Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Peter Macchiarini, 1964 Oct. 18

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Peter Macchiarini on October 18, 1964. The interview took place in San Francisco, California, and was conducted by Mary Fuller McChesney and Robert McChesney 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.

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. The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives retranscribed the original audio and attempted to create a verbatim transcript. Additional information from the original transcript has been added in brackets and given an –Ed. attribution.

Interview

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: This is Mary Fuller McChesney interviewing Peter Macchiarini, spelled M-A-C-C-H-I-A-R-I-N-I, who lives at 130 Russia Avenue in San Francisco. The date is October 18, 1964. Present, also, this afternoon are Robert McChesney and Virginia Macchiarini. Peter, I'd like to ask you first, where were you born?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I was born August 27, 1909. I was born on the Wohler Ranch in Sonoma County between Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, and Forestville. And it's a big—it was a big hop ranch on the Russian River.

UNDISTINGUISABLE SPEAKER: What ranch was it?

PETER MACCHIARINI: The Wohler Ranch.

UNDISTINGUISHABLE SPEAKER: Wall?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Wohler. W-O-H-L-E-R, I think, you spell it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: And it's a—it was a huge, fantastic rambling thing, and it had mainly hops, but it also had a great deal of grapes. And I remember my father used to take contracts for training of the hops, and I was—I was almost born in the hospital—I mean, in the hop field, instead of being born in a hospital I was—my mother had to rush home during hop picking season so I could be born. [They laugh.]

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Where did you receive your art training?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I had a proclivity for art, I suppose, from—as a youngster, I never developed it, but when I went to Italy in 1924, where my parents took me, I was fascinated with the—all the marble in the area where I went. And this was in Pietrasanta, Italy where—it's near Carrara, where all the quarries are. And that where my parents' family originated. My grandfather used to haul great, big blocks of marble from the Altissimo and then—and in Anagni [ph] up in the mountains. And he used to tell me stories about when he used to be head—they call him head wagoneer. They used to have as many as 20 pairs of oxen to pull these huge blocks of marble. And when I went to Italy, I was fascinated by all of this wonderful craft of people doing all of these—this carving marble, ornamental, and sculpture. It was very traditional, however, there wasn't anything you might call creative, it was repetitious of the Renaissance. The work that was made to go on buildings and things like that. And in fact cemetery work. And a lot of this stuff was sent throughout the world. In fact, the Los Angeles County city hall was built from the marble from Pietrasanta, the wainscoting in the interior.

And I remember doing a good deal of translating for these people when they used to get letters from America, because most of them couldn't speak English. Of course, I had a difficulty because I couldn't—I had difficulty with the nomenclatures of words and sayings

that I didn't know—logic that I didn't know the translation of. But I guess—I suppose that I served them to some purpose, because they kept me on. And—well, to help me with my spending money, let's say, while I was going to the academy there. I started going to the Academy of Art. And I developed—I wanted to go into the ornamentation—ornamental, when I did all the acanthus leaves [ph] and things that were—is usually associated with traditional architecture. And I went to—three years to this school, and I came back to the United States 1928—the end of '28.

And I got a job, not in marble, but I worked with a terrazzo. I did some terrazzo work at that time with P. Grassi [ph] & Company on Cortland Avenue. I worked—I stayed with them until the advent of the Depression. Until 1929 when the crash came. And then, successively, the jobs there became fewer and fewer and scarcer and scarcer. I was called on less often. And then, I—we gradually drifted into this tremendous void called a depression, I like to refer it to. I mean, it took—I think that this was a tremendous tragedy to the American youth of that time, where their ripe years of their life was completely destroyed. I mean, in this futility of doing nothing. Not being able to find jobs or anything like that, which was—took a great deal out of personality, I think. You look back on it now and I say, my god, I say, if I could have had time to devote more to my work, I say, just think how much more developed I would have been. And that was the feeling that I had then, it was just—we were just dying on the vine, that's all.

[00:05:18]

In 1931, I took a trip throughout the United States on nothing, by freight trains. I hitchhiked and I was gone for three months and a half, and I traveled over 3,000—10,100 miles I covered. I went to Boston and I met—I went to New York, where I met some of my friends that I had known in the old country who had come back—who had come over. And sort of reminisced about Italy. And then I went to Boston and—where there was a great deal of marble up there, and granite, but everything was just at a standstill. And I—fall was fast approaching and I know that if it cold, I could no longer sleep outside like I had in the past. And so, I made one tremendous resolve and I said, I'm going back to San Francisco, and I'm going to get there as fast as I can. [They laugh.] I came back to—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That cold weather's [inaudible]—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. I came back. I made it in, I don't know, about—I think I made it back in about a week, 10 days, which is a pretty good record with no money. [They laugh.] And when I got back, I said, well, I had no job, but I figured it—starving—if I had to starve, I said, San Francisco just about as good a place as any. And sure enough, the next couple of days, I got a phone call, and my old boss says there is a job of limited circumstances. In other words, he had—they were doing this Los Angeles General Hospital and they had no money. The boss was practically broke, and they were doing it on a shoestring. And they asked me if I wanted to go along and lend one of mine.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Your shoestrings?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, one of my shoestrings. [They laugh.] Which meant that we would only be getting $10 a week, and then we would get the rest when the job progressed. And we worked on that for about a year, and I lived on $10 a week for year. And every so often, I would get my—the balance. And of course, I got all my money, which is very good. But after that, it—there was—it was just as dark as it was before. I mean, that's when the CWA [Civil Works Administration], the pick-and-shovel jobs, and—we used to fill holes. Dig holes, and then fill them up again. That was actually true. I mean, there was—this is what actually happened. And we did—we worked in the Laurel Hill Cemetery, that development there. You know, up on the hill where—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Digging graves?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. Digging out the remains of—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Removing?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Yes.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, removing. And they built houses there. And then, we went into the—this was CWA, and they we went—then, later, W—in the interim, we used to get

groceries. I was single at that time. We used to get a bag of grocery a week and three dimes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Three dimes?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Three dimes. They—the lady up at the window would give you three dimes and—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Streetcar fare.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, streetcar fare. [Robert McChesney laughs.] You know, believe me, it was three dimes. I took them. I wasn't going to—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Well, sure.

PETER MACCHIARINI: I was smoking in those days, and I could get three packages of 10¢ cigarettes, the old—what was it?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Wings?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, Wings, and things like that. But—

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: And then he'd walk to the [inaudible]—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Finally, I got married about '35. And that's when I first went for—the WPA first started out in '35. And my—I tried to get on the Art Project, and I just couldn't swing it, for a variety of reasons, best known to Mr. Allen, I don't know what they were, but—so, I took the next best thing, and I got onto the marionette project because I could carve. You know, was out doing the—Ralph Chessé's puppets.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: And I was—I did a lot of the casting of the heads and we'd make whole casts of plays. Characters for *The Mikado*, and operas, and it was very, very, extremely interesting work. Then, the Project later began to—they began to sabotage the Project. Too much—there was a great deal of opposition to WPA. Where there was no justification for them running it down—I say them, well, I don't know who them were—you knew that—you could read the newspapers and the WPA was criticized as being a useless thing.

[00:10:15]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Constantly.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. It was—so, they would throw things in your way, like they'd give you a job and then not have the essential materials to carry it out, or do one thing or another, just so that this feeling of frustration was slowly developing. I was on—the marionette project finally was on the verge of being closed down, and they put me in the theater, as an actor. Of course, I didn't—[they laugh]—I was an actor. I acted a couple of parts, and they said, "Gee, you died very well." [They laugh.] You know, I was supposed to be one of the Pharaoh's—in the *Sun and I* [ph]—one of his prophets. And I didn't do or say the right thing, so he had me hauled out by these two, strong, huge, fellows, you know, bronzed—and they're taking me out to be executed, and I yelled—let out—supposed to let out a blood-curdling yell, in the process of me dragging off, and he says, "Boy, you sure chilled the house." [They laugh.]

Even that, that wore out, and I'd had it by that time. And I told them I wanted to be transferred to an art project. Well, incidentally, that's where I first started doing jewelry, on the Theatre Project. While waiting to go on, I used to nervously whittle a piece of wood. And I used to carve these masks, tragedy and comedy masks. And the girls in the theater used to like them. And at first I used to give it to them. Then, the demand became so great that I felt that some of my expenses should be defrayed, like buying a rare piece of wood. [They laugh.] I wasn't holding down for jobs, and I don't want to get people to think that I was holding down a federal job and—federal job sounds big, doesn't it? [They laugh.] But believe me, that was very important. By the time I had—was married and had a child, and I was getting $94 a month, and those were big $94 I was getting, believe me.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Boy, you started out pretty high.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Huh?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: $94, that was—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, $94.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: How long did you work on the marionette project with Ralph Chessé?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I worked about three—no, two years.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Two years?

PETER MACCHIARINI: About two years. And I had a valuable experience in there.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Was that a separate project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, it was part of the Theatre Project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, part of the Theatre Project.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What—

PETER MACCHIARINI: I remember, we gave—one of the shows we—it was a variety show, and we gave it in a Chinese theater on Stockton Street, The Greater China. And they would have half of the time devoted to Chinese opera, and then they would bring our marionette show on from the sides. You know, they would cut it in half and bring it together again. And we used to have our own stagehands, but they insisted on—some of these Chinese stagehands insisted on helping us. They'd never seen a marionette stage before, and they were more efficient—the first time they put their hands on it, they knew exactly how it went together. They just put it together, bing, bang, boom. The whole thing would go together and come apart just as fast.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did you actually manipulate the marionettes?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes. Yeah, I'd—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Besides making them?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes, and I had spoken parts and things like that. It was very interesting because it gave chance at emoting, and to construct sets. They were miniature sets so that it didn't take a great deal of space and you can achieve the same effect as a regular theater.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Didn't Chessé have his marionette show at the World's Fair federal building [ph]?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, but that—at that time, I had—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That was—you were off of—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, I had just gotten off of it just before then [inaudible]. I remember one of the marionettes that I made for the Federal Theatre was for the *Cricket on the Hearth*, and it was a cricket about four feet long. And I manipulated the thing from 65 feet up in the fly, way up—they built a special ladder out there with a board on it, had a lineman's belt, and I used to sit up, way up on the work bridge and wait for my—and look down, gee, it was very dramatic. And believe me [they laugh] I was glad for that lineman's belt.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: That's a long way down, 65 feet.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. But I went to work with Benny, with Bufano. I made an application, and I asked Benny if he wanted me on his project, and he said it would be all right. So, I went down on Shotwell, 15th and Shotwell, and we were working on that wall for Washington High School. It was a huge wall there.

[00:15:01]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: 15th and Shotwell?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Shotwell. I can't—was it 16th or 15th? I can't recall, but that was an old, old casting place for plaster of paris. Ornamentation—ornamentals that they did for the World's Fair, and it was quite a place. And it'd gone broke, naturally, during the Depression. It was used for—Benny had one of his shops there. He had them all over the city. [They laugh.]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Was the governor supporting this? I mean—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes—

[Cross talk.]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible] paid for the shop?

PETER MACCHIARINI: This is the—yeah, this was WPA project. And he had a number of things going. He had the *Peace* statue that he has over at the airport. I worked on it a little bit, on there, doing odd jobs on it. We worked on the *Sun Yat-sen*. But my main job with him was working on the wall, which never materialized because they booted Benny out. One day, Benny came to work and there was a big padlock on the door. And it stemmed—basically, it stemmed—it was just another measure of getting rid of WPA. And—but Benny got into a fight with Allen, and he made some very suggestive remarks about he and his office help, which wasn't very flattering to them, and—very complimentary. I won't go into that too much, but let it lie. But the next day, his place was locked, and I was transferred to a home project.

A home project is where they give you the paintbrushes and the canvas or—if you're a painter— or if you're a sculptor, they give you a project to go home. And they gave me a job to make a chess set which—out of wood—carve a chess set. I don't know who has it, but I enjoyed doing it. But it was pretty demoralizing because it let so much up to the individual's own integrity and honesty to put the prescribed hours for which you were getting paid. You see, nobody—there was no check there. If you wanted to get up at nine o'clock you could get up at nine o'clock a.m. And if you wanted to get up at 10 [o'clock]—and it—the whole thing slowly disintegrated from that point, and they would visit you. Your supervisor would visit you, but there was means of knowing when they were coming, you see.

Not that there was any cheating, but the frustration that had set in by this time induced that, whether you wanted to do it or not. I mean, you'd say, what in the hell do you want me to—they're not going to use it anyhow, or—what did they do with the other piece I did for them? And there was that general demoralization. And this went on until the war relieved the situation. Pretty cynical, but—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: How long did you work for Bufano?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I worked for Bufano for about a year and a half.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: About a year and a half?

PETER MACCHIARINI: About a year, I should say. About a year.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What were you doing, making the clay models for the wall?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. Well, they were making this huge wall, a section of this wall up there that—picturing athletics, different athletes in different forms.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Peter, was there some criticism of the content of the subject matter?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah. That was one of the things that—I don't think was very wise for Benny or not, I'm not going to go into it, but I think that, whether this was the main issue or not, those that wanted to embarrass WPA certainly jumped upon it. He had the center of this wall was—it came into a big, big medallion with heads of a variety of international leaders, such as—oh, there was Roosevelt, there was Stalin, and there was Karl Marx, and things like that. And I doubt whether Benny really would ever have bothered to put them in, but he just had them sketched out.

And there was one fellow there who made it his business to—he was a modeler of—

apparently he thought that Benny mistreated him because he didn't give him more to do, or didn't give him more say-so, or—but anyhow, he—the thing leaked out and it's assumed that he had a great deal to do with the leakage of this. But that was incidental to the fact that the WPA was in the progress of being dismantled anyhow, so it's neither here nor there.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Was there any question about the erotic content?

[00:20:03]

PETER MACCHIARINI: No. I can't remember—I can't remember—to the best of my knowledge, I don't think that—in fact, if I—if we looked back on those projects, there were—the artists themselves were apparently steered clear of—to the extent of being completely sterile about it. Because if you look at the wall that was done—marble wall that was done over in Oakland by Stimson [ph]. What was her name? That she put all that marble, and it was more or less the history—if I recall, the history of California, the northern Cali—the—you look at—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Marian Simpson.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. And if you look at—and this was a wonderful job, incidentally. That's a—technically and artistically—I saw it just recently, and I think it's a—I admire it very much. The Oakland city hall. Remember that marvelous thing? And then, of course, there was a big fuss over the Coit Tower things. But you look back on them today and, my god, that's a wonderful job of reporting, aside from—whether it's decorative or not, and to what extent it's decorative. But it certainly was a—showed what was actually happening and what San Francisco looked like, and it was a real chronicle, I thought.

And it's regrettable. I think it's downright tragic that a lot of these works, some very significant works, have been allowed to go into disuse and they have been broken, they've been lost, unaccountable for. I think that a great, big section of Americana has been lost through the neglect of the curators in not taking better care of these things. Of course, certainly, there was a lot of bad things—I mean—by bad, I mean not up to par from an artistic point of view. But then, what enterprise is perfect, completely, in all its details?

And I think that Sargent Johnson's—one of his things that he's done was in the city hall, are in the basement someplace. And it was lost. It was—he saw it once, and then it was just going to pieces. And it was a very attractive piece of work. And now he asked Martin Snipper [ph], who's a curator of the city's wealth in the art—he couldn't account for it. Didn't know where it was. And Sargent—I talked to Sargent and he thinks that it's been dumped. They've done that with a big thing. I presume that many of the things have been preserved. One questions—has a feeling to question that—were the best things preserved? Were the most significant things preserved? We don't know.

It—WPA proved to—in my way of thinking, to prove one thing, aside from the fact that it fed worthy people, it proved that a project like that could be done constructively for the benefit of our community and our society. And it also proves that the artists—it brought the artists in very good perspective in his relationship to the community, that he is wanted and needed. And I think that to let him grow completely, as a wild weed, is good to a point. But there comes a time when he needs succor from the government or from the state of some sort. I don't mean to be completely—believe in handouts, but the—certainly, if there's a handout that was ever made, I think that the contribution that the artist makes to society is one that should be given greater consideration.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What was your actual job with Bufano? What did you do in the studio?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, I did modeling. I mean, there was several of us. There was David Lemon, that I remember, that I worked with. He was quite proficient with modeling. And there was a fellow by the name of Forrest—Forrest Wilson, his name. Forrest Wilson. I don't know what has happened to him. There was Jan Sabre, I see him once in a while.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Was he on that project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. He was on there. And there was a number of people. And we did modeling, and David would block it out for us. And then we would follow and work on different sections of it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Were you working full scale?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. This was full scale. We had—I remember that the wall was about nine feet high—the wall was nine feet high. And it was supposed to have been in four sections of 180 feet total.

[00:25:08]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: We were making in full. We never got beyond the first section. It was torn down and Sargent Johnson was put in his place. And that's where the break between Sargent Johnson and Bufano occurred. I mean, I don't know what the details were, but Mr. Bufano— Benny to you [laughs]—was pretty incensed over it, and they have never been friends since. He's never spoken to Sargent since. I don't know what the circumstances were, I don't know who was right or wrong. I think it's regrettable that these two guys had to be enemies. And that—of course, in the interim there, that's when I started making jewelry about 19—when I—right the theater deal where I could carve these things, that's when I started in this, about—oh, I think it was about 1936. About '36. Middle—beginning of '36. '35 and '36. And I started making jewelry, actually in '38, just before I went off the Project, started doing it. I wasn't selling it very much, but I used to work at it. And I knew nothing about soldering or anything of that sort.

And I got a hold of a book on modern jewelry. I read something about the Bauhaus, and I think I saw some pictures of the work they were doing. And that's what—they first inspired me to go in that direction, rather than to follow in the old, traditional method of the Academy where I'd been taught. So I went in that direction. And later on, I saw some of Moholy-Nagy's work and I saw Margaret De Patta's work, who had preceded me as a jeweler by some five years. And she went into the direction of Bauhaus and I was further inspired by her work.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did you do any metal work when you were with Bufano?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, not as such. I was doing mainly modeling, clay modeling. Mostly clay modeling. And then, I finished out—when I left Bufano, I went to—before going and working at home, I worked over out on Potrero Street with—Johnny Magnani had the [inaudible] kiln. See, they put me there, modeling. When they—when Bufano was closed out, they put me in this Johnny Magnani's project over there. And there, I was—oh, I did—I just did things small scale that was fired. I don't know where they are now.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Of your own designs?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. Strictly of my own design.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Were there many potters out there working with him?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No. No, there weren't. There was only Bernice [ph]—a woman by the name of Bernice [ph]. And I think most of the—I don't think there was many potters working at all in those days. There were very few potters, to my recollection. I don't think they had a pottery project other than that. And it was set up, mainly, for firing of sculpture, small piece sculpture. Um—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Was Magnani doing sculpture, too?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, he was just—no, Magnani was a mold maker by trade, by profession. In fact, he was—one time, he was president of the mold makers' union. But he used to fire—he was an expert technician. He could build kilns. He knew all about the mechanical part of building these kilns, and he knew a great deal about clays at that time. And he—I rather imagine he knew something about glazes. I don't know how much he knew, but he certainly knew more than any of his contemporaries. So, that certainly qualified to be head of that project. And he later—later, Johnny went to State and taught—set up their whole kiln business there, their whole firing shop, ceramic shop.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: San Francisco State College, you mean?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: But again, practically of these people that were on WPA—I'm speaking for the art—they all went out an made a big name for themselves. Not all of them, but a great—you know, to a certain extent, they made a niche for themselves in art, contemporary [inaudible], and they their contribution. So, this business of belittling a WPA worker as nothing but a boondoggler is really quite a falsehood. Because after all, these people that were boondogglers got jobs in shipyards that built the ships that won the war. So, I mean, they couldn't have been so bad, I would say.

[00:30:08]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What kind of sculpture were you doing when you were working with Magnani?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, one of the things that—I used to like to make bas-reliefs of animals. And one of the things is that cat that I have at home, you know, I made that. I got a copy of it at home. I used to like to make animals. Bas-relief animals.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Would you make a mold and then cast more than one copy?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. And then, they would be made into—would be fired.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: And you were allowed to keep a copy yourself?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Not really.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh. [Laughs.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: Not really. I just inherited this. I don't know, they were about to throw it out, and I asked them for it, and they said, You can have it. I don't know what right they had to give it to me, but I wasn't going to question it. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: You don't know whatever happened to the pieces that you made? You don't know what they were used for?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I don't. No. I remember, I made about 15 or 20 bas-reliefs.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, that many?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. Not big, but—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: That's quite a bit of work, though.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, they were about 18 by—14 by 18, about—generally about that size. I used to thumb through magazines, and I like to look through the National Geographic magazine, [inaudible] animals, fish, and things of that sort. I used to get my—and I used to stylize them. They were all stylized. So, whether they were realistic or not didn't bother me too much. But they were—they've been lost. They've been sent some place or dumped. Nobody knows where they are.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Did you work at Aquatic Park [inaudible]?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I didn't. Sargent Johnson did. He did the sandstone carving on the —remember, on the outside? Yes, that—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Sandstone or slate?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Slate? Yeah, yeah, slate. And Hilaire Hiler was head of that project, if I remember.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Right.

PETER MACCHIARINI: And Dick Ayer was one of the people working with him, and who was the other fellow? There was a number of people that—but Dick Ayer stands out more prominently in my mind. And he—II really don't know who else was on that project. But they seemed to—actually, they all seemed to enjoy it, and they did a wonderful job.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yes, that was the impression I got from everybody who—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —was part of it. Surely [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Well, Hilaire knew—apparently knew something about color, because—I don't mean the head of the museum, I mean C-O-L-O-R. [They laugh.] Because he handled things pretty well, I thought.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Oh, he was quite a theoretician, [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, he was. He wrote a book, as I recall. So, they had to really—to attack WPA, they just had to go out and really get the worst, because there was so much good that they—could be spoken of, out of their way. They attacked the whole Project as being socialistic which was quite ridiculous.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: I've heard complaints from some of the sculptors who were on the San Francisco Project to the effect that it was very difficult for them to get projects of their own to work on. They felt that the scene was dominated by men like Bufano and Johnson and that their only chance was to work as assistants, and there was a great deal of reluctance on the part of the authorities to allow them to develop individually. Do you think this was true? Did you ever—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, I thought that that was—that criticism was quite justifiable. I think that if we wanted to say that Bufano was the most capable, and therefore, he should have been given all this material and all this—all these facilities—if you want to accept that premise then there is some justification. But if you want to give competent—all competent artists their due, well, then, I think this criticism was justifiable.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Were you ever approached, yourself, to do any designs or any project of your own on the sculpture department?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, no, I wasn't ever, until the very end when the thing was falling apart, and they'd just as soon get rid of me. You know, they had no place to keep me. That's how I felt. I mean, that, if there was a big job to do, like the one they did on the state building, maybe that—probably, it was all right. You have to have a leader to do it. But that doesn't gainsay that he should forever be—he should forever work for the same person.

[00:35:03]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: That was one of the biggest beefs with Bufano. And he had—Bufano had—certainly had the inside track to all of the material. He—if there was plaster to be had, he had the first plaster. If there was people to work, he would get first—and he had it from the top. Joe Danysh, that's where he got it. Joe Danysh was his—Bufano was Joe Danysh's boy, so to speak. And Sargent Johnson had that prerogative, too, but he certainly didn't get it from Joe Danysh. He got it from Allen. Allen, who was the actual head of the Project. And who else was helping Allen? The fellow at the museum now, what's his name? Not Humphreys. No, he wasn't—no, not Humphreys. The fellow teaching at school, at the Schaeffer School—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, Gaskin. Wait. Bill Gaskin.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Gaskin, yes. He was in the office with Allen on Potrero, but he shortly thereafter resigned. He resigned his job. I don't know why. But that's where he—Sargent got it from Allen. He used to get his help from Allen. I know that, in fact, that they used—actually were the antagonists. They used—they played one against the other.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: That's how they split the Project. And I think that, as far as I'm concerned, Allen is more to be remembered for his service in dismantling WPA than his building it up. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: But you didn't have any trouble with Bufano, yourself when you worked with him, [inaudible]—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, I wasn't—first of all, let's remember, I wasn't—I wasn't very demanding because I felt that I didn't have any particular right to be demanding. I was just a young fellow trying to get on, and I was very grateful to Bufano for having me on his project. I thought the experience that I got from him proved it. And so, I wasn't interested in a project of my own, particularly, I was willing to work with somebody who I felt was competent.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: The—of course, I know Berle Winnick [ph] had a feeling that—and she got her project, too, but she—to do these metallic Madonnas, very charming.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Metallic what?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Madonnas. Mother and child.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Hammer them out and—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What was her name again?

PETER MACCHIARINI: [Inaudible.] Don't ask me to spell it. [Mary Fuller McChesney laughs.] Sounds like something out of Chaucer England or something. [Laughs.] And she subsequently married that UC art—painter, professor. I don't know who, I can't remember.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Sculptor?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, he was a painter. That—there was no jewelry project in those days. I suppose though that if had a depression now, I'd probably make a request to join a jewelry project. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: But there—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Probably, I would have an argument in my favor for having a project of my own. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: You have a lot of experience with the WPA [inaudible] for seven years.

PETER MACCHIARINI: This—are these facts going to be sifted? Or are they going to be placed in juxtaposition, or are they—it's just a library of recollections of people that worked on the Project? Is that—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Yes, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: And whoever does the final research and wants to sift it out will have to go through and listen to them all.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, brother.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: I was going to ask you about Michael Chepourkoff. Was he on the Project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, he was on the Project. And he was—he had a whole project. He used to make these little animals. He may have worked with somebody, too, but I knew him when he did these animals out of flat sheet metal. And he used to curve them very economically and get the greatest amount of expression for the work and everything involved. And his animals were—for a while, they were quite sought after, weren't they, Bob?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yes. You know, I thought, for a long time, that it was Dick Ayer that did that thing out in the patio [ph] or whatever you call it—federal building. But it was Mike. He did a big skier—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible] was done in bronze—big bronze.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Remember that at the state fair, that big skier?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: At the World's Fair, not the state fair.

[00:40:02]

PETER MACCHIARINI: Or at the World's Fair, I got state fair on the brain.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That was my Mike [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: That was his first big job.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That was a big thing.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: And he never did anything larger, I'm sure.

PETER MACCHIARINI: No.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Most of his stuff was small animals cut out of tin cans. He did some marvelous things, just take an old tin can, you know, cut out these terrific animals.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: I remember seeing them, they were quite nice, really.

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did you do any work at the Golden Gate Exposition, the World's Fair?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I didn't. I was on the Project when they—the bids went out, and I don't even recall what the method was of giving out these jobs for the state fair. I know that they were quickly taken up by local artists. I know the statuary around the fountains. And so, I never had a crack at it. I wasn't around where the possibility of getting a job like that—I wasn't around there anywhere. So, everyone else got the jobs. My first recollection of seeing them at the Fair.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: It must have been done in, sort of, a combination of way, I've gathered, because there were—some of that work was done on WPA, and some of it was done privately.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: So, people like Bob Howard, for example, did work at the Fair.

PETER MACCHIARINI: He did the dolphins?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: It was done privately. Yes. And then, Sargent did some sculpture that was done on WPA—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: —for the Fair.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, I think that they had a provision there where you could—you see, when they gave you your severance when you were—they called it—they gave you the pink slip. You remember the pink slip?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yes.

PETER MACCHIARINI: That means that you were off the job, that you didn't have a job anymore. I think that there was—in order to encourage private enterprise, that they—you

could relinquish your pay for a given time without getting a slip. Or they would make it so that they would give you the pink slip and automatically you had—you see, in order to get back on you had to reapply for relief. You couldn't go—you couldn't get a job without first going on relief.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: And I think the relief slip was a yellow slip. And you know who would know, Charles Braque [ph] would know. He used to be—he was one of the heads of—he was on the marionette project, and he did a great deal of the hiring, and he did a great deal of the clerical work.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Charlie Braque [ph]?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Charles Braque [ph], yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Poet?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, no, this is George Braque's [ph] brother.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Oh, this—well, George is a poet.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Is he the poet? Yes. Charles Braque [ph] is the younger of the two brothers. And he—Charles Baraque [ph] was on the WPA and he did—he took the part of Tom Brown, is that who it is? The guy that was hanged?

UNDISTINGUISABLE SPEAKER: [Inaudible.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: John Brown. Yeah, Tom Brown. School days. [They laugh.]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: You're thinking about Tom Jones. [They laugh.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: Something like that. But he was—he did that part and, you know, I'm not—can't give a reflection of the man, but you know, he looked more like the part than he acted. His acting was absolutely unconvincing as could be. But he looked just like it. I presume—he looked just like Brown did. [They laugh.] But when he got on the stage, he just couldn't pull it across. [They laugh.] What a tragedy.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Did you ever see Percy Freer act?

PETER MACCHIARINI: He—no. He was—he's dead, you know.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yes.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. No, I've never seen him act. Oh, I've seen him rehearse. I've never—yes—we were in *Bury the Dead* together. Yeah. He's—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That was The Green Street Theater.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. The Green Street. That had nothing—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That doesn't have anything—

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, nothing to do with WPA at all. No. I don't know. Talking about a little levity here. I mean, Percy was the funniest guy you ever saw. I mean, during the Depression, he'd go out and get a job where nobody else could succeed ever. You'd see a big line standing in front of a theater, you know, or a big line in front of a place, and Percy was at the very end of it. He'd get the job and the other ones wouldn't. [They laugh.] And I says—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: These were acting jobs.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah—well, no, whatever they was. And I says—he says—I said Percy, you can't sing. You know—[They laugh.] So one day, he got a job—he went down to get a job as a—pennant factory. They made pennants. Did I ever tell you that story?

[00:45:02]

So same usual routine. There was a bunch of people, and he gets the job. So, he goes to work the next day and I'm up at the boarding house, you know, sitting on a sofa there and here, one o'clock here, hands full of paint, you know, and dye, and walks in. And I said, What happened, Percy? Well, he says, I got canned. [They laugh.] What happened? Oh, he says, I got—we were making American flags and I got my colors mixed up. [They laugh.] And I said, Well, why did you apply for the job in the first place? You don't know anything about making pennants. He says, Well, I know, but—I says, you know you'd get fired. He says, Yeah, but there's a state law that says that if you go to work for somebody, he's got to pay you for a full eight-hours work. In eight hours, that's a dollar 1 an hour, well that's eight dollars and that'll keep me going for a week. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: He was on the Theatre Project for a while, wasn't he? This man, Percy Freer?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, he never—I don't know why, but he never—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible] on it, too?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, he was in the Art Project, and he was teaching. He was teaching art.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, he was on the Art Project?

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: [Inaudible.] [Laughs.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, I thought he was an actor [laughs]. I guess he was everything. [They laugh.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, Percy was never on WPA.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: He was on the Art Project. He came over and he was with Volz—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —on the Volz job there, on Treasure Island.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, he was?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, Volz. I saw Volz recently.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: He was up there.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Was he? Herman, yeah. He's pretty upset now because his work is not accepted anywhere. You know, he goes to Europe, he thinks well—he thinks that going to Europe is going to make him—accept his work. When he found—he found that when he went to Europe, the Americans had been ahead of him. [They laugh.] So, [inaudible] accepted, didn't work. Or—[inaudible] facsimile.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: There were also a few Europeans that were ahead of him [laughs]—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, he was really cut up to realize that the world had suddenly changed. I mean, the people were not doing the same stuff that he was doing before he quit painting. And I had—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: He hasn't painted for 20 years.

PETER MACCHIARINI: And he figured that he could be starting where he left off. And he received the shock of his life.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: It's terrible. But it's so naïve of him to think that.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Hard to believe that a man of his age and maturity would believe that you can stop for 20 years and then suddenly go back—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: —and become an international success overnight.

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: [Laughs.] Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did you ever have any trouble getting on relief? You were talking about the pink slip when you were removed from a job. Did you ever have difficulty getting back on relief?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I didn't. I don't recall that I had much of a—it was—the only difficulty was that the endless hours of waiting, of sitting on a bench for three hours waiting to be heard. And then they would say, Well, now, we're shutting down. We're going out to lunch. Or come back tomorrow. Or this routine. This was typical of trying to get on. But the act of getting on, I was certainly eligible. I didn't have a job. [They laugh.] That qualified me. And yeah, the endless—and they had WPA stations all over San Francisco. They had one at 1010 Gough, they had one over at Potrero, they had—and they used to send you from one—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Relief offices.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Relief offices.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: They had one on—

PETER MACCHIARINI: 1010 Gough—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —Montgomery Street.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. And they used to, for some mysterious reason, to send you from one place to the other until you finally got—and when you got that, oh boy, you felt like, you know, that you were born again or something. Here, we eat.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Probably they were trying to find another job for you.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, well.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Trying to get you off.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, try to discourage that.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: I remember, they used to have the social visitors, and boy, they used to take their job seriously. They used to—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: You mean the social workers?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. They were really something. They—I remember, they went into the one [inaudible] house and they said, Well, do you have too many children? Or something like that.

[They laugh.] They'd say, Do you really need relief? Let's see your furniture. Look around, they'd go and lift up the blanket to see if your mattress was new or whatever it was. That's a fact. They used to—they weren't called—they were called snoopers, they used to call them. [They laugh.]

And then, of course, at that period when we had the unemployment council in the Fillmore section, we went—we used to—they used to throw out these families, throw them out in the street. So, we used to get together and put them back in. Haul the furniture back in. [They laugh.] And—

[00:50:035]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible] sheriff, [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. So, then, the PG&E would come by and turn off the gas and electrics. And they would put a very elegant sign on there with one of those wires with a seal, you know, and it says, "Turned off by the PG&E." And we used to tear it off and turn it on, and then we'd put a big sign, "Turned on by the unemployment council of the Fillmore

section." [They laugh.]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Was the Fillmore section at the time predominantly Negro?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh no. There were no Negros there at all.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: No?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No. There were Jews. All the Jews. 90 percent Jews in that area. Oh boy, we used to go up when we were hungry, you know, and no food. This was when I was still young. And those—we used to go—you could go any time and ask them for some stale donuts or something like that. Langendorf's, you could get bread. They would help you, and—but it was a god damned annoying thing to—I mean, the feeling you have to go out and beg for the stuff the country was teeming with. Here you read where they were dumping oranges over the—huge truckloads of—carloads of oranges over the side, no market. Babies dying from rickets. No market, so they destroy the oranges.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Pour creosote over them, burn them.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Apples, oranges, all the fruits.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: You mentioned being active in the unemployment councils. Were you a member of any of the artist union groups?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Not at that time. There were no artists' unions around, to my knowledge. The only place where they had—Joe Murphy [ph], head of the hod carriers, used to be at that place on Fillmore. He used to put on plays. They put Elmer Rice's machine—what is it—*The Adding Machine*, plays like that. But there were no artists around, to my knowledge. They were all—the only artists were in North Beach. You know, they were in Monkey Block.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: There was an artists' union.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Huh?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: There was an artists' union.

PETER MACCHIARINI: There was, in the early '30s?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Oh, in the early '30s—

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I'm talking—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: You mean before—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: No, I was talking about during the Project days.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah, yeah. I was a member of it. Yeah. But then—see, one of the gimmicks that they had on the Project, they organized—we demanded to be part of the federal employees' union. You remember? We became—in other words, we were eligible, just like the postal carrier, or anybody that was drawing money—their pay from the federal government.

UNDISTINGUISABLE SPEAKER: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: I mean, that sort of took a little bit of the tarnish off of the WPA, we felt like we were federal workers. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What happened with this demand?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Huh?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What happened—

PETER MACCHIARINI: It was granted, but it was sort of a hollow victory. It never amounted to anything, I mean, the fact that you had a little brown button, you know, it just gave us the opportunity to pay a few dues, which we could ill afford. [They laugh.] But other than that, I suppose that the legitimate federal employees looked askance at us. I don't know, I never got close to one. [They laugh.] But I'm sure they mustn't appreciate the fact that we were part of their organization.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Do you remember the Artist Writers' Union?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes. Pete Fry [ph] was on it.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: And then that became the Artists' Union.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes. Pete Fry [ph] was on it. I remember, he—I don't remember him very well. And there was Gordon Williams [ph], and there was—oh, and they did a wonderful job, and I think their work is still—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Rexroth was in it.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. I think that their—that was wonderful what they did. You know what—how—what their project was. They wrote the history of the people of San Francisco.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: The Writers' Project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yeah.

PETER MACCHIARINI: They took—and I think this is comparable, this, what you're doing right now with your recorder is comparable to what the writers did on the Project—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: —because they have a whole—they have a survey of all of northern California.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: You mean the writers' guides? Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Those are fine books.

PETER MACCHIARINI: I've never seen them. I'd like to see them sometime.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: They have them in most of the public libraries.

PETER MACCHIARINI: They have?

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: I'll look next.

PETER MACCHIARINI: I mean, that's a service.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, definitely. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Oh, it's the greatest thing that's ever been put out in that respect [inaudible]—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Look under Federal Art Project, FAP. Because I looked under WPA and I couldn't locate them for a while. They have two at the Petaluma Library on Northern California, and one for San Francisco. But they're very good jobs.

[00:55:00]

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: They should really be brought up to date.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Speaking of the Artists' Union, do you remember a demonstration, maybe two demonstrations they had? Protesting cuts and that sort of thing?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes. I mean—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Projects.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah. There was pandemonium in the Federal Theatre. Remember that? They picketed the Federal Theatre one time?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Who picketed?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, the union. I think the—our group did. I'm pretty sure, if I recall, it was the Alcazar. We were stationed at—you see, the Federal Theatre was stationed at 960 Bush, at the Columbia Theater, and the Curran. At the Curran, and the Columbia, and they quit the Columbia Theater, and then we went and consolidated in the Alcazar. And I think that that's when we had—the battle had started at the Columbia, and then they were brought up to the Alcazar, yeah. And there was—I mean, we had to constantly be fighting against being fired or having our—every time—every so often, you know, where things would come for renewal in Congress or wherever it is, we had to put on a tremendous drive to keep us from having our projects lopped off from under us. And I can remember one campaign, presidential campaign, Hopkins. What's his name? Harry Hopkins.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yes.

PETER MACCHIARINI: He came to the theater and he says, "Remember I will not let you down." [Inaudible]—[They laugh.] Sure enough, the January after the elections, why, it was renewed. And—but there were battles all the time. And there was—and the thing was that there was a right and a left element in there, and a lot of times, the issues got lost between the so-called reactionaries and the so-called progressives. You know, I mean—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Excuse me, real quick. Within the Theatre Project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Quite often the issues got lost. But more often than not, everybody—when their paycheck was threatened, then they all united on having it preserved.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Well, there was one demonstration I remember. I can think that all of the Project members came out. Artists, and—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —the writers, and the theater, and everybody. There was a big demonstration. We paraded—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: I don't know where that was we paraded, I just remember marching—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Well, I remember, there was two—I mean, at this huge meeting, I think that it was handled rather badly by Pete Fry [ph], with the question of striking. I think the word striking should have never been used. I think that to strike put us in a very compromising position.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible.] You could not strike against the government.

PETER MACCHIARINI: I think—against the government. That's what—that was one of the opposition—which, they had a point, that you couldn't—well, why call it a strike? It's a matter of semantics there anyhow, this is—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Their reasoning was you couldn't strike against the government because you were the government?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, that's right. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Right. That's true. It's a semantic argument. You could have had a demonstration against the government, or against yourselves, I guess.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, no, there's a legal term—there's a legal provision that you can't actually go on strike against the government. But that's a moot question too, because you

can say, well, I'll stop working. I'm on strike. Okay, you lose your job. Well, you lose your job. So, you're fired. But you strike first. I mean, the matter of the mechanics of it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Right, mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, there are a lot of other very vivid recollections I have of the Project. I—but mainly, I enjoyed the Theatre Project because I was on it the longest. And my experiences with the theater—I don't claim to be knowledgeable about the theater, but it certainly gave me an insight on the theater. And the marionettes, where I learned, where I carved, and worked with the stage settings. And dealt with the public—the audience, got a reaction from the audience. I used to—we used to put on these plays, and I can remember that sometimes, we used to have lines where we could always depend for a reaction from the audience. And some nights, those lines wouldn't produce anything.

[They laugh.] Just nothing. And you wonder what—those people are stupid out there, they're not laughing. Well, what's the matter with them? What did—we must have done something to them or something. You get the funniest feeling. [Robert McChesney laughs.]

[01:00:13]

And then, all of a sudden, the whole house would come down at something that was supposed to be absolutely serious. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: I don't know what that means about your ability on the Theater Project. [They laugh.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: [Inaudible]. They laughed, so we considered that a bonus. I mean, they laughed, so they can't be all dead, you know. [They laugh.] And one other thing with the marionettes. We used to—after the play was over, we used to have the people come up backstage and look at the marionettes, see. And many times—this happened time and time again—our marionettes were 24 to 28 inches high, pretty good sized, as far as marionettes go—and these—some of these people would look at the marionettes very good, you know, very closely, and examine them. And then before going off, they'd go up to Ralph and say, "Mr. Chessé, where are the real ones." [They laugh.]

And he said, "What do you mean, the real ones?" You know, "The ones you used in the play tonight." And it was just, "These are the ones." "But they look so big. These are little." [They laugh.] He says, "These are the real ones." So, we—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Pete, did you know Luke Gibney very well?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, I knew him very well. Very well.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Do you remember when he went on the Federal Art Project?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I think he went there about the same time that we all did. I don't think that he did much of any campaigning for WPA on one thing or another like that. He was a seaman. He came to this country from Ireland. And his profession was that of a seaman. I don't think he did too much of it, but—and I think he went on—and I—but I don't think he was as destitute. Well, he was poor and didn't have anything to eat, let's put it that way, but he always could get a meal here or there, I mean, he wasn't like many of the people who just didn't—either because they were timid or because they didn't know, or the couldn't—they were actually—many of them went hungry at times. I don't think Luke ever starved. He was a very well-liked person. I mean, his—he was a jovial type of a person. Not without his serious faults, I might add. But I don't think that he stayed off of the Project any longer than he could. And he was close associate—he was very good friend of—I don't know whether he was a good friend, but he was—he knew Ralph Stackpole and knew that bunch of artists that lived in that group there, you know, right off of Hotaling Place in the Montgomery Block. And he belonged to that Bohemian group.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Was he—did he start out on the Project on the easel section of it?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, no, he—I think—no, he went to work with somebody. He was working with somebody. I can't recall—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Did he work with Hiler?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, I think he did.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: He knew Hiler quite well.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yes, I think he worked with Hiler. I'm not too—but at that time, Luke was not really a painter. I mean, he had not—he had—he was painting. But I remember buying the first painting that he ever sold, believe it or not—

[END OF TRACK AAA_macchi_242_m.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: —ask me questions because the well runneth dry. [Virginia Macchiarini laughs.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: This is side two of the taped interview with Peter Macchiarini. We were just talking about Luke Gibney, Pete, and you were saying that you were—bought one of his first paintings.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, I bought the little—the clown head he had, and I paid $25 for it. Luke, at that time, was doing little miniature sculptures, too, you know, he used to fool around with little—that time. But he developed a technique that was very much his own, and that was quite a thing in those days, because everybody was—all the painters that I knew of was trying to look like there were just come from Paris or something. There were emulating this or that. And he worked out this—these varnish finishes, very lacquered effect look. And he had a fascination for people's—women's eyes, particularly, and he used to emphasize the eyes. And I wouldn't want to—at this juncture, to confuse his propensity for doing that with another one who does the same kind of stressing, and that's Keane [ph]. I mean, his—the paintings don't at all look like Luke Gibney's.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: No, there's a great [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: But Luke—yeah—but Luke used to—he was definitely fascinated by eyes. And the individual portrait revolved and evolved from that aspect. He lived down there with—he occupied—a man by the name of [William] Gerstle, at that time, lived—had a studio down at—in that place, and he used to have free use of it in exchange for janitorial services to Mr. [Gerstle] and cleaning it up, keeping it. It was a very wonderful studio if I remember correctly. Isn't—isn't that where [Melvin] Belli [the lawyer –Ed.] is now? It was in that group of buildings.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: I don't know which one there.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, it was one of those.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Victor Arnautoff has a big studio—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —down the street.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah, Victor Arnautoff, too. And—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Ted Gregory was down there.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Stackpole had a place right back of the [Black] Cat [a bar –Ed.].

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Was this in the Montgomery Block?

PETER MACCHIARINI: That was—no—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: No.

PETER MACCHIARINI: That was next to it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Next block?

PETER MACCHIARINI: It was between Jackson and Washington.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: And Hotaling Place. That's where—you could go to Stackpole's studio from Montgomery Street, you know, through the—you have to go through the whole hallway. But you also could—you had access in back. That's where he brought in his stone and his work.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: From the back.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: He had an alley there.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. And who else? Was Ruth—Ruth Cravath had a studio there? Ruth Cravath, didn't she?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: She either had a studio there or she shared Stackpole stoneyard [inaudible].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, she—well, at least she had one after Stackpole left. I think she took his studio over, you know?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: But getting back to Luke. He was pretty hard person to understand. I mean, emotionally, I could never—I never really got too close to him. I knew him very well. I could never depend on him for getting the same kind of reaction twice. He—his main problem was his drinking. And I don't know what it stemmed from, but I understand that's—towards the end there, when he died about four years ago, he was drinking quite a bit. His paintings were not—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: He was painting quite a bit, or drinking—

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, he was drinking.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, because he'd gone on the wagon, remember?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: He'd gone on and off pretty periodically.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Yeah. He was on the WPA Project, though, in San Francisco, working with Hiler, was it? Hilaire Hiler?

PETER MACCHIARINI: I can't recall who—

[Cross talk.]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: I think he was, Hiler.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, he worked with Hiler, yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did he work at Treasure Island with Herman Volz?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Then he came over, I think off of Hiler's job and worked with Volz. Because I know he was on the job when I was there.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Anyhow, I mean, very sad epilogue to his demise. His life—the way he died. He died alone in his room, and they didn't find him for two or three days. And some little jerk of a newspaper reporter wrote his—wrote it up, and referred to him as some screwball character, or words to that effect, to which I took offense.

[00:05:03]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yeah, [inaudible.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: And I wrote him a letter and they—wrote the paper a letter. I says irrespective of what—you know, this man painted during the '30s and he was part of our era, and he made a certain contribution, and I think he deserves a little more consideration shown by your reporter. And they refused to publish the letter, see. So, I called up the editor, and I balled the hell out of him. [They laugh.] The next day, it came out. [They laugh.] This is in view of the fact that I have had, as I stated, differences with Luke.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Oh, I think everybody who knew him—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: —had differences with him. As you say, he was a very mercurial, is that the word?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Very changeable personality. One time you'd see him he'd be perfectly gay and marvelous. The next time, he'd be in this black Irish gloom and—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Come out with this stuff, you couldn't believe it was the same person. [They laugh.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: I remember one time I was in the Black Cat. And he came into the Black Cat and he was half-swacked, and he practically had tears in his eyes. And he says, You know, I was up at—at that time, it was Louie's up on Broadway. Remember the restaurant?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yeah.

PETER MACCHIARINI: He says, You know, I was up there, and you know, this so-and-so—and so-and-so is referring to Louie. He says, You know what he did? He jumped over the counter, and he punched me right here. See, look, he gave me—[Mary Fuller McChesney laughs.] And I says, well, what did he do that for? Oh, he says, He didn't like something that I said. And I said, What did you say? And I said, Well [inaudible]—and he just went off with all these [dirty words –Ed.]. I said, Well, gee, you're lucky you're alive. [They laugh.] I was in a very foul mood that day, I remember. I felt like saying, well, isn't the other cheek a little jealous? And let him have it [laughs] on the other side. [They laugh.] But it was—he pulled out of it. He could use the King's English to a great personal disadvantage upon occasion. And one time, he was invited to a party out in Marin County someplace, and they made him walk home. They kicked him out. It was a great, big farm. You know, it was about three miles from a main road [laughs]. And they drove him out and they dumped him. Said, Don't you ever come back again. [They laugh.] He'd get half-drunk and he'd start, you know, using his middle English, and—to his guests. And people who knew him, well, you know, they—

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: [Inaudible.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Well, it's part of Luke.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. They didn't accept it, but that was Luke. But when he'd go out—he'd get in trouble when he'd go out where people didn't know him. [Virginia Macchiarini laughs.]

Well, anyhow, I can talk—I can tell you about this clown painting. He painted others in that same vein, but all a little bit different. So, the first one that I bought was, by far, in my estimation, the best of the clown series. And I was short of money one time and Henri Lenoir came up [inaudible] where I was living, and he wanted to buy it. He wanted to buy the painting. And my door was always open up there. I says, Well, I might as well sell it, because if I don't sell it to him, he's probably going to go home and steal it. Anyhow—[Robert McChesney laughs.]Well, I got $50 for it. You know, he gave me $50. And he—I—he still has it. I think he still has the painting. He sold a lot—he was one of the few people that ever bought—collected his work.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Well, Luke—I mean, Lenoir tried to—he was very unscrupulous about

getting a hold—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Of Luke's stuff after died.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: You remember Sweetwine [ph]? Alan [ph] Sweetwine [ph]?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Al had several. You know, and Luke went to no end—went to his wife, and everything else, to get those paintings back. Al and his wife were separated and—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Well, you know, right after I wrote this letter—I mean, right after *the Chronicle* published this letter, I got numerous telephone calls from people. And they were very interested in my position, and I couldn't understand why, particularly, since they themselves had not written in. You know, if they felt that strongly, they—including Count Marco. And it dawned on me after a while that the reason that they were interested in this, they wanted to make a cause célèbre of some sort, so the investment that they had made in buying one or two of his paintings would increase. It's very selfish. I mean, here, the whole time, they were pretending to be so altruistic, and it wasn't really altruism at all, it was just—they just wanted to raise the stock in their investment.

[00:10:17]

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: It's—Percy Freer and Luke were very close friends. And they died in almost identical ways, you know.

PETER MACCHIARINI: No. No, Percy—you know, Percy was a very clever person. He was very well-read, and there was more to him than met the eye. I mean, he had a congenital heart condition that nobody knew about.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Percy did?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. He—when they operated on—I know because—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Oh, he was in the hospital?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. He died as a result of a mild heart attack followed by an exploratory coronary operation. He died about five days after the operation was performed. And Percy had no kith and kin here, so he gave me—so, the doctors called me up and they talked to me about this operation. I said, I cannot advise you one way or the other. I know Percy very well. And if you feel that this operation is imperative, I says, I cannot give you my blessing, but I take it that you know what you are doing. In other words, I couldn't stop them. So—and they said that his condition was terminal, actually, unless they could do something about it. And they called me after the operation and they informed me that his condition was—the operation was not beneficial, could do nothing.

But I remember, we used to be in plays. You asked me if I—yeah, I remember, he used to be in plays, and rehearse, and then the night, or two days before the play, he would just come down with tremendous attack of asthma. And the way it was explained to me is that it wasn't really the asthma that—it was just the other way around. His heart condition did not supply his body with sufficient amount of oxygen. Sometimes he used to be slate gray. Remember sometimes, his complexion used to be? He had a very—and he suffered from asthma all his life. He would get these asthmatic attacks that were fantastic. They were engendered by excitement, and it reacts on his heart, and his heart would react on his blood circulation. His body did not get sufficient amount of oxygen. He used to slate gray.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Getting back to Luke. You know, Luke went over—I assume, again, that he left directly from Hiler's and went over to Volz [inaudible]. And he worked there, well, the first year on that job. I don't—he didn't go back the second year when they opened up [inaudible] went back and repainted that whole job, Luke wasn't there. I wonder what he was doing in the meantime. Do you have any idea what he did when he went off the Volz mural [ph]?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I don't. I have no idea what he was doing at all. My first recollection after the—not the WPA, but the World's Fair and Treasure Island—well, Luke Gibney started working for Henri [Benoir]. He started working in the bar. He did—I don't think he did any war work; do you know?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Maybe he went off the Project right after the Volz job [ph].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. And I don't recall what he did there. But he didn't—the—he used to paint and sell his work. I don't think he sold a lot, but I think it—he sold enough to keep him from starving. I think that's what he did. And I don't remember what he did during World War II. I just—I—he used to paint. As far as I'm concerned, he used to paint and sell his stuff. But I couldn't swear to it. And then, the next thing was that when Henri opened up the bar up on Adler Place—you know, what is now known as 12 Adler—Henri [sic] [Luke] worked for him on and off, and then when he went across the street to the Vesuvio, he worked with him practically constantly.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Another person about this time that is no longer around to interview is Tom Hayes. Did you know him very well?

[00:15:08]

PETER MACCHIARINI: You know, I worked for a while in the WPA down on that furniture store, you know, down on Columbus?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yeah, the pickle factory.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible] it's now—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: —a furniture store. It used to be—

PETER MACCHIARINI: It was a pickle factory. And I met Tom Hayes for the—I had—I was sent down there to do some work—to help Sargent Johnson or somebody, I don't recollect. I worked there for about two, three days and Tom Hayes had—was in that building working for the WPA, and I remember he was taken—very much taken with Indian tapestry. And he had a book on these tapestries, I don't know if you recollect—have any. And he used to sit there by the hours and just drool over these tapestries, pictures of these tapestries. And he was very—he was very disenchanted with his experience with—he went to Spain, and he was extremely unhappy with his experiences there and the disillusionment.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: He'd gone to fight in the civil war in Spain?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah, he went to fight for the loyalists. And he wasn't at all hesitant to tell you how he felt about it.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Well, it was a big mistake in the first place, recruiting him. Dr. Eloesser was responsible for that.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: He's not the only one. [Inaudible] a lot of these other—

PETER MACCHIARINI: They tried to do—they tried—they made a number of efforts to get me to go. I politely said no. I have—they have all—the loyalists have all my sympathy, but I just couldn't see going into another fray like the waterfront, where I got socked over the head [San Francisco general strike – 1934 –Ed.]. [They laugh.] I mean, I just—I felt that I wasn't the military type. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: [Inaudible.]

PETER MACCHIARINI: But he was—I don't know who recruited him or anything, but anyhow, had I gone there, I certainly wouldn't have blamed anybody anymore than I blame anybody for what I did by omission or commission, I was an adult, and I knew exactly what I was doing. But I certainly—I think I did—made the right choice in not going.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: The person we should have asked about, I guess, Tom Hayes was Gaethke.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Were they good friends?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: I think Tom and Gaethke worked on a mural together.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, that's Vera Allison's husband?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Yes, George Gaethke.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. Well, she's a jeweler. She was a painter at that time.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: That's right, she—

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: That's right.

VIRGINIA MACCHIARINI: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. But no, I didn't know Tom Hayes before that. I had heard of him—people speak of him, but I had never met him, and I met him—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Tom was a—the reason I brought it up, he was a very close friend of Luke's.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Yeah. And he lived in Mill Valley, I understand, when he died?

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Yeah.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Or was it—I understand that it was suicide, I'm not sure.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Suppose—yes, it was.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, he was disturbed, there's no question about it. I mean, without being a doctor, I could tell that there was something rankling him, even in this brief encounter.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Carleton Williams [ph] can tell us a great deal about Tom Hayes.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Whatever happened—

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: They were great—

PETER MACCHIARINI: —to Carleton [ph]?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: He's working for a television station—

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: —in San Francisco. He just has an article in *the Sunday Chronicle.* He's writing again.

PETER MACCHIARINI: Oh, yeah?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: I think he has something coming out in *Esquire* next month.

ROBERT MCCHESNEY: Did you ever contact him?

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: No, I haven't yet. I will soon. Now, we could just sort og generally sum up about the WPA period now. You mentioned quite a few things in the earlier discussion, Pete. But looking back on that period, what do you think were the main difficulties in the way the Projects were operated?

PETER MACCHIARINI: How the Projects were operating? Oh, I—that's a pretty difficult question for me to answer. I'd rather put it the other way around. I am amazed that they operated at all, under the circumstances. The fact that they did achieve what they did achieve was remarkable.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: And fantastic, that all these projects—and I'm sure that it was the goodwill and the desire of the people involved who worked to do something constructive and positive. And I think that this was due to the credit of the WPA workers.

[00:20:14]

I think that whatever the WPA—the Depression of the '30s did to the individual was proven—to me, I would sum it up this way, that the WPA Project proves that the success of it was solely due to the will and the desire of the people in it to be constructive, and to be honest, and to achieve something worthwhile. Not only with the Project, but with our lives as well. I mean, in spite of all this, their moral fiber was not destroyed, by any means.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: What sort of an effect do you think that period had on your own career as an artist?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, I certainly had all the reasons to be disappointed in the field of art, so I think that—not the WPA, but I mean, the problems of being an artist, or trying to be an artist, faced me as it must have faced others. First of all, there was—you had to—one had to be reconciled with the fact that the chances of being wealthy were absolutely remote. Chances that—to work as an artist and to support yourself, leave alone your family, was—were considerable remote. So, I mean, taking these things into consideration, I must have had a desire to be an artist, otherwise I wouldn't have sacrificed so much, like we all did.

Somebody—you know, this is a problem that comes up, and they say, Well, why don't you go out and mass produce, or do something like this? I say, Well, that's not my interpretation of artistic expression. He said, But just think of the money you would make. Yeah, I'd make a lot of money, but if I was interested in money, I'd go out and make hamburgers. I know how to make good hamburgers. I could, but I think that I—this is what I chose, and I—for better or for worse, I'm sticking with it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Do you think it might be a good idea for the government in the United States to sponsor the arts again?

PETER MACCHIARINI: That's a pretty general question for a specific answer. I think that I would rather see the federal government take more interest in having a modern architectural building embellished, to some extent, with the fruits of the artists' labor. I think that the architects have gotten away with murder today. They imply that just because they put up a building that it's culture. I think that the bareness of our building, the—is a reflection on the sterility of our culture which need not be. I think the architects have entirely too much say, and I think that the work of the artists, both as a muralist and sculpture, I think, should be employed. And I think that if the government does nothing more than to see to it that more of these works of the artists are used, at least in the federal building, I think that that would be the—that would be a tremendous contribution.

As to subsidizing it, we've come a long way since the WPA days. It—actually, it—the subsidy was not accepted on—by the vast majority of the American people. It was a simple means of an expedient to feed people when they were starving. But I think that there are some areas in which the government possibly could sponsor some things. There are some—I wouldn't rule it out completely. But I think that the government, in sponsoring work for the building—the federal buildings, and using more of the artists' work, I think that would be a tremendous achievement, not only because the government would actually help culture, but it would also inspire the same thing on the state and community level.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Did you have any contact, yourself, during that period, with the Treasury project, which was the project involving competitions for murals and sculpture to be placed in public buildings?

PETER MACCHIARINI: No, I didn't. I wasn't—I must admit, as an artist, I was far being—far from being that precocious. I mean, I had a lot to learn. And so, as I said before, I didn't concern myself too much with these competitions because, frankly, I didn't think I was able to handle them at that time.

[00:25:17]

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: But I—some of those—some of the things I did were—I'm not running down my work, but I'm saying, a big job, a big contract job where it takes—I—25 or 30 years, I couldn't have handled it, frankly.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PETER MACCHIARINI: Now is a different story.

MARY FULLER MCCHESNEY: Do you have any other general comments to make about the WPA or that time?

PETER MACCHIARINI: Well, I'd say that if we have another depression, I recommend WPA very highly. [They laugh.]

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]