



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Phillips
Sanderson, 1965 April 1

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Phillips Sanderson on April 1, 1965. The interview took place in Scottsdale, Arizona, and was conducted by Sylvia Loomis for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

SYLVIA LOOMIS: This is an interview with Mr. Phillips Sanderson, 8002 Granada Road, Scottsdale, Arizona, on April 1st, 1965. The interviewer is Mrs. Sylvia Loomis of the Santa Fe office of the Archives of American Art and the subject to be discussed is Mr. Sanderson's participation in the Federal Art Project in Arizona during the 1930s and '40s. Before we discuss that Mr. Sanderson, will you tell us something about yourself, where you were born and where you received your art education?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I was born in Bowling Green, Missouri, a small town about 90 miles north of St. Louis in 1908 and I went to the Art Institute of Chicago for 2 years studying painting and illustration and then I worked for a sculptor who was brought here from France to make some of the sculptural decorations for the Chicago Worlds' Fair a year or two later than this particular day, which was around 1930 or '29, I believe -- whenever the Fair was. I worked for him for about a year.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Tell us about how you met him.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well I was cleaning windows, my first job -- I couldn't afford to go to any art school, it being Depression days, and I got a job cleaning windows for a large department store. He was given an exhibit there in the art gallery -- in one of the State Street windows -- and on seeing his work (his name was Raoul Jose) I immediately knew that I had been studying the wrong thing. I should have been, and wanted to be, a sculptor because my feeling for form was much greater than my feeling for color so that was the start of my sculptural career. I worked for him for about a year and then I came to Arizona.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did you work as an apprentice, or just in the studio?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, in the studio as an apprentice. I might add that I learned more about art in the year I worked for him than I had in the 2 years at the Art Institute. It was an amazing experience, of course he was a very patient man, teacher I should say. Not that he would teach me, I was actually serving my apprenticeship, but he knew that I was enthusiastic and wanted to learn so he went out of his way to help me. He was quite a sculptor, quite a man, I've forgotten just where he stayed in France but he served an apprenticeship under Bourdelle, the great French master. Oh, many times after I got to live in Arizona and would run into a technical jam I would write him a letter and immediately I would get a reply with illustrations and all kinds of information.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How long were you with him -- about 2 years?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, I was only with him a year.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And then what happened?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, then I decided to come to Arizona. I had terrible bronchial trouble back there and sinus trouble as a lot of people get in Chicago. I had a cousin in Bisbee, Arizona, who had been asking me to come out here for a long time so I came out and I was so intrigued with Arizona and the climate that I just decided to stay. And the wonderful thing about it is that it afforded me an opportunity to work out many of my problems as far as my art career was concerned. I knew I wanted to be an artist but I couldn't bare the thoughts of going back to the Art Institute -- even though I liked it very much -- and the sculpture no longer had any worth for me so I thought, well this is a good place to teach yourself, and I certainly did, or tried to. And then these relief programs came along and for the first one I was asked by the superintendent of schools, in Bisbee, Mr. Sauers, to do a large statue of a miner dedicated to all miners who had worked in the mines in Bisbee. He asked me if I could do it and would be interested. Mr. Sauers, incidentally, was head of the ERA relief program. He said, "Now this will only pay you \$30 a month but by public subscriptions we'll try and get you a bonus when its completed." Well, I made the 9 foot statue which still stands in Bisbee, Arizona, in front of the Court House and I received \$30 a month and that was all.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You never got the bonus?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Never got the bonus.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh, dear, and how long did it take you?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: About 6 months. I didn't work on it steadily every day. It was made out of reinforced concrete and even though its not a great work of art it set me out on a sculptural career and that's exactly what I wanted to do. I was quite young in those days and inexperienced as far as sculpture was concerned, outside of the year of apprenticeship I had served.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Tell about the material they wanted you to make if of.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: They wanted it cast in copper inasmuch as Bisbee, Arizona, is a copper mining camp and the smelter in Douglas, Arizona, is 25 miles away. They had all kinds of copper and of course they thought it was no problem to cast it in pure copper. In the first place copper is very hard to cast anything in and the second place I was not an experienced foundry man nor were there experienced foundry men at the smelter, so I ended up making it in reinforced concrete. And about that time a new machine came on the market called a metalizer. They had bought one for the machine shop and it's in wide use today. It's for the purpose of building up the pistons on those underground water pumps by just spraying metal. Now, when you tell some people about this they think you're spraying aluminum paint, you know, or copper paint. This actually sprays little infinitesimal beads of metal which are hot enough to stick to a clean metal surface -- well, it doesn't have to be a metal surface -- it could be wood, or glass or anything. You can even spray you hand with it, it won't stick to your hand but it won't burn it either, so that's what the statue was sprayed with. And it was about an eight inch copper coating on it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And it has stood up all right?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It stood up beautifully, except that the people of Bisbee don't like copper to turn green and they like a bright copper, so every year they paint it with copper paint which annoys me no end. But as long as they like it why its all right with me.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What was this clay you got out for the statue.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, yes, I was suppose to be able to get money for my materials but even that didn't come through, so I had to go down to the tailing dam at the mine which was down below the concentrator, pick out a strata of tailings that I could use for modeling clay, which I did. And this in turn turned my present wife's arms green, as well as mine, from the high concentrate of copper.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How long did that last?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh it must have taken 3 or 4 weeks to wear off. Oh my wife was so mad you just can't imagine. I was real embarrassed about it because I hadn't been courting her very long.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well I should think that a woman wouldn't particularly like green arms for 3 or 4 weeks.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It worried me at first, because I didn't know what might happen, but a doctor friend of mine told me, "No, that won't affect you." That many old miners would have been dead, or wouldn't have lived to be old, you know, working underground.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How long were you at Bisbee?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I lived in Bisbee 7 years, and right after this statue was made I was approached by a man (I'm wondering if you knew about him -- I think he was the first person having to do with the WPA art project.) His name was Lon Megargee.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, I never heard of him. How was that last name spelled?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: M-e-g-a-r-g-e-e.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, never heard of him.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: And through the publicity I got on the statue, he wrote me a letter and asked me if I would be interested in being on the WPA art project, which was starting in Arizona then.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Let's see, it was in 1933 that the statue was put up, is that right? And then how long afterwards did this man contact you?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I was contacted almost immediately after that.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that might have been the PSAP program, Public Works of Art Program, and then there was

also the Treasury Department that...

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, I'm familiar with the Treasury Department. It might've been the PW..what'd you call it?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: PWAP, Public Works of Art Program.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: PWAP. I told him I had no way of making a living at art, and making a living in Bisbee in those days was pretty hard anyway, because I didn't want to work as a miner and even if I had worked underground it would have been almost impossible to get a job because they were trying to take care of the old timers, you know. So I went on this project and I remember the first assignment I had was to design murals for the Post Office which had just been built in Phoenix. It was to be just in black and white and this is something I never could figure out -- whether he intended to paint it or whether he intended to get me to paint it, or what. But that's as far as it got. Later on an artist, who used to live here who I believe was originally from Santa Fe by the name of Black, was commissioned to do one of the murals and then a Santa Fe or a Taos artist -- his name slips me -- did the other mural down there. But Megargee didn't hold this job down very long and he kept me busy with various and sundry sketches, mostly designing of murals -- no sculpture -- and I was asked to come to Phoenix for the organization of an artist's group called the Painters and Sculptors of Arizona and this is the first time that I had met any artists in the Phoenix area, including Lon Megargee. At that time I met Ross Santee who had just been sent out here from Washington D.C. as head of the Writer's Project and at that time of course I met Phil Curtis, Lew Davis and many others, and it was then that Phil told me what he was sent here for, they were going to open this gallery and school in Phoenix under the WPA Art Project and asked me if I would be interested in teaching children's classes, which I told him I would be. A short time after that I moved to Phoenix.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you remember when that was?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, I've been married 28 years and that would make it, what? My arithmetic is no good.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: 65 minus 28 -- that would be 37. 1937.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: 1937.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It was at the time you got married -- when you came here?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Right, 1937. I moved to Phoenix and it was in July and I never will forget it. I thought, what am I thinking of? Bisbee's much cooler, you see.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, if it can be 87, the way it was here yesterday, in March, I can imagine what it would be like in July? Must be dreadful.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: The day we landed in Phoenix I went down to see a man who'd I'd been told to look up, whose name was Sanderson -- he was head of the Associated Press and he was the only other Sanderson in Phoenix at the time. And we looked out at a thermometer which was on the north side of the Arizona Gazette Building, and this was in the shade, and at 4 o'clock in the afternoon it was 114. So this was quite a radical change.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I would have turned right around and gone back to Bisbee.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, you know I used to get sick when we were here until I got used to it. My mother passed away this summer and I had to go back to Missouri and I had forgotten how hot it can get back there in July, everything happens to me in July. I was born in July, married in July and my stepmother passed away, whom I was very fond of, but even with my father's airconditioning you walk in the house and it would be wonderful but in a few minutes time you'd be perspiring because you just couldn't get all the humidity out and I thought I was going to die all the time I was back there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's why I like Santa Fe so much because its always cool there, it hardly ever gets above 90, and then it's cool in the shade and cool at night.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: What's the altitude there?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: 7000. Does the altitude bother you?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, it didn't seem to bother me when I was there. Do you have much humidity there?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: None at all.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: That's the way it used to be here.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It's dry heat when it is hot, so you don't notice it anywhere near as much as you do in these humid climates.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I think the climate's changing in Arizona, but Bisbee had practically no humidity in the summertime, and the summer never got above 90 down there anyway.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How high is that?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It's a mile high. But there was no humidity and when I lived down there I can't remember not at least having a light blanket over me at night, but that's not the case now. People have coolers down here the same as they do here -- not big ones but they need them in the middle of the day and sometimes at night. Well let's see where do we go now?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well you'd just gotten to Phoenix.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh yes. I want to say this while I'm thinking of it -- we all worked very hard on this WPA project under the careful supervision of Phil Curtis and I will always be most appreciative because it brought me in contact with many artists who were enthusiastic and it helped me actually to further my own self teaching and my own education. If it hadn't been for this I don't think I would ever have been able to be an artist.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right? Well, I think that's the wonderful thing it accomplished.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, it just opened up new fields for me. I also want to mention about my trip yesterday, I was asked by this former student of mine -- he's now a practicing architect -- how I happened to make the statue in Bisbee and after I got through telling him that, I was telling him about the WPA art projects. He said, "I remember I used to live down in that area where the art project was when I was a little kid," and he said, "I used to peek in the front door." I said, "Why didn't you come to some of the classes?" "Well, my mother wouldn't let me."

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Why?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, I haven't the faintest idea, but he was amazed to know of all the things that went on as far as WPA was concerned. He had the wrong impression of the WPA, just like so many people have had in the past. When the letters WPA are mentioned they think of a man leaning on a shovel, and when I think of all the good things that went on as far as the art projects were concerned, and other projects that were closely associated with it, and all the people who were competent, who were put to work, and people who needed help and didn't know anything about the crafts, but they were able to learn. The one thing that always fascinated me -- because I did some of the designing for them -- I've forgotten now how many women they had that learned to weave. And this was real educational for me, too, because I knew very little about weaving and the supervision of it was wonderful to the extent that they even carded their own wool or cotton or whatever the case might be, and spun it and many of the things they made in the way of drapes for public buildings were all handwoven by these women. And I know of any number of these women that have gone on with this weaving and are doing beautiful things today.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's nice to know. I know Mr. Wardell and Mr. Curtis both told me about this weaving project, but they didn't tell me what had happened since then with these women that learned to weave and did such nice work.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: There's an organization here of weavers -- I forget the name of it -- and they hold an exhibit every year and there are 3 women on that, that I know of, that learned weaving. They had never woven before in their lives and they learned weaving on the WPA project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What did you teach?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, I taught only children's classes on Saturday and I taught sculpture to very small children, and this architect was asking me yesterday, "Well, did any of the children that you know of that maybe had promise, or whether or not they had promise, did they ever go on with art?" And I said, "Yes" immediately. "I think that you should know," I said, "one of the competitors of yours -- about your age, a very promising young architect in Phoenix -- after he finished high school went away and studied art, but he decided he was an architect rather than an artist so he's now practicing in Phoenix." Also another young fellow by the name of Ralph Bruno who, I felt, had definite talent at the age of 6. He is a very fine commercial artist and has a large commercial art studio in Phoenix. Right now I can't think of anyone else but I'm sure there have been many that were actually started on an art career through the art center. Believe me, we had a bunch of real eager beavers. And it was wonderful because we had traveling exhibits that came through here, which of course were exhibits of painting and sculpture done by artists who were working on the WPA back east mostly and in California. We had some fine shows here.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It helped to expose the people of this area to art from other areas.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, because art in Phoenix in those days was dead. Well, it never amounted to very much -- about the only thing that had gone on before that was the annual exhibit at the State Fair, and I think some organization used to buy the prizewinner every year, which they added to the collection which now belongs to the city. And some of these things were good.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Where is this collection?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It's in the Phoenix Public Library and I think its upstairs, but if you would be interested in seeing it you'd have to ask.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I went to the Art Museum yesterday morning and found it closed.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, they're putting on a new wing.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I didn't discover it until I went there, and I wanted very much to see the Art Museum. They told me over the telephone that they had nothing in the collection from the WPA days. Which surprised me, and I thought maybe if I went over there I could find something, but I couldn't get in.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I'm wondering if there's anything in the city collection from WPA days?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: The easel paintings were almost always allocated to some public buildings, either that or they were all sent to Washington, but if there were public buildings in the areas that wanted easel paintings, they took them from the WPA project. It seems strange that there is nothing in Phoenix that I've been able to find from those days.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I'll tell you where there were some paintings that were allocated, but what luck you would have in finding them, I don't know. And those went to the Arizona State College, in Tempe, which is now a University. But I remember that there were terrific paintings that were in Dr. Ganigan's office, at that time he was president of the college, he's since passed away. Another thing I'd like to ask you is if Phil or Tom, (I don't think Tom would have known about this, but Phil did of course) about the WPA project decorating one of the new buildings in Tempe that was built by the WPA and, incidentally, every drape in that place was designed by us and handwoven by these women.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I think that was the Women's Activities Building and it had a mural there, and they did the furniture. They had these cabinet makers that made the furniture and these women did the weaving for all the drapery.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: One of my projects was the furniture -- helping to design it and the supervision of the making of it -- and we had some fine cabinet makers who otherwise would have been out of work. It was a very interesting project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I was going to ask you what else you did beside the Saturday classes with the children?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, that was it. I was to work on the designing of the interiors and furniture and that was my project. Phil, of course, was over me but I was the one who had to go over there on the job every day to help the painters mix the colors, etc.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: There was also a sculpture project they talked about -- the Father Kino Shrines. I understood from Mr. Voris in Tucson and then from Mr. Wardell and Mr. Curtis -- all of them told me something about the series -- and I understood that there were 12 of them, but Mr. Curtis told me yesterday that only 2 of them were completed.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Do you mean those small statues?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, they were fairly large, they were put in shrines, and were supposed to follow...

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, I don't understand that -- Phil knows there were more than 2.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh? I'm sure there were supposed to be more than that, but he told me only 2 were completed.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, no, there were more than that, and of course this was a very unhappy situation, people molested them -- I guess he told you -- but they were very nicely done. They were done by ...

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Radke?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, Radke cast them but I believe the sculpture was by a woman on the art project, her name was Kathleen Wilson. She lives in California now -- I hear from her once in a while -- and also she made some wonderful small sculptures in the way of animals that children could play on for the training school at the college in Tempe.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, Mr. Wardell has some photographs of those.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I think they're still over there.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Which I thought were very interesting -- charming things. Well, were you the supervisor of this particular work?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: The sculpture on that? No. She was a very capable person and of course Radke was a professional mold maker and had worked in a place down here on South 9th Street where they made architectural cast concrete for buildings. He was very thoroughly trained in that -- a master at it. We were very fortunate in having someone like that on the project.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Were there more than one design in the Father Kino series?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, they were all the same, they were all cast from the same mold.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mr. Wardell told about one that is below Tucumcari(sp).

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Tucumcari(sp), that of course was one of Father Kino's churches.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I knew that it was, and he said this one always has fresh flowers there, so this one is kept very carefully by people in that area -- they are quite devout -- but I guess some of the others were vandalized. Well, how long were you on this project?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well let's see, where are we now? When I came here it was in '37, and when did World War II start?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: It was in '41 - Pearl Harbor.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: '41. In 1939 I won a national competition for the decoration for 3 United States Maritime vessels and so I went off the WPA.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Where did you do those?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I did those here.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What was the nature of them?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, the one that I won first prize on had to do with all sailors.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was it sculpture?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It was bas relief, all carved in wood, that's the first series. Let's see, there were 6 of these about 3 feet wide and 2 feet high and one of them was 14 feet long and 3 feet high. These went in the promenade deck in these combination passenger and cargo vessels. Now incidentally, this announcement for this competition was made just like the Treasury announcements were made and, as a matter of fact, I think it had something to do with the Treasury.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, it sounds like one of the Treasury Department projects. They were open competitions throughout the country.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: There were 1750 others who competed in this thing and this was one thing Lew Davis made me do. He said, "This is right up your alley," And I said, "Why, I haven't got a chance." "You're going to go back to your studio and knock these things off." So I sent in 3 sets of designs and I won first, second and third. I haven't won anything since.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That was quite a commission!

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: And then the second set had to do with decorative undersea life which was done out of rare tropical woods and plastic, or lucite -- which was just coming into being in those days. When I was back east to install the first set of carvings I went to the DuPont Company and worked with them to get the colors that I wanted, and then the third set had to do with people of the South Pacific -- Hawaiians, Samoans, Tahitians. I

even got into the Philippine Islands, and the first set I made are still, as near as I know, in the Navy Building at Newport News. They were taken out of the ship -- which was, incidentally, the U.S. Monroe, belonged to the Dollar Lines. I don't think that's any longer the case, but that's what used to happen, and after World War II, or just before World War II, these (murals) were taken out. But I have a cousin who was a Marine and he went into Saipan (in a ship) with my decorations still on it and they didn't even make it. The ship was sunk so I have decorations at the bottom of the ocean.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: What ship was that? Do you recall the name of it?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Let's see, there was the Monroe, the Garfield, and Van Buren, I think it was the Van Buren that they were on, the one with mural of undersea life.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That was appropriate, wasn't it -- that it went down -- if one had to go. What happened to the other ship?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I don't know. I've never inquired.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How long did it take you to do these?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I would guess I worked on them about a year. I know one thing that burned me up -- of course I was elated to get these things to do, but a few days after they had sent me a wire telling me that I won them I got another wire saying that you have 30 days to do the first set of carvings. And to try to make 6 carvings 2 by 3 -- and they were 2 inches thick, incidentally, out of hard wood -- and one 14 feet long and 3 feet high, in 30 days is rough. But I was able to get a little help and with the help of Lew Davis and his wife and my wife, we got these things done. We all sanded our fingers down to the bone, but I had more time on the others.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: How did you get paid for these?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: They were paid through the Treasury Department.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was it an advance that they gave you?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: They gave me an advance, yes, because I remember it was a third of it. When I think of what I got for those I shudder, too. I got \$900 a set. And I would guess that there would be \$400 worth of wood in each one of them, at present prices.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And you had to pay for the wood?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, yes, but in those days wood was much cheaper, of course. The material didn't cost much at all. I was afraid of the plastic because I had worked to get special colors -- I was afraid of the expense at DuPont, but in these lucite sheets -- which were quarter of an inch thick -- in the colors that I wanted, for some reason or another bubbles developed, so they gave me all the plastic, and it didn't make any difference anyway because these were decorative things and bubbles were very small.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I know in some of the other competitions that I've heard of, that that was the method of paying -- they'd pay a third in advance and a third at the middle of the process, and then the third at the end.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, that's right, but it was a tremendous amount of work. Of course the drawings I submitted were to scale, they were color renderings, and a few days after I found out I'd won I had to furnish them with full size cartoons. Just line drawings, but this got to be quite a chore, too. My wife reminded me of this the other day -- the girl I had representing Hawaii in the people of the South Pacific series didn't have a brassiere on -- I mean I've seen many pictures of hula dancers, especially the early ones, with just a grass skirt. They hadn't said anything about this before and they had seen the rendering in color, so I sent the cartoons to the man and in a few days I got one back, the one of the hula dancer, and they had drawn a brassiere on her. It said, "Please cover this area in color." I thought that was pretty good!

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I should say so! Well, what happened after you completed these?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, let me see, I just worked as a sculptor for a long time.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You didn't go back on the project after that?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, I was able to sell a little sculpture and then I also did some wood carved decorations for various homes in the Valley. And in those days -- even though they were depression days -- living was much cheaper than it is now and I didn't get exorbitant prices. I've never believed in exorbitant prices anyway. We did better then than we're doing now.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that right? When did you go to Scottsdale?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: We've lived in Scottsdale for 25 years? Long enough to be rich, and I'm not. Everyone thinks, not everyone, but so many people think that because I'm a sculptor and live in Scottsdale that I have it made.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That you're loaded?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, and I've had many opportunities to make money in Scottsdale but I didn't have any money to buy land, and at the time I had these opportunities they were still depression days and you just couldn't go down to the bank and borrow money. But it doesn't bother me, I'm happy and I enjoy my work.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's more important, certainly.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: The Davises were quite fortunate, they bought some land a long time ago, which incidentally is out in Paradise Valley, and they only paid \$8.00 an acre for it. They bought 80 acres and I think they sold it for about \$3500.00 a lot so you can imagine how much that brought them.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I understood from Mr. Curtis that you and Mr. Davis set up some kind of an art craft center in Scottsdale. Is that correct?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, is this in connection with Tom Darlington?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, this was something Mr. Curtis told me that you and Mr. Davis had set up. Some sort of ...

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, yes, this was about 17 years ago I would guess. Scottsdale began to pick up a little bit and, believe me in Scottsdale 17 years ago you could count on both hands the number of businesses that were open here. No kidding, there was a pool hall, 2 filling stations, a garage, a bar and a couple of grocery stores, that's about all it amounted to, but it had been larger than that. But anyway, Tom Darlington, who is an art collector and a well-to-do man, had had an idea of opening a craft center. At that time I believe he owned one of the guest hotels, part owner, and the gripe from many winter visitors was that there was nothing for them to do here, nothing for them to go see. The war was over and there were so many people who were craftsmen and -- I don't know whether Lloyd Kiva was mentioned to you?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh yes, yes, I know him in Santa Fe, he is with the Institute of American Indian Art, you know.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, I know, and he had taught at the Indian School here. Well, when Lloyd got out of the Navy he wanted to go into business and so Tom Darlington decided to buy this old building in Scottsdale, which was large, and to have shop space for these various craftsmen and the Davis' - Lew and his wife - had a ceramic shop where they manufactured ceramics, dinnerware mostly. Lloyd Kiva and his shop, where he just made handbags - ladies handbags - and he had Indians working for him, and I had a shop where I turned things out of wood on a lathe - you know, bowls and trays and that sort of thing - along with a few pieces of sculpture. These were of rare woods. Well anyway, those were the three main crafts. Oh yes, there was a Mr. Segner, who was a silversmith. He had a jewelry store and the other shops, which I think were only 3, one was an Indian painter, Dan Tsinnajinnie (one of my Navajo friends told me how to pronounce it), and just an ordinary commercial Indian shop. There were no crafts going on and that was the start of crafts in Scottsdale. It's a shame the way they're gone, but the building burned and that sort of put an end to that, which was a shame because Mr. Darlington realized the expense that the craftsmen would have in getting started, and so, if you couldn't pay your rent, why he was willing to go along with you and tide you through. He did a wonderful job and is actually responsible for getting crafts started in Scottsdale.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, Mr. Curtis told me about that, too, and that you men were responsible for Scottsdale's early reputation, which attracted so many other craftsmen later.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Then after that I was asked to teach over at Arizona State College. They wanted me to teach the many GI's who were coming back, and when the college began to grow they asked if I'd be interested in teaching sculpture. And so I went over there and taught sculpture and drawing and perspective and never worked so hard in my life. 7 1/2 years and I didn't have to quit, I did quit, but I was always having it thrown up to me by the head of the Fine Arts Department - not my boss, incidentally, but the man who was over dramatics and art - that I didn't have a degree and I said, "Well, I don't have a degree, but I've had lots of practical experience," so they made it a ruling that the head of any department had to have a Doctor's degree and my boss, Paula Kloster, who was a wonderful person and has done so much for the art department, only had a Master's degree. She'd done a certain amount of work on her Doctorate, but she had to step down and they brought another man in here, Dr. Wood, who I have since learned didn't have a Doctor's degree in Art but only in Philosophy, which is all right - I mean, I wish I had a Doctor's degree in Philosophy. Anyway he got her job - she had to step down - and I had 2 or 3 good size commissions coming up and I said, "Sanderson, this is a good

time for you to get out," so I did, because the college was crammed from so many GIs coming in and the Art department was always the last one to receive any benefits from money. Any other department that wanted money, why they'd get it, but never the Art Department. It made teaching very difficult - to work with not enough supplies. I enjoyed teaching.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, what have you done since then?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, I've done everything - I've worked at sculpture part time and I've even done technical illustrating at Motorola, I did until I developed Valley fever and had to quit that, but mostly sculpture. I've done a lot of work for the Valley National Bank, they have 90 branches, I believe, and I have made many reliefs, nearly all of them are carved, incidentally, outside of one or two that are mosaic. I must have worked in about 15 of their banks, I just finished a job yesterday, incidentally.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Is that the one down at Nogales?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, its on the way to Nogales - about 22 miles south of Tucson there is a beautiful new retirement community called Green Valley and they have a bank.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: That's the one you did yesterday?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes. And I worked so hard on that and it's very difficult to get anyone to help you. I hope you didn't think I'm bragging but I'm a perfectionist, and people can annoy me in the shipshod manner they have of doing things, that's the reason I'd use this young friend of mine, the architect in Dallas, because he knows how I like things, and this is just to help me put it up. He's been a construction man so we went down and we got the stuff up - no trouble at all - with no hammer marks on the wall and that sort of thing, but I've had a lot of trouble from time to time. It would be different if I could afford to hire someone all the time as an apprentice but that's hard to do.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, I suppose they want such large wages now.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, even when I was teaching I used to get my students to help me once in a while and they wanted too much money. And believe me I'm not tight, I'm willing to put out if I can afford it, but as I say I don't get exorbitant prices.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: You can't give up everything you make on a job to a helper, certainly. Well, I think we still have not appreciated the artist enough in the community, but I think the Art Project did a lot to increase the appreciation of art in this country, don't you?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I certainly do. I was thinking about it on the way in this morning, I wish there were some way, some sane way, to subsidize artists. But I really don't know how, I don't know how to do it, but I have known so many people that if they just had a little help to go on they would really be a fine artist.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I suppose just establishing standards would be one of the difficult things since there are so many different kinds of standards.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: That of course was one of the problems in the WPA days, I'm sure.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I think it would be harder now because, for instance, somebody who was all out for Abstract Expressionism wouldn't like anything that had any subject matter and vice versa.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, incidentally, while I'm thinking of it, I got an announcement I believe in yesterday's mail, or the day before yesterday, from the Modern Art Gallery in Scottsdale which is our new gallery. They are having an exhibit of Fletcher Martin's paintings and I haven't heard of Fletcher Martin in years, and I believe he was a WPA artist. Have you heard of Fletcher Martin?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, that name is not familiar to me. Was it in this area?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, no. As well as I remember he was born in Iowa and at one time he taught at the Kansas City Art Institute, (incidentally I went to school there a year or two, I forgot to tell you that) and he became quite a painter, during the period when painters were painting the American scene - which, I think, was a fine era, incidentally, in art. I wish we'd get back into it, but I think we will to a certain extent. Well, I'm anxious to go see this exhibit because I was always fond of his work and I just haven't heard of him for years. I thought he was teaching and it sort of dried up or something.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: So you don't know where he would have been located during that period?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I haven't the faintest idea. This little announcement just told where he was born and what

year and I think where he studied and the prizes he'd won.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, that's one difficulty in this survey that we're trying to make -- that the artists have moved out of the area in which they worked during the WPA days, so now we don't know where they are, and all of a sudden they turn up somewhere or another.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Now he has lived in Colorado but whether he lives there now, I don't know. If you want to give that lady a ring, I don't know her name but she's awfully nice. She could probably tell you where he lives.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, I'll write down that name.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Its called the Modern Art Gallery on West Main Street in Scottsdale.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And his name was Fletcher Martin?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Fletcher Martin. Let's see, I'm 57, I would guess he's about 63 or 4. But I'm almost positive that he was on, what did they call it? The WPA easel project?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: The Federal Art Project, during the WPA days they called it that. Oh, say, there is one thing I wonder if you could clear up for me, and that it what happened to the art center in Phoenix after the WPA closed down? There are conflicting stories and I wondered what your recollection is of that.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Gee, I'm trying to think. I just have a faint recollection of Tom Wardell having something to do with it.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, he told me that there were some people who were interested in continuing the art center...

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Yes, there were a number of women in Phoenix who were, and I'm sure they must have been in on this thing. They wanted to take it out of the hands of the government just at the time when we were really doing well and I'm sure that they must have had something to do with it. I should remember more about this except I was very busy, but I taught there at night.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Mr. Wardell said that it went into an old barn and then...

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, it started where the WPA Art Project had been -- down on Adams street -- and then it went into an old barn on McDowell, which is a very attractive place, because when you say "barn" this was one of these fine old Phoenix residences and this was a kind of a stable that you'd like to live in.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Oh that kind of a barn, I see!

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It's since been torn down. I always had my eye on that in hopes that I could buy it someday. About that time I left here for a year, my wife and I went down to the southern part of the state where I did a lot of work on a big fine home, we were down there for about a year and a half and as well as I can remember when we got back the whole thing had blown over.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Well, let me see, I think it was Mr. Wardell who said that it went from there into some other building and then stayed there until the Phoenix Art Museum was built four or five years ago, but that there was always a continuity from the days of the WPA right up until the Phoenix Art Museum was built.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I wasn't aware of that, but when I got into teaching I was so busy and also trying to do a little work on my own that I didn't keep very close contact with what was going on.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: But do you feel that it gave a boost to art in Phoenix generally?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, I think it was one of the greatest things that ever happened to art here.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Good, that is one of the things we are attempting to find out -- to what degree it did stimulate art interest in the community.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: There were any number of architects in town who were conscious of what was going on and what we had been doing on the project -- decorating that building at Tempe -- and it made them conscious of what could be done in the way of decorations for buildings.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Do you feel that it gave you a boost personally, too?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Oh, definitely, because in getting around the building traces - which I had to on account of the supervision of the building, decorating the building in Tempe - I got to know many of the architects, and

that helped no end. A lot of them were very sympathetic and I'm sure that it opened up new fields for them, or ideas, as far as what could be done for a building. It was a lot of fun.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Those exciting days!

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It was a lot of work, but a lot of fun. I was always fascinated when I draw - and which I haven't done for a long time (I have a blood clot on the optic nerve of my right eye which is slowly going away, let me find some wood) - but when I used to draw it was very realistically and those Index plates used to just intrigue me to no end.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Did you ever do any of them?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: No, we had an old lady on the project that did. I don't know if Phil told you about her, I've forgotten her name, but she was real good and she was real old.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Yes, he did, but he said there was very little material here, branding irons and revolvers and things like that, but there didn't seem to be very much to do. I saw a good many of those plates when I was in the east and also in New Mexico, they did them on the Spanish Colonial Art, there.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I know it, some of those Santos and old Spanish chests. I have a book at home on it, put out by the Museum of Modern Art. I don't know how many years ago, it had to do with painting on the WPA and evidently they exhibited at that time some of the Index plates.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: Was the New Horizons?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: I think so.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: I'm acquainted with that book and it does give a good sampling of the work that was done. Well, we're just about at the end of our tape, I guess, but you certainly have given us a good deal of very good information, and we're very glad to have this. I want to thank you and also for coming in to be interviewed here rather than having me go out there again to Scottsdale. That was kind of hard.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: It's a shame you had such a hard time finding Phil, but of course that's not an easy place to find, even for a taxi driver, unless he lives in the Scottsdale area. Was it on the map?

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, it wouldn't be.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: He was sure I meant Camel Back instead of Cattletrack.

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well, it's a very short road, it isn't very long.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: No, but it was very interesting to see his work, I was fascinated by his painting. Where could I see some of your work? Are there any banks that are easily accessible that I could go to?

PHILLIPS SANDERSON: Well you see I've done more work out of Phoenix for the banks than I have in Phoenix. There's some of my work in the Valley National Bank in the Mayer Building that's across the street from Park Central. Have you heard of Park Central since you've been here? Well its a big shopping center on North Central.

SYLVIA LOOMIS: And where?

END OF INTERVIEW

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