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Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Harry Knight, circa 1965

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Transcript

Interview

(Undated)

HP: - Dr. Harlan Phillips
HK: - Harry Knight

HP: I think, this is a judgement I'll go to the stake on, that the thing that conditions events and people too is what's in the air. Insofar as you personally were concerned what were you doing in the late twenties? What sort of mischief were you up to in the artistic field? What were the alternatives? People live from day to day, but give yourself a sense of direction, what were you headed for? What sort of luggage had you picked up? What were you carrying with you? Does any of this make sense to you?

HK: Yes. Well, in the twenties I was doing commercial art and illustration, book illustration, this sort of thing, and there was a serious depression in the art, in the commercial art world at that time. The photograph had just come in and taken over most of the illustration that was required. I was a so- called figure man. I did illustrations of people doing various things for a numbered different accounts. It came to the end of the road there, and simultaneously I was put in touch with Raymond Huston, who was the director of the men's work on a welfare basis with offices at the AICP, Association for the Improvement of the Condition of the Poor. I went down to see Mr. Huston and was immediately hired. My job was to find work for artists.

HP: Was it?

HK: Yes. This was in the fourth year of this project, the Harvey D. Gibson Committee. There had been nothing done in the previous three years, so my job, as I say, was to find jobs for artists. Any semi-tax-supported institution was eligible to receive the services of the artists, so we did work in churches. One job that stands out in my mind, that I got for George Pickens, was the back wall of a stage in the basement of a church, and Pickens did a typical Picken landscape, which was quite handsome, quite dramatic on the back wall. Then I got in touch with Grace Goslin, United Neighborhood Houses, you know and arranged to send a number of teachers to settlement houses for children, teachers of painting and sculpture. I don't remember what our peak of employment was, but the College Art Association gave me office space. They were there at 57th Street and Lexington Avenue. Every day when I came back from going out with architects to check on possible spaces for murals and what not, or to settlement houses, I would be confronted by a line of artists with their canvases looking for work. Once, I remember, they went out, down the street, and around the block. I was very apologetic, I remember, as I didn't have funds enough to employ all of them, but I had to review their work and make my own assessment of it, things I didn't feel really completely competent to do, believe me, and it was a one-man jury and these people were all looking for work pretty desperately. That went on for, oh, I've forgotten. The time element in my mind is not very clear. My memory isn't too good.

HP: Well, is this the effective Gibson Committee as far as art was concerned?

HK: Was this the what?

HP: The Gibson Committee. It was the Gibson Committee?

HK: Yes.

HP: What was her orientation? Was she interested in art? How did she get caught --?

HK: Harvey D. Gibson.

HP: Harvey D. Gibson?

HK: Yes. A financier, wealthy man who headed up a drive for funds, you know, to run these projects. But Ray Huston was the effective person in charge of all men's work, men's employment, and he was very enthusiastic about what he did.

HP: Tony Velonis said a very early project on which he worked involved a trip on board a boat, fishing, for some poster project.

HK: Yes, poster project. Right

HP: Was this one of the things that came under --?

HK: That was not under my jurisdiction. That was an entirely separate thing. That was under the TERA, I think, the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration in the state of New York, and they employed quite a number of people there. That, however, was a little later, about a year later, I think that that started.

HP: Would this be the late 20s then?

HK: No, I think that was December 1932, I believe, when I went to the Harvy D. Gibson Committee and in January '34, I think, the Works Progress Administration started. WPA. In the interim, the Public Works of Art project got under way, and for this area Juliana Force was the director, and because I'd had this experience employing artists, the only one who really had this experience at that time, she invited me to come there to work for the Works Progress Administration, the PWAP. So I went to the Whitney Museum, and we were besieged by all kinds of groups for employment. This was not a relief project so you didn't have to be approved by the --

HP: Well, there was no oath required.

HK: No oath?

HP: No oath required here. There were times in order to qualify for relief that one had to take a pauper's oath.

HK: Right.

HP: I don't believe this obtained on PWAP.

HK: That was true for which you were soundly criticized a dozen times, you know, because of the general unemployment among artists. But we were besieged by various groups, as I say. The Sculptors Guild, I think it was called, had a number of unemployed sculptors, and Mrs. Force agreed to have them interviewed. I did a good deal of the interviewing myself, and many of them were Italian sculptors who did decorative things on buildings. Buildings were becoming more simple and severe, and very little decorative, ornamental work was being done. I put a number of these people to work, and I had a great deal of difficulty in communicating with them because their English was so poor and my Italian was non-existent. Usually out of despair I would say, "Well, you know Abraham Lincoln, or George Washington?" "Oh yes, Abe the Lic, George the Wash," you know. They were commissioned by me to turn in a picture every certain number of weeks. I've forgotten the time schedule on it, and strangely enough, all these busts of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln, I began to get worried, I thought I'd gone too far, came in, and they were all very able, academic things, and they were snapped up like mad by all the schools, that they were allocated to. The school system was invited in and they came and selected things. Then when that expired, which was I think early in 1934, I was invited to go back to the College Art Association. Audrey McMahan had become very interested in the art program that was still under Temporary Emergency Relief Administration of the state of New York.

HP: Well, were some of the unfinished things under the PWAP continued under the FERA? As I understand it, the PWAP was announced on December 8th, 1933, and ran until April 8th. It was very shortlived under the CWA.

HK: Right.

HP: Ned Bruce in Washington, wasn't it --?

HK: Right.

HP: And that there were seventeen regions, I think, all of the headed up one way or another, but to adorn public buildings basically was its orientation, but I think some murals were started. I don't know --

HK: They didn't come under our jurisdiction at all. They were all given out, I think, Washington, awarded through Washington.

HP: From Washington?

HK: From Washington.

HP: Yes. So that there were continuing funds to see them through?

HK: I really can't answer that. I wasn't close enough to that phase of the --

HP: Because the Southern Senators got quite annoyed at the CWA because they wrote into the resolution a twenty-five cent an hour minimum wage, and the share croppers in the South were leaving the farm and going to the cities for twenty-five cents an hour, and Southern Senators wanted the CWA scuttled, and it was. I always assumed, I don't know why necessarily that, you know, work that was continuing unfinished had to be carried somehow, some way. It wasn't dropped so far as I am aware.

HK: I don't know what happened. I know Ed Rowan was kept on, was retained to allocate the balance of the work, the prints. There were great collections, editions of prints, you know, as well as a lot of paintings. I saw him in Washington much later on when I was in the Army, and he still had all of his work to unload. I was in the Army for four months basic training at Fort Belvoir, and I saw any number of pictures which I recognized immediately. I have a very good memory for pictures, you know, that were done on our projects, which were in the service halls, the PXs, etcetera.

HP: Yes. Well, you know, there wasn't any precedent for this.

HK: Right.

HP: None. This is like carving your way through, you know, a wall of snarling things, and there was quite a bit of snarling in the city at that time. You said that you were subject to pressure from groups. I think the Whitney Museum even had to close its doors six weeks ahead of time one year.

HK: Mrs. Force got unduly alarmed I think. There were pickets and what not on more than one occasion in front of the museum but I don't remember that they closed the doors six weeks ahead of schedule.

HP: Well, there was an announcement - I don't know whether they carried this out - there was an announcement in the press that she was going to close because they were invaded, you know, and there was quite a bit of marching outside and it was - what? - it was alleged from a public relations point of view bad for the Whitney Museum. Quite apart from the fact that a lot of work was done that it would have been a wiser thing to separate the two. I think somewhere along the line Lloyd Goodrich was moved to another building in the midst of -- that it wasn't always centered at the Whitney Museum. Those were horrible times --

HK: Oh sure.

HP: And rough times.

HK: Yes.

HP: And people were awake and a vested interest in something and they'll push it. Besides, idea was in the air, this was the Popular Front day, the whole drive for unionization was still a question in so far as America was concerned, and you know, a funny thing to find groups of artists standing together with a collective voice, you know, it's almost --

HK: The Artists Union was outstanding, of course.

HP: Yes. But to find a collective voice like that, you wouldn't anticipate it.

HK: Right.

HP: Because they're cussed, individualistic, and so on, and yet holding loft meetings to talk about sick call, or sick pay, or back vacation pay, yes, this was a whole new world opened up.

HK: Sure. The American Artists Congress, of course, was very effective.

HP: Yes.

HK: But the Artists Union as far as employment was concerned, of course, and they were effective. They used to cudgel me, believe me, until I got to know them a little better. I was a little frightened in the beginning, you know, because they would come up and demand jobs from me for ineffectual persons who had a small budget.

HP: Sure. Yes.

HK: And I'm thinking of a wonderful little story that I can't tell with this thing.

HP: You can't? Why not? If it's an illuminating detail.

HK: Four-letter words.

HP: Look, secretaries are well --

HK: Well, Chuzo Tomatzu was a very well-known Japanese artist at that time, I don't know what has happened to him, I've often wondered and inquired, I don't know whether he's dead, or alive and has given up painting because I never see his name in any of the gallery shows, you know. But he came in to see me one day and I told him I was terribly sorry, I'd love to employ him but I just didn't have any funds, the funds had been cut,

etcetera. But I said, "There's a chap who's in charge of the Park Department's projects, his name is Solbert." He was a very popular illustrator and fairly wealthy, I think, in his own right. So I think he did this as a gesture, you know, it wasn't that he needed to be employed. But I called Solberg and told him that I was sending over several people. Well Tomatzu showed up - this is the story as I heard it and I'm sure it's absolutely true - he walked in and Solberg greeted him and asked him what his name was. He said, "My name is Tomatzu - Chuze Tomatzu." Solberg said well, he wasn't acquainted with his work, of course, "I'd like to see some of you work." Tomatzu hadn't brought any because he was Tomatzu. And he said, "My name is Chuzo Tomatzu. Everybody knows my work. Let me tell you something, Mr. Solbert, won't take any shit from the Park Department."

HP: Marvelous! But it does illustrate the times, that is the relationship between art as a creative thing and agencies like government agencies was non-existent, it was a language that neither side really understood at the moment, you had to fumble your way.

HK: Yes.

HP: And this is the way.

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: I mean it illustrates in part the cantankerous nature of an artist anyway who won't take shit from the Part Department, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: And you wouldn't expect him to. Well, there was a lot of work done under the PWAP, an awful lot of work done.

HK: Yes.

HP: Of all kinds.

HK: Post offices primarily.

HP: Yes. I wonder if you'd tell me how the organization was set up. There wasn't any precedent for it, of course. Remember your saying that there were long lines of artists that came to the College Art Association to show their work and you were a one-man jury on the basis of acceptance. Or could I find something for X to do? How was it, you know, done in the PWAP? Mrs Force had her tastes, too. I don't know how dominant they were. I guess she was properly named, at least - I never met her - but I'm told she was properly named. So I don't know how much of whatever it is she was seeped down into the day-by-day routine of dealing with artists or finding things to do or suggesting things to do. Was there any organized setup.

HK: Well, let's see, there were two of us who were busy interviewing people - Vernon Porter and myself, and sometimes Lloyd Goodrich. But we also had a jury in which Mrs. Force served for viewing the works of people who came in with several canvases as to whether or not they were sufficiently good artists to employ or not because they had limited budget too which was the reason for all the picket lines in front of the Museum that I mentioned previously. And then after that, I think it was in January 1934, that I went back to the project which was run by Audrey McMahon, as deputy director, and that was still under the state TERA setup, and we had Frederick I. Daniels, who was head of the TERA, down several times and there was one big meeting at the New School for Social Research, which we helped set up because they all wanted to see Mr. Daniels, you know, and talk to him about the future. And that was really quite a holocaust.

HP: Was it?

HK: Yes. It wound up in a blaze of shouting, etcetera, you know, and Daniels finally had to leave the stage, there were several of us up there on the stage including myself, and we had to get him out. We were a little afraid, a little fearful for him physically, you know, because these people were really articulate and noisy, and very sure of what they wanted. And then sometime during that period the WPA came into the picture, the Works Progress Administration, that's when the thing really started to develop and grow. And we then set up departments, an architectural department, a sculpture division, and poster division, printmaking division, with a head of each. Diller was the head of the --

HP: Mural?

HK: Murals, yes, yes.

HP: This is another surprising thing about this is the way in which an artist with artistic temperament is suddenly confronted with the necessity of an administrative function, a chicken with a mother, you know like a

mother hen. And I just wonder how did, how did you decide on Diller? I've talked with Burgoyne Diller, he glowed about those days.

HK: Yes. Yes.

HP: But, you know, he's an artist, too.

HK: Sure.

HP: But to walk the kind of tight rope he had to because his interest content-wise and idea-wise wasn't in negotiating for sponsorship. I would have thought that was completely alien to what it is he was, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: And yet the necessity of doing this to keep the idea alive and keep the work going is -- well, effectively it's the Pied Piper that sucked him into it, I'm sure, but then to find administrative competence, too, where, you know, you might least expect it.

HK: Right.

HP: How did they -- well, Mrs. McMahon I guess by this time the College Art Association and the continuing work in the FERA she had, you know, added to her energy and enthusiasm the deeper seismograph as to what was going on, so maybe she was able to pick and choose. I don't know, I often wondered - you know, I didn't have the nerve to ask Burgoyne Diller how he got selected in the light of what he told me about the 20s, you know.

HK: Well, it was really economics, I think, primarily.

HP: Was it?

HK: Sure. Diller needed a job, and I guess there weren't any teaching jobs available in those years, and Sally, his first wife, worked with the New York Times in the classified department, and Diller worked evenings on his own work. I don't know who hired Diller, I don't remember whether I was instrumental in hiring him or not, but we got some people with a lot of administrative, untapped resources, you know.

HP: Right.

HK: Piccoli, Girolani Piccoli was the head of the sculpture division. And in easel painting we had John Lonigan, for one; and in printmaking we had Van Auschwitz, and then Jean Morley after he left, after Van Auschwitz left and took up the head of --

HP: Well, were the divisions established almost immediately or what?

HK: No.

HP: Or did they just sort of fit new situations?

HK: No, they were set up at the outset. And one of the first employees, as a matter of fact, was David Smith.

HP: Uhhuh.

HK: And I interviewed him, he showed me some illustrations he had done for a yachting magazine and that sort of thing. He had also been an art director for one of the magazines, I think it was sort of a yachting magazine, and he convinced me that he knew a good deal about materials, so I employed him to head up our so-called technical division, which handed out supplies to artists on the project. And David was in consultation the whole time on murals, frescoes, and murals on canvases that we did, he was our chief consultant, he had the know how, he was very effective, he was very good.

HP: Well, do you see this period as a period of experimentation with materials? It was, wasn't it? How to get a piece of canvas to stick to the wall?

HK: Oh yes.

HP: How to size a wall.

HK: Oh sure.

HP: What to play with. With access to materials and I think the WPA made those available, it gave, I would think, artists who, left to their own devices, never would have reached a certain thing, an opportunity to do it.

HK: Right. True. True.

HP: In that sense it was experimental because -- I've often wondered. This is a great burgeoning period of American murals. Well, how many people who got involved in murals had prior experience?

HK: Yes Sure! Sure!

HP: Except insofar as maybe watching or working with Orozco and Rivera or something like that. If they'd never done the, that's the best argument in the world for doing one that I know.

HK: Sure.

HP: Well, how -- you know, this was a land of opportunity from the point of view of taking an idea and converting it into something visual, brand-new, and to be paid, to boot was a novelty - to be paid to boot was a complete novelty.

HK: Yes. $23.86 a week.

HP: Whatever. It was continuity, you know.

HK: Yes, and necessity.

HP: Yes. It wasn't slinging hash. I can't tell you the number of artists who said something to the effect "At the end of the day I could have a glass of beer."

HK: Yes. Yes.

HP: I had that kind of change about --

HK: Yes.

HP: In terms of the setup itself I guess Mrs. McMahon had Frances Pollock, too?

HK: Yes.

HP: What was her -- how did she come up?

HK: She had been interested very early in the Index of American Design.

HP: Had she?

HK: Yes. And that was another phase of the project I forgot to mention that was very important. But Audrey McMahon was on salary with WPA a director of the project. Frances Pollock was not. She was just an assistant wherever she could, you know. She was a wonderful person.

HP: Yes. There's some -- you mentioned the Index of American Design. There was a disparity, if that's the proper word, between what was being done in Boston and what was being done in New York. The Index of American Design comes out, at least in my judgement, as the one national program that the Art Project had, that required some standards of success to which all sections would aspire. Apparently, or at least I've gained the notion that the New York project was more of a research and writers project as distinct from a plate, that is initially.

HK: Yes.

HP: And Boston was the reverse.

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: Boston was making careful renderings and wasn't perhaps doing as much scholarly work on the origins, while New York had the origins, sort of a writers project.

HK: Yes. Right.

HP: I don't know whether that accords with your view, but at some point --

HK: I think they probably had more know how on the New York City project, there were several people involved in it who were leaders in various areas of design - furniture, and what not. So we did have a good staff there. But I can't - I don't remember exactly whether what you say applies to the New York project, but I know we turned out an awful lot of stuff here. And I remember a show, one day I was going around with Edward Alden Jewell, you

know, and it was an Index of American Design show and the first thing he saw on the wall as we were going under the door was a beautiful rendering of something, I've forgotten what it was, a quilt, I think - no, it couldn't have been a quilt because the scale was -- at any rate Jewell said, "Where is the reproduction of this piece of material?" - whatever it was. I said, "Mr. Jewell, go up and touch it." And very shamefacedly he went up and touched it and was surprised that it was a rendering from the object. And they developed that skill to a remarkable degree, three-dimensional rendering.

HP: Marvelous.

HK: Yes. And most of the artists who were employed for it - I used to sit on all committees when work was brought in by artists and left there for us to go over it - those who were obviously not painters but had some commercial art background were siphoned off to the Index of American Design. They were discriminated against, in other words. And they were the people who made these wonderful renderings.

HP: Yes. Well, you know, it's possible that a person would be less -- what?--original and yet have tremendous technique.

HK: Technique, sure.

HP: Which would be put to good purpose. I've thought - put it this way - Mrs. McMahon had a number of divisions directly under her, but Frances Pollock had the Index of American Design. And somewhere along the line there was a reorganization and it shifted away from a kind of research project again into rendering, and someone in Boston, who had sort of broken through initially, some woman in Boston, whose name escapes me at the moment, went out through the country - Kentucky and elsewhere instructing people who had technique as to what a rendering was, or artists were found eligible for the project but who were not original, she was sort of a Pied Piper of this particular process, and as I always understood when it became a question of concern, there was certain reorganization - Mrs. McMahon, you know, revised it some way. Cook Glassgold was brought in --

HK: Yes. Right.

HP: Later he went to Washington as the overall coordinator because people were coming up with comparable objects and it needed someone to say, "Well you do this, we've got a lot of those out here, and we don't need that," you know, it was a matter of choice. And this is how I derived the notion that it became a kind of national project as distict from local one. Now in every other respect, everything was local, you know. There was a lot of local discretion.

HK: Right. That's true, of course.

HP: Did you see much of Eddie Cahill during this period?

HK: Quite a bit, yes. Quite a bit.

HP: What sort of a forceful fellow was he in, you -- I don't want a curve ball, I would be very surprised if he was a good administrator, I think that kind of detail might bore him endlessly.

HK: I think he was an excellent national director. He traveled quite a bit, got around quite a bit, was quite well-informed about what was going on all over the country.

HP: Yes.

HK: We used to see him rather frequently here.

HP: Yes. Well, he sort of - I don't know how to put this - he was good a'deux, that is between two people, he had that common touch that would bend an arm with the boys, he could be one with them, and yet he could have, you know, an over-all view which they may not have shared, sitting where he did in Washington he could see a purpose - put it this way - which may or may not have been shared by individuals but nonetheless with him behind it he would kick open opportunity. But I can't picture him where friction emerged eager for a fray, not that he was afraid of a fray, but it just wasn't his dish of tea, I suspect. Now I don't know this personally but there are a number of problems that emerged, one in particular a sculptor in San Francisco --

HK: Yes,

HP: -- and I think he would have avoided that like the plague and sent someone else out there.

HK: Yes.

HP: You know, it's a wise man who recognizes certain limitations.

HK: Right. Yes.

HP: And he may very well - I don't know whether this accords with your view -- I also agree he was a great national director, an inspirer --

HK: Yes.

HP: A legend, a comment, put it that way, who could, you know infuse some of his own interest, some of his own deep drives and concern about things American in other people, get them also fired. I think also firing was part of the times.

HK: Yes.

HP: Wasn't it?

HK: Right.

HP: Don't you have that sense that there was a different spirit abroad in the land then? Comrades --

HK: Oh yes, sure! No question about it.

HP: Which doesn't obtain, or may not obtain, maybe we don't know where to look for it. There was --

HK: There was a wonderful spirit of camaraderie, of course, among the artists. There were various groups, of course, too. But the predominant group in the working artists was the Artists Union, and that was a pretty progressive outfit. But it was the spirit of the times, as you pointed out earlier. They had a terrific membership. And the American Artists Congress, of course, which was on another plane was behind the Artists Union projects, fought pretty hard for them and --

HP: Mmhmm. It was like reaching for a more statesmanlike position --

HK: Yes.

HP: Would have broadened the base in some way.

HK: Yes.

HP: The Artists Union, while it had mushrooming groups in Chicago and Los Angeles and San Francisco, was basically a New York oriented group --

HK: Yes.

HP: You know, growing out of the requirement or the necessity even in the 20s to sit down in a cafeteria and hash over something with one's friends, that sort of thing. It also had an ideological orientation to it which for me never really figured because it was largely a social thing, you know. While some were dominated by this and I mean no disrespect to them at all because this is the legacy of Sacco-Vanzetti ad infinitum, it's a basic American mood. The sense of power, you know, the use of numbers, they're first on record as a group against Mussolini and Hitler, for example; the Spanish Civil War --

HK: Right. Yes.

HP: This you would expect from artists that can see things coming up over the horizon, they see around corners or have that sensitivity. And where the rest of us were somewhat stodgy and defending the Johnson Act, you know, they weren't, they were right smack in the midst of it - and this is where they were right.

HK: I remember they put on a drive for funds to buy an ambulance, and they got enough funds to buy an ambulance, which was sent to Spain with a couple of, two or three members of the Union as drivers, chauffeurs, etcetera for the ambulance, and some of them of course were killed in Spain. But I remember - I've forgotten where it was -- I think it was on the stage of the old Hippodrome Theatre that this ambulance was pushed out on the stage, the place was pretty crowded, you know. Well, they were certainly politically orientated, there's no question about it. I had to face this from time to time in my contacts with Colonel Somervell, later four-star General Somervell. I was the guy who he always called, he'd say, "Knight, come up here. I've got something to talk to you about. Very serious." I'd hop up the West Side Highway to 111 Eighth Avenue - no, Columbus Avenue, it was further uptown, I've forgotten the address, it was the headquarters of WPA at that time. And I'd be confronted with an issue. In one instance the Colonel got a photograph to show me to prove that the Artists Union - that there were communists in the Art Project somewhere, probably the Artists Union. And this one I didn't have to do any research on. It was just pushed right in front of me and I knew it very well because I'd been

working pretty closely with Arshile Gorky. He did this abstraction, a big mural, it was at a Newark Airport and it was supposed to have been in the administration building and I don't know what happened to it.

HP: No one does.

HK: Yes. But there was a red star obviously union so I pointed out to him I've never seen him more embarrassed - that this was Texaco star and Texaco had these pumps down at the - fueling all the planes with Texaco Sky Chief, I suppose it was.

HP: Yes.

HK: Well, that was one instance. And there was another one. We used to decorate the windows at 70 Columbus Avenue. Being the Art Project, they'd tell us what they wanted and we'd send somebody up and make exhibitions and arrange the window. And I got a call one day from the Colonel and I was again confronted with a photograph of the window at 70 Columbus Avenue. It had the calipers and another instrument - I can't remember - but anyway, they were crossed, and I was confronted, again, with these crossed symbols, the hammer and sickle, you know, so I went on to tell the Colonel this was common use in the art world and had been done for centuries, you know, crossing two elements in a design, that it had nothing to do with the hammer and sickle at all. Which it had not, of course. And he asked me to fire - "Nevertheless," he said, "fire Godson," who was head of the exhibitions division. and I refused to do it. And he said, "Well, fire the man that made it then. He's a Red," he said, you know looking for ammunition. And I said, "I happen to know - as a matter of fact I knew about this before I went up to see the Colonel so I had been able to investigate a little bit. And he said, "The artist that did this must be a Red, must be a member of the Artists Union and a Red." I said, "Colonel, that is not so. This man is not even pink," - oh, no, I said that in regard to Godson - well, let me finish this at any rate. I said he wasn't even a member of the Artists Union, he was a non-joiner, I said he was a crippled little introvert. He was not -- he had no political leanings at all, I said. But about Godso - when he said, "Fire Godso, he's a red." I said, "Colonel, he's not even pink. He's Mauve." That was what I said, and I walked out the door.

HP: Well, you know, as you think about it, the chances of talking to, or with, or at, I suppose is a better word, a man who has military pretensions and those alone is a fantastic problem. Yes.

HK: Yes.

HP: Yes. Well, the limitations that were -- and yet with the use of power, too. There was one time I think in New York where Harold Stein was sent up from Washington for some purpose.

HK: Federal Project Number One, which came somewhere between the two WPA periods.

HP: Yes.

HK: It was set up as a separate unit - Federal Project Number One, which was theatre, writers,and art, and one other project - a research project of some sort.

HP: Documents.

HK: Yes, Yes, yes.

HP: Is this what he came up here to sort of administer that?

HK: That's right. That's right, yes.

HP: And he left when it became - what? - turned back to the states?

HK: I think so, yes. I think he left when Somervell came back as head of WPA. He had been on the WPA previously, I think. And Federal Project #1 came in the interim and then WPA it was under the auspices of WPA.

HP: Yes. Yes. Well, I think the original design was to bypass state administrators because they wouldn't know anything about art, hard art.

HK: Yes.

HP: And to tie the creative people directly to the federal government for quotas and funds --

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: So that the state politicos, I guess who still obtained from FERA days, you know, the state organization, wouldn't seize the funds and use them for other purposes or define an artist's function and paint my wall green.

HK: Right.

HP: It's possible.

HK: Yes.

HP: But, let's see, so Stein then came out of the Washington office, Bruce McClure's office, I think --

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: As an administrator then, as a buffer? Who was the fellow before Somervell? -- old Iron Pants Hugh Johnson.

HK: Oh yes! Sure. Yes. Johnson.

HP: Who was no --

HK: Well, Somervell had an interest in art, the pretense of an interest in art primarily, I think, through his daughter who in those years was going to the Art Students League. I remember one time we got word the General was coming down - the Colonel was coming down to see, to visit, the project. We were down then on, oh --

HP: 23rd?

HK: No. Down on King Street.

HP: King Street.

HK: Yes. 110 King Street, it think was the address. And I immediately alerted everybody, we set up everything that we thought the Colonel would like - portraits, for example, from the easel division of various figures, important figures, and sculpture, it was very academic, you know, everything was set up according to and he was very pleased with what he saw.

HP: Was he?

HK: Yes.

HP: He could be handled. I've had artists tell me that they've gone to meetings with him, this was some of the representatives of the Artists Union, and his whole procedure was to give you a chance to talk and then dismiss you. Well, that's infuriating in a way. It's undemocratic. If you're going to hold a hearing, you hold a hearing.

HK: Right.

HP: This "All right you've had you say now get out."

HK: Yes.

HP: Which is an imperial military --

HK: Oh, he was very arbitrary. Very arbitrary.

HP: Yes.

HK: But we managed to live with him in those years.

HP: Well, you know, quota reduction, which was a tough proposition, he would issue in the press, announce in the press a certain percentage withdrawal, you know, and this would infuriate the organized voices in the -- I think there was a teachers sitting in his office, wasn't there one in his office? -- art teachers?

HK: I don't remember really. It's very possible, though.

HP: You know, because I guess the one thing to do with tyranny is to resist it.

HK: Yes. I remember we had a sitin when we were on 42nd Street when Harold Stein was the administrator and they came unannounced, came up the stairways, you know, the various entrances to the building, and they kept Harold Stein at his desk. Made him call Washington. It was an all night sitin, and he called Washington on two or three occasions, tried to get through to them, and they all stayed all night.

HP: Great.

HK: Yes.

HP: Well, it must have been hard in a sense -- oh, I always thought that the administration was caught between, sort of between Somervell on one hand, who was highly arbitrary, and had a kind of not even a layman's view of art, even had, oh you know, all the feeling of a man who reaches for Parisian pictures and runs away from the public, who reads spicy French novels at home with the curtains down but who publicly will stand for morals, womanhood, you know, innocence, ad infinitum, and that's a tough line to deal with.

HK: Yes.

HP: And on the other hand you had these artists who had been aroused to a vested interest in life, in effect, organized, yapping their way, you know, a feeling of belonging, I guess - -

HK: Yes, yes.

HP: -- and using their new power. And the administration - Mrs. McMahon, yourself, the supervisors were caught in between.

HK: Right.

HP: I don't see how - it must have been awful --

HK: Oh sure. It was a trying time.

HP: Because I think it was Burgoyne -- or Lou Block, I think it was who indicated that there came a time when quota reductions - that the supervisors just couldn't do it, they had no criteria, and rather than do it, find someone else. Well, that's a personal thing.

HK: Yes.

HP: It's hard to administrate - you have so much funds, you go so far. And Congress was very niggardly in this sense, you know, always a deficiency appropriation, never enough so that you could plan -- well, plan wisely. So that there was this seesaw all the time.

HK: Oh sure.

HP: Well, did you get in on the negotiations for sponsorship, or no?

HK: No.

HP: Although that was a vital thing also, you know, negotiate acceptance of an idea whether it was a mural, like the oh, I know, I talked with Charles Alston - the Harlem Hospital --

HK: Yes, yes. And the Psychiatric Hospital at Bellevue.

HP: Oh! That's another fantas---

HK: Rile Ludens and two or three Mexicans whose names I don't remember now - did frescoes there.

HP: Yes. Somervell didn't care for the training part, the use of painting pictures as therapy that was started at Bellevue. You know his mind couldn't o'erleap this kind of thing.

HK: He was very much impressed with the mural of Jimmy Brooks at the LaGuardia Airport. He took a very personal interest in that, and found funds after there had been a severe cut - I think Brooks was cut out, I've forgotten what had happened to the funds, the allocation of funds at that time - but those were tremendous murals in a Naval base building - and he was carried on after the project to finish the job. And the Colonel had a very definite interest in the LaGuardia Airport because I think it was built under his supervision, wasn't it?

HP: Yes.

HK: Sure it was, yes. That was his baby. It's very different from the work that Jimmy Brooks is doing today, however.

HP: Very much so, yes.

HK: Oh, I must tell you one little story maybe Diller didn't remember to tell you. Jack Pollock was on the project. Jackson Pollock. And he was turning in little Thomas Benton's as his assignments, you know, month after month, and Diller went up to see him one day at his studio and found him doing abstract work, with spheres, circles, and

squares, and triangles, etcetera, nothing like his later work with the drip technique. And Diller came in to see me as soon as he got back raving about what he had seen. He said he talked to Jack about it, he asked Jack why he wasn't giving the project his sort of - this new work. And Jack said he didn't know, he didn't think the project would be interested. He thought they wanted representational things, you know. That was right in the beginning of this new, abstract direction of Pollock's --

HP: Yes, yes.

HK: So we began to get these abstractions and they were really quite a change, you know, because most of the work, of course, was -- well the depression school of work, you know. The realistic stuff. We had a lot of very good painters on the project.

HP: Yes. Diller indicated that part of the orientation of the

whole Federal Art Project was to do acceptable things where sponsorship was concerned in order to maintain continuity of the project, which is a sensible move, you know a decision made if you want this to keep going, in that sense, we can't superimpose on an unwilling sponsor something which that sponsor doesn't want.

HK: Right. Right.

HP: So Diller with his own interest in non-representational things was nonetheless a merchant in effect for acceptable work with the view that maybe he might get, you know, one or two of the others going, too.

HK: Yes.

HP: For example. I think Floyd Bennett Field mural was originally set up for Gorky. They had photographs of airplanes, parts, and equipment and so on which they'd piece together. It was a marvelous thing. I don't know whether this is the one that was later done in Newark, or not. But I know LaGuardia didn't care for this. How did he fit - did he figure very much in this whole -- the "little flower" --

HK: Yes, sure, yes. Yes. And Austin McCormick - we had plans to do some murals, Ben Shahn and Lou Bloch in collaboration with each other were going to do these murals at the Riker's Island Penitentiary. And we could never agree as to what the subject matter should be and finally the Commissioner, who was, who seemed to be very enthusiastic and warm toward the thing, the project, gave up completely because he thought that if we did a landscape kind of mural, you know lyrical sort of thing, that the prisoners would want to get out, you know; and on the other hand you couldn't give them what they did every day, which was another alternative, fill in an eight-hour day or what have you with their activities because it would be too much for them to see these things on the walls, you know, because they felt confined enough, this would confine them further, whereas, as I say, they'd be very dissatisfied with their environment, more dissatisfied than they already were if we did something quite different. So - the philosophy of the thing, you know was just - it was never realized.

HP: This which is too bad.

HK: Yes. Yes.

HP: Because -- well, I've talked with both Bloch and Shahn about this and they nosed not a little around the various penitentiaries, you know these places where recalcitrant boys etcetera, talked to a number of wardens, took fantastic numbers of photographs, and boiled their thinking down to a series of towns, only to discover something to the effect that it was announced somewhere by Jonas Lee, I believe, --

HK: He was a painter member of the Art Commission at that time.

HP: --yes. That the work was "psychologically unfit" you know, in quotes. And the Artists Union picked this up and in their publication, their newspaper, oh, what they did to Jonas Lee! Well, you know --

HK: Yes.

HP: Well, you know, this gives a sense of variety, it's more difficult I think to think in terms of variety in New York than it is in Iowa, you know, where they had to tailor make and cut the pattern to fit what they had. But here you had so many artist that an effort to -- like Diller's was an organized effort to gain sponsorship for murals.

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: And pick a person who would do it. Or the kind of mural you might suspect the sponsor was interested in. It's not quite censorship of content; it is a sense of direction. Because the largest stake is at issue: Do we continue the project? That's interesting because I often wondered why during the war and after the war this

explosive expression comes on the American scene. And you've just indicated that Pollock was already dreaming away at the, playing with shapes and forms in the thirties during the project.

HK: Right. Oh sure.

HP: And I suspect Diller himself was also, at least he was thinking in those terms.

HK: Yes, sure he was. And so was Gorky, of course.

HP: Yes. Davis I guess kept pretty much to his last, didn't he?

HK: Stuart Davis?

HP: Stuart Davis, yes.

HK: Yes. I was trying to recall, because it came up recently this mural that he did at Station WNYC.

HP: It's a marvelous thing.

HK: Yes. He did that for the project, and I'm not so sure about the period in which he did it because Stuart was never on relief, you know --

HP: Yes.

HK: I don't know how he got along, he was settled occasionally, and be able to manage, but he was never on relief as far as I know.

HP: He was on the PWAP.

HK: Yes. Yes.

HP: And I think there was a time that he did go down and get on the mural project because I talked with Stuart Davis and he mentioned Burgoyne Diller --

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: Because he had an assistant who wasn't really an assistant, you know, how the --

HK: Yes, sure. You'd just allocate a person who hadn't arrived to be an assistant to a mural group.

HP: Yes, because I think the mural for WNYC was painted in the shop wherever that was.

HK: It was. That's right. 110 King Street.

HP: Right.

HK: That's right, yes.

HP: And then was taken up to WNYC underneath the elevator. Because I know Davis described that. That's still there. They probably -- I don't know whether they understand what is it they have or not.

HK: Well, it's just been moved to somewhere else.

HP: Well, I think somebody was going to knock down the walls and revise the whole --

HK: Oh, that was it?

HP: And somebody said, "Take it off the wall."

HK: I see, yes, yes. Speaking of "need" in relation to Stuart Davis, Mrs. Force at one point spoke out, lashed out at the organized groups, you know, making her life miserable and she was very fearful of someone throwing a bomb at the place, you know.

HP: Yes.

HK: I remember I talked to her about that, I told her that was silly, it was ridiculous, I knew these people, they wanted jobs badly but there wasn't a potential bomb-thrower in the crowd. At any rate it was during all the publicity the Museum got that Mrs. Force said at one point, "The word "need" is not in my vocabulary." It was not a relief program, of course, as we discussed, but that she was attacked for, you know, because everybody

"needed" at that time and she was just a prima donna --

HP: Yes. Well, you know, the way that started when the idea was floated first, if you go back and look at the New York Times of that day, every major, conservative art organization in town blistered her hide, or blistered the whole idea for having selected her --

HK: Yes.

HP: In the sense that a -- what? -- she had her interests and her tastes, and it wasn't going to be theirs, you know -- but, gee, the announcement that this was going to happen in New York and Mrs. Force was going to head it up was met with these fantastic statements from the president of the Sculptors Association, the Mural Painters ad infinitum.

HK: Yes.

HP: They made a complete collection of them one after another in the press. The last person who was interviewed was John Sloan, who summed it all up by saying in substance, "When you throw corn into a chicken coop the feathers fly." Sort of a sardonic, whimsical way. But she did have a different orientation than certainly the FERA and certainly the WPA.

HK: Yes

HP: How did -- how did Mrs. McMahon get along with Colonel Somervell? That must have been a negotiating battle of a pretty high order.

HK: Yes. Yes, it was. Yes. Well, Mrs. McMahon was in awe of the Colonel because of his status, you know. And she played the game politically very well. I remember one cocktail party she had at her house with the Colonel and his wife as the guests of honor, and how well that went off. She played the social game pretty well and kept herself pretty well in hand although I remember bitter exchanges over the telephone, of course, because Andrey was not the most malleable person in the world.

HP: No.

HK: But she dealt with him very well I think, very successfully, I think he had a lot of respect for her.

HP: Which is a surprise because he strikes me as a person who would have reacted adversely to the suffragette parade, you know --

HK: Yes.

HP: And a woman in the position of management. Well, it was an unheard of thing there wasn't very much in the way of background for it in the thirties to begin with.

HK: Right.

HP: Frances Perkins had given us the key. But Mrs. McMahon - I can't - you know I've talked with her and she was like a, you know, it was like going back to excitement, sheer excitement, all right, she's an ambitious woman, she had a sense of power, almost a juggler sense of power --

HK: Right.

HP: And while Somervell must have presented any number of problems to her, forced her to revise, you know, the shortest distance is not always a straight line, you know there are ways to skin cats, 101,000 ways, he must have taught her not a little about her own resourcefulness. At least I get this impression because, look, a cocktail party is a kind of softening up exploration, you know, valuable for itself but also valuable for like exploiting weakness.

HK: Yes. I don't know what the General - or the Colonel I always called him - what his reaction to that was and to her the following day for having put him in the situation, because he drank quite a bit, and I was very much surprised myself at this man, you know, a Colonel in the Army, and head of the WPA with which lots of dignity, you know, just broke down completely and talked about things that he shouldn't have talked about, and his attitude toward his wife was revealed too. I think he married a wealthy woman.

HP: Well, she knew how to -- I suspect Mrs. McMahon knew how to hang him up to dry.

HK: Yes, she did.

HP: You know this is part of the scene. I can't imagine anyone else looking for or reaching for the management of the Federal Art Project in New York, unless it was Mrs. Force, and I suspect that Mrs. Force's first taste was enough to last her.

HK: Yes.

HP: Well, it's not easy. Just take the theatre. Wow! And the Writers Project.

HK: Yes, sure.

HP: You know, quite apart from the fact that the artists were -- well, I used to say that the East Side used to have tea shops and coffee shops where you could go in and you could hear arguments from, on anarchism - you know, they'd tear society down the first half of the night and build it up the second half, and you could hear all kinds of political arguments while you were there. But the 30s pushed the teahouse right out in the street, Gorky marching in a parade, or the Artists Union marching on the City Hall trying to get the Mayor to set aside a place to show, an exhibition hall run by artists. It's a marvelous idea. But the main stem became the thing you know for them. And when to call a halt, it's best to keep it fluid really. It must have been terrible for Mrs. McMahon to walk that kind of tightrope all the time.

HK: She enjoyed it.

HP: She did?

HK: Yes. Yes, sure. She certainly had a yen for power, there's no question about that. And we had many little tiffs, you know, but she was also an extremely able administrator. I admire her very much.

HP: You can tell she is xxxxxxxxxxxxxxx yes.

HK: Yes.

HP: Helps not a little, Well, you know -- --

HK: Of course, she really appointed Cahill, you know, to his job. I went with her to meet Cahill one day at lunch to tell him about the project and see if we could get him interested in it, because we had discussed various people from time to time. When the National Director was going to be set up and we finally got down to Cahill as the best selection. We had lunch with him, talked with him about it, he wasn't terribly enthusiastic about it and he wanted time to think about it. And he called back about a week later and said he'd like the job. But it was Audrey, really, who put him into that job, for which he never really quite forgave her.

HP: Yes.

HK: It was always a little bone of contention.

HP: It's like when you have to bow.

HK: Right.

HP: At least he had the instincts of wanting to thumb his nose in any direction if he felt that he could, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: You know, that's a rare person

HK: Yes.

HP: Well, I suspect - you know, there's every reason in the world for them to have sampled her experience - College Art, the way their own little exhibition room was used for modern artists. She had that sense. As a matter of fact, they practically turned the College Art Association upside down before they got through.

HK: Yes.

HP: New interest in the, you know, the question of trying to keep bag and baggage together for artists became more important than publishing *Parnassus* and some of the other things.

HK: Sure. Sure.

HP: Or at least took up that much time to the dismay of some members of the Board of Trustees so that it was a battle almost from the start, but not to have sampled that kind of experience from her I don't know who asked

her - maybe Baker, who - Jacob Baker --

HK: I think Jake Baker had something to do with it, yes.

HP: How did -- you know, it's possible I think for people after the fact to confuse what was with what they now think was. I suspect Cahill suffered from this somewhat. There's a big -- I don't know how fruitful the argument is, and I don't really care because the results are magnificent, but how does Ruth Reeves figure in the Index of American Design?

HK: I could never get that straight and I don't think anybody else could, because Ruth, I think, claimed to have originated the idea, and there are one or two others who want to be remembered as having originated the Index of American Design idea which was incorporated in the art projects.

HP: Yes.

HK: But Ruth incidentally just got back from India.

HP: Oh, did she?

HK: Yes, yes. Last night, she's in New York staying at one of her brothers, daughters, I think, she's kind of ill and, but

HP: Well, she's had a long continuity in terms of design.

HK: Yes.

HP: You know it would be an extension certainly of her interests of whether she fired New England, who knows? Or New York. Strange, because it lurks always in inference underneath the surface not that gee, look at the record down there in Washington. That's important enough. Well, how about the teaching in New York? There was a School of Design established. I don't know whether this was established under the WPA as one of its projects or not - Experimental Design Laboratory --

HK: Yes.

HP: Or Design Laboratory.

HK: Design Laboratory is right, yes. That was when we were up on 39th Street I remember, so that must have been under WPA auspices.

HP: Yes.

HK: Alex Standish was active in that, and I've forgotten the name of the chap who was the director of the Design Laboratory.

HP: I have too.

HK: But that didn't last very long, it was very short-lived.

HP: Well, it was a question that had to be defended in the thirties as to whether the fine artists could fine a niche in an industrial society only to discover that Mrs. Murphy through the sales personnel designed things as distinct from the artist. But I don't imagine, you know, and the Bauhaus --

HK: Yes.

HP: And it was a school, you know, it was an idea, it was a project in that sense. Was there much aid in this whole picture from museums, local museums during the thirties?

HK: You mean the Metropolitan Museum and others? We had good friends who could always be counted on to talk up when times - when the stresses and strains were getting to be too much in various museums - the then-director of the Brooklyn Museum, and the Museum of the City of New York, a woman who is connected with the New York Public Library - I've forgotten her name.

HP: It was Mona Javits.

HK: Javits, yes, right. But as far as the institutions as such were concerned I don't think we got any support.

HP: Well, I would think in the light of the experience of Mrs. Force that that was sufficient for museum personnel not to get involved.

HK: Right.

HP: And when you couple that with the mind and nature of Mrs. McMahon, you know once you reach a pinnacle you're not about to, part of the self-protection device is not to share it beyond. I wouldn't expect her to go to Mrs. Force, for example, for aid.

HK: No.

HP: It would just be -- never?

HK: Never. They just ignored each other, I think, completely. But I remember Vernon Porter after - with whom I worked at the Museum, the Whitney Museum during that period - PWAP - when funds were cut off there I went to Audrey's project, TERA. Vernon got a job with Civil Service heading up an art department. His job, it was pointed out to him, was to go and find available wall space to employ artists. And Vernon with his enthusiasm went into it, you know, hammer and tongs, started running around like mad checking on public buildings and available spaces and talking to people and he was told within his organization by the group there to lay off, he was jeopardizing their jobs, you know, they were just collecting their salaries. Vernon told me all about this at the time and he was terribly disillusioned, but he needed the money, he said he just went home and painted, lived down on Sixth Avenue in an old building with a studio light, he and his wife, Beata, her name was, maiden name, and he would go in and collect his check on payday. Well, he did that as long as his conscience permitted him to and then he resigned. But he got absolutely nowhere.

HP: Nowhere at all?

HK: No. This was after a lot of publicity was given the projects because of their value to public buildings for decoration.

HP: Yes. Was there much, oh, competitive feeling toward the Treasury Department which was also alive during this period?

HK: Right. No, there wasn't because they were primarily interested in decorating post offices, I think -

HP: Yes. Yes.

HK: No. We got along very well with them, with Ed Rowan, and Ned Bruce and, oh, the former editor of the old *Arts* magazine, Forbes Watson.

HP: Yes. Yes.

HK: No. We got along very well with them. As a matter of fact, I would recommend people to them myself.

HP: Yes, there was this basis whereby they would employ assistants, or use assistants on those and they'd come from the WPA --

HK: Right. Right.

HP: Yes. This sort of working arrangement. There's some indication that Olin Dows established a, oh, TRAP, Treasury --

HK: Treasury Relief Art Project.

HP: Yes.

HK: Yes, that's right.

HP: Which was a bridge, I suspect to WPA.

HK: Yes. Right. I was trying to think of Olin Dows' name, you know so many years have elapsed since I was so mixed up in it, believe me I was. This was the most exciting period of my life. I understand Diller said something to this effect too. It was a terribly exciting period. We were friendly toward them, there was wonderful camaraderie that went all through the WPA from the top administration all the way down to the lower echelons of artists, assistants and what not. And also it gave them an opportunity to develop, of course, which you've heard all over, of course, that they never would have had before. That was a very exciting thing which we were all aware of. As a matter of fact, as far as I was concerned - I had painted when I was very young - but then for economic reasons, lack of drive, I suppose, I got into commercial art. But I saw the project, as far as I was concerned, at a later period this thing became permanent, we were always trying to get it on that basis, of course, as being a practicing artist. because that's what I really wanted to do. As a matter of fact, I made

lithographs during two or three years that I was on the project at night. But I got an enormous kick out of the thing being identified with it, you know, I was terribly excited about all the work that was being done as though I were doing it myself almost. I was very closely related to it.

HP: Well, you know the way the government recognized artists the first time ...

HK: Yes. Right

HP: ...gave it a dignity.

HK: Sure.

HP: It gave it continuity of earning power.

HK: Mmhmm

HP: You know, it gave opportunity for idea.

HK: Sure. Yes.

HP: You know there are some things you can do I suspect in your own room, or your own wherever, your diggins, but here they worked in -- some artists came in and worked in the same room, that kind of comment.

HK: Yes, yes.

HP: And they always had groups, always arguing over aesthetics but, you know, this was an almost releasing thing because it gave you a greater opportunity.

HK: Right.

HP: I talked to this fellow in New Jersey. New Jersey was part of the New York setup initially. Michael Lenson.

HK: Yes.

HP: I talked with him.

HK: I think Audrey appointed Ollie Langford in charge with ..

HP: Yes. But, you know, they worked hard in New York, close enough to get to New York had their own particular problems, Newark you know was a smaller example of what New York was with its organizations, its unionization, and so on, the works.

HK: Yes.

HP: But the excitement he remembers - the way stones were discovered in Brooklyn, you know, where you were resourceful with reference to materials. New paints, new kinds of paints that came out, from a man who was on the project and was working in the paint field, you know. So that from almost every point of view it was looked upon as opportunity to experiment, to extend one's experience like Geoffrey Norman, you know, as disparate from Michael Lenson as A from Z.

HK: Yes.

HP: And he had a huge mural in one of the schools, the effect of it is that twenty people worked on that mural, what is a collective mural? A collective design?

HK: Yes.

HP: That whole --

HK: Brooks had a whole crew out there.

HP: Did he?

HK: Yes. And they were very excited about it. And also James Michael Newell --

HP: Oh did -- Yes.

HK: He did a big fresco in Julia Richman High School I think it was and he had a group of assistants, too. I

haven't seen or heard anything of him. I was in the Army for four months in basic training in '41 and Newell found out through New York that I was there, and I was in the hospital at the time. He came around to see me. He was a top sergeant in the Army, for a painter, you know, very quite, easy going sort of person to all intents and purposes, and he had gone to Officers Candidate School. I got a bid to go to Officers Candidate School too, and I was mulling it over, you know, because I wanted to go -- I'm getting ahead of myself for the moment -- I was requested by the OSS in Washington to do special work. So I was waiting for my discharge to come through at the same time. But Newell was heartbroken because he had gone through Officers Candidate School and been turned down. He was a college graduate but he said he had forgotten how to study. I think this was a predicament that I found myself faced with too, I would never have made it, and particularly the physical strain - hours standing at attention just to make sure that you had it. But he was very crestfallen, quite forlorn about it. I imagine he got out shortly after I did because we were in the over 38 category, both of us at that time.

HP: There were some of those hideous, sadistic practices of the Army to --

HK: Yes.

HP: ..hated every minute of it, *every* minute of it.

HK: You know I was in the Army when I was a kid of eighteen.

HP: Oh, were you?

HK: Yes. I was a sergeant in the U.S. Cavalry at eighteen.

HP: Wow!

HK: In World War I. And I was a buck private in World War II. But not only in retrospect but actually after I had made the transition into the Army I was shocked when they were digging around the bottom of the barrel and came up with my name. I was divorced - no, separated at the time and not divorced and I was over 38, and I had a terrible internal struggle, you know, as to how could I adapt again to the Army life - no privacy, no dignity. And I thoroughly enjoyed it after I made the initial step because it did me a world of good physically. I sang in a group, a group of four, a quartet, and during Christmas we sang a lot of Christmas songs and my vocal range had increased so enormously just from breathing good air and smoking fewer cigarettes where I'd been sitting behind a desk at the Federal Art Project for years, you know, nine years, as a matter of fact - or ten years - and I felt myself to be in very bad physical shape, but I came out, as I say, singing, you know, literally. I got back into the old habits again, of course.

HP: Yes. I was thinking of the Officer Candidate School atmosphere. I enjoyed the Army, it was like going to school in a lot of ways, and so many other people were better prepared at the art of being in the infantry than I ever dreamed of being, and, you know, what you pick up from one's haphazard acquaintances that you simply bunked with, that was good progression. You could sample far more beyond anything you'd ever had chances, everybody's parochial, you know, Triberry Avenue and Prospect Avenue is a great place but I could extend it through a boy from Georgia, somebody from North Dakota, and someone from New Mexico and how we ever made a unit out of it is -- you know, but we did. The Officer Candidate School was a sadistic, hideous and, you know, no necessary test whatsoever as far as I'm concerned because there wasn't anything going on in this country that prepared us in any way for what we ultimately got into. But when you fire for effect it's brand new, you know, it's never happened before, and nothing prepared you for it. You were with the project right to the end?

HK: No.

HP: As it went on the handwriting was on the wall. Was this obvious to the people?

HK: That's right, it was obvious, yes. We began to do more and more work for the Navy and various branches of the services. But I had left the project just about that time, I resigned and Diller took over my job.

HP: Yes.

HK: Diller was head of the mural division all those years and then he became Deputy Director when I left. And I don't know just how long it went on after that, just a few months, I think.

HP: Yes. But, you know, even the Artists Union disappeared in terms of its rancor, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: Things moved on, discussion nationally went to a oh - remember the debate William Allen White's crowd against Colonel Lindbergh's crowd, the Committee to Aid America by Aiding the Allies as opposed to the

American First Committee? We'd been involved in internal problems in the thirties, "Feed them", you know, decide whether they can organize and bargain collectively, minimum wages, maximum hours, protection for women, factory inspection, all this kind of thing was going on. And suddenly those monsters in Europe and we had this choice, you know the Johnson Act, actually redoing on a much larger scale the whole debate that was pretty much under the surface, with the exception of the artists, in the Spanish Civil War, all over again. Only our civilization so-called was being threatened, England. And preparedness was up for grabs. You indicated you did certain things for the Navy or some of the military posters and the like, or --? Pretty much?

HK: Yes. I think that had just started to come in to the activities of the project when I left.

HP: I know Richard Morrison in New England began the establishment of a camouflage unit using paints and so on.

HK: Yes.

HP: And there were others, there was a lot of work done on the West Coast, Seattle, in various Navy installations, like the officers' mess and so on. So that there was this effort at least to ride on, although the whole thing was going to be devoured shortly.

HK: Yes, yes.

HP: Its original impulse was feed them, and with the growth -- industry throwing the switches for larger and larger production for preparedness, attrition in the number of people on the WPA must have subsided, so it became an eddy largely.

HK: That's right.

HP: And Congress was happy to --

HK: Slice it off.

HP: Yes.

HK: Sure. Well, Diller could have given you much more background on that than I could. I just wasn't there.

HP: Well, he was like a --

HK: Be was pretty ill, of course.

HP: Mmhmm

HK: He was pretty ill.

HP: Well, he, you know, he saw it from the opportunity that it conveyed and if you had to tailor make it for sponsorship which had preparedness in warfare, then let's go, I mean, you know, that's what it took. But you're right, he was quite ill at the time. Well, I think one day the thing terminated and no one knew what happened thereafter, you know.

HK: Mmhmm

HP: A question of space, you know how they requisitioned space - we need such and such and such for national defense production, we can dispense with the remnants -- you know, it was almost as clinical as that. I don't know about allocation of materials. A good bit of that was handled locally, wasn't it? Wherever you could?

HK: Yes. Right. I'm sure we had an allocation.

HP: Yes. So wherever you could get materials out, you did?

HK: Right.

HP: They weren't all shipped to Washington, then? Ever?

HK: No. An awful lot was allocated here. Lloyd Rollins, who now lives out on the Coast, I think was our --

HP: Do you have any idea where he is?

HK: It will come to me now. And I'm sure Ralph Mayer would know.

HP: Ralph Mayer? Where do I find him?

HK: He is - he wrote two or three books on painting techniques, which are quite authoritative, all the universities both here, and a good many places abroad apparently, and he has a class at Columbia University with his wife, Deana Mayer - Deana Fyfe was on the project for years. But Deana and Lloyd always got along very well for some reason or other, had an acute kind of relationship, so I think they've been in touch with each other over the years.

HP: Yes, he trekked it to the West Coast.

HK: Yes.

HP: Because he was also in the -- I think Lloyd Rollins was part of the early Whitney Museum, I think too, wasn't he?

HK: Yes, he was.

HP: Yes. He had continuity, too.

HK: That's true, right, yes.

HP: Yes. And you say he's the one that handled allocations?

HK: Yes. Right. And he used to call all the schools and what not and arrange for visits to the project and showed many things, and we allocated quite a lot of material to schools and hospitals, etcetera.

HP: Yes.

HK: But then I think the bulk of it then was shipped to Washington. It was Ed Rowan's job to dispense with it.

HP: Yes.

HK: But he died prematurely and I don't think anyone was put in to carry on his work.

HP: No. I know Mildred Baker was sent --

HK: Right.

HP: -- out to Chicago, because there was a big warehouse in Chicago --

HK: Right.

HP: --so that she could allocate, I suspect, Midwestern materials or maybe by that time, national materials from the warehouse in Chicago. I know some universities got some fantastic things, Johnny on the spot, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: But, you know, that was after we already entered the fray, Pearl Harbor had knocked on the door and everybody's life was changed in the process, and it was, you know, something that was discarded.

HK: Yes.

HP: Then there was that problem that emerged here in the city, someone who needed space, they sold stuff for scrap and some enterprising used book, used magazine --

HK: On Canal Street?

HP: Yes. Bought it up in job lots.

HK: Yes. I heard about that and I went down to look at it and, again, I remembered many of the paintings from the easel project. I was shocked to find them all there, you know, being sold great stacks of them on the counter without stretchers, you know, canvas.

HP: Yes. So much a pound.

HK: Yes.

HP: But this was the government who needed the space, the warehouse space for something new.

HK: Yes.

HP: So you make way despite - you don't value those.

HK: Yes. Yes.

HP: Yes. It was hideous in that.

HK: That was shocking.

HP: Well, tell me this. How extensive were records kept on what was done?

HK: Pretty extensively. They had a filing system, you know, each unit, you know, had records of everything that was ever produced, on prints, easel painting, sculpture, murals, of course.

HP: Yes. And this --?

HK: And all those records I think went down to Washington.

HP: They did.

HK: Yes. Audrey could tell you about that better than I could. As I say, I left before the end.

HP: That's the last part of a - she was a little bit disturbed, you know, because the thing had terminated. No one wants to sit an unwilling witness to the loss of power.

HK: Right. Yes.

HP: She was one who felt this sort of deeply although maybe it didn't show, you know.

HK: Yes. It certainly made quite a personality of Audrey, though, she was a very important person in those years.

HP: Yes. And has enough of a massage to want to keep it alive.

HK: Right.

HP: And yet, you know, the scene passes, that's the rude, crude think, it passes and one finds oneself in an eddy and you can't - you're drowning, you're grabbing at straws.

HK: Yes.

HP: Let's see, did Ellen Woodward ever come into the picture? She was the Washington head of the, oh, that division of WPA under which Cahill --

HK: Yes, that's right. No, I don't remember her really in an active capacity.

HP: Although her testimony on the Hill was helpful from time to time. It's always surprised me, she came out of a Mississippi background and courthouse background, her father was a judge and she probably had no orientation for the likes of Eddie Cahill, Hallie Flanagan, Henry Alsberg, you know, and suddenly to be put in a position where she had to -- these were her kids. She was a great woman in that sense, her testimony is quite good, quite good. She was a superb actress herself, I guess.

HK: Yes.

HP: I just wondered, you know, whether people who administer from a distance ever see the firing line, don't know what it's like, haven't the vaguest idea.

HK: Right. Yes. Very frequently not sufficiently interested, either.

HP: Well, New York must have presented something of a problem where it must have had, oh, you know, tons of discretion there besides its own. I don't know how you have time to read in a bulletin or memoranda, you know, that's for the birds, that's for someone who has got nothing else to do while he's sitting at the center of authority and wants to make meaningful his exercise. Well, when you convert that into something real it's a wholly different problem.

HK: Yes. Sure.

HP: I don't know --

HK: I remember how completely absorbed most of us were in those years so that we had no time schedule, go on far into the evening very frequently, you know.

HP: Sure.

HK: And that was all we ever discussed, you know, problems, accomplishments, etcetera of the Art Project.

HP: Well, the phone was ringing all the time, it was a firing line, and you don't reach for answers by saying "Let me go check the research unit," you know, it's right there, somebody's there with a problem.

HK: Right.

HP: I think this is true probably the only agency in perhaps in the history of administrative agencies that wasn't old-line. The people in Washington were cutting corners all over the lot - when I say cutting corners I don't mean to say they were doing anything necessarily illegal - but in terms of the Civil Service as a tried and true method, it was breaking new ground all the time.

HK: Yes.

HP: Just take the person who was ordering all the cloth for the women's sewing shop. They'd never had such an order for so much cloth in their life, you know, the old-line people. and it took a magician, in a way, to explain this kind of enthusiasm to the old-line people. But, you know, the whole design of the WPA was to work toward its own end, to put itself out of business by being successful.

HK: Right.

HP: So there is that element to it all the time. But, you know, you ask - I've asked Diller, for example, what he got in the way of illuminating insight from Washington. He looked like I'd jumped in from Mars. You know, it was all right, those things were handled, there were meetings, they were accessible, there were a phone call away, where we had to handle the daily detail it's a wholly different game.

HK: Right. Sure.

HP: Yes. And well, you know, the day would require negotiations all over the city, or a principal, or an art teacher in a school, who thought she knew something about what a mural should contain, and there was this endless kind of, not wrangling but negotiating, each with their own interests, Diller spurred by the desire to keep a project afloat and use that wall and somehow get it acceptable and trying to instruct the principal, teach a principal or superintendent something about art at the same time.

HK: Oh sure. Right. And we had the Art Commission, of course, to cope with, too. Jonas Lee and then, oh, the name is French descent --

HP: It escapes me too.

HK: De Cheauteau, Ernest De Cheauteau.

HP: He was real helpful, wasn't he?

HK: Very helpful. Very helpful.

HP: And open to conviction, too?

HK: Right. Right. Yes.

HP: As Jonas Lee was not?

HK: Well, he was kind of a professed to be something of a tyrant, you know, but he really wasn't.

HP: He wasn't?

HK: No. He was a nice guy actually. Of course, his tastes were very conservative.

HP: Yes.

HK: But he wanted to be well thought of, too, so he went to great lengths to approve things for the Art Project. We really didn't have any trouble with Jonas Lee.

HP: You didn't?

HK: I shall never forget taking him out one day and then winding up at his studio, that wonderful old building on 57th Street and 8th Avenue --

HP: Oh yes.

HK: --which is now torn down, and walking into the studio and just being shaken by it - it was really what I anticipated, I think - but here was these heavy velours, you know, velvets all around, here was the great big easel with a piece of red velvet diagonally across the painting, which I'd seen in movies or read about, I'm sure, before. But living the life of an artist in the accepted standard of living.

HP: Yes. He was one of those who was quoted when the PWAP was announced and not very happy about he manner in which it was set up. But de Cheauteau - Diller remembers de Cheauteau as being open to conviction.

HK: Right.

HP: While he had a -- what am I going to say? -- limited energy. Nonetheless, he would use it.

HK: Right.

HP: He would go visit the artists with Diller and come back to his own diggings after an exhausting day and say, "Well, Jese, I've seen some great work of art." So Diller's sight is not a little useful and helpful in the total program so far as murals were concerned.

HK: Yes, I think he was.

HP: Yes.

HK: Particularly - - -

HP: Well, I guess, you know, most artists are like that. They may not like the things they see, but they're glad it's being done, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: It's not my cup of tea but he's a good artist.

HK: And it also gave them additional prestige, too, you know, in the art circles.

HP: Sure.

HK: And they became more important people because they were in an official position and certainly it would enhance their image to have a state of approval, you know, rather than destruction.

HP: There is that, too isn't there, like forceps at a birth?

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: To be helpful.

HK: Right.

HP: Well, you see this whole period, then, as you know, the rarest kind of excitement.

HK: Yes, I do, and meeting artists from time to time that I haven't seen for years, you know, which happens not infrequently, we always go back to those days, and they, and very successful painters, you know, commercially - not commercially but economically - successful because they sell, still look back with great nostalgia to that period. It was a terribly exciting thing to be identified with.

HP: Yes. Well, the prospects they faced even in the late twenties were pretty slim.

HK: That's right, yes.

HP: And if one of them was successful in finding a buyer of one of their works, they would see to it that the buyer would go around and see their friend's work.

HK: Yes.

HP: I don't know that that obtains any more.

HK: I remember in the twenties in Woodstock where I spent a couple of summers and my brother, who was a painter, just left Columbia University this last year, lived up there for quite a number of years - but I remember when Juliana Force from the Whitney Museum was scheduled to come to Woodstock, the artists were at each other's throats trying to be, trying to get in, you know, get her to their studios first and entertain her and what not, and they became bitter enemies, because this was their only, the only possibility for sales was the Whitney Museum.

HP: And besides she didn't help matters any because she had certain interests --

HK: True.

HP: --which -- because she could have spread some of this --

HK: She'd have fourteen or fifteen pictures by one artist who was just talented, just so much talent --

HP: Yes.

HK: -- where others were completely ignored.

HP: Yes. Yet, part of her, well, whatever the design of the Whitney Museum was, it had a kind of dead end with Juliana Force.

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: I think it was, you know, designed for the artists. She was another one who had a sense of power, but without -- almost imperial, haughty.

HK: Right.

HP: How instinctively she has the proper name! That's a hideous thing to say since she's not here to defend herself, but nonetheless, you know, the impression one gains is: taste is one thing: aid is a wholly different thing, you know, and fourteen pictures by a given person -- all right, Alex Brooks is marvelous, let's say.

HK: Yes.

HP: -- but so were ten or twelve or fourteen others who were available.

HK: Yes.

HP: Did you see much of Kuniyoshi during this period? He was in the Artists Union and --

HK: He died.

HP: Yes, but during the thirties?

HK: Yes, yes. Oh yes. A little bit, yes.

HP: He was a strange fellow, too.

HK: Right. True. I used to go bowling with "Yosh" quite frequently we had a bunch of artists who met every Saturday night and bowled, and I remember Yosh getting his thumb stuck in the ball, you know, he was pretty tiny but very wiry and he literally went halfway down the alley with his ball tumbling over with it, you know, laughing like an idiot. Ernest Fiene used to go there, and --

HP: Was it regular weekly --?

HK: Yes. Yes. It was a kind of an institution, we really enjoyed it. We'd all go over to what we called the "Dirty Spoon" on East 13th Street for beer afterwards, although we consumed quite a few pitchers of beer while we were bowling. Adolph Dehn was -- and Ralph Mayer, who I mentioned before, and - oh, my God, this sculptor who lived in Brooklyn Heights - owned three houses up there which Hamilton Easter Field had been able to will to --

HP: Oh yes. His name escapes me too, but I know who you mean.

HK: Yes. He's been teaching out of town somewhere for a few years now, he's been around.

HP: It's French, isn't it?

HK: Yes.

HP: Terrible.

HK: What about this new Division of Arts that the government is setting up?

HP: I don't know. They're doing a lot of things, you know, on a large scale.

HK: Pere Laurent was the other one --

HP: That's it! Pere Laurent. I don't know. They've tried to sample the past someway get some idea as idea. Look at the start, not only is it a start but - I'll say something bad, I suppose - but so long as it doesn't get over-organized, you know, funds that are used, are used not to staff organizations but to create opportunity so much the better. I don't know enough the museums, they're interested in all kinds of things that it may start with great pyrotechnics and wind up a fizzle. In a sense, it's too far removed, too, one of the things I've gotten out of going around the country on this aspect of government's relationship to the cultural impulses that we have is the way in which each area could respond to its own needs and make for richness and variety, so that there wasn't a kind of guidepost for acceptability, there wasn't. So you find murals with cows and backwoodsmen in Kentucky, you find trappers in upper Minnesota --

HP: Right, in Wisconsin. Kids who never would have done a mural had opportunity and have gone on as -- well, some of them have, I think in the design field, have gone on pretty much the way Velonis and Warsegar have --

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: -- to show continuity that can be traced back to this period of opportunity. I don't think, I can't think of anyone who in an organization sense has done as well as what came out of that silk screen process.

HK: Yes.

HP: Some of the things they're doing up there today on metal -- did you see those things on metal?

HK: Mmhmm.

HP: Whew!

HK: Was there a stained glass window there?

HP: Those are marvelous!

HK: Yes. Yes. That combination of stained glass and metal -

HP: The new building block block isn't it?

HK: Right. Right. Yes.

HP: Incredibly good, isn't it? Of course, that, you know, looms right now as the rarest excitement for them, and yet they're weighted down with those damn models.

HK: Yes. Bread and butter.

HP: Yes. Oh, they're wise in that sense, but there was a lot of idea. I saw the silk screen process somehow, some way which is used on metal and that's incredible, you know, he showed it to me, Gus showed --

HK: Yes.

HP: --this to me, some of the things he's been toying with. And I never would have believed it --

HK: Gus developed that, you know, and there was a patent on it, a patent.

HP: Yes.

HK: That was the last thing that excited me before I left. I went around to the architectural magazines and got publicity on it. I had a very exciting reaction to it, you know, I was taking small samples around. Actually it's an epoxy material in it but otherwise it's pure metal and glass, of course.

HP: Right.

HK: But how it opens avenues for design in large areas so that you can design one whole area, find out what you like, you know, and just use stained glass for windows. There is no such thing now in existence.

HP: No. They have a drawer -- let's see, Tony had in a drawer replies to a survey on this stained glass window building block --

HK: Yes.

HP: Something which they couldn't improve yet --

HK: Right

HP: It was terribly impressive, all he did was open and show me then slam the damn thing shut because this is something that's lurking up there as a freeing kind of thing for them, you know, away from those damn machines.

HK: Yes. Tony is a rather remarkable guy, you know, he's a designer of machines, he's built machines after his own design. So he has this extraordinary technical ability in addition to his aesthetic interest and tastes.

HP: Yes.

HK: Where Gus, I think is strictly a technical guy, you know, materials.

HP: Yes. But, you know, this is the fellow who put his feet up on the desk one day and came up with --

HK: Sure. Oh yes.

HP: --changed the whole universe. Yes.

HK: Yes. Well in that sense he's certainly creative, I didn't want to limit creativity to --

HP: No. But you know the amount of glassware they have up there now is so great that the area he formerly used for experimentation is loaded down with glass.

HK: Oh really? Warehousing?

HP: You know, the demands on that process that they have just keep growing.

HK: Sure.

HP: Just keep growing.

HK: We were the pioneers, we were the first serigraphers the first to create a print all the way around the glass. They always used to have a break at which point the squeegee started and then picked up again at the stroke. But by using hot paint it dries, it's dry to the touch the moment the squeegee comes around to the starting point and then it's overlapped a little bit to make a continuous band. And it's dry at that point, which is the secret of it because it's so-called hot paint. It's actually hot, you saw it probably in some of the machines.

HP: Yes.

HK: And also the raised gold technique was developed by Gus and Tony, so that you get a drawing underneath, to give you detail and you put a gold print over it and you've got two surfaces and you've got dimension there. So they've been by far the most creative in silk screen printing of any company extant, I'm sure.

HP: Some of the glasses they have -- well, when you design for glass it's like sending I guess eighteen horses to the race and one of them comes home a winner, they haven't got the vaguest idea why.

HK: Right. Right. Yes.

HP: But you put aside the design, it comes back again in a couple of years and so be it takes off.

HK: Right.

HP: Some of the designs they've put on glassware are just fantastic - the coins --

HK: Yes. That's still the top of the selling in its sixth or eighth year it's been that way.

HP: But it's an incredible, lovely thing.

HK: Yes.

HP: But, you know, "All right, it's done," they say, "it's done, it's over, it's bread and butter, etc. etc. etc. but it's not satisfying." So they're back the painting. They're going back to painting. Well, you know, all the -- to see this sort of thing start, a good bit of what we do today is related to it, you know, the WPA the way it's formed - interest, idea, the way touring shows went around, the Art Center movement made us more conscious of what it is we have than we would have been before.

HK: Right. Sure.

HP: And equipment. Look at the number of museums that sprang, like the fellow who was on the WPA who collected documents and had to have a historical museum to house them --

HK: Historical records, yes, sure.

HP: --and it was a great period of mushrooming in that sense. It was also a place to hang pictures. And I guess a lot of people saw a lot of things which they never knew existed before.

HK: Sure, sure. Of course, the theatre with their traveling shows. I remember going down to Wilmington, North Carolina to visit some friends of my wife's down there during those years, somewhere in the 30s and meeting these young people who had a tremendous interest in the drama and art, etcetera, but had no opportunity, and they lived between the -- from visit to visit of Hallie Flanagan's traveling shows, they were electrified by these things which just sustained them, you know, for another few months until something else happened. They were very intelligent people with good taste, you know, but no chances to --

HP: No means to participate.

HK: That's right, yes.

HP: She was a bombshell, wasn't she?

HK: Oh yes, she was really quite --

HP: She had not a little difficulty, you know, with the administrators. They padlocked her place one night, wouldn't put the show on, they marched through the streets to another place and put it on in a wholly different . She, unlike Diller, I mean you can see the differences between the two projects in Diller, who, while he had deep feelings about things, disciplined them for the total purpose; and while she had her deep feelings, they ran riot --

HK: Yes.

HP: -- and the net effect was that the theatre project had to walk the plank.

HK: Right.

HP: Quite so, you love her because of the enemies she made in part. And then for this, this comment like -- but then you often wonder with a temperate approach with some continuity -- I don't know, you know --

HK: Yes, yes.

HP: She had to do whatever it is she had to do.

HK: Yes. She was certainly very definitely a part of the times, you know.

HP: Oh yes.

HK: Because the material they used in the theatre was very much of the times and very provocative.

HP: Sure. I know her Living Newspaper was the scandalous thing that quoted Senators correctly. She never thought anything about it from a public relations point of view, you know.

HK: Yes.

HP: It was really a dam that tore full speed ahead but frankly experimental in so many ways. Almost everyone I talked to remembers a show they went to whether it was The Hot Mikado from Chicago, the Negro theater here in the city, great --

HK: Well, gee, we got publicity too, a lot of it on the Gory mural, for example, the abstract mural. Gorky was so infuriated he came in to see me because some of the criticism had been the fact that with this new movement in art, this abstract movement in art, we didn't need any training, you know, my child can do it as well, etcetera, you know. And Gorky got some of that sort of criticism, you know, in the papers and he was so furious about it -- Gorky had a good academic background, terrific, he could draw terrifically well academically -- and he insisted that we find him another mural space where he could show that he had discipline and what not, you know. But we talked him out of it, he was too valuable to do that sort of thing.

HP: No, but it shows the, you know, the play of forces that were alive at the time. Sure. And what it would arouse...

HK: Yes, yes.

HP: ...in the way of interest in what one was doing. And you know but for that kind of thing Gorky might conceivably have just been painting someway, PERIOD, you know, and no one would have -- but as it was, his experimentation and acceptance and non- acceptance, rejection, etcetera, etcetera, etcetera...

HK: Oh sure.

HP: ...stirred up enough to keep it alive from any number of points of view it could share with him because he had a right, you know and the criticism was wrong. Gee, look at the series of articles that was published in the Daily Mirror, I think it was. Miserable articles! Stuart Davis tells me about a group of them going up and getting this writer out in the hall, nobody exchanging, you know, blows, they just indicating their fury at his treatment.

HK: Yes.

HP: And they wanted to find the person responsible with what is called a howling mob out on the streets. All right, you know, this kind of investment in what one is doing to see it clear, to get good treatment, fair treatment as distinct from butchery. It's a great impulse. Most artists wouldn't have given a damn not individually, I suspect, but as a group somehow or other they, you know, this electricity was in the air so they --

HK: And it enabled some of them, by the way, to buy places in the country that they would not otherwise have done, you know.

HP: Yes.

HK: Values were way down at that time, as I remember, I remember Lou Block bought a place out near Flemington, out in New Jersey, not too far from the River, a wonderful old stone house, eighteen inch walls, corner cupboards - Dutch cupboards - fireplaces you could literally walk in, and I think they paid $2,500 for it, and a hundred and some-odd acres, 106 acres, or something like that.

HP: You couldn't do it today.

HK: And others moved up to New York state and bought places which I think they still have now, but at any rate it did that for people and they were developing and experimenting in their work, it gave them time and security to do this.

HP: Sure.

HK: By the way, I just happened to think of that other instrument in the window display at 70 Columbus Avenue for the WPA. It was a micrometer

HP: Micrometer.

HK: Micrometer and calipers, they crossed, you know, in the center of this window display. We did very handsome displays for them. Well, at any rate, I mean so many of the artists of the day who are still working today, of reputation, were on the project and actually developed. This little story about Pollock illustrates that very well. It gave him an opportunity to develop in the direction that he wanted to go, whereas he probably, if he were trying to sell, having gotten this erroneous picture of what was required of him he probably would have gone on painting with the Thomas Benton's.

HP: It would have been terrible, wouldn't it?

HK: Yes. I read somewhere recently Thomas Benton was here in town, I think, for some reason, I don't remember what it was - had just done a big mural or something - and someone quizzed him about Pollock and he said the only thing he ever taught Pollock was the ability to down a bottle of liquor in one sitting, or something of that sort. Which, of course, Pollock could do. You know he was, I don't know if you knew him or not

personally, he was very insecure, very inarticulate, very shy, and he drank primarily to overcome this shyness, and then he was completely extroverted and a little bombastic, but that apparently is what -- he gave it up from time to time. I saw him a couple of times while he was on the wagon and he was a very quiet, unassuming, insecure person almost --

[END OF INTERVIEW]