



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Andres
Francisco Moreau, 1964 June 16

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview Andres Francisco Moreau on June 16, 1964. The interview took place in Petaluma, California and was conducted by Mary Fuller 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.

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. 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

ANDRE MOREAU: [Inaudible] go, but I don't know what to say [laughs].

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Well, this is Mary Fuller McChesney interviewing Andre Moreau. Name is spelled A-N-D-R-E, M-O-R-E-A-U. He lives at 2955 Mountain Road in Petaluma, California. The date is June 16, 1964. Andre, first I'd like to ask you where were you born?

ANDRE MOREAU: I was born in St. Louis, Missouri.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: St. Louis, Missouri?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And what year was that?

ANDRE MOREAU: I was born in 1912, April the 22nd.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And where did you get your art school training? Or art training?

ANDRE MOREAU: I went to the Art Students League. And I went to the—in Chicago—the Art Students League is in New York, and the Chicago Art Institute.

[Recorder stops, restarts.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Where did you first get on any of the WPA or government art projects?

ANDRE MOREAU: The first project that I was on was in 1933 in St. Louis. This was, I believe, the C—Civilian Works Project. I'm not real sure about that. But this was a—the project was set up and it lasted for only about three months. It was sort of an experimental project, I believe. It paid better wages than any of the subsequent projects paid. We were paid \$126 a month.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: At that time, Joe Jones was on the Project in St. Louis and running—was running an art school for working class people.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. That was—he was running the school in St. Louis?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes. He—the—I am not sure that the city authorities recognized what type of school Joe Jones was running. But it was certainly a very left school, where they were teaching Marxism-Leninism by way of illustration. Not out of a book, you know? Not out of the CPUSSR [Communist Party of the United States], but out of the fact that you illustrated the struggles you were going through.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: This was an art school?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, it was more or less a private school. I mean, probably, it—I don't know who was behind it, really.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You don't know if it was government sponsored or not?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh no, it definitely—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, it wasn't?

ANDRE MOREAU: —was not—but the city—the city, at that particular time—the city of St. Louis—there was an old, old family called the Lafayette family. You know the people who fought the damn revolution or something.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: They—they, shortly after the revolution, built this tremendous rotunda building. It was a totally round building where slaves were sold, and all this sort of jazz. This was given to the city in perpetuity, so long as the city maintained it as a public building. Well, it was so inefficient for what the city had previously used it as—courtrooms and so forth— that they, through the, I suppose, the St. Louis School of Fine Arts, which was Washington University, and the museum, they turned this into a public sort of art workshop, where artists could petition and be awarded studio space.

The rotunda on the main floor—which was immense as, I recall—was used for the exhibiting of the work of the artists who had the privilege of studio space in here. Well, Joe Jones had one of the largest. He had an old courtroom.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And it had chairs in it for lectures and so forth. Well, these were used for sketch classes and so on. And he really did a terrific job there in worker education directed toward the class struggle.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Another one was Joe Banks. Joe Banks had a studio there. Tenosco Radulovich [ph] had a studio. I keep thinking when I look at you and speaking these names that, like Mac, you would know the same people. But—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Joe Jones I've heard of, of course, but not Joe Banks or what was the other name? Tenosco [ph]—

ANDRE MOREAU: Tenosco Radulovich [ph].

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Radulovich [ph], mm-hmm [affirmative].

[00:05:01]

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, he was—he was one of the instructors out at the St. Louis School of Fine Arts.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And well, this was the nature of this particular institution. I left St. Louis in the fall of 1933 and came to California.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: But the—when you were in St. Louis, you were on a W—

ANDRE MOREAU: I was on the CWA as sort of a pilot project. The project lasted, to my knowledge, three months. We were all, more or less, put on the project at the same time. And we were all dumped at the same time.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Who else was on the project?

ANDRE MOREAU: As I say, I know that Joe Banks was on the project. I know that Joe Jones was on the project. There was another Yugoslav, Savo Radulovich, I believe—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: —was on the—on the project. I'm not sure whether Barbara Stevenson was or not. But Barbara Stevenson was in St. Louis at that time.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And what did you do? What was the job that you did? Did you do a mural or something?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, no. No, it was more or less an easel project. It—you were given no direction at all. It was sort of, as I say, a pilot project. No one knew what was going on. No one knew how long the project would end—would continue, what the acceptance of it would be by the community, and by the nation. This was one of the early Roosevelt—like closing the banks.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, you actually exhibited your own paintings in your studio.

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember who the directors were on the project?

ANDRE MOREAU: I remember—I remember the man, but I don't remember his name.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: How did you happen to get onto it? And did you hear about it?

ANDRE MOREAU: I didn't hear about it. I was—and I don't know why, other than the fact that I guess I knew Joe and Frieda Jones, and I knew Joe Banks, and a few other people who might have recommended me, although I don't know. I was very young at the time. I was younger than any of the others.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And I was merely asked would I like to make \$126 a week—I mean, a month. Naturally, I would like to make [laughs] \$126 a month. And I don't think the president of the local banks were making that much.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What did you do with the paintings that you did during this period? Did they collect them?

ANDRE MOREAU: I don't remember, Mary.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You don't remember if you had to submit them, or if they checked your work?

ANDRE MOREAU: I really don't remember. It was only a three-month period 31 years ago.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Right. Okay, so after then, that was 1933, you came to California.

ANDRE MOREAU: I came to California. After I suppose the statute of limitations has [laughs] taken place. I mean—[They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I think it's only four years [laughs], five years.

ANDRE MOREAU: But it—but it—but anyhow, you had to be a resident of California for one year, and a resident of the county, I believe, for a year before you were eligible for relief. Well, when I came to California, I got here very early in 1934. I happened to apply for relief two weeks after I got here because this was the only way you could get on any of the projects.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: So, I applied for relief in San Fernando. And I was quite fortunate because San Fernando was probably 99 90/100ths Mexican and Mexican American. So, they were so happy to have an English-speaking gringo apply for relief that they made it very easy for you.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I see.

ANDRE MOREAU: Particularly knowing once you were on relief, you would be eligible for work projects. And I had already seen a fellow by the name Partridge [ph] up at the Los Angeles Museum who ran the Los Angeles County Art Project, and had been promised that I would be placed on the—this was the SERA Art Project of Los Angeles County.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: So, within a month of arriving in California, I was on the SERA Art Project. They paid us, I believe, something like \$29 a month, and a materials allotment.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What did SERA stand for?

ANDRE MOREAU: S—State Employment—

[00:10:00]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Relief Art, Relief Artists?

ANDRE MOREAU: Relief Administration.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I see, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you remember Partridge's [ph] first name?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, I don't.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: He was at the Los Angeles Museum then?

ANDRE MOREAU: He was—he was not the director, however. But he was the assistant director of the—of the SEAR [*sic* SERA -Ed.]] Art Project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I see, mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, then you went right onto the Art Project in—

ANDRE MOREAU: The—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —San Fernando or Los Angeles?

ANDRE MOREAU: Los Angeles. At that—at that particular time, I was living in a—what was thought of as an art colony. There were people like Barbara Stevenson, Ellwood Graham, Kenneth Foley [ph]. Kenneth Foley [ph] was a writer on the Writers' Project. He was writing the rivers—one of the river series, the Los Angeles River. Then, there were one or two other people living in a little ex-nudist colony that became [laughs] an art colony because we were all struggling young painters and writers.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Where was this located?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, Chatsworth, California.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Chatsworth?

ANDRE MOREAU: Chatsworth, California. It is not the Chatsworth that it is now. This was a very, very small, tiny community. It was a sort of a suburb of the present Chatsworth. And Chatsworth is, of course, it is by Canoga Park, San Fernando. It's all about 35 miles from Los Angeles.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: The Project ended, I believe, in November 1935. And it wasn't that any one of us was cut off. The Project just totally and completely ended in November of 1935.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What did you do while you were on the Project?

ANDRE MOREAU: Just easel painting. Just easel painting. What happened to the paintings, I don't know. We had to submit one painting no smaller than 16 by 20 every 30 days. Upon submitting this, we drew another canvas and supposedly enough paints to complete another painting. We were not harassed to turn out more than one painting. And, if anything, we were discouraged from turning out more than one painting. These were then turned in to Mr. Partridge [ph] in the County Museum in out in—out by the University of Southern California.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: It was Exposition Park, where the county museum was. And what happened to them from that point on, I don't know.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Do they any exhibitions of the work that you know?

ANDRE MOREAU: No.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: No?

ANDRE MOREAU: Not to my knowledge.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And if you wanted to do more than one painting a month, they were reluctant to get you more than one canvas.

ANDRE MOREAU: That's all you could draw. You could paint as much as you wanted to paint, I mean, but you only turned in one painting a month.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And they gave you materials just for that one painting?

ANDRE MOREAU: Just for that one painting. And you tried to get as much material as you could. I mean, you could get possibly more paint than you needed, but you would never get more canvas or canvas board. The rest you had to supply for yourself. Usually, we used old burlap sacks and gesso, and painted on our own.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And how much were you paid on this Project? This was the SERA.

ANDRE MOREAU: SERA. To my knowledge, it was \$29 a month.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: \$29 a month?

ANDRE MOREAU: \$29 a month, plus materials.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Were you eligible to get surplus foods or anything like that?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, yes. Yes, we all got surplus foods once a week. The surplus truck came practically to our door—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: —and loaded on us beans, and potatoes, and a ham, once in a while a couple of blankets that we might sell, a mattress, you know—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Clothing?

ANDRE MOREAU: Only—the only clothing I ever got were shirts and pajamas. I don't know what [laughs] you were supposed to do—[They laugh.] I didn't—

MARY MCCHESENEY: [Inaudible] shirt—

ANDRE MOREAU: But other than that—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Well, was this \$29 a month that seems like so little. Did you actually live on it—

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, at that particular time I was able to save enough in about four months to take a trip up to San Francisco to see the lie of the land up here.

[00:15:02]

MARY MCCHESENEY: [Laughs.] That seems unbelievable.

ANDRE MOREAU: But well, look, I lived right in the very, very heart of the fruit-producing area there in southern California—Canoga Park, San Fernando, Chatsworth—where they raised apricots, grapes, tomatoes. And this being the worst period of the Depression in California., every farmer would permit you to pick a lug of fruit for yourself for each lug you

picked for the farm.

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

ANDRE MOREAU: So, that it was very, very simple. I—at one time, I had three barrels of dried apricots. And each barrel weighed a couple of hundred pounds. I could pick hundreds of pounds of grapes. Some grapes we dried for raisins. The temperature in Chatsworth in the summertime was about 110 degrees in the shade. Also, I only paid two dollars a month rent. And my rent didn't include electricity, but it did include water. So, by doing without electricity I had—and I had a fairly large house with a veranda on three sides, ostensibly a sleeping porch that I used, more or less, as a studio. And it was just a wonderful location to be poor in.

So, that—and, by necessity, I was a fruitarian you might say, with the exception of once in a while they would bring around a slab of bacon or ham on the surplus commodities truck. But, other than that, the—all of us were practically vegetarians.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: So, that it was very, very easy to save money. Very easy.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What kind of painting were you doing then, Andre?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, more in the manner of let us say Braque and Picasso Cubistic painting.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: I had already gone through a more Impressionistic period when I was in St. Louis, and was working much more freely, and more in the matter, definitely, closer to Braque than Picasso, but in the general format.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You mentioned Barbara Stevenson and Ellwood Graham, who were both on the same Project with you, and lived in the same area.

ANDRE MOREAU: Uh, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What kind of painting were they doing at this time?

ANDRE MOREAU: Barbara was painting very, very—what you would call socially significant painting. Barbara was probably a lot smarter than either Ellwood or I politically. She was far warmer, humanly, than we were. She was more concerned with what was happening to persons other than herself than we were. And, as a consequence, paint—painted out of the warmth of her heart what she felt and saw around her. I think she, of the three of us, was, by far and away, the better painter. Graham, at that time, was painting mostly landscapes and seascapes, very free, very broad. Showing a great deal of the quality that his future work would take, but still quite representational at that time.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you have any contact, during this period, with any of the mural projects, or any of the artists who worked on the mural projects in Los Angeles?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. No, I didn't. When the SERA ended, I happened to be fortunate and went to work for Warner Brothers, as an assistant to the assistant art director. Which meant that I was just being paid a lot more money than I had ever made in my life, and just had to keep out of the way so no one saw that I wasn't doing anything. I had a little cubicle with my name on it, and so forth. But you were never supposed to be there because if you were that just meant you weren't, you know, working. So, you always carried a briefcase and walked very fast through the studios and looked like you were busier than all hell looking for someone. And, for this, they paid \$26 a day. Well, now, that was a lot of money.

So, with that money I saved a few dollars, and I bought a piece of property up in Monterrey. And then, through a few of the people that I met in the studios I happened to meet a man by the name of Olin Dows. I'm not sure about this, but I think he was head—the government had recently passed a law that five percent of all federal funds had to go into the decoration of these buildings. And, I believe, Olin Dows was appointed by Roosevelt or by the Treasury Department to administer this five percent. I—

[00:20:31]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Pardon me, how do you spell his name? D-O-W-S?

ANDRE MOREAU: I don't remember.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You don't know? You met him in Los Angeles?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes, I met him at a typical Hollywood studio party.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And shortly thereafter, I was offered an opportunity to work with Gordon Grant of Santa Barbara, on a mural for the Ventura post office. This was simply because I happened to meet this Olin Dows at a studio party. Otherwise, it never would have taken place. Now, this was the Treasury Department. This was not—there was no WPA at that time. I mean, it—this was a period in between when the SERA ended in Los Angeles, and before the WPA.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: The Treasury Relief Art Project was set up in July 1935. And the Section of Fine Arts of the Treasury Department—which was probably the one that this involved in because that was the one that involved—

ANDRE MOREAU: But this was a non-relief project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: That's right, yes. So, it must have been the Section of Fine Arts for the Treasury Department.

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Which was set up October '34. And they were to the ones who were to get works of art in federal—or government buildings.

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah. Because we painted the post—the mural for the post office in Ventura.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You were the assistant to a man named Gordon Grant.

ANDRE MOREAU: Gordon Grant.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how large was that mural?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, it's hard for me to say, Mary. It covered three walls. But we also designed all the tile and the grill work that went into the post office also.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, ceramic tile?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And iron grill work?

ANDRE MOREAU: And iron grill work. I can't [laughs]—I haven't the slightest idea as to the size of it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: How large it was.

ANDRE MOREAU: We worked on the project for almost 18 months. Not that it would have taken 18 months to complete the project if we wanted to hurry the job. But, at that time, we were all being paid about \$159 a month, I believe. The—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What was the subject matter, Andre, of the mural that—

ANDRE MOREAU: It was a history of Ventura County. We went out into the field. We made many, many sketches of the workers in the field, and all of the industries that were then in Ventura County. They grew beet—sugar beets. Principally, it was a citrus area, so oranges and lemons. This was before frozen orange juice, but there was a great deal of processing by Sunkist, both in lemons and oranges, so we spent a great deal of time in the factories.

There is quite a large petroleum industry, both the producing of crude oil and the refining of the oil into gasoline. So, well, we spent a tremendous amount of time—far more than was necessary—in drawing, making sketches, making watercolors of all of these industries. And we would have these tremendous gab sessions where we would argue the merits of one particular drawing over the other, and how they might be incorporated. This was truly a cooperative mural. I mean, all of those involved in it contributed equally. No one contributed more than another, in my opinion. There were only the three of us on the project, other than from time to time we would—actually, I say we—well, it was true that it was we also, because if Gordon wanted to hire someone that we didn't like, that person wasn't hired. If we wanted to hire someone that the others didn't—if I wanted to hire someone that the others didn't like, that person wasn't hired. But so, it was a pretty cooperative thing, although Gordon Grant was the senior artist on the project. And—

[00:25:33]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: When you say the three of you, you mean: Gordon Grant, yourself, and Ellwood Graham.

ANDRE MOREAU: And Ellwood Graham, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was Gordon Grant the painter from Los Angeles?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. Gordon Grant was the painter from Santa Barbara.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I see, mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you know if he got the job through a competition? Did he submit to any kind of a competition to the—

ANDRE MOREAU: No. No. Most of these larger mural projects were awarded through competition, unless you happened to know someone or be relatively important in the art world. Gordon Grant happened to know someone. He was not important in the art world. As a matter of fact, he needed Graham and I very much.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: How was the mural done? Did you paint in fresco technique?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, we paint—we painted in tempera on gesso.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Tempera on gesso? How was that done? You—

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, you—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: On panels or on the wall?

ANDRE MOREAU: You construct—yes. No, the—no. We constructed large panels that were architecturally scaled to fit the walls before the building was completed. These were constructed in our studio. We had—we took a big office building in downtown Santa Barbara. We had immense floor space. We constructed these panels. And there was an engineer from one of the big California paint companies—one of the first commercial gesso's that was ever put on the market was being supplied to mural projects as a testing—

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

ANDRE MOREAU: —thing. Well, we would cover these panels that were made to fit the shape of the building with gesso. We would sand them down, we gave them, I believe, three coats of gesso.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: On plywood panels?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, they were Masonite panels, because plywood would swell and shrink.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: These were the Masonite, which were far more stable. And these were covered with gesso, and then they were set up. And we just painted in more or less tempera, dried tempera, technique. They looked very, very similar to frescos without being fresco. Fortunately, you could work them at your leisure. You could erase them by sanding off the gesso. And, you know—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: —putting fresh gesso on it. It's a—it was a very, very easy—I think this is where Gordon Grant was really terrific. He was a very, very good technician.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You put the gesso on the panels flat, then placed them on the walls, then put the painting on them—

ANDRE MOREAU: Right, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —while they were in place—

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —on the walls. And was the building in construction while you were doing this? Or had it been completed?

ANDRE MOREAU: The building had been, more or less, completed by the time the panels were painted—completed and painted in the post office, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You said that you also designed the ceramic tiles that were used in the building. You—the three artists who worked on this project designed ceramic tiles. Where was the tile made? But you didn't make it yourself or what?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, the tile was made by Gladding McBean.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I see.

ANDRE MOREAU: In southern California. We merely designed tile, then we painted tiles, and we had these tiles fired, and then we decided on what tiles we wanted. And then, from that point on, these tiles were reproduced by Gladding McBean. We didn't do each individual tile that was used in the post office.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, I see.

ANDRE MOREAU: We designed tiles. We had tiles fired. When we finally arrived at a final tile, they reproduced these by some mechanical means. The mechanical means I don't know. But they looked as good as our original tiles.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What sort of designs did you use? Was it Spanish motif?

ANDRE MOREAU: Spanish.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: California Spanish, I think it's called. Do you remember who the architect was?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, I don't [laughs].

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: There was an architect, though, who worked on it, yeah.

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, yes. It was—I believe it was a Class B post office.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What does that mean?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, I believe post offices, until very recently, came in classes. And this determined the size, the type of design, and everything else.

[00:30:03]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, I see. And probably the amount of money to be spent by the government—

ANDRE MOREAU: Probably.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —[inaudible]. You also said you designed the iron grill work. What was this for? Was it for gates or—

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, well, where you stand at the window for stamps, or for postal things, and so forth. But because we were trying to keep—I don't know why the ar—it would seem to me that this should have been the architect's job.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: But maybe Gordon Grant had some tie in with the architect. I don't know. Anyhow, we did the grill work, as well as the tile, and the murals.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Where is the post office located in Ventura? Do you remember what street it's on? Was it right downtown or—

ANDRE MOREAU: The post office was right next to the plaza. Ventura's—of course, it's changed so tremendously now. But the post office is still there. I don't know if the mural is still in it. But the last time I was through Ventura, which was 10 months ago—11 months ago—the post office was there because I could see it from the new freeway.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh—

ANDRE MOREAU: But—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —so now we're going to take a look at the mural.

ANDRE MOREAU: But the—but the—was it the post office is operating as a post office, I don't know. Because the post office in Santa Barbara is now a museum.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did you do any other projects in Ventura?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. No, I did other work for the Treasury Department. But these were the small five by seven-foot murals that were awarded on a basis—they paid \$600 for each mural. And they supplied the—well, they told you, for instance, this is for a small post office in Albuquerque, New Mexico. It should conform to your conception of what you know about the history of Albuquerque. So, for the—I did—I did one of these small panels for Albuquerque of Indians. Then, I did another one for a town up in Wyoming, of the [inaudible]—as I recall, it was a—the driving of some spike uniting some branch line railroad with the Transcontinental Railroad.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: These were two of the small murals that I did for the Treasury Department before I came to Monterrey and actually got in the WPA.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You did these Treasury murals when you were still in Ventura?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. I did one of the Treasury murals in Denver, Colorado. And then, I came back to Los Angeles. And I was, again, living out in Chatsworth and I did one of these Treasury murals there.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And how were they done? The same technique or the—

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, no. They were just large easel paintings.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh they were on canvas?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oil on canvas?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes. Just large easel paintings. And—but with very, very tight—with historical motifs for the area in which they were supposed to be hung. Whether they were ever hung in these areas, I don't know. I've never been in Albuquerque since. I think it was Rock Springs, Wyoming that the other one was to be hung in. And I've never been in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: How did you happen to get on this kind of a project? Was it through your friend, Olin Dows?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. It was simply because I had worked for the Treasury Department before. And these were supposedly competitive. You submitted a small design and if it was accepted, you got the job. If it wasn't, they informed you that it—who it had been awarded to and that was that.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Where did you submit them to?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, you submitted them to the postal authorities in Washington, DC. They used to publish a monthly mimeographed bulletin that stated all the competitive opportunities that were available in the—in the post office art [inaudible] department or whatever it was called. And you could submit designs for the hugest murals or the smallest things. I happened to submit generally for these because they seemed to be easier to get.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: They were certainly not great art.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Well, after you'd done these two, the one that you did for the post office in Albuquerque, and the one for the post office in Rock Springs, Wyoming, then you moved from southern California and came up to Monterrey.

[00:35:05]

ANDRE MOREAU: I moved up to Monterrey, California, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And there you got on the regular WPA Project?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

[Audio break.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: We were just talking about your leaving southern California, ANDRE, and coming to Monterrey, California where you got on the WPA Art Project. Do you remember what year that was?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes, it was in September 1939.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: September 1939? And how did you go about getting on the Art Project in Monterrey, California?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, I had saved a few dollars. And I had come up to Monterrey to build a studio, because my friends—Barbara Stevenson, and Ellwood Graham, who I had more or less come out from St. Louis within 1934—were living in Monterrey. And I lived in Barbara Graham's—or Barbara Stevenson's studio while I was building my house in Monterrey. After, oh, maybe three or four months—I met -Ed.] August Gay [who -Ed.] was then the art supervisor for this particular district in Northern California. We were on the—or this was a part of the San Francisco Art Project. And there were probably a dozen artists on the Monterrey peninsula who were on the—on the San Francisco Art Project.

Well, August Gay was sort of the supervisor. He was later—not exactly dumped, but he was able to resign his position and they appointed a woman by the name of Amelie Kneass. I don't—I don't think the San Francisco Art Project found August too successful because August was a working artist, and he was more interested in what kind of work you were doing, then how long you worked.

You see, by that time I believe the Project—this was 1939, early 1940—there was some resentment upon the part of the public for the fact that artists could work without supervision and so forth. And they were beginning to herd the artists into buildings that—where they could be more adequately supervised to see that they were doing their six or seven hours a day. We, in Monterrey, were very fortunate in that we worked in our own studios. And an art supervisor had to drop by or to see us capriciously to see if we were actually working when we claimed we were. And Gus just in what—Gus just wasn't the policeman. He was an artist. He was far more interested in what you did than when you did it. And, as a consequence, they—well, eventually, Gus didn't like the job anyhow. And it didn't mean that he got paid any more for being a supervisor, it just took his own time from painting.

So, Gus was very, very happy that they could get Amelie Kneass to take over the supervision of artists on the peninsula. And she wasn't unreasonable. She had a job to do, and she would just, you know, drive around and capriciously drop in on you. And, supposedly, you were supposed to be working. However, many of the artists on the peninsula were nature painters, so they always managed to be out when Amelie was around [they laugh].

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Out in the field working? [They laugh.]

ANDRE MOREAU: Right.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Who were the other people on the Project in Monterrey? Barbara Stevenson and Ellwood Graham?

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, no you see Barbara Stevenson and Ellwood Graham—although I identify them as individual artists—they were married.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Barbara Stevenson was Barbara Graham. And so, they couldn't both be on the Project at the same time. Only one could be on the Project. So they used to take turns being on the Project. Ellwood would be on the project for so many months, and then he would resign. And then Barbara would apply for relief, and then she would be appointed to the Project, and she would be on the Project for so many months. But they were never on—both on—at the same time.

[00:40:15]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: There was August Gay. August Gay was certainly the best painter there in Monterrey. There was Patricia and John Cunningham. They, like the Graham's, had to take turns being on the Project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: These were all on the Easel Project?

ANDRE MOREAU: They—we were all easel painters, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: There was—was there any mural project in Monterrey County?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. No, Barbara did—Barbara did do a mural for—what it was—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: A fairly small mural, but it was definitely a mural. But that was the only mural. Oh, all—let me see, Bruce Ariss was on the Project at that time.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Bruce Ariss. How do you spell his last name?

ANDRE MOREAU: A-R-I-double S. We did it—we did probably, I think, the largest mural that was ever painted for the [laughs] Monterrey County Fair. This was a mural that completely enclosed the fairgrounds. It was painted almost like a billboard continuously around the place. It was 10 foot high, and it was really fabulous.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You mean it went around the whole circumference of the—

ANDRE MOREAU: It—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —fairgrounds?

ANDRE MOREAU: No, around the whole circumference of the livestock pavilion where all of the fair activities took place. Where they exhibited livestock, where they held horse races, where the 11th Cavalry paraded around. Where they now—or where, a couple of years ago, they had the Monterrey Jazz Festival. They might have still used the backdrop for that, for all I know. But, again, this was not a mural in the sense it was great art. It was just a mural in the sense that it was painted by artists.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And all the people who were on the—the painters—

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —were working on—

ANDRE MOREAU: And everyone who was on the Project worked on that thing from time to time. It was under the direction of August Gay, who was the overall planner of the thing. But everyone worked on it. Everyone that I knew that was on the Project in Monterrey, at one time or another, worked on that.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Was this done on—in oil on canvas?

ANDRE MOREAU: This was done in oil on canvas, yes, so that it could be taken down every year and put up every year.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh. How did you ever find room enough to—a building large enough to paint it in? Or did you unroll it as you went along?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, we just painted it on the ground. We walked on it. And this was probably some of the freest—[they laugh] form painting—skated around on tennis shoes on the damn thing.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Where did you paint it? Was it at the fairgrounds?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah, we painted—actually, we painted out at the fairgrounds. We had a big barn out there. And, as I say, Gus was the overall director. And he approved the—all the design and we would paint it. Actually, I did very little painting. I was, more or less, color coordinator of the thing, to try to keep all of the colors so that they would have some relationship to the rest.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And Bruce was a very, very clever sort of cartoonist. And he gave a little humor to the thing. But if it had any feeling about—of art at all about it, it was because of August Gay. He was a very, very close friend—and so similar they could almost be twins—with Lucien Labaudt.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You mean as far as his work his concerned?

ANDRE MOREAU: Both as far as his work was concerned, as far as his humor was concerned, as far as his attitude toward people. They were—they were both born in France. They both came to this country as, you know, teenagers or so. And they were very, very much the same kind of people.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], what was the subject matter of this—

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, again, the history of the state of—I mean, the county of Monterrey, which had to do with fishing boats, and fishing, and what agriculture there is, and the hills beyond, and just this sort of thing. I—other than—other than that, we—it was just all easel painting. There were a couple of other artists there that later went back east and became relatively well known, but I can't remember their damn names.

[00:45:10]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], where was your studio that you worked in when you in—on the Easel Project—

ANDRE MOREAU: Most—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —in the house that you had built?

ANDRE MOREAU: My studio was up on Huckleberry Hill.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: It was in your own house—

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —the one you built yourself, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah. Graham's was just a block or so away. Barbara's was another block away. Bruce Ariss lived across the street. This was, again, because of mutual need and mutual help, a rather small, tightknit community or call it a colony.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: It was only a dozen or so people. You must have all known each other quite well.

ANDRE MOREAU: It was very, very well. We were—well, after all, the peninsula is a relatively small place. And although Carmel, supposedly, is an art colony and has been one for a long time. There were probably some, at one time, regional painters there that were very good but none of them were on the Project. I mean, these were all older men. Quite old.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], on this Easel Project, on the WPA in Monterrey County, was it different from the SE—let's see, the one in Los Angeles, SERA, where they set you a quota of one painting every 30 days. Now, on this project, the WPA Project in Monterrey County, the Easel Project there, did they set you a quota for—

ANDRE MOREAU: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —work for you to do?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes. We were—we were expected to work the number of hours each month that we were—that our salary schedule called for. As I recall, there were two or three categories of painters, and they were paid from \$85 to \$94 a month. I think junior artists or something like that—what that meant I don't know—were paid \$85 a month. Senior artists were paid \$94 a month. You were expected to work 94 hours a month.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: A dollar an hour?

ANDRE MOREAU: Right.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Which was less than 25 hours a week.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: So—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: But you worked—

ANDRE MOREAU: —but you—no one could say that—for instance, some people paint quite rapidly. Other people paint much slower. No one ever questioned that we work our 94 hours a month. And if it took me 94 hours to do a painting, or if it took me 194 hours to do a painting, no one questioned this.

Also, we were no longer limited as to size of painting. Although—I don't know whether this was official or unofficial—whether we were limited to no abstractions and no nudes. But I am sort of under the retroactive impression that we were told there were to be no abstractions or nudes. Semi-abstractions, yes. Still lifes that were semi-abstract in the Braque-ish manner, yes, but no real far out abstractions, and no far out nudes. These were taboo, as I recall.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], this must have been local policy. I've never heard of this around San Francisco.

ANDRE MOREAU: Well, as I recall, no one in San Francisco at that time—with the exception of possibly Luke Gibney—was painting any nudes. And certainly, no one that I knew in 1939, '40, '41 was painting any abstractions. The closest thing might be some of the cityscapes that Nepote was painting over in Oakland. A far cry from abstract. Do you—do you, personally, recall seeing any?

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Well, Urban Neinger who did the color work with Hilaire Hiler on the Aquatic Park mural was doing small blocks of color things.

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, in—if in thinking of the Aquatic Park building, I think Sargent Johnson might, you know, the big tiles—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative] [inaudible].

ANDRE MOREAU: —and some of the things that he did were quite abstract. But the nature of this building was so entirely different than anything that had been done before. They even closed that building during the World's Fair—or during the San Francisco International Exposition, whatever it was called, in 1939 and '40—they closed that building because it was getting too much attention from the fair people. It was so good, so far out.

[00:50:04]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: But because that really was a terrific building for its time.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Yes, it is. How about materials? Were you limited in the amount of materials you could get on the WPA?

ANDRE MOREAU: They were never supplied. We had to supply our own materials.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, they didn't supply your materials?

ANDRE MOREAU: No.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did they give you money for materials?

ANDRE MOREAU: No.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You were expected to, then, buy your materials?

ANDRE MOREAU: You had to buy your own materials for the—for the—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: For the Easel Project, however?

ANDRE MOREAU: For the Easel Project, yes. As a consequence, most artists worked quite small.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: There is one exception to this. If you were on a sustaining project, then they supplied materials. A sustaining project was 25 percent of the funds—as I understand it—that was spent in an area had to be raised by the local taxpayers. This was why Barbara Stevenson did a mural for the school, because the schools paid for this material, and for her salary while she was doing it. This helped sustain the rest of the Project. I did a book on art instruction for the Monterrey County Schools. This was a sustained project that was supported by the—by the city schools of Monterrey.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Or by the county of Monterrey for the—for the county schools.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: The book on art, what was this? For its use in the schools?

ANDRE MOREAU: This was used as a—an instructive book for the—for the rural schools in Monterrey County where you would have a teacher in a one room school who was teaching, maybe, one to six or one to eight grades. This was to assist her in her art instruction.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: I had previously done a book for the Glendale City Schools. And on the basis of this the art supervisor for Monterrey County, Elmarie Dyke—Elmarie Dyke—D-Y-K-E—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: —thought that—thought rather highly of the book. I don't know how she even came in contact with the—with the one in Glendale. But she contacted Amelie Kneass And, I guess, through Amelie got to Allen [ph]. And so, I was temporarily taken off of the Easel Project and put on this project to do a book for the county schools in Monterrey.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What did the book deal with? The kind of materials for them to use?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, the book tried to deal with absolutely every problem that would arise in an elementary classroom from kindergarten through the eighth grade for every holiday, for Mother's Day, Christmas, for any occasion. It tried to supply them with the formulas on how to make fingerpaint, how to use fingerpaint, how to mix clay, how to use the clay, projects to do with clay, what to do for Washington's birthday, what to do for Lincoln's birthday, what to do for Christmas. It was a very—it was a large—about a 350-page, mimeographed book.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did you do illustrations for it too?

ANDRE MOREAU: I did all the illustrations, probably 70 percent of the research on materials, and so forth. We had a couple of seminars where the teachers contributed material and ideas that I had to work up. But it was used for how long I don't know. But it was used for several years in Monterrey throughout all of Monterrey County. It wasn't a great book, but books didn't exist then on this level.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: So it was a great aid to teaching them.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: How did you—how did you do the illustrations? On a stencil directly, or—

ANDRE MOREAU: They were done directly on a stencil, yes. I still have a copy of the book.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Yeah, mm-hmm [affirmative]. And how long were you working on this? How long did they remove you from the Easel Project to do this book?

ANDRE MOREAU: Offhand, Mary, I don't know. Possibly nine months, possibly a year.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, that long?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And then—

ANDRE MOREAU: You don't do these things in two ticks.

MARY MCCHESENEY: [Laughs.] Not that kind of a book. That's certainly true. This was in the middle of your period on the Easel Project. I—

[00:55:04]

ANDRE MOREAU: No, it was almost toward the end because, you know, Pearl Harbor came along December 7, 1941. And the projects ended with the fiscal year in 1942.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And not many people remained on the Project to the end.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did you stay on until the end in Monterrey?

ANDRE MOREAU: I was on the Project until the very end, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Although a great number of others weren't. They were taken in the draft and other things. But some of us remained on the Project to the end, yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What kind of painting were you doing?

ANDRE MOREAU: Bad.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What?

ANDRE MOREAU: Bad. [They laugh.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh, bad [laughs]. Well, what kind of—

ANDRE MOREAU: [Laughs.] Lousy.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What kind of bad painting was it? Were you still working in the—

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, relatively representational. As I said a little earlier, we were sort of limited in that we could not paint, for the Project itself, any abstractions or any nudes. For myself, the Project supported me. The Project was probably the best thing, as an artist, that has ever happened to me or for me because it gave me the basic security to make a living as a painter. I didn't have to think as a carpenter, as a bricklayer, as a plumber. I thought all this time as a painter. I only had to work a certain length of time for the Project. And then, I had all the rest of the time to work for myself. So, that at the same time I was doing relatively bad painting for the Project, I was doing some fairly good painting for myself. I would have just as soon given the good painting to the Project, but they didn't want it. They wanted bad painting. They wanted—they wanted tight, hard, representational painting, very academic painting.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: They were attempting to get this painting in schools and various other places. I don't know who set the policy on the basis of that it should be rather tight academic painting because they thought that this was what teachers wanted, or some of the hospitals wanted. You know, an awful lot of this stuff ended up in veteran's hospitals and various other places, to bug the poor nuts. But the—all of the painters that I knew painted much, much better work than the Project ever received.

Might make some exceptions like August Gay was—I mean, there was—he just painted his way and the Project either took it or lumped it. I think this was true of Lucien Labaudt. But, you know, painters like George Post, for instance, there could be no dichotomy there. There could be no—I mean, the Project would like anything that Post did, because it was good representational painting. This was true, certainly, of Dong Kingman's work at that time. But other painters at this, particular time—Graham was really way out. He was much in advance of a great number of North Bay painters.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: But what was he doing for the Project? He was painting historical portraits of all of the early Californians.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Was this an assignment that he took?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: One of those sustaining projects.

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes. Historically, he was doing it because the state was acquiring these historical adobes. And they needed paintings of the period that looked like they had been painted in 1848—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Oh—

ANDRE MOREAU: —of John Sloat, and Larkin, and all of these cats. So Graham was a very versatile painter. So he could turn these things out and this is what he did.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: And these were—

ANDRE MOREAU: But for himself, man, he was really doing some terrific painting. This is true of Barbara also. Barbara was painting some of the most beautiful little cityscapes. No, she was better than Utrillo when you come to a painter painting cityscapes. But—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: What kind of work did she do for the Project?

ANDRE MOREAU: Mostly children's work; work that children liked.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], to be placed in schools?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yeah.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: And she was very successful at this. She would paint *Alice in Wonderland* on a big canvas. And it was terrific. The kids loved it and they—and it was better than, I think, most other people were doing.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did they have any exhibitions of your work—of the Monterrey painter's work?

[01:00:01]

ANDRE MOREAU: What happened to the work of the Monterrey painters, I don't know. It was all collected about in around the first of June 1942. Everything that was available, that was locally there, and it was put in a big truck, and it was driven up to San Francisco, and it was deposited in the basement of a school. I wish I could tell you the exact location of the school. Mac would know because Mac worked there. He worked in the school. They had a weaving project in the school. There were a couple of Italian girls doing big loom work and things. A lot of the San Francisco artists worked in this particular school. This was where they had studio space, or whatever you want to call it.

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

ANDRE MOREAU: They could keep tab on them. But this was where we delivered the stuff. Allen [ph] had office there—Dorothy Collins would know. She would know when the stuff was delivered and where it was delivered. But whether she would know what happened to it subsequently I don't know, because I have never spoken to a single person who knows what happened to it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I meant the—actually, the question what I intended was during the time that you were working on the WPA in Monterrey County, did you have exhibitions of the work of the painters who were on the—

ANDRE MOREAU: No.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —on the—

ANDRE MOREAU: No.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: —WPA.

ANDRE MOREAU: There in Monterrey there was nothing but a Carmel Art Association. And you could only exhibit at the Carmel Art Association if you were a member of the Art Association. And it was a typical Laguna Beach Art Association type gallery. And it was more or less boycotted by most of the more serious painters in the area. It wasn't boycotted, they just didn't pay any attention to it.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: There was no museum, then, in the area where—

ANDRE MOREAU: There was no museum in the area, today, as I know. I believe the first commercial gallery established in Monterrey was established through the—through Pat Wall, the Contemporary Art Gallery.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and that was after the war?

ANDRE MOREAU: And—yes, that was in 1946.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Was there very much contact between the painters on the WPA in Monterrey County and the painters on the San Francisco Art Projects? Did you know those people, or come to San Francisco and see their work?

ANDRE MOREAU: I—because I was very fond of Dorothy Collins and a close friend of hers—met a few of the San Francisco artists. But about others—Gus used to be very close to Bill Gaw. And when Bill Gaw came—but I don't know that Bill Gaw was ever on the Project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Yes, he was on the Easel Project for a short time.

ANDRE MOREAU: But the—when Bill Gaw used to come down to—down to Monterey, if we happened to be down at Gus', why, we would see—but the only people that I knew in San Francisco—I knew best Clay Spohn and Bill Hesthal [ph] because they, I guess, knew Dorothy as well as I—or we were close friends together.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: I met a few other painters like Dong Kingman and George Post in San—Nepote—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Nepote.

ANDRE MOREAU: Nepote. But they were just merely speaking acquaintances. Oh, Adaline Kent. I happened to know because I had an exhibit with her in San Francisco at the Courvoisier Gallery.

[END OF TRACK AAA_moreau64_253_m.]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: This is side two of the tape with Andre Moreau. This is Mary Fuller McChesney recording, the date is June 16, 1964.

We were just talking, Andre, about the contact between the WPA artists in Monterey County, and the painters who were on the WPA Projects or different government projects, in San Francisco. And you said that there was some social contact, that you had met a few of the people who were on different projects up here in San Francisco. I was wondering if, during this time, the painters in Monterey were interested in the mural projects that were being done by the San Francisco WPA artists, and if any of you came up to look at that work?

ANDRE MOREAU: To my knowledge, Mary—I can't speak for the others, but I certainly can for myself and my closest friends, which were Graham and August Gay, Bruce Ariss. No, to my knowledge we were ever interested in anything other than our problems as easel painters, and the pleasure we had when we occasionally saw someone like Bill Gaw or C. K. Chase.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Did you ever go up to Treasure Island and see any murals that were being painted then?

ANDRE MOREAU: No. I had a painting in the California Pavilion of the Fair, and I believe Gus had also, and I know we came up to the Fair several times together. But I can't say that we paid any particular attention to—the only painters that I knew in San Francisco were easel painters, they were not muralists.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: You were on the Project then—the different government art projects—from around 1933 into 1941, which would be about—

ANDRE MOREAU: Into 1942.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: '42. So that would be about nine years that you were—

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes, but in the meantime, I was off the projects for several years also.

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

ANDRE MOREAU: I was off the Project—if you consider the Treasury project being off the Project because it was a non-relief—I always think of the WPA as being—you had to qualify for relief before you could qualify for being on the Project. The Treasury Department you didn't have to qualify for anything. You just merely had to be awarded a contract to paint either a small or a large mural. So, I have always included myself, when I was working for the Treasury Department, as being off the Project. And of course, when I was working for the studios—I worked with the studios for almost two years—this was off the Project.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: To sum up, Andre, what were your general impressions of that period in American art? What would you say was the influence of the government art projects on your career as a painter?

ANDRE MOREAU: My general impression of all of the persons, including myself, involved in painting at this particular time was that if had not been for the WPA and the Treasury Department, we would all have been something other than painters. I feel that that particular period laid the basis for a more vigorous and a better period in American painting which followed the Second World War. I think there's far better painting done between 1945 and 1964 than there was done between 1933 and 1945. But I feel that if it had not been for this period of the WPA, this later period couldn't have existed.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: In a sense you mean that many people who are now producing artists would not have become artists?

ANDRE MOREAU: Right.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: The—

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Do you have any criticisms of the way the Project was run?

ANDRE MOREAU: Oh, not really.

I mean, it's easy to criticize things, like, to say that a person like Amelie Kneass, who was taking person from an art project and she was not a producing artist, was wrong, and yet you need bureaucracy to run anything.

So, it's foolish to criticize something like this.

[00:05:09]

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: If the government ever engaged in sponsoring art the way it did during this period again, would you have any suggestions about improvements that might be made in the way the projects were run? Or do you think they were successful for what they were trying to do?

ANDRE MOREAU: I think they were eminently successful for what they were trying to do, yes. I think there were a few phonies on the projects, but there are always bound to be a few phonies everywhere. I mean, you just can't avoid this, I mean, things are complicated, you can't run a project—and these projects were pretty fabulous. And in some areas like San Francisco, they seemed to be pretty straightforward art projects. In places like Los Angeles, where there were a tremendous number of unemployed actors, musicians, burlesque girls, clowns, and everything else, the projects there were really fantastic. At one time there were seven legitimate theaters operating that were strictly Art Project theaters. There was a marionette theater. They never quite got around to a burlesque theater, but they came pretty damn close to it by calling it ballet. [Mary Fuller McChesney laughs.] Really, it was fabulous. But look how complicated this was in Los Angeles.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ANDRE MOREAU: Finally it was able to be closed up on some subversive grounds because theatrical people were then a little more in advance, socially, than the painters were. Because they closed up the Theatre Project, they red-baited it out of existence.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: In Los Angeles?

ANDRE MOREAU: Yes.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: I hadn't heard of that.

ANDRE MOREAU: But that's all I know about the WPA.

MARY FULLER MCCHESENEY: Thank you very much, Andre Moreau, for giving us the time for the interview.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]