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Oral history interview with Donald Bannard Goodall, 1965 July 8

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Transcript

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Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Donald B. Goodall on July 8, 1965. The interview took place in Austin, Texas, and 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. Donald B. Goodall, director of the College of Fine Arts, University of Texas at Austin on July 8, 1965. The Interviewer is Mrs. Sylvia Loomis of the Santa Fe office of the Archives of American Art. And the subject to be discussed is Mr. Goodall's participation in the Federal Art Project as director of a WPA community art center in Utah during the 1930s and '40s. What town was that in Utah?

DONALD GOODALL: The town was Salt Lake City, Utah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative]. But first, Mr. Goodall, would you tell us something about yourself—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —where you were born and where you received your art education.

DONALD GOODALL: Let's start with the present. I am chairman of the Department of Art and director of the University Art Museum and acting dean [laughs] of the College of Fine Arts at the University of Texas at this point.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I went to Salt Lake City in 1938 from graduate study at the University of Chicago. I was stimulated to that decision by having met a very inspiring person, Holger Cahill, through chance and in an artist's studio on the North side of Chicago. I set aside a doctoral fellowship at the University of Chicago to go to San Francisco for an in-training period for directors of the—within the Art Center Program of the WPA Federal Art Project.

In San Francisco, I met Donald Bear, the regional director for the western area, Joe Danysh of San Francisco, a man named Alan [ph], and numerous other of the San Francisco Project artists, some of whom I came to know later. After a preparatory period and a visit to the Art Center Project in Salem, Oregon—which was, at that time, directed by a man named Charles Bow Clear, C-L-E-A-R—I went to Salt Lake City, Utah where at 59 South State Street an old office building was in the process of reconstruction. The purpose of the reconstruction was to affect a building of four stories, two of—four stories and a basement. The basement and two stories were devoted to the central activities of the Federal Art Project in Utah, but most particularly to the art center itself. The upper stories included the Utah Music Project for which there was a rehearsal hall, otherwise the auditorium and activity hall for all projects.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: When did you go there, by the way?

DONALD GOODALL: 1938, fall. September as I remember it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And was it—was the art center actually in operation at that point?

DONALD GOODALL: No. It was just—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I see—[Cross talk.]

DONALD GOODALL: —in the process of being brought together.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The top floor was given over to the Federal Writers' Project, which ultimately produced the Utah Guidebook. The supporting agency—the community agency, which represented let's say the sponsor in Utah was the Utah State Institute of Fine Arts. This was a state agency whose structure was similar to that of the state Highway Department. It had been, however, almost defunct for a number of years. Its principal activity being to hold annual exhibitions.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Of the artists of Utah?

DONALD GOODALL: Of the artists of Utah. The Utah State Institute of Fine Arts was extraordinarily well adapted in its structure to sponsorship of a government project, for the language describing it was sufficiently loose so that when legislative appropriation was requested—and this appropriation was supported by a major private utility, incidentally, as well as other elements in the community—it was possible to increase the state appropriation for the arts, that is for sponsorship of the arts, without the difficulty of procedural limitation.

[00:05:20]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was there a certain percentage of the costs that were paid by the—

DONALD GOODALL: There was a percentage. And I don't remember at this point. Local support was materially increased.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Now, it should—it is important at this point to mention that the seminal figure behind the development in Utah was a man named Gail Martin [ph] of Salt Lake City. Gail Martin [ph] was the critic of art, music, and theater for the then leading newspaper. Certainly the leading newspaper as far as the Church of Latter Day Saints was concerned, *the Deseret News*. It was a very influential paper.

I think all of us came there, really, as the result of the energetic groundwork which Gail Martin [ph] had done. He is since deceased. He was principally interested in music but gave much attention to the art movement.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what had you done in the art field before—

DONALD GOODALL: Before coming to Utah?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —coming there? Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Well, let's see, I suppose I spent most of my life being a student, having gone to the universities of Oregon and Chicago where I took bachelor's and master's degrees. I studied painting at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago and had spent quite a little time painting. So, that I arrived in Utah freighted with the wisdom which was available to us through schools and universities and very little practical experience.

However, I might say that I had grown up in the packing industry and had—where I started at the age of 14, and had worked with crews, worked with production groups, from that time and had had quite a lot of experience working with crafts personnel and unskilled labor.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were you born in Chicago?

DONALD GOODALL: Oh, no. I'm a—was born in Los Angeles—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: —and went to school in Oregon. Brought up in Oregon.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Would you like to hear more about the art center project [laughs]?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, definitely. As we just want to—

DONALD GOODALL: Okay.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —get you—

DONALD GOODALL: Right.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —get you set first.

DONALD GOODALL: I'm going to struggle now, and probably inaccurately, for facts.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, now the things that we particularly like to know, your immediate superiors and how many people were involved in this art center?

DONALD GOODALL: Okay.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: We'll start out with—

DONALD GOODALL: Now—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —that.

DONALD GOODALL: —let's see. The immediate supervisor of the division of the WPA, of which the Federal Art Project was a segment, was Ruby [S.] Garrett. An extraordinarily effective and able administrator. Apparently, all the cultural projects came under her purview. The project administration had a state administrator, Mr. Elzy J. Bird, who was a Utahan.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What was that first name?

DONALD GOODALL: It's E-L-Z-Y. I functioned as assistant state administrator, director of the art center, and shortly as executive secretary of the State Institute of Fine Arts. So, that we had—you see, a person of one person a kind of connecting factor—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Liaison.

DONALD GOODALL: —between state and—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

DONALD GOODALL: —government. And that proved helpful to us in centering our figures in one office. Mr. Bird was largely responsible for the projects such as frescoes.

[00:10:08]

Among the projects which the artists under his supervision completed was the great large-scale painting of pictographic figures from southeastern Utah, which was ultimately used by the Museum of Modern Art in its Indian Art Show.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: And that project was directed on the ground by the painter Lynn Fawcett [ph],, who had, before that, been connected with the administrative group at the Art Students League in New York. Lynn, being particularly effective in large scale painting, was able to work with our artists rather satisfactorily.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did they work directly from the pictographs, do you know? Or from photographs?

DONALD GOODALL: No. We loaded a carload full of artists and sent them down into southeast Utah— station—what passed for a station wagon at that point.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: And they were nearly flooded out a couple of times. That's a flash flood area. And they were very fortunate to get their picture [inaudible] [laughs]. They took it back to a large warehouse in Salt Lake City where it was completed.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And then they copied the pictograph, is that right?

DONALD GOODALL: They made a scale copy of the pictographs.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Because we've had inquiries about whether or not there were any photographs of pictographs taken on the Federal Art Projects. And I didn't know there were any—

DONALD GOODALL: There were sketches made and, very probably, some photographs were taken by the crew that went down there. Now, where they are at the present I don't know. As the result of this interview, I may make some inquiry out in Utah and find out where some of this material is.

I want to add another thing now with respect to the art project studio side of this development—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

DONALD GOODALL: —in Utah. There was a sculpture being produced and three to four sculptors working all the time. Painting assignments developed at intervals as local, that is Utah institutions, made wall space available. And, finally, the Index of American Design was most successful in Utah. And I think it was here that Mr. Bird's supervision was particularly successful. He was able to convert painters, plasterers, and so on into copiers of early Mormon textile and furniture. These men produced, what I modestly presume to be, some of the best work executed in the Index of American Design. They took great pride in it. And many of them worked many more hours than they were required to do so.

Incidentally, I'd like to comment at this point that I used, continually, in the newspaper, to read about WPA boondoggling. And yet, at no time in the Utah Project was I ever aware of the slowdown. In fact, usually, our people got so involved in their projects that there was always a certain amount of contributed overtime into the work that happened there. As a matter of fact, I was very proud of that crew.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: About how many were there?

DONALD GOODALL: I have forgotten. I would presume that the—that the Utah artist staff, including those who participated in the art center program, and those who worked on the Project —and we flipped them back and forth interchangeably, since we used the art center as a school, and exhibition area, and demonstration center—I presume there were about 25 or 30 artists involved in that Utah program.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That would be the entire state? For the entire state, or were they mostly located around Salt Lake City?

DONALD GOODALL: Most of them were in Salt Lake City. Let's say that another half dozen were located at intervals outside of Salt Lake City. And I'll describe their activities in just a moment. I can tell you a little more about the Art Center program in the—in general if you—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Fine. I'd like to have that.

[00:15:01]

DONALD GOODALL: The art center, very rapidly identified itself with the school system where the art supervisor, Maud Hardman—an extremely effective person—was inclined to assist materially in the use of exhibitions and the physical facilities at the Art Project. There was, therefore, a liaison at the level of child and adolescent training and production because this became the only museum in the area. The schools used it. Used the area busily. And Miss Hardman, when she was not making demonstrations to her teachers in her own system buildings, brought her teachers to the art center where they made considerable use of the space there. Indeed, the art center frequently held exhibitions of the artwork of children in Salt Lake City, or the children of some other city.

Now, the residue of that was both immediate and perceptible and diffuse and difficult to describe. First off, adolescents from the high schools began to attend art center classes. A regular school was set up there, for adolescents and adults. Unfortunately, a fair percentage of the best younger people were lost in a group of GIs that were shot up in the Battle of the Bulge. Some of them, however, are still participating in other parts of the country.

There was, in addition to a regularly organized school with normally about three grades of proficiency, beginning, medium, and advanced in painting, sculpture, design and related fields but—plus public lectures given by university people, by the art center staff, by visiting artists—there was a use made of the art center as a—as a forum for community problems. For instance, I remember a session on city planning, which was held there. And two protagonists who interested me were a professor of comparative religions, an anthropologist from Switzerland, and our own milkman who were the three talking most busily when we [laughs] closed—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

DONALD GOODALL: —that particular project out. That milkman became a specialist in Cezanne. [Laughs]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right [laughs]? He must have been an exceptional milkman.

DONALD GOODALL: Well, I think the exceptional aspect of this was that the 1930s was a time when there was enough commonality of purpose so that people were drawn together, and the separateness and distinction of class or education was not enough to hold people apart in colloquiums. And that people from all parts of the community were very apt to meet there, including our banker. You see, this—I don't think this is probable at the present time. But it was not only probable, but common at that point in that place. Among our sponsors, as I say, were the extremely well-educated and effective president of the—of the intermountain utility company [Utah Power & Light Company –Ed.] there. The—a member of our board was the director of the Kennecott Copper Mine in the area. We had newspaper representation. In fact, the community gave us their top personnel for bringing together the various aspects of these three projects, which we were pulling together and which we hoped to present as a front to the university.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The project—the Federal Art Project, of course, sponsored the guidebook. Well, artists from the art center advertised the guidebook, you see?

[00:20:01]

We did all the visual publicity, and so on, for the symphony orchestra. A Utah state symphony orchestra was set up with a base of project personnel. And then, we set up an associated committee, which produced money for temporary personnel to enlarge the permanent orchestra.

And the extremely able secretary of that symphony orchestra group was a lady, a musician, from the community whose name escapes me at this moment. I don't know why it should [Genevieve Fisher –Ed.]. She was one of the most dramatically impressive young women I've met in—you know, at any point. She was able to convince people effectively. Indeed, I think one of the reasons that the Utah Project worked so successfully was that it kept a multiplicity of ideas and projects going all the time. So, many people found reasons for coming there. People brought their children there. People came there for meetings. They came there for music. We even had theater going on in that place.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was that part of the Theatre Project? Or was that locally—a local [inaudible]?

DONALD GOODALL: Theatre Project, I think, never really got off the ground there. [Possibly because the University of Utah had a very effective department and there was an active little theater. –Ed.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative]. But was the Music Project extended throughout the state, or was it localized here?

DONALD GOODALL: The Music Project was localized in Salt Lake City and carried its message to communities throughout the state. Utah is a musical community with the—both the Mormon and so-called Gentile people there are inclined to be active musically, particularly in choral groups. And so, small communities in the southern part of the state, in those very difficult years, would put up their matching share so that they could bring the symphony orchestra down for the school kids.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh. I wondered if it traveled out of the city.

DONALD GOODALL: It traveled. In fact, everything traveled.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The state is such that it has a vertical spine, which is the airable land and the highways connecting that airable land. And the communities are located pretty much along that central tract, with the exception of communities in southeast Utah given over to coal and sheep ranching. But there too in Price, Utah, which is coal center, support was given for this musical activity. And, at one point, we started a series of branch exhibitions over there.

Which leads me to this point. The Art Center program soon proliferated itself, first in the form of loan exhibitions, and then, finally, in St. George and Price, permanent exhibition halls into which we circulated exhibitions and sent, at intervals, artists from Salt Lake City, you see.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The Salt Lake City radio stations, there was no TV then, of course. The radio stations extremely generous to us. We had—the art center had one half hour program. I remember personally writing at it for three years. And then, the CBS outlet there, KSL, at intervals, did programs out of the center; played its musical programs and so on. Community reception was generous, in brief.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You said that you had painting, sculpture, and design classes at the art center.

DONALD GOODALL: Right.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were there any others—other types of classes?

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah. I was thinking particularly of silk screen. A number of us who had been involved in silk screen in Chicago had been interested in that medium as an inexpensive means of disseminating, not only information, but reasonably good works. In those years, in the New York Project, you'll remember that Yasuo Kuniyoshi and others were doing 14 or 15 different screens, to try to use that medium to transmit their landscapes. At one period, as you will remember, artists were loaned from the richer metropolitan areas to we provincial—

[00:25:07]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: —centers, on a non-relief basis, I think it was called. And if I remember those figures, which were drilled into my head at that time, the percentage of non-relief personnel, at one point may be raised up to 10, and then subsequently up to five percent of the total project. And as these percentages waxed and waned, we were able to bring people to Utah as artists and teachers. And we brought people—we took a lesson from Brigham Young, who sent out his representatives, the persons who brought the Mormon word to other peoples and nations. Brigham Young implied that it would be very nice if carpenters, and plumbers, and artisans of skill be converted to the Mormon Church. We were very interested that silk screen personnel, designers, and painters [laughs] be brought into the land of Brigham Young. And so, Chicago supplied us with several, whose names I don't remember at this point. But these were wonderful guys who came out for six months at a time. Did—without exception, did a grand job for us.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And this was in the teaching? Mainly.

DONALD GOODALL: Teaching and demonstration.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

DONALD GOODALL: Let me—let me refer you, again, to the relationship between the art center and the Project. The thing which was very separate, administratively, came very closely, or very soon, glued together in practice. And we were using artists who were working on Project assignments to demonstrate in classes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Some of them spent time teaching in our classes, so that whatever was being done as an assigned project soon became grist for demonstration and part of the school information. So, any piece of information that came into that area eventually entered into the school.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see, mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: And, therefore—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But these—

DONALD GOODALL: There was also some craftwork being done.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But these artist teachers that came in, as you said, from the largest cities—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —they were not employed as easel artists, for instance. They—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes, they were employed—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: They were?

DONALD GOODALL: —as easel artists.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, in Utah?

DONALD GOODALL: In Utah. They would come in on our easel project and we'd hook them into teaching.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh [laughs], I see, it worked that way.

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]

DONALD GOODALL: And principally because they were generous, and the Utah Project was conceived that flexibly.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see. Because I know of other cases—well, the Roswell Art Center, I think, in New—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —Mexico, where they did have teachers that came in from other large cities, but they did nothing but teach, and that was their assignment and that's what—

DONALD GOODALL: Well, I—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —they did.

DONALD GOODALL: —may be mistaken, but—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No. Well, you should know because you were [laughs] the head of—

DONALD GOODALL: But—well, yes—[Cross talk.]—but I have a slippery memory.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —the center.

DONALD GOODALL: The thing about the Utah Project, at this point, was that there was a general air of excitement about it because there—the community was interested in it, and we were interested in it. And I think the dialogue between the professional artists and the community was pretty good.

Now, there was one point of normal conflict. I guess the word is exacerbation. And this is the—was the area of aesthetic decision. One of the mistakes I think that I made, as a 26-year-old zealot, was to assume that everyone would normally become interested in the most advanced reference frames in art. All they had to do was to be exposed of it—exposed to it. And since the assumption in those years was that all people of normal eyesight, and so on, were capable of normal absorption [laughs] of visual ideas, they would soon, of course, advance, I think we thought of as being, to a certain position. Well, I was mistaken. And I think we began to understand that as time goes on that the pleasure which people take in art is not based on any kind of absolutes, but it's based on their own range of comprehension and interest. And I suppose it took me a couple of years to really accept this thing.

[00:30:13]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How long were you there, by the way?

DONALD GOODALL: From 1938 to 1942.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: To when it closed.

DONALD GOODALL: The Lanham Act was in effect at the time that I left. And we were converting this place into a soldier's service center and were teaching classes for soldiers stationed there. And part of the thing was being used by the USO, but we still had exhibitions going. It was still going, full concerts.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I may be ahead of the story a little bit, but what eventually happened to it?

DONALD GOODALL: Oh. Well, I think it had sort of fulfilled its purpose. At the point at which government funds were commenced to diminish, and personnel departed for a variety of reasons that were normal in those years. And local and domestic interest also began to divert itself towards the war effort. And the great drive, of course, was toward USOs. Artists were being called into do things like camouflage and so on. The symphony orchestra was loyally and effectively continued and exist to this day.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: [Inaudible.]

DONALD GOODALL: So, it is a direct outgrowth of the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What about an art center?

DONALD GOODALL: The art center continued to pay its rent until one of the unions looking for a meeting hall bought the building [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: And it became a union hall. And the art center found itself without a home. And I think, probably, that was the coup de gras. I think that finally helped in—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: In the—

DONALD GOODALL: —closing it out.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, do they now have a fine arts museum there, or—

DONALD GOODALL: There is a museum, I believe, at the University of Utah [called the Art Barn, sponsored largely by the Junior League. It was also active when the WPA Project was operating. –Ed.], which is supported in part by state, and in part by local, money. I feel, however, that although it was too bad that Project was terminated at that point, I think all along those of us who were involved in it thought of it as a—as a temporary one, and as one which should make its case as intensely as possible during a time which it was in existence. And then, if it had values that they would somehow enter the fabric of the community, and the community would, in its own way, restate what it needed to do.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that was what I wondered. What—to what extent it—

DONALD GOODALL: I have no way of knowing. There is no pedometer which records the stimuli received by a person going into a gallery. There has been a continuing and active interest in the visual arts in Utah. Many of the youngsters who went—who were students in that program, subsequently went to art school at Utah institutions or into the East. Some of them went east. I don't have any reason knowing whether they would have done that if there had been no art center, you see. We like to think that the ideas expressed then entered quite a few different people's lives, affected their lives, but there is no accurate measure.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But there is—there is no specific entity now that—

DONALD GOODALL: The only concrete entity, which exists now as a result of the Project, is the symphony orchestra.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Which is a good one. And I should say that the other entities are the collections of artist's work which were formed at that time, and which continue to be formed in Utah. I think, if I were being optimistic, that I would say that there was, in those years, and I believe still continues to be, a wider practice, if that's a sentence, of the collection of one's own regional artist's work. There—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What collections are these?

DONALD GOODALL: Well—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Private?

DONALD GOODALL: Private collections, yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But no—

DONALD GOODALL: They—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —public ones that—

DONALD GOODALL: The public collections are those attached to universities.

[00:35:02]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I see.

DONALD GOODALL: In Utah State University, University of Utah in Salt Lake City, the Brigham Young University, all were forming collections at that time which have continued to grow. [There was also a public school collection begun, but this was not instigated by the WPA Project. –Ed.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative], but there wasn't one nucleus that continued—

DONALD GOODALL: No central nucleus grew out of this, I think, because of the either historical accident or logical [laughs] outcome of the—of the occupancy of that—of that building. It formed a center. It was located at 59 South State Street. And it was so placed that people coming into town always could get at it readily. Therefore, it was very valuable real estate.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: It was sold at a time when everyone's effort was being diverted to something much more important, you know?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, of course.

DONALD GOODALL: National survival.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that actually was one reason why, I think no nationwide survey has been made of the Federal Art Project because the war came on. By then, everybody was diverted—

DONALD GOODALL: Do the records still remain from these various Projects?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, there's—there are some in Washington—

DONALD GOODALL: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —archives there but they are fragmentary.

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And so, that's why we're trying to reconstruct what happened—

DONALD GOODALL: Is Tom Parker, is he still alive?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I don't know.

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah. He was the national director during this period.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: Extremely able person. Thomas Parker, he subsequently became the director of the American Federation of Arts.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I was interested to hear you say that Donald Bear was one of the supervisors—[Cross talk.]

DONALD GOODALL: Donald Bear was stationed in Denver.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I know.

DONALD GOODALL: Was in charge of 11 western states, was he not?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I didn't know how many. I—I've heard—I've heard five, I've heard seven, and now this is the first time I've—

DONALD GOODALL: Well—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —heard 11.

DONALD GOODALL: Accept five. This—that was a pure guess.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But—

DONALD GOODALL: It—[Cross talk.]

DONALD GOODALL: —he may have been the Rocky Mountain man.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: He might have been.

DONALD GOODALL: But he was very much in evidence in our area. And was always very optimistic and we thought of him as extremely able.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I think he was from everything that I've heard.

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: In all of the four states that I've visited, they all—

DONALD GOODALL: He had an excellent eye.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —speak very highly.

DONALD GOODALL: The thing about Don Bear that was important to us—there were two things that were important to us at the working level. He was resolutely honest, and this was clear. He had a good eye. Now, this isn't a casual observation. This goes back to Holger Cahill, because Holger Cahill was one of those persons who always protected the artist. And his policy always was somehow that the—it was the administrator's job to keep pressures off the artist. And that there should be no intervention within the legitimate area of the artist's concern his own creative work.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I knew this about Mr. Bear. I didn't know Cahill that well from what I—I mean, from what I've heard [inaudible].

DONALD GOODALL: I don't think anybody realizes the direct effect which Eddie Cahill had upon the workings of projects, because just through coming and being them—there, he sliced through the normal separation between administrator and worker.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: He was one of the guys, so to speak. And he was obviously enthusiastically and immediately involved. When he left a project, he left a lot of friends there, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

DONALD GOODALL: He was an exceptional person.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What were some of the main problems that confronted you?

DONALD GOODALL: Well, growth. This is a—the first problem—we were anxious to get ourselves housed. That was first, it was mechanical. And we were given reasonably adequate means and left to dig up the resources we didn't have. In time, we did and, usually, with the help of local people. The problems, I suppose, had to do with the development of sponsorship for permanent projects on the scale of our desires and ambitions.

[00:40:15]

And these were new in kind to Utah. And because of its own background, and its very considerable interest in and heritage for education, it meant that our exhibition program, teaching program, this kind of thing, the concerts, were very much more comprehensible to these communities. So, that I think probably our toughest jobs were going out and selling stuff which people thought of then as, you know, very modern art. And, of course, modern art at that point constituted a—let's say, an easel painting with a series of ugly and unfamiliar mailboxes. I can remember when a non-project artist exhibited a picture like that. He then happened to be the head of the Art Department at the University of Utah, Mr. LeConte Stewart. His picture was censured because it seemed to celebrate the vulgar. Now, I think this will imply that there was serious changeover problem from one generation to the next as to the matter of what art really is.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The—there was a rear-guard action fought by older persons who were really the relics of a Beaux-Arts system at the end of the 19th century. Some of them had actually studied in Paris, and perpetuated a kind of quasi-impressionistic image. Now, that kind of thing was at variance with art which seemed to have some—even the most modest social message [laughs].

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: By the way, having come there from Chicago, which was in ferment in terms of social beliefs of various kinds, and in which, you know, members of the party, the Trotskyists, and so on dueled over any particular question. Utah really seemed like a mountain valley because the social ideas, when utopian, were sort of Fabian socialist. And [laughs] closer to Walden Pond, I would say, than Finland Station. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, what about these fluctuations in the administration of Washington about funds and so forth? Did that disturb you very much?

DONALD GOODALL: Well, these, of course, were hectic. And I think they actually disturbed the Project very little. Except for those unfortunates who were periodically cut off or added on because there was a kind of peripheral complement of persons who took the last tail end of our budget, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: And when that budget would be sliced in March, then these poor guys would be without food.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Well, that was—

DONALD GOODALL: And, actually, there were local and informal food distribution projects, really, to take care of some of these people.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, now this leads to a question about Utah, which is unique, and that is it's always been my understanding that the Mormons looked after their own, and I assume that the majority of people in Utah were Mormons. I may be wrong on that. But [inaudible]—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes, I think the percentage in Utah in those years was something like this:

Salt Lake City was 50 to 60 percent non-Mormon—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: —or gentile.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: With a substantial Catholic community.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The state had from 60 to 80 percent Mormon in its various communities, depending upon the location. Those communities which were more agricultural were apt to be more Mormon in nature. Those devoted to mining and distribution more non-Mormon.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:45:07]

DONALD GOODALL: I would guess that between 60 and 70 percent of the population of Utah was supported in one way or another by the WPA. Our Project was composed, largely, of persons of Mormon background. The assumption that the LDS Church took care of all its people in total is, I think, false. The Mormon Church, in my experience, in those years, was nonetheless extremely active in its mutual improvement associations and its various stake, that is, subdivision meeting houses, in joint projects in which people canned fruit and vegetables put these in warehouse, contributed clothing to warehouses, which were then distributed to members of the Mormon community.

Nonetheless, the—any look at the economy of that period and at the income of the state through agriculture or mining will show you that considerable funds were pouring in from other than industrial or agricultural sources. And they were coming in through the Federal Art Project. Or through the—excuse me, through the WPA, with the Federal Art Project as a small component thereof.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Because during the WPA days it was necessary for the majority of employees to be—to have relief status.

DONALD GOODALL: Yes. Well, the majority of employees on the WPA Art Project in Utah carried relief status. Never more than 10 percent were non-relief.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. [Inaudible] I think that was just about the general average so that—so, there must have been some Mormons involved in that. Well, I had—I had heard, at one point, that even during the days of the Depression that the Mormons had taken care of their own but I [inaudible]—[Cross talk.]

DONALD GOODALL: Well, they did much to. And—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It's just too big a problem.

DONALD GOODALL: —believe me, it was an enormous problem. And this doesn't—in no way denigrates the interest or importance of the Mormon ethic, which is to sustain its own community.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes.

DONALD GOODALL: But they're—economically, there are points beyond which you can't go.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, that's true. Well, what did you do after you left Salt Lake City?

DONALD GOODALL: Oh, I went to the University of Texas as an assistant professor of the history of art. And—at Texas [laughs]—we arrived at Texas in time to be frozen as part of a naval training complement. We became interested in such things as navigation, the design of infernal instruments, and the teaching of art history to young maidens. [They laugh.]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that's quite a combination.

DONALD GOODALL: After the war, I went to Harvard on a graduate fellowship. And, from there, to the Toledo Museum of Art as dean of its education program. From there, to the University of Southern California where I was chairman of the Department of Fine Arts. Served on several museum boards. And was reasonably active in the art community there. And during the past five and a half years, we have been—we have returned here to the University of Texas, where there is an extremely active art program.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. Well, now what do you think was the effect of the Federal Art Project, generally, throughout the country as far as art appreciation is concerned?

DONALD GOODALL: I—this is opinion only since I have no evidence.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, you've been around so much, so you should know.

DONALD GOODALL: Well, I have, as a matter of fact, been most interested in the effect of the Art Center program. First off, its director, Daniel Defenbacher who now lives in the Bay Area—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Now, where is this? Is this San Francisco?

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What center are you talking about?

DONALD GOODALL: The Art Center programs which he set up during—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh—

DONALD GOODALL: —the Depression.

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

DONALD GOODALL: He was the administrator in charge of developing the art center idea. And there were more than 60 in the country at one time.

[00:50:02]

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, I didn't know that was under one head.

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh.

DONALD GOODALL: Various—in various dimensions. These brought the sort of activity, which I describe in Salt Lake, to medium and smaller communities, from one side of the country to the other. I would assume, on the basis of our experience in Salt Lake City, that a portion of the upswing of interest in the arts following World War II can be credited to the extremely broad dissemination of arts and art ideas during the second half of the '30s under the Federal Art Project and the Art Center program.

It is clear, and it is commonly accepted information in the art community, as you know, that the Project kept alive and, more importantly, kept the continuity of work going for artists in major and secondary centers from coast to coast. I was talking about this idea with the American painter, Adolph Gottlieb, who visited this here a week ago. And we were reminiscing over the numbers of persons who had been in the Project in New York, and Chicago, and San Francisco, and Los Angeles. These people kept continuities that were lost in Europe, and carried with them an audience which was otherwise diverted in Europe. So that at the end of World War II, the American artist had a head start.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: And I think our present position of leadership in the world right now is in part due to the continuity provided our art by the Project. As I remember, the figures of those years, the total sum expended for the arts projects was approximately that of a very small battleship. The total sum acquired through sales in the American art part—market in one year would far exceed all that was spent on the Federal Art Projects.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right? I never heard those figures before, those general statistics.

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah. The—and they are, of course, no measure of the national enrichment which has been provided by this means. It has become fashionable to refer to the WPA mural as a funny thing. And WPA art as somehow a social message art, which has lost its meaning. I think, in part, this is true, is defensible. But so, the art of any previous decade loses its impact because there is only a core of artists at any time who carry us beyond our immediate requirements into more permanent satisfactions. But this does not mean that a community is not largely benefited by the expression of its artists who fill a need for a people at one time, give it serenity, and order, and a sense of self-definition which it can get in no other way.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: And that you can't measure. But this the Project did and, importantly, at a time when America was in real trouble.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And it also exposed the public to art for the first time. I mean, at their own level.

DONALD GOODALL: That's right.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I mean, before it had been—

DONALD GOODALL: That's right.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —something up on a pedestal.

DONALD GOODALL: There was a communication between artists and the public in those years that I think has not happened, at least, until the last few years again. And what we have going now is a somewhat different thing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative] It's kind of wild [inaudible]—

DONALD GOODALL: Well, it's—yeah, it's a—it's a—it's an entirely different relationship.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I think there was another contribution that the federal art easel project, and mural project too, made and that was the last of the regional art.

[00:55:02]

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Then it went out of style.

DONALD GOODALL: You know something that was very important to us in Utah, and on the West Coast—because we had continuous contact with San Francisco, some contact with Los Angeles—we were helped by the opportunity to study problems, step by step, easel painting problems, and some mural projects. We were able to move toward the real problems of plastic organization, the nature of pictorial structure, on the one hand, and real problems of controlling technique, of materials.

When Lynn Fawcett, for example, came to Utah at the time we did the mural for that museum of modern art, he brought a technique of glazing—over glazing, large areas which reminded us of Rubens' process of painting. He had gotten this through contact with Reginald Marsh. Reginald Marsh had gone—gotten it through a study of Rubens' medium. And here, out here in the center of Utah, we have a group of artists working with a medium which stemmed through Lynn Fawcett, to Reginald Marsh, to Rubens' and we were concerned with problems central only to painting, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Now, when this kind of thing enters the arteries of the art community, then it enters the life stream and becomes part of its ongoing process. You can't inject that anyway other than to give people the time and opportunity to feel their way into those projects, and get at them because one may need them, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes. And without—

DONALD GOODALL: They can't be taught through propaganda. They have—

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No—

DONALD GOODALL: —to be needed.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —[inaudible]. And or they can't be taught under pressure.

DONALD GOODALL: That's true.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: If the pressure is too great, and the artist—

DONALD GOODALL: Nothing happens.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —is too concerned with, well, just earning a living, we'll say, he can't concentrate on these deeper problems [inaudible].

DONALD GOODALL: Let me add one thing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: In the brief experience that I had on the periphery of the Chicago Project, I, as a younger artist there, was led to understand that only those artists who were the best artists in Chicago were admitted to the Project. It was a real distinction. And this was a thing which we tried to infuse into the Utah Project, that you had to be the best in your area, so that it became an honor to join.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, I think that was true in New York. And I—

DONALD GOODALL: It must have been.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —know in some communities where I've interviewed artists or administrators, they said that they were given people. They were put on a project and they didn't come up to standard and they had an awful time trying to fit them into something. You know, some kind of copying or something of that sort. Well, that [inaudible]—

DONALD GOODALL: That's where our people—our people of that nature went into the Index, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, yes. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, it did fill a need for the type of painter who had brought up in the academic school. And—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —simply couldn't break away from it, so—

DONALD GOODALL: That's true.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —it did help. But their were other problems of that sort. But, from my own experience in New York—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —it was an honor. I know—

DONALD GOODALL: I'm sure it was.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —for an artist to get on the Project as an easel painter. And some of the others were given jobs as teachers—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —you see, if they weren't quite up to snuff.

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah. I'm sure your projects and your problems in New York were very much more complicated than ours because you had a big city, a complicated society, and lots of artists, and ours was kind of a pastoral situation, really.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, the big problem there was this constant aggravation of the unions, Artists' Union, the—

DONALD GOODALL: Yes.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —Artists' Congress. And every time there was one of these cuts in [laughs] the federal budget, why, then there would be all kinds of picket lines and demonstrations and so forth. So [inaudible]—

DONALD GOODALL: Well, have you talked to people in Chicago? They had similar problems, you see?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I imagine they would in a large city.

DONALD GOODALL: But we did not have such problems.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No. Well, it didn't exist in New Mexico or in any place in the Southwest—

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —as far as I've been able to discover. But I know from my own experience that it did happen in New York.

DONALD GOODALL: It must have been serious.

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

DONALD GOODALL: Yeah.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, we're just about at the end of our tape. I wonder if there are any summary comments that you would like to make that we haven't. I think we've covered it pretty well. And I'm extremely grateful for this information about Utah, because we've had so little about it.

[01:00:08]

DONALD GOODALL: If I am able to localize documents, programs, exhibition schedules, and so on from that period, I'll send them to you.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, we'd certainly be glad to have any of the original archival material. But—

DONALD GOODALL: I think that the strength—one of the strengths of the Utah Project as I sought to underline it before, was the fact that it was multiple in character. And that if we didn't get them one way, through the exhibition program, they came in to listen to music. You may be interested in an anecdote at the end of your tape.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: Among other things we did was the desire to encourage local art. This was a period of primitivism as you may remember. And we felt that we had discovered a major primitive in the person of one Francis X. Horspool. Frances X. was a retired railway fireman whose father had been one of the Utah pioneers. Frances X. himself was an octogenarian. We held a formal reception for his exhibition, at which the governor and local dignitaries formed the receiving line with Mr. Horspool. During the course of the receiving activity, the man next to Mr. Horspool turned to him and said, Mr. Horspool, are your pictures for sale? Mr. Horspool rattled his false teeth and said, Yep. And the man said, Then how much are they? Mr. Horspool replied promptly, A dollar a square inch. And the man next to him thought for a moment and said, For that I could buy a Cézanne. And Mr. Horspool, thinking this was some competitor down the street said, Go buy one of his then. Mine are a dollar a square inch. [Sylvia Loomis laughs.] End of story.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And he was one of the artists on your—

DONALD GOODALL: No, no. He was a visitor. Periodically we went—you see, we exhibited persons very frequently—persons other than those not on the Project—other than those on the Project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DONALD GOODALL: The point being that this was supposed to be an arena for the best artist being produced in the area. And these truly fantastic pictures of Mr. Horspool's formed a primitive show that was held there in the late '30s. And I think one of the most interesting I'd seen at that time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, well it sounds as though would be. [Laughs.] Well, thank you very much Mr. Goodall—

DONALD GOODALL: You're welcome.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: —for this very interesting interview and for giving me your time.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]