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Oral history interview with Robert Oliver
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Transcript

Preface

(Mr. Engard, who was in 1939 and 1941 an instructor at the Spokane Art Center, is now a sales representative at Litho Development & Research Company)

Interview

RE: ROBERT ENGARD

DB: DOROTHY BESTOR

DB: Now let's see how the recorder goes. You say you were brought up in Spokane?

RE: Yes, I lived there most of my life. I came there from Philadelphia when I was just a boy.

DB: And so your work at the Art Center was right there in your home town; you hadn't come there from somewhere else . . .

RE: No.

DB: . . . the way most of the people at the Art Center had?

RE: Well, yes, as an instructor -- assistant -- I was one of the few natives of the city, in fact about the only one on the staff.

DB: Yes, I think you were. In talking with people last week, I found a good deal of, well, not suspicion, but sort of mental reservation, about the fact that the Art Center imported so many people, some from Chicago and some from New York, and a certain feeling still among those people who had been connected with it. The question: Why did they bring in all these Eastern imports?

RE: Well, I think that only Spokane . . . is due to the attitude Knowing Spokane as I do, the fact is that they're very suspicious of anything that isn't from the Inland Empire, and the fact that the artists came from the outside, they were . . . made them very suspect of the fact that they were foreign. There was only one other artist from the State of Washington on the staff.

DB: That was Vanessa Helder?

RE: Vanessa Helder of Seattle. [INTERRUPTION TO MAKE SURE THAT RECORDING IS SATISFACTORY.]

DB: Yes.

RE: There's no other electronic equipment in this building.

DB: Yes, fine. Fine. Well, I think we have it on at about the right degree of loudness now, so we might start over again: Mr. Engard, why don't you tell me first what you'd done and where you studied before you had any connection with the Spokane Art Center?

RE: Well, I'm strictly a local product of the State of Washington. Most of my art training was obtained in the public schools at Spokane and at Washington State University at Pullman.

DB: Oh, at Pullman.

RE: And from there I did quite a bit of commercial work on my own, and actually watercolor painting had become somewhat of a hobby of mine when the Art Center opened.

DB: Oh.

RE: And as with many other adults of my age at that time I was unemployed at the particular period that the Art Center was being built, and they needed volunteer labor for construction work and supervision of some of the setting up of the equipment, and I had the time available, so I volunteered at that time.

DB: Well, that's interesting. You were saying that you had a job as an engraver on the newspaper. did that come first, before . . . ?

RE: No, it was shortly after the Art Center actually was opened to the public, and I already was enrolled in a couple of the courses -- life courses and watercolor courses, and had managed to get the donation of the stone

litho equipment, which department I took over as an instructor.

DB: Oh! Who donated it? How did you get them to do it?

RE: The Spokane Lithographing Company donated the press, a hand-transfer press, Fusch & Lang, and the rollers and some stones, and they made available to students first quality stones that they could purchase at the very nominal sum of five dollars apiece.

DB: Well, that's wonderful. Were the presses something that they were discarding or did they just go and buy . . . ?

RE: Well, actually they had . . . at that time the stone engraving or hand transfer in the litho process trade was on its way out, and where they had a staff of three transfer men, they had only two at this time, and I was doing art work and design for this company and was well-acquainted with them, and with Miss Helder's assistance, we sort of talked them into donating this to the Art Center as their contribution to the public good.

DB: Oh! Very fine. That must have been one of the most substantial donations that the people made?

RE: Well, it was one of the more substantial ones in the way of what would have been involved in the actual outlay of cash, and enabled the Spokane Art Center to set up a lithograph, stone litho department course, which was one of the few offered, to my knowledge, in the country.

DB: Yes, I think it was.

RE: Because they are . . . for two reasons: the equipment is expensive and there were not too many people qualified to teach the technical aspects of the course. It was in the technical end, that is the printing and reproducing of the drawings in which I was the basic instructor. All my students were professional or advanced students and the drawing, the art work, was left up to them or to . . . if they cared to call in one of the other instructors in one of their subjects as far as their actual interpretation of their work went, but my job was to see that they got the best out of their work from the stones.

DB: About how many students did you have? Do you remember?

RE: I had 22 as the largest enrollment.

DB: At a time?

RE: Yes. The class was held in the evenings primarily, because most of them were working, and we had desks and facilities to handle twenty-two students. **EB:** And these classes would run a semester or . . . ?

RE: Yes. The classes lasted about six months, four to six months. There was no course period. Actually in the public Art Center, inasmuch as it was more or less voluntary as to when you came in, there was no fixed period of time for the class to run. I had some students who only actually attended maybe a few months, then I had others that were there for the whole two and a half years.

DB: Let's see, you were telling me a few minutes ago when you actually started in at the Art Center and how long you were there. We might get that on the record.

RE: Well, I first became associated with the Art Center at the end of July or the first of August 1939, at which time it was just . . . the building had been purchased or rented or leased, whatever they did with it, and they had just started setting it up and renovating it for use as an Art Center. At that time there was some of the staff there, many of them had not yet arrived. The first director, Carl Morris, was there, Vanessa Helder was there, and shortly after that Mr. Downer, Ken Downer, arrived. **DE:** Hilda Deutsch hadn't come yet?

RE: No, Hilda Deutsch did not come until later, she came . . . Hilda Deutsch and Joe and Ruth Soloman and Ruth Egri . . . those four arrived at the same time from New York. And I don't remember where Ken Downer came from at the time; I believe it was Connecticut.

DB: Woodstock, New York, perhaps, was his base of operations.

RE: That may have been it. I think that's where it was, yes.

DB: I know according to the literature about him he had been practically everywhere before he got to Spokane.

RE: Well, that was it. Every time I talked to him, he had been someplace so I didn't know just where he had been just prior to his arrival in Spokane. But he was there and Carl Morris especially and, of course, there were several they had hired already, as a working staff -- carpenters, and some receptionists and general helpers for

work in the galleries, and building of tables, and all the easels were built and model stands, and the installing of the lights, it was all done by the staff that was assembled by Carl Morris at that time.

DB: Oh! Well, I hear that you had one of the best physical plants for an Art Center throughout the country.

RE: I was excellent. They had The gallery was large and very well-designed and illuminated and it was very accessible to the downtown area, which gave it a good flow of traffic.

DB: Yes.

RE: It's surprising actually to me, and I'm sure to most of the other people. They probably thought they were the only ones who were interested in art in Spokane, and you'd go in and you'd find quite a large crowd most of the time, especially when there were any shows of interest at all. They had a show of original Van Goghs that I would hesitate to guess how many, but I know it would be thousands of people went through the gallery to see that. And then the classrooms -- it was well adapted for teaching -- several small classrooms for the smaller classes. We had a large studio for life class, and there was room for a few smaller offices for some of the instructors, and the entire basement was set up in such a way that it was ideal for the heavy sculpture work, and the litho presses, and even some jewelry work that was done down there.

DB: Well, I passed the site of it last week when I was in Spokane. It's too bad that the building is being torn down.

RE: There's nothing left but a hole.

DB: I know. I think it's going to be a parking lot and then

RE: It's a Federal building.

DB: Oh, a Federal building?

RE: A new Federal building is going in on the site of the old Art Center, so it's still being absorbed in a Federal project!

DB: Well, they certainly did have an amazingly strategic place for it.

RE: It was a very good location, and it was well-supported by the people of Spokane. It took a while, as everything does, to get off the ground, you might say. A large percentage of the students were housewives who were actually interested more in the therapeutic value of doing art work than they were in taking it up seriously. Surprisingly enough, some of those students who did attend have continued, to my great interest, with their art, and have even gone so far that at the present time there's quite an organization of women painters in Spokane, the nucleus of which are some of the original Art Center students.

DB: Well, that's very interesting. Do you remember by name any of the students who studied at the Center, either with you or otherwise, and who went on?

RE: Yes, as I say, Hattie Blomberg is well-known in Spokane and she's one of the prominent ones in this new group of women painters; Opal Fleckenstein, who

DB: I've talked with her.

RE: . . . she attended the Art Center at that time. She's an instructor at the Eastern Washington State College or was the last time I talked with her.

DB: Yes, she still is. I interviewed her last week.

RE: Kathleen Gemberling, who at that time was under another name, but she also studied there at the Art Center. DE: Wow! that is very interesting. I have seen her recent show at the Woodside Gallery [In Seattle] and I asked about her in Spokane, and it wasn't mentioned that she had studied at the Art Center. do you remember what her name was?

RE: She attended classes as Kathleen Van der Woerker. Now this is the best of my recollection, because she was very active in the art group and I know she was at the receptions. she was not in any of the classes that I was taking, either as a student or She did not take the lithography course, but to the best of my recollection Kathleen was a student at that time. In my own class there was Joe Kimmel, who is now Art Director for the National Chamber of Commerce in Washington, D.C.; Bob Matthiesen, who is Art Director for Met Press here in Seattle. He was one of the students. I had numerous students who are still active in the art world; one of them is Lang Armstrong, who is presently Art Director for the Spokesman-Review and Spokane Daily Chronicle.

DB: Oh! Which was the position that you had . . . ?

RE: No, I was just an artist in the department. Lang at that time was not in that department. Carl Kragelund, who is an artist for the Renoware Distributors in Bellevue.

DB: What is that name, please?

RE: Renoware Distributors.

DB: I mean the name of the man.

RE: Carl Kragelund (K-r-a-g-e-l-u-n-d). There were several women; I don't know if any of them have actually gone on into teaching. Some of these names will come back to me; I don't remember them all, as we go through some of the students' work here.

DB: Yes. All right. Now, let's see, you raised several points that I'd like to pursue a little bit. We branched off a bit from your discussion of your own instructing there. You gave the course in lithography for two and a half years. Did you give any other courses?

RE: No. I assisted in the metalwork and metal design because I had had quite a few years of craft work in silver and gold.

DB: I see.

RE: Gem setting.

DB: I know you're about to show me the set of lithographs that was done by your students. What happened to the other copies of the work? Were some of them sent around the country in the national traveling shows that the WPA had?

RE: There were some that were sent around the traveling shows. We also made up a portfolio of one dozen lithographs in an edition of a hundred of them that were sold as one of the means of raising money for the Art Center. They were sold locally.

DB: Oh, I see.

RE: And incidentally, most of them sold very well.

DB: Good.

RE: Surprisingly enough at that time, lithography was not accepted too widely, although there were print shows to which a lot of the students sent as individuals, and I myself was exhibiting regularly in most of the print shows in the country, but the Works Progress Administration -- WPA -- did not at any time to my recollection ask for any particular number of lithographs. I remember Carl Morris did take a few from the class a couple of times and sent them in, but what happened to them, I don't know. I never saw them after that, I know that.

DB: Perhaps they're in buildings in Washington now, or were allocated to other . . . ?

RE: Or are in the files of some Archives is more likely.

DB: Well, that could be. It's odd, though, that lithography wasn't accepted on the same status as some of the other art.

RE: I think perhaps part of it is due to the fact that the course, though it was offered by the Art Center, was not included in the appropriations for the Art Center and that it was entirely volunteer, inasmuch as the equipment was donated and the instruction was volunteer . . .

DB: Yes, all your instruction was volunteer?

RE: . . . there was no publicity or any funds allocated for the promotion of that particular course, it was sort of something that the local artists threw in on their own as an added incentive, and it was certainly very popular with them.

DB: I see. Then, you were saying that you thought the students that you had were very good and professional . . .

RE: They were all professional.

DB: . . . but those of the Center in general were all kinds.

RE: They were all kinds, right. There were many who had aken art through college and many who have since continued to do a considerable amount of art work very seriously, and others who have just used it as a . . . for its therapeutic value.

DB: Which, after all, is considerable.

RE: Well, absolutely!

DB: Now, you also were a student in some courses?

RE: Yes.

DB: What ones did you take?

RE: Watercolor painting.

DB: With Vanessa aHelder?

RE: With Vanessa Helder. And I took one life course for one period of time but it conflicted too much later on with my trying to do any teaching, so I had to drop that, and I just managed to get in one watercolro course.

DB: Yes, I see. I saw a series of her Grand Coulee pictures, her watercolors over in the [Spokane Historical] Museum last week; she certainly has a very definite stle and technique. Did she teach all her students that rather precise technique, or could you do anything you wanted to; be as wet and flowing as you wanted to, or . . . ?

RE: No. Vanessa was an exceptionally fine instructor in this respect; she developed enthusiasm of the students in the subject, and she had an exceptional amount of technical skill in the handling of the medium in any way you felt like handling it. Her work, as you say, has a very definite style, but her students' work was as varied as there were many people in her class.

DB: I see.

RE: She taught very wet watercolor, and, it's interesting to not that a couple of her students she turned around and made them start painting in oil because she felt they were not in the right medium, and they continued with her even in oil painting.

DB: Well, that's very interesting. Yes. Her things, wherever I see them, are all of a piece and also very controlled.

RE: Yes. She had a very definite style. Of course, her background was such, after all, she had done commercial work for quite a few years prior to her going into fine arts.

DB: Oh, had she? I didn't know that.

RE: Yes, she was a commercial artist. Of course, this is the thing that I think is going to show up in so many of the lithographs you'll see, that most of the artists participating in that course were commercial as well as interested in the fine arts aspect. The result is they had to have a definite, a very definite control of the medium.

DB: Yes.

RE: And, of course, having been through the same routes myself, why, I appreciate it. However, I certainly admire some of the results that were obtained by people who had never even been exposed to the commercial aspects, and came in, and they got some excellent results in the classes there.

DB: Was Vanessa Helder in commercial art over here in Seattle before she went . . . ?

RE: Yes, she was.

DB: I hadn't known that. Well, as you think back over the workings of the Art Center, would you be among those who think that the morale was pretty high, or would you remember some of the criticism and some of the sort of centrifugal forces that seem to have operated from time to time?

RE: It opened with a very good feeling, and it was very well received and I'd say it was very popular under Carl Morris. He was the director there and he managed to get strong support of quite a few of the people who had enough money to donate, also time, and to be able to pick up a few of the tabs necessary to do the printing of

nice programs and things like that, which expenses, of course, were not covered by the federal budget. And the morale of the instructors was excellent. As time progressed into Ken Downer's administration, there seemed to be a lessening interest -- and it had nothing to do with him -- because he was an excellent director

DB: Yes.

RE: It seemed to me there was. Of course, you must remember there were other factors, the international situation was rapidly changing at that time, and more and more people were becoming involved. Their interest was more absorbed in that and they had less time to spend in the arts. And, in fact, a lot of people who were unemployed at the time the Art Center opened soon found themselves busy and didn't have the time to attend classes. We had a lot of men in the daytime classes at the beginning . . .

DB: I see.

RE: . . . and toward the end there were few, if any.

DB: Were they drafted or did they find employment . . . ?

RE: No, this was prior to the draft, but then industry began to absorb them more rapidly in the '40's. DB" Even in Spokane?

RE: Oh, yes.

DB: I hadn't picked up the fact that there was a great deal of industry around there. Where was it?

RE: Well, a lot of it came in very rapidly at that time. Kiser put in two large plants -- a large rolling mill and a large reduction plant -- and there was a lot of industry brought in to Spokane. And then, of course, the Air Force put in Fairchild Air Force base and Geiger Field was expanded for a fighter wing, and all these things were taking place, not simultaneously, but they all were either started at that time, or at least the economic picture changed very rapidly.

DB: Yes. Now, let's see, where were we? Oh, on the general question of the morale of the Center, you said it started out well with Carl Morris, and under Downer it wasn't quite as good . . . ?

RE: By the time that Jim Fitzgerald took over, it was actually more or less just to close it out.

DB: Oh, really?

RE: There were some classes and for the people who had the interest, the morale was just as good as it ever was, but the attendance had dropped off. This was the thing I believe that eventually spelled the death blow to the Spokane Art Center as much as anything else, the fact that the attendance dropped. The morale remained good amongst the instructors but, like a lot of the others at that time, why, my own work and involvement with being drafted and everything else -- or rather I volunteered -- but I mean that was the reason I left.

DB: Yes.

RE: I left there in August of '41, so it was not too long after that -- that was August '41.

DB: Well, I heard rumblings in Spokane last week and I've seen something about this in the records, too, rumblings of criticisms made of the Art Center by people in Spokane, some of them on political grounds, some said that there were little Communist cells

RE: Oh well! You know that goes back to the statement I made originally that in a provincial area like Spokane everyone that is from out of town is very suspect . . .

DB: It would seem so.

RE: . . . and certainly, especially upon the arrival of the contingent from New York, whose attitudes were entirely different, and they were much more outspoken, and they weren't afraid to speak on such things as politics and economics and Well, in other words, they were normal human beings, and they had rights, and they said things they felt should be said. And a lot of them did not go in accord with the holier-than-thou attitude that is sometimes expressed in the Spokane attitudes. But at the same time there is a nucleus there that is very conservative, and anything that expresses a feeling of change and optimism is rather frowned upon.

DB: Yes.

RE: And this is the main reason for the suspicions. I heard that, too, I'm quite familiar with it. In fact, I was

included in the group of people "who were being recruited for probably the Communist party or something" because I actually associated with these people and thought they were very delightful.

DB: Well, I'm sure they were. Well, some good ladies who shall be nameless were telling me last week that this oncoming wave of Communism was they thought, at the bottom of the students' being organized. And I said, "Well, organized how?" "Well, organized into groups." And I said, "Well, what kind of groups?" "Well, you know, jsut into groups." I couldn't pin it down to anything more thana that.

RE: Well, the groups were classes, yes, they were definitely organized. The only way to run a school is to organize classes.

RE: Well, I don't think a lot of the people in Spokane ever realized that it actually was a school, and was being run as such. A lot of them thought it was sort of an afternoon tea party that they could drop in on and participate in a little sketching or drawing at their leisure.

DB: Well, that's it. Some must have expected it to be a carryover of the Spokane Art Association, which had been apparently a social organization.

RE: Exactly. And the Spokane Women's Club, which had sponsored art projects. and this is what a lot of them thought it was. They never took it seriously as an art school. The students who did got a lot out of it. The ones who didn't still dropped in for their afternoon china painting lesson, but that's about the extent of it.

DB: Oh now, come now! You know the Art Center wouldn't have permitted them to study china painting!

RE: No one permitted it, but that's what they intended -- they'd love to have had that.

DB: Well, I didn't know anyone in the Twentieth Century took or taught or studied china painting.

RE: Oh yes! Absolutely! Mrs. Bestor. The Women's Club there had a very active class in that for quite a period of years. Oh, actually to appreciate Spokane it has about the cultural level of the United States at the turn of the century in its appreciation and interest in art and the level of its actual education in art, of the general populace. This is not to be taken that everyone was that way, but that was the general feeling of the place.

DB: Yes, I see what you mean. Mrs. Fleckenstein was telling me last week that it took about twenty-five years for the impact of the Armory Show of 1913 to reach Spokane.

RE: Oh, true! Opal would know. She was one of them that went through the Art Center there with myself and some of the other Spokane people who were considered ruined beyond all doubt, I'm sure; why, we fought the battle for the Art Center.

DB: Well, good. I'm certainly glad you did. Well, another kind of point comes up in some of the interviews with Seattle artists: they felt that they were administered almost to death in their work here. Did you feel over in Spokane that either you as an instructor, or in the Center as an institution, was much bothered by governmental red tape or by directives form the Seattle office, or from Holger Cahill in Washington, or . . . ?

RE: Quite the contrary. There were occasions when I know Carl would have been very happy to have been able to get a directive from Bruce Inverarity.

DB: Oh!

RE: As a matter of fact, to the best of my recollection, Bruce was only in Spokane at the Art Center three times in that period of time, and -- whereas there was communication and certainly he gave it his wholehearted support -- in fact, I had a feeling at times it was sort of an outlet for him and he enjoyed the results that wree being obtained -- because they were, they were considerably different than the Project as it was worked in Seattle.

DB: Very different!

RE: I had the opportunity of going through the Art Project in Seattle, and it was headed in an entirely different direction.

DB: Yes.

RE: Here there was so much done in the recording of artifacts of this area

DB: Yes, for the Index of American Design.

RE: And the Index of American Design work, which was laborious, hard work which required a tremendous amount of research and constant supervision and administration, whereas in Spokane, the directors were true directors, they ran that Center and under each one there was a definite direction of policy that was not subject to any change as far as I could determine, as long as it adhered to the general administration setup from Washington, D.C., and by the Washington State area.

DB: Well, did you feel then that you had enough funds to get the supplies and staff the place?

RE: Oh, no, no. We never had enough funds but we -- actually that's where, as I say, there was a lot of local scrounging done and donating done, and I don't think the Art Center really suffered for lack of funds. I'd say there was sufficient, the instructors got their money, and that was the main thing. And there was enough allocated for maintenance of the building and staff, the staff was certainly a skeleton staff but it did make do, and the rest of it was done by donations and volunteer labor.

DB: Well, it seems to have worked out really awfully well. I asked about funds because in some of the correspondence between Mr. Inverarity and Carl Morris, and Inverarity and Kenneth Downer that is stored in the University of Washington Library, I came across letters in which Inverarity would say, "I am sending two sheets of watercolor paper for the use of Miss Vanessa Helder." I mean they had so much correspondence and then such pitifully small amounts of supplies that it just seemed as if it might be operating on a shoestring at the last.

RE: It was, it was actually a shoestring. You see, each instructor in addition to his teaching duties was supposed to spend so many hours a month on production for the -- I don't know where the paintings went but they became the property of the Federal Art Project.

DB: Many of them went on national circuit.

RE: I believe that's what happened, but like I know Carl Morris, he had an easel and equipment set up right in an office off his main office where he did a considerable amount of painting. But most of them ended up furnishing their own supplies. I think Carl did get some paints or brushes and maybe a canvas, and I know Vanessa did get two sheets of watercolor paper per month.

DB: I see.

RE: And, of course, in watercolors you're not always guaranteeing results from the first attempt.

DB: Of course not.

RE: So she'd end up buying her own paper many items.

DB: I would think so. That would be so inhibiting to have two sheets mailed you -- you have to learn to waste your material or you're just so tight, and I just

RE: Perhaps that accounts for her controlled method of painting!

DB: Maybe it does. But you seem to have survived pretty well despite that.

RE: Oh, we survived very well. Actually we got I don't know how Carl and Ken did it, but it seemed when we actually had to have something, like when we had to buy carborundum for graining litho stones and chemicals for etching them, and things of that nature which had to be furnished by the Center -- there was a charge made for the use of these so they reimbursed the fund, but originally they had to buy them. He managed to find the money somewheres.

DB: Good.

RE: Those things we couldn't get donated.

DB: Yes. Incidentally, what do you think was the secret of Carl Morris's great success. Was it his personal charm, or was it the tradition that this WPA Project was a great thing?

RE: Both. It was both. His personal charm was a tremendous asset in dealing with the public, he had a very fine public image, I would say. And certainly his work was such as an artists that he incurred a great deal of respect from the people of Spokane. Now this is surprising enough because he is one of the better-known moderns of our time

DB: Yes.

RE: . . . and yet he was so sincere and was so convincing as to the great good being done by the artists of his

time and generation, that he really sold the idea of modern art and got the people behind him in this whole project. He was a good salesman. He was more than just an artist; he was a good salesman.

DB: That would have been quite an achievement, given the isolation and conservatism of Spokane, and the fact that Carl Morris was one of the imports . . .

RE: Right.

DB: . . . having studied in Chicago and I think grown up in California.

RE: Well, that was saving grace, the whole thing was that he came originally from the West.

DB: Oh! I see.

RE: He was acceptable, you see. He actually did come from the Pacific Coast.

DB: Oh, yes. That would make a difference.

RE: That actually made the big difference. And I'm sure it was of some help, to him at least, in selling the Art Center to Spokane.

DB: Well, I have heard that people who came to Spokane for the Art Center directly from the East were in some cases not very happy there and didn't stay very long.

RE: They were very unhappy, most of them. It was a very stifling atmosphere and especially inasmuch as they were certainly social outcasts, you might say.

DB: They were?

RE: Absolutely! Many of them were, from the point of view of being accepted into the social activities that go along with any civic enterprise -- and naturally they're an important part of any functioning project of that nature, and certainly some of the instructors from the East were all but openly snubbed in that fashion.

DB: Just because they were from the East, or because they seemed "Communitistic," or because they seemed beatniks?

RE: Well, a combination of the things -- this was it -- some of the artists, as I say, that came from the East spoke a different language completely. They were of no beatnik attitude -- they spoke what I call the vocabulary of art, which was entirely unintelligible as far as many of the people there were concerned, and they were definitely uninhibited in expressing themselves, which did not go for cementing good relationships.

DB: No. What do you think they had expected to find in Spokane? More like the New York Art Project, which I gather was a very free-wheeling and creative thing with Jackson Pollock working on it and . . . ?

RE: I don't know. I think they hoped to create another New York Art Project in Spokane, but surprisingly enough half a dozen people cannot overcome the resistance of some fifty years and 180,000 people.

DB: Quite true. Well, I'll ask in a minute whether you have any summary or any final thoughts about this, but I think if I'm going to see the lithographs I'd better move my car, turn this off and move my car, because it's getting on towards 4:00.

RE: Yes, you had. It's five minutes to four. [INTERRUPTION]

DB: Well, now that we've seen the lithographs that you kept from the Art Center, done by yourself and the students, Mr. Engard, I guess we've summarized what you remember about the Art Center. but if you have any ideas, as I believe you have, about what the government, what the role of the government might be in relation to the arts, you might tell me about those, if you would, please.

RE: Well, I think the government is missing an opportunity in not at least subsidizing the arts to the same extent that they are subsidizing the sciences. It makes for a rather lopsided educational system in neglecting the cultural side of life and completely emphasizing the physical, which is what they're doing with a great many of the scholarships, the funds are being made available to those students who they hope will become useable in the military and scientific programs.

DB: Very true.

RE: But at the same time, if you look back in history, Rome and Greece and even the Renaissance are

remembered far more for their accomplishments in the fields of art than they ever were for what they accomplished in the physical sciences.

DB: Right.

RE: I really believe very strongly that the initial step that was taken by the Federal Government in the original Federal Arts projects could have been expanded and developed to where at the present time they could have had a very fine federal system of art schools subsidized by the Federal Government, at which the students who have shown the proper abilities and are screened properly, the same as they are for other scholarships, would be allowed entrance and trained, and given the opportunity to develop to a high standard of cultural level in the field of fine arts. It's been left to too hit-and-miss an operation, and I think that art in the United States especially is suffering very seriously because of this. There are too many "isms" and too many schisms taking place in the arts, and there is certainly no direction that I have been able to determine in the last ten years to any notable trend in the arts. True, there are occasional outstanding artists who have made a name for themselves, but there are no schools that I would consider acceptable for a standard that I would like to follow, and even the graduates of many of our so-called art schools I think are not trained properly in the fundamentals of art that they should have had.

DB: Very true. Well, you say the government "could have used this opportunity." You mean you think there should have been continuity right on from the WPA Art Project? They never should have folded up even during World War II?

RE: Well, that, of course -- no plans on war, but I think the programs There were several good programs, and this is one of the finest, that were started that could well have been taken up again and made a continuing thing for the government, actually a continuing branch of whatever department they wanted to put them under. But there's definitely a spot for it. I think that the government is letting down their people who are interested in culture at the expense of the ones who are interested in science.

DB: Well, I think you're right. Well, perhaps there's a chance for some of this now with the appointment of Roger Stevens as -- what's his title? - Presidential Associate . . . ?

RE: . . . for cultural . . .

DB: . . . for Cultural Development.

RE: Let's hope -- it's to be hoped that something like this will develop. There were a few signs, there are a few signs in the past couple of years that the administrative branch especially is becoming conscious of the fact that there is a need, or a void to be filled in the cultural training in this country, and it's to be hoped that something positive is done in that direction in the near future.

DB: I certainly hope so. You think it should be administered federally, or locally, or as a combination, or what . . . ?

RE: There's nothing wrong with centralization on a national project if the money is being paid for it from federal funds. I think it should be set up, as so many federal agencies are, under local administration but federal supervision.

DB: Umhmm. Well

RE: Give your local agencies a certain freedom, because each area definitely has its own peculiar problems.

DB: Yes. As you showed that Spokane did.

RE: Right. And ethnic groups that you have to work with, and certainly the local people are more familiar with these than a central organization, but the basic administration of funds and the basic programs to be administered, to be set up on a federal level.

DB: Well, fine! I certainly hope there are enough people who agree with you so as to get something done.

RE: I'd be the first one to volunteer again, if they ever get started.

DB: Good! Well, thank you a lot, Mr. Engard.

RE: Thank you.

DB: Do you have anything else you want to bring up?

RE: No. I think I've said more than enough.

DB: No, Not more than enough, but that's fine. [END OF INTERVIEW]