all the tremendous amount of building that has been going on in our country. I think people are getting much more acutely aware of quality in building. And I say that in spite of all the all the little salt boxes that are being built all over the country. There is a tremendous amount of good building being done in the country too.

[00:55:05]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I think people who we might not think would have much regard for taste, I think that there is an improvement—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —in quality, in a great many fields.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what about it in the field of easel painting?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, there's no question in the world but that more people are painting now than ever had—ever have been before.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yeah. But what about standards?

FRED S. BARTLETT: I think standards in certain areas are being maintained very rigorously. I think, on the other hand, there are great many amateur groups or semi-amateur groups, organizations, made up of painters of the same kind who, because they paint, feel that their painting is as good as anybody who may have spent a lifetime studying painting or about painting.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I think it takes a good deal of winnowing and a good deal of rigorous selection on the part of our critics, on the part of dealers, on the part of museum people, certainly, and on the part of the public, to eliminate the good from the bad.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But by my saying that there is a great deal more being produced, I would say that the job of the people who make qualitative judgment is much greater, but the fact remains that they have much more bulk to work on. So perhaps the general standard of, again, the cream of the top is better.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that's interesting—

FRED S. BARTLETT: At least that would seem to work out on a logical kind of basis.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: On the other hand, I think that we are being exposed to a tremendous amount of material which goes under the heading of art. And I don't think that—I know perfectly well, I'm not wise enough or experienced enough to know what's going to happen to Pop art, for example, in the near future.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: As a manifestation of vitality, and a certain interpretation of, again, a certain phase of our existence and our life, the constant thrust upon us of billboards, neon signs, overblown, over-emphasized sex symbols and all the rest of it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: I think that it is perfectly legitimate as an art form. But I'm inclined, at the same time, to think that this insistence upon portraying what's someone's described the art of the banal, I think it will follow its own way—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —before too long.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I'm glad to hear you say so.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But—I don't know, I could be 100 percent wrong.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: However, from the practical standpoint of preservation of works of art, in the future, one wonders what a restorer in the year 2100 is going to do with a Rauschenberg if he has to fix it up?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Or any other artist who's dealing in so called constructivist work—that's not the proper name, that goes back to a previous period of time. But assemblages, I believe, is the proper word at the present time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But I don't gainsay the fact that this is stimulating, it's interesting, it's amusing and it's telling, and I think it tells us something about ourselves. We had —*Americans 1963*, the exhibition, which was organized by Dorothy Miller at the Museum of Modern Art, we had it here last year in '64. And I was very interested to see and to look at the audience which we got. We got a great many different kinds of people, including all the people who think that we're much too far out whenever we present anything beyond 1910.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: But we got an extremely active, vocal, and interested audience of

college and high school kids.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And it probably has something to do with rock and roll and all of the other teenage manifestations, but they loved it.

[01:00:02]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And they came back again and again.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What effect did this have on the students in the Art Center, I mean in the classes here?

FRED S. BARTLETT: They were here all the time looking at it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: They were? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: They were intrigued. Whether it's had any effect in their actual production, I doubt—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but I've seen nothing of it. We have operated from that point of view, I would say, a reasonably advanced school anyway—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —but we are not much concerned with how far advanced they are in their production.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What is your relationship, by the way, to the school?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, it's a rather unusual one. The Art School is the predecessor institution of the Fine Arts Center.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: The Broadmoor Art Academy which was founded in 1919—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and it went on for good many years. The Fine Arts Center, as I said, was built—established in 1936 and an art school going all this time. And became known as the Fine Arts Center School then, with a big school wing here to be north, and it operated as an independent art school. But it also served Colorado College as its Art department.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: At one and the same time. But for many years of the administration of the school, both winter and summer sessions, was entirely in the hands of the director of the Fine Arts Center.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And—who delegated his authority to the director of the school—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —who, as I said, for many years was Boardman Robinson, who was succeeded by Jean Charlot, and who after that was succeeded by Emerson Woelffer, who in turn was succeeded by Bernard Arnest.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: At the time, Mr. Arnest came on the faculty we had worked out what has

turned out to be an exceedingly felicitous agreement with Colorado College. The handicaps of our running an art school and serving them when they produce over 90 percent of the students, as the situation has developed through the years—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —the administrative line of authority is obviously very poor. So, we now operate with a joint committee, three people from the Fine Arts Center and three people from the College—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —myself, the assistant director and one of our board members. And the president of the College, the dean of the College and one of his one of their faculty, with Mr. Arnest being the seventh member, ex officio.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: That is the administrative committee —

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —we only have to meet about once a year.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And this is fully accredited—

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —then from the college standpoint?

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes. It always has been through our connection with Colorado College.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: But we—now the administrative authority is vested in the college, they occupy our building.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: We jointly support the school. We contribute funds to it. But they, to all extents and purposes they operate it. Mr. Arnest is a member of both the staff of the Fine Arts Center—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: —and he is also professor of art at Colorado College.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

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SYLVIA LOOMIS: This is a continuation of the interview with Mr. Fred Bartlett, director of the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center. And one of the things that I wanted to ask you, Mr. Bartlett, as a director of an art museum, what you think about this general criticism of museum directors that they try to do something sensational, rather than something that is necessarily in a—the high standards of art tradition?

FRED S. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] That's a very interesting question, Mrs. Loomis.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Laughs.] Well, I hope so.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And I think there's at least a modicum of truth in it, but I think it depends entirely on which directors you're talking about.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that's true and I don't think it applies to you, with everything that I've seen of your museum.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I wouldn't say it, but in some instances, it might not. I wouldn't

feel completely innocent about it all. I think this: that the way in which the art museum in this country has developed in the past 10 years, let us say, that because of all of the other impacts of various media on the public, that the art museum, to make itself felt, has occasionally been forced into a false position of over-hippodroming its activities. Sensationalizing them, in a sense. And I think this can be rationalized very simply in that way. But I think what might appear to be rather over-sensationalizing is due to this fact, that it is a scramble to get public attention. We and most institutions are—we, as in most institutions, are confronted with a problem, always, of making our activities known to the public, and they are for their benefit. And, getting them into the building by means that are I think usually fair but might sometimes seem a bit foul—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You think the end justifies the means?

FRED S. BARTLETT: No, I don't agree with that. I believe that you will find that by far the greatest majority of people working in the art museum field are more concerned about the basic functions of an art museum than anything else. Which, as far as its exhibition policy and its educational policies are concerned, are primarily concerned with quality and nothing else. At the same time, I suppose, like anything else in our society, you have to sell quality. It doesn't just stick out inherently, unfortunately, in many cases. But I believe that the museums by and large are doing a very good job. I think that they do occasionally probably overemphasize the—some of the sensational aspects, but I can't call any up to mind real quickly where [inaudible]. [Cross talk.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I'm thinking about that one that was publicized quite a bit in the last few months in California, where there was this painting by a child that got first prize or something of that sort [inaudible]—[Cross talk.]

FRED S. BARTLETT: I don't recall that particular instance, but those things unquestionably happen, and of course they're picked up by news services and by various other means and they are given sensational treatment by the press.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, they are.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And it's quite understandable. The general body of the public is, for the most part, as has always been the case in the field of contemporary art, a certain—there's a certain time lag, they're behind. And they resent much of what they see in today's art. And yet, those institutions which are devoted to the presentation of contemporary art, because they feel it is a responsibility to give the artist of our own time a chance to show and also direct support.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I've heard several artists that I've interviewed, though, have criticized museum directors in general because they say that they are more interested in something that is sensational than they are in good, solid painting.

[00:04:58]

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, that sounds exactly like the case of an artist whose work is not appreciated by that particular museum director. [Laughs.] Those things happen. But I just don't think that's true. I think that's a generalization which won't hold up. I think in isolated cases, it might be true.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I was going to say, I've had several artists, you know, speak in these general terms about it, and so that was the reason I wanted to find out from an art director [laughs], and get his input.

FRED S. BARTLETT: I—I think—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But I think you're a little unique, I mean just based on the quality of the work that I've seen here, that you are holding to the standards.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I don't think an institution of this kind, or any other public arts institution, makes much sense if we don't.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, that's the way I feel about it.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And we—I hope we do. It's our aim to do that, within our relatively

limited means. And yet, I'd be the first to admit that there are times when I feel that the bar's slip a bit.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: And we go through a little bit of personal rationalization, and [laughs] excuse ourselves because it is necessary from the standpoint of community betterment perhaps, or community interest.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I think that if something can be done that has a publicity story to it, I mean, but where the standards are maintained, I mean, if you have such a happy situation, then you can do it with a completely clear conscience. And not do it just because it is sensational and you get people here, then of course, when you get them here, you can expose them to other things, but it's a little bit devious to my mind to do that.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yeah, yeah. And I don't think it's particularly fair.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No.

FRED S. BARTLETT: We have—we're in a rather unique position here in Colorado Springs because for one thing we do not have a permanent collection of paintings or sculpture or other graphic arts in the so-called old master field. We have virtually no material of that kind. Consequently, we do a pretty extensive changing exhibition program.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: We do have a collection of paintings primarily, which we built up through the years, which are primarily late 19th century and 20th century American, some European painting. And we show them from time to time, and always have some on view. We have some fairly notable pictures. And, but at the same time we are giving to the public here about 30, 35, 40 exhibitions a year. And we try to do a balanced program, not just contemporary painting, although admittedly the emphasis is there more than in any other direction. It is getting increasingly difficult to the point where it's almost impossible for an institution like this to build up and show a group of old master paintings of real quality, because other institutions or individuals won't loan them.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, is that right?

FRED S. BARTLETT: And that is—that I must agree is quite right. Because other institutions which do own old masters, their primary concern is preservation, as it should be. And old paintings take a terrific beating being toured around the country.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I can see that.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Unless the particular institution, which is doing an old master show, can make a real contribution to the body of knowledge in art, they have little or no right to ask another institution for the loan of a masterpiece.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And here you're getting into a situation which is in a sense self-defeating, because the smaller institutions seldom have the staff or the training, within the individual members of the staff, to be able to make a very significant contribution to the body of art. The major museums of this country are the ones who are able to build up staffs and support real scholars in the field of art.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: So, that may sound a bit—that may sound a bit defeatist, but I think that is facing the realities, myself. And certainly there are enough other good exhibitions, which are offered by various means, Smithsonian Institution, AFA, various other museums, and we have been able to participate in a great many shows which have been organized by other institutions, and some which we have organized and shipped around ourselves.

[00:10:04]

SYLVIA LOOIMS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

FRED S. BARTLETT: So that as I say, we try to build a balanced program to show a wide variety of things, such as the Swedish folk art show which we have on now and which you also saw in Santa Fe

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Which is an outstanding show of its kind.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It is. It's a beautiful show. I was certainly very much impressed by your Spanish colonial art department, too.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Yes, that is certainly our most important single collection.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And then I thought your selection of contemporary art that you have in the gallery here in the corridor is excellent.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, I think that's pretty good when you consider that virtually all of this is local, plus Taos, in this particular case, our rental gallery.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I think that that's why it is good, that—to have—to have selected such good paintings from local artist.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, we try to—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I think that helps to encourage them and to give them a feeling that there is someplace in the region where their work is appreciated as fine artists.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Well, we also—at least it has been my policy since I've been director, to—not to discourage local one-man shows. But they are meaningless if they are given to everyone.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

FRED S. BARTLETT: And so we are quite selective and we have—I suppose we average perhaps three every two years, at least that's been my aim.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, it's about time for our next interviewee, so I'll thank you not only for this very interesting and informative interview with you but also for all the help you have been to me while I've been—

FRED S. BARTLETT: You are most welcome, I'm sure.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —here to get these other artists in to talk to them. I've certainly enjoyed your museum and being in Colorado Springs.

FRED S. BARTLETT: [Laughs.] Good.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Thank you very much.

FRED S. BARTLETT: Sure.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]