



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Ilo Carey  
Liston, 1965 June 1

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Ilo Carey Liston on June 1, 1965. The interview took place in Seattle, Washington, and was conducted by Dorothy K. Bestor for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

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

## Interview

DOROTHY BESTOR: Now, let's see how our voices sound before we really say anything significant.

ILO CAREY LISTON: What do we say, one, two, three, four, testing?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, that's fine, [Ilo Carey Liston laughs] why not? I guess I'm a little high.

ILO CAREY LISTON: No, my voice is rather low. I mean, it's a low pitch.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, at least there isn't that peculiar feedback I had a minute ago. Someday I'll learn—

ILO CAREY LISTON: I wonder what caused that?

DOROTHY BESTOR: I don't know. I've never done it before. Occasionally, I've done it while turning that up, which apparently I should leave down. Now, why don't you just say one or two more things, and then we'll play it back and see what's—

ILO CAREY LISTON: I notice they have the little magic eye indicator for your voice level.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. It works better if it doesn't quite overlap but just occasionally touches. You have that on yours—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Yeah, we had that on the Fisher. There's, well, no. On the tape recorder, it's a needle. But on the Fisher, the tuning apparatus, is this same type of eye.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I see. One thing that this does that's crazy is go this way, from that reel to that, which is unusual.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, that's right.

DOROTHY BESTOR: They usually go the other way, and on my little one, it goes the other way. I don't know why this does that. But there it is.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I'm looking at ours to see.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: [Since you were at the -Ed.] Seattle Art Museum, on the staff, during some of the years when the Federal Art Project was flourishing in Seattle, Maybe you could tell me whether you think the Project was a good thing for Seattle and for the artists involved?

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think it was more particularly a good thing for the artists than it was for Seattle. Because—

DOROTHY BESTOR: How so?

ILO CAREY LISTON: —I think—well, Seattle has the museum, and the museum was flourishing at that period. So that we really were getting art constantly through the museum. But some of the artists were indigent, had no money, no positions open to them, and I think it did a good deal for a good many of them.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Whom were the ones that you came in contact with?

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, Morris Graves was one. Ebba Rapp was another one. Rowena Clement Lung from Tacoma. Guy Anderson, Malcolm Roberts, Lubin Petric, Myra Wiggins. Those were a few of the names that I remember. DOROTHY BESTOR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ILO CAREY LISTON: Earl Fields. Earl was then working at the museum, and I remember one of his paintings in particular, called *The Stove*, was one of the WPA Project paintings. I don't remember the names of the ones that Morris did. Ken Callahan was also in it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Of course, he was on the staff at the museum, too, at the same time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, at the same time?

ILO CAREY LISTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DOROTHY BESTOR: I didn't realize he was doing his murals for the treasury section—

[Cross talk.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think—

DOROTHY BESTOR: [Inaudible.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Yes, I think he was, and I had forgotten about the mural project, but wasn't he involved with a mural at the marine hospital?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, he was. That was one—

[Cross talk.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: I ran across that [inaudible]—

DOROTHY BESTOR: —that had a long and complicated after-history. It was removed from the marine hospital, and it's since been lost and found several times.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, really?

DOROTHY BESTOR: And now it's rolled up in the basement of some building. I haven't found out yet whether it's in one of the university buildings—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, really? I didn't know that.

DOROTHY BESTOR: —or the Museum of History and Industry, but I'm on the trail of it. When I saw Mr. Callahan a while ago, he didn't know, either, and he was highly amused that it was lost, and he thought it deserved to be lost, that one shouldn't leave the same murals on the same walls indefinitely.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Was this one of his famous three men, the logging scenes?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I believe it was.

ILO CAREY LISTON: That was of the period. We call it his three men period, because practically every painting that he did at the time had three men in it, either right in the foreground, or maybe there was one man in the distance, two in the foreground. And many of them are these tremendous, sort of Peter Puget logging scenes. Great, brawny men, with big, broad shoulders.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, they do seem astonishingly brawny. He's very amused at that period now, of course.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, I don't think he should be.

DOROTHY BESTOR: He thinks it was much too illustrative.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think it was a wonderful period. They all went through this type of thing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Even our well-known friend Mark Tobey.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True.

ILO CAREY LISTON: His work has changed so tremendously.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it certainly has.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Did you ever see the *Algerian Landscape*?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't.

ILO CAREY LISTON: That he did? Well, it's in the museum collection. Sometime, take a look. That's one of his very early paintings, one of the first ones we had.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, well, then I must have seen it at the Tobey show you had, probably two or three years ago, the retrospective show, if it was out then.

[00:05:09]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Extremely hard edge for the period. It's the sort of thing you wouldn't have expected Mark to do at all.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, now, when you were in contact with these people we've just mentioned, were they exhibiting at the museum and entering and being accepted by the Northwest Annual concurrently with their working on the WPA?

ILO CAREY LISTON: Some of them were, probably. I don't really remember. I'd have to see the old Northwest Annual catalogues. Do they have them at the museum, or has Mrs. Malone [ph]—

DOROTHY BESTOR: She hasn't unearthed them—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Unearthed them. [Laughs.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: —yet, but I'll find out next week whether they do have them still or not.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, I would check back in those, because that's the only way you could find out. I'm almost certain that Morris must have been. And I would be almost certain that Ken and Guy and Earl.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ILO CAREY LISTON: Those are the four that I know the best. Of course, Ebba Rapp was working in sculpture, and she was doing a lot of children's illustrations, I think, at that time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, she told me when I talked with her that she had done one picture for the Art Project, and that it was hung in some children's library somewhere.

[Cross talk.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think I saw that—

DOROTHY BESTOR: She was so young at the time that she doesn't really remember enough about it to do a taped interview with me. Which I think is too bad, because there seem to be hardly any women who came out of this WPA Art Project.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, except for Hilda Morris.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Except for Hilda Morris, yes, whom I hope to see in Portland. [Inaudible.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, of course, Mary Jane Warren [ph], but now, Mary Jane isn't painting anymore, as far as I know, but she was on that Project. She's now Mrs. Barksdale [ph].

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think you know of her. Myra Wiggins, wasn't she in that? Yes.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, she's one I haven't gotten in contact with yet.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And Elizabeth Curtis was another one.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, there were women on the Project, but they don't seem to have made their mark—

ILO CAREY LISTON: No. Mm-mm [negative].

DOROTHY BESTOR: —as painters since, the way the men we've just been talking about have.

ILO CAREY LISTON: No. Of course, Theodora Harrison—Theodora Lawrenson Harrison—would have made her mark here if she had stayed in the States, but she moved back to Ireland. She and her husband moved back to Ireland. But she's one of the world-famous heraldic experts. And that was what she contributed, I found in these files, these heraldry things. And illuminations. She was magnificent at that. So, her name is well-known throughout the country. Wasn't Rachael Griffin involved in this, who is now on the staff of the Portland Art Museum?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh. She could have been. I haven't tracked her down yet.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Rachael Smith Griffin. And I tracked her down in your list, and she is the curator of the Portland Art Museum.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, fine.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And she's done a number of teaching series for art for the Portland schools. [Inaudible]—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I'll be down there soon, so I will write her.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, go talk to Rachael. You'll find her a charming person.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, fine. Well, as you probably know, there have been all sorts of extravagant praises of the WPA Art Project, and also, in this region, there's been a great deal of griping about how many things were started, but not much was left as a permanent achievement here in Seattle. How do you feel about it?

ILO CAREY LISTON: I'm inclined to agree that not much is left. I've been listing—most of the galleries that began under the WPA don't exist any longer, do they?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Now, the Spokane Art Center apparently was a really active one in this state. Well, that's no longer in existence.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True.

ILO CAREY LISTON: That's—I don't know whether it's the same building, but if it is, that's the one that was taken over by Washington State University.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Then there was a sort of an abortive attempt down in Chehalis, which never came [inaudible]—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yeah, that was one of the regional galleries, to which they sent circuit shows.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Have you ever heard anything about that? I mean, have you traced anything down on that one?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No. It's in the correspondence during the years '39 to '41, when the Federal Art Project was taken over here by the Washington statewide Art Project. It was flourishing then. And apparently, with the coming of World War II and the gradual wrapping up of this Project, it just seems to have stopped. I haven't been down to Chehalis and found out precisely how it stopped or how suddenly or whether there's any trace of it, but—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, there was an arts center—they did try to start an arts center sometimes within the last ten years. I got several inquiries through the association. But nothing ever came of it. They just asked did I have shows, and how much did they cost, and apparently it was too much, because they just didn't ever even answer the letters.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

[00:09:59]

ILO CAREY LISTON: One of the—the only other one that I know of that's still in existence is the North Central Washington Museum Association. I ran into that in your files. And that began as a WPA project, and it still is in existence. Now, they have borrowed some things from the museum. But they—and they were at one time, members of our western association. But since— well, they dropped out about two years ago, and now the Wenatchee Valley College is the member. But this thing still exists. Grant Erickson's [ph] the director of it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, yes. I hope to get over there.

ILO CAREY LISTON: So he might—he wouldn't have been involved at that time. A man named A. V. Shepard [ph], according to your records, was director. But it might be worthwhile to go over to Wenatchee and talk around and see if they have any files about what went on.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I'd like to.

ILO CAREY LISTON: But there was nothing in here, in your files, to indicate that it ever was very active.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Thank you for crediting me with those files, but actually, as you know, they're the files of the Seattle Art Museum—

ILO CAREY LISTON: I know they are. [Laughs.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: —which I have borrowed to have filmed. [Laughs.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: I know they are, but since they were in your possession, they sort of seemed like they were yours. [Dorothy Bestor laughs.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I wish they were, and I wish I had studied them more thoroughly than I have, but I hope to before they get filmed and returned to Mrs. Malone [ph].

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, I was very interesting in reading the January '64 copy of this Archives of American Art. It's a terrific job to pull all of this together.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it is. They're having great luck pulling a lot of it together in California. They seem to have hundreds of artists down there who were connected with the Project, either in California, or in some cases, in the East, and they've come out there. Up here, it—well, people have scattered. People seem to leave the Northwest in droves, and those who have remained are often willing to talk about the Project, but filled with personal animosities involving it. Or perhaps very happy about the Project, but unwilling to talk about it, [laughs] as in the case of Mr. Petric, and, until he finally broke down last week, Mr. Roberts.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, was he rather reluctant, too?

DOROTHY BESTOR: He was for a while, but then he did decide that interviews weren't so bad and tape recorders weren't so diabolical.

ILO CAREY LISTON: He was afraid of tape recorders? [Laughs.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: [Laughs.] Maybe we shouldn't have that on the record, but he said he was.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, you can erase it, you know, after all. [They laugh.] No, I think that this personal animosity business, this develops in any sort of situation like this—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, of course it does.

ILO CAREY LISTON: —where people are getting paid, as it were, a pittance for what they're doing. They always feel somebody else's pittance is bigger than theirs, and they're more worthwhile. And I notice in the files, they had them segregated into groups. Group one, group two.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Did that indicate anything about their respective abilities, as the WPA saw [inaudible]?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, it was supposed to indicate something about their training, not necessarily their abilities, but their training. And their experience, and hence, their rate of pay.

ILO CAREY LISTON: You can see [phone ringing] how that could happen, then, couldn't you? [Recorder stops, restarts.]—here in the tape, too, because it's—any time you get involved with a civil service position, you find this animosity business builds.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Everybody thinks the other fellow's getting more than he has coming to him, and that you're getting less.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I worked for civil government—civil service during the war.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, you did?

ILO CAREY LISTON: I was working for the army. And it was just amazing, the women who were jealous because I was a new face that had come in, and they were afraid I was going to take the jobs away from them. Don't you suppose this had the same sort of feeling with the WPA Art Project?

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'm sure it did. I'm sure it did. For one thing, they had so many classifications, and there was so much correspondence about reclassifying people, and they would have a requirement of employing, say, 15 tracers and 10 painters and 20 tinters. Mr. Elshin pointed out that there was all this hullabaloo about painters, tracers, and tinters, and it got to be rather funny, because sometimes the distinction was almost infinitesimal, between the work that a tracer or a painter or a tinter was doing.

ILO CAREY LISTON: What did a tracer do, just draw?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I hope he didn't just trace.

[Cross talk.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well probably so. [Laughs.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: But at least he was someone who got paid less than a painter and more than a tinter.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The tinter was the boy that—like the dime store oil painting artists.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I suppose so.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Bring in your portrait, [they laugh] and for one dollar, we'll make it look

like life.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I suppose so.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I noticed in Mr. Inverarity's letters, there was some reference to reclassifying some of these people, and "Class AH1245.2" or something.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Right.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, this is probably what led to a lot of this difficulty.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, he had a tremendous amount of paperwork to do, just seeing that these quotas were filled, and that he didn't have for half a month one man over the quota in one classification and two women under in another.

[00:15:10]

And Mr. Downer [ph], over in Spokane, went through a great deal of correspondence with him, too, [cross talk] exchanging artists.

ILO CAREY LISTON: You don't have all of those files in your possession, do you?

DOROTHY BESTOR: They're, well—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Microfilm?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Not in my possession, unfortunately. They're in the University of Washington Library Manuscripts Department, and I have had those microfilmed for the Archives. They make one fat roll of film of almost a thousand frames.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Must have been a fascinating file to read.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it was. Of course, I didn't really read it. But I read here—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, you couldn't. You wouldn't have that much time.

DOROTHY BESTOR: —and there in it, and saw what kind of things they were having to correspond about and send, sometimes six or seven letters back and forth about the same matter, because they—or the orders from Washington, D.C., which had to be acted upon in Seattle and transmitted to Spokane, and sometimes Chehalis or the other places around the state where the project was flourishing. And then, everyone had to comment on these and go back and forth, and then the letters often had to be rewritten in the proper form. And various people would get irritated, because letter that made perfectly good sense were not in quite the official governmental form. You know, having been in the army, how that was.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I was working for the medical division, and if a soldier got off-duty because of illness caused by his duty, it had to be written up in a specific form. If he had a common cold, and you wrote it down: "rhinitis, acute catarrhal," he wouldn't get paid. But if you wrote it: "rhinitis, catarrhal, acute," his LOD [Line of Duty] took effect.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Good heavens. Well, this is the same thing, exactly.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And we had seven copies of everything, and I finally figured out where six of them went, but I never did find out what they did with the seventh one. [They laugh.] But this was just typical. There's so much paperwork. And I presume it's important. I believe it has to be done.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I don't know, they're experimenting in England, I read recently, with doing no paperwork at all for big chains like Marks & Spencer.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, really?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: What do they do to keep records?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Just selling the goods and throwing out the records, or not keeping records, period.



ILO CAREY LISTON: Sometimes, I think it's an advantage, [laughs] particularly when I start cleaning files.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Now, as far as the artists are concerned, I actually think the WPA gave them a hand when they needed it. I don't think that it made the artist any greater than his latent ability would have been, anyway.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, it hardly could have.

ILO CAREY LISTON: But at this time, I think Morris Graves would have been Morris Graves and would have come to the point that he's come to regardless of the WPA. But Morris needed money. He needed to buy paints. He needed to live.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Right.

ILO CAREY LISTON: The same thing was true of many of the others. I think it did help a good many of them, and of course, some of them fell by the wayside.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, inevitably.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Went into other professions, or—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Or some fell for 10 years by the wayside and now are having a renaissance.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I was amazed at the names that came back when I was reading these files. Like Merlin Enabnit. I don't ever know what happened to him.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Nobody knows what happened to him.

ILO CAREY LISTON: He just dropped into the void.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Apparently. Maybe it turned out that someone—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, it was such an unusual name.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it was. Well, lots of the names seem awfully improbable. Merlin Enabnit and Lubin Petric, for example.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And Y. Sonnichsen, I can remember his name. And whatever happened to him, I haven't any idea.

DOROTHY BESTOR: There was a point that came into my mind a minute ago. Oh, perhaps the Project, in some cases, did something indirectly for the painters in giving them something to react against, a framework to react against, just as families sometimes do for adolescents.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

DOROTHY BESTOR: I know William Cumming reacted against it so violently, and in his view, Morris Graves and Mark Tobey did. Maybe it goaded them a little bit, helped their personal development that way. Do you think, possibly?

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, that could be, and in the exact reverse, I read in the *Art Horizons*, the Spokane Arts Center bulletin, that Guy Anderson felt that he had a responsibility when he was on the staff there. That he had to do his very best to prove that he appreciated what was being done for him.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, that's what several people have said to me. Ernest Norling, whom you may—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, he's another one, too.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, he was one of the people that I had one of the earliest interviews with, and he struck me as being just suffused with gratitude for this opportunity to keep alive and keep painting during that time. And he said—just as a matter of course—and said it

perfectly straight, Of course, we all gave of our best, because this was our chance to show the public that we could do something.

[00:20:09]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Maybe some artists feel they shouldn't be grateful. That it's not becoming of them to be grateful. [They laugh.] Do you suppose that that's an attitude?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yeah, that could well be.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I don't think Ken would ever feel that way, though. Ken Callahan. I think he appreciated his opportunity, and I think Morris did.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: They are very few of them that I feel didn't. At least, they didn't act it at the—when they were at the museum.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Of course, it was a different kind of opportunity for Mr. Callahan. He didn't need to be kept alive at the time.

ILO CAREY LISTON: No, that's right. He did—

DOROTHY BESTOR: But he did have the opportunity that he saw, when I talked with him, as an educational opportunity. To learn what it was like to do big murals and to get this illustrativeness out of his system, and to find out what he could do and couldn't do in the way of murals, and then go on to a more individual and personalized style.

ILO CAREY LISTON: You haven't talked to Carl Morris, have you?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Be interesting to see what his reaction is.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I want to, very soon. I've been trying to get in touch with him, and he took off for New York City just about the time I got seriously in touch with him. He may be back now. I'm going to phone him again and write him again and see.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, certainly—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Of course, he was terrifically important over in the Spokane Arts Center.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, so was Hilda, too.

[Cross talk.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: And lots of correspondence, yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: The two of them together should have some marvelous reminiscences for you.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I'm sure they do.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And some very enlightening comments to make on what they feel was the value of the whole Project.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Right.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, anything that furthers the artist. Of course, in Finland, this is one of the accepted things. The artist is subsidized. The painter is subsidized. The musician is subsidized.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Exactly.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Sibelius didn't ever have to work if he didn't want to.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True. Well, now, what do you think about that as a possibility over here? There's so much talk now, as you know, again, about the federal government and the arts,

and what the role of the federal government should be with the arts.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think the artist now doesn't need it, unless we have a terrible depression again. I don't think he needs to be spoon-fed, and I don't think he should be spoon-fed. I think he should stand on his own merits.

DOROTHY BESTOR: So you wouldn't want us to be another Finland, in that respect?

ILO CAREY LISTON: I don't like too much government control in anything. There's been a lot of discussion of just this type of thing among the various museum associations, where they want to get away from this idea. If the federal government's going to pay for it, they could possibly say, Well, you paint the way we want you to paint.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True.

ILO CAREY LISTON: There, you lose your artistic freedom, and this is the one thing that we mustn't lose is our artistic freedom.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I gather there was some feeling during the Project that muralists who painted for the Treasury Section on Painting and Design were sometimes dictated to, or at least there were subtle pressures for them to do a sort of section-style of rather inspirational, rather illustrative, somewhat conventional murals.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think it could have happened. I don't know—

[Cross talk.]

DOROTHY BESTOR: Local industry, and such.

ILO CAREY LISTON: —of any exact—I think those suggestions were made. It seems to me I do remember, vaguely, something to that effect, suggestions about local industry.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I think lists of subject matter—suggested subject matter—were sent out. And to be sure, I gather they didn't absolutely have to follow them, but there was this sort of idea that it would be nice to have lots of apple growers picking apples and lots of fur trappers trapping furs, and in a sort of way that we've come now to think of as rather saccharine presentation.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, of course, that was a different era, too. There was a great deal more representational painting.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Very definitely.

ILO CAREY LISTON: You see, we—you and I have moved through the very beginning of the modern art movement as we know it today, this very abstract, way out type of thing. Same thing with music and any of the other arts. And I think that this undoubtedly had an effect upon the work that they were doing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Quite. Well, I see you've made a few notes on the folder that we borrowed from the Seattle Art Museum. Have we covered the—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Oh, I mentioned some of these people whose names came to me. Have you contacted Lloyd Jensen or Dorothy Dolph Jensen?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't. I shall right away.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Because he's a framer, or was in the picture-framing business, and his wife was an artist, was a painter. And he was involved with the Project, but I didn't find her name anywhere. Charles Lindstrom rings a very loud bell, and I wonder if he's the Charles Lindstrom who's now on the staff of the de Young Museum in San Francisco.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I don't know.

ILO CAREY LISTON: He's the educational supervisor there or some such thing, and his wife also teaches at the de Young. But you might check—

DOROTHY BESTOR: I'll try to find out.

[00:25:00]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Barney Nestor, did you ever find anything about him?

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, I haven't. Not a thing. Is he—

ILO CAREY LISTON: He had a number of paintings in the Project. And then, of course, Mrs. Reed, I mentioned to you the other day—Mrs. Truman Reed in Spokane.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. I've written her.

ILO CAREY LISTON: She'd be a marvelous source of information. She was on the board of the Art Project.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Excuse me, you mentioned Barney Nestor. Is he one that you knew?

ILO CAREY LISTON: Yes. He used to be an assistant at the museum in 1934 and '35, working in the stacks, packing and unpacking, helping to install, this type of thing. I've lost complete track of him. I don't know whether the museum knows where he is. Another name that was mentioned just casually in passing was Jean Fay [ph]. Now, she is the sister of Carl Gould's [ph] widow. And Mrs. Gould [ph] is the one that wrote several books, I think, on Seattle history. And as far as I know, Jean [ph] is living in San Francisco. I don't know whether she's married or not, but Carl Gould, Jr. [ph] could tell you.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Now where do I get in touch with Carl Gould [ph]?

ILO CAREY LISTON: He's here in Seattle. In fact, he lives right over here at McGilvra Boulevard.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh.

ILO CAREY LISTON: They are donors. Quite active donors to the museum.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think you suggested, or asked me the other day, what I thought the long-term value of this Project was.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes. Yes I did.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I don't really think that we have any long-term value that you can point out from the Project, other than the fact that some of these producing artists were helped at a time when they needed to be. But I think you can't point to the WPA as a definite influence on their style or what they have done since.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, and wouldn't want it to be—

ILO CAREY LISTON: No, mm-mm [negative].

DOROTHY BESTOR: —a definite influence on their style. Of course, the point is sometimes made that the whole WPA Art Project, and the other government projects that preceded it and followed it, had a certain influence in helping the movement toward regional art and the rediscovery of American styles and subjects for the artist, and got us away from the feeling that France was the only home of art.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think that's true.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Do you think that's possible? That's a point that E. P. Richardson makes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I noticed in these *Art Horizons*, which I found most interesting reading—

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, they are fascinating.

ILO CAREY LISTON: There seemed to be a terrific buildup of interest in Spokane in art as a result of the Spokane Arts Center.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Perhaps if we had had an active arts center here that was run by the WPA alone. I mean not connected with the museum in any sense of the word, or if we were impoverished artistically and needed something, it perhaps would have helped. Apparently, it did help in Spokane. It gave them the shot in the arm they needed to get going, as far as having an arts center there was concerned.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, that's one thing I wanted to ask you about, and I want to ask Dr. Fuller and Mrs. Malone [ph] next week. Do you know exactly why we didn't have an actual arts center here? It's always been hinted at in the correspondence with Mr. Inverarity and the others that that is one of the goals and aims and functions locally of the Project, both when it was WPA and when it was statewide Washington.

And then, I don't know whether it's because Mr. Inverarity thought that the Seattle Art Museum served the function of a flourishing arts center, and he didn't want to compete with that, or whether he couldn't get enough local interest, or what. But there wasn't an actual arts center, and there weren't actual painting classes for adults and for all ages, as there were over in Spokane. And there was just the studio where these painters, tinters, and tracers worked, first in the maritime building downtown, and then in the Bailey-Gatzert School, and then in the Latona School. And then, as you know, some of the artists on the staff were on what was called remote control. [Recorder stops, restarts.][We were talking about what might have happened if there had been an -Ed.]—arts center here. And what was the point you were making, Ms. Liston?

[00:30:00]

ILO CAREY LISTON: I think the point was that I felt that Bruce Inverarity did not want to compete with the Seattle Art Museum, because it was already fulfilling the same thing that the WPA Art Project was trying to fulfill.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, in its public relations with the community—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Yes. Now, people ask me, too, about were they having classes at the museum.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: They did have a life class every Thursday night, and I think they also had some children's classes in the morning. Saturday mornings. And then, Mrs. Young [ph], was giving talks, lectures, all over the city. The museum was fulfilling the same purpose that the WPA Art Project would have fulfilled if it had been necessary.

DOROTHY BESTOR: I see.

ILO CAREY LISTON: But what happened in Tacoma?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Not a great deal, as far as I can find out.

ILO CAREY LISTON: It's too bad, because that was the very beginning of the Tacoma Art League, and there wasn't much going on there. There should have been.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, the records of that period in Tacoma don't seem available, but I'll perhaps find them in the public library when I go down there.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I would suggest that, or else the Washington State Historical Society in Tacoma might be another source of information. Oh, and another person that could tell you would be Francis Chubb at the college—or University of Puget Sound, it's now called. She was the secretary of the Tacoma Art League for years, and I'm sure that she was on the staff at the time of this Project.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine. [Inaudible.]

ILO CAREY LISTON: Were there any other centers open in the state of Washington? I don't think there were.

DOROTHY BESTOR: No, there weren't. There was talk of one at Cheney, but it didn't materialize.

ILO CAREY LISTON: What happened? Did it just finally die out a natural death, or was it suddenly stopped?

DOROTHY BESTOR: Well, I don't think it really started. There was just a project to have it—at one point, Mr. Inverarity was going to establish 10 art centers around the state, and not all 10 of them ever were really established. I suppose it's a matter of funds not being as available in some communities as others.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, then, too, I think the thing that we both overlooked was the fact that the war came in 1941.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: And that killed any possible chance of any activity like this, which was not essential to the war effort, certainly.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, it certainly did. I know they tried to see what the Project was doing that could be helpful in the war effort, and you found in the files from the art museum a letter of Mr. Inverarity, I presume, telling what his artists, what his staff could do in the way of making plans that might—or scale models and so on that might be useful to the military, and ways in which their talents could go on being used, but I don't think a great deal came of it.

ILO CAREY LISTON: No, I think a lot of the artists at that time disappeared into one or another realm connected with the war effort.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Some of them went to work for Boeing, and some of them went in the service as illustrators and map drawers and that sort of thing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Yes, I think there was suddenly a change in focus in the general feeling on the part of most people, that this was of secondary importance.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, they didn't need it then. They had other sources of income, and the government didn't need to subsidize them any longer.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True. And I gather also there had been out here a groundswell of objection to FDR and his works, and this was thought of as one more of those darn Democratic make-work things, and it was high time—

ILO CAREY LISTON: Well, could very well be. Could very well be.

DOROTHY BESTOR: It was felt by some that it was high time that that it was over. I don't know how much of that there was during the extent of the life of the Project. Do you—out here?

ILO CAREY LISTON: No, I don't. Probably, when it began, they were grateful enough to get meals, they weren't worried too much whether it was FDR or the democratic process, but it put food in their mouths.

DOROTHY BESTOR: True.

ILO CAREY LISTON: Which, at that point, was the most essential thing.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Indeed, it was. Well, thank you ever so much. Do you have any other points that we haven't covered that you noticed in your contact with these artists? When you were on the staff at the museum?

ILO CAREY LISTON: I thought of one more name that just came to mind, William J. C. Klamm.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, I haven't heard of him at all.

ILO CAREY LISTON: I wonder if he—I didn't find his name in these files, but I wonder if he, by any chance, was involved in it.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Is that C or K?

ILO CAREY LISTON: K-L-A-M-M. And he lives in Seattle.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Oh, yes, yes, I have heard of him. Mr. Cumming mentioned him.

ILO CAREY LISTON: His wife was Phila McDuffee, and they have a daughter who's a writer. But he was in the area at the time of this Project, and he—even if he wasn't working on it, he might be a good source of information for you.

DOROTHY BESTOR: Fine. Well, thank you very much.

ILO CAREY LISTON: You're very welcome. It's been fun to do this.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]