



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Elizabeth Boyd,
1964 October 8

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Elizabeth Boyd on October 8, 1964. The interview was conducted in Santa Fe, New Mexico by Sylvia Loomis for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

SL: SYLVIA LOOMIS

EB: ELIZABETH BOYD

SL: Miss Boyd was connected with the New Mexico phase of the Index of American Design under the Federal Arts Projects in 1936 and '37. Even though she typed up a report of her activities on this project and gave it to us about a year ago, she has consented to be interviewed about other aspects of this work. First, E., would you tell us something about yourself, where you were born and where you received your art education?

EB: I was born in Philadelphia, Pa. and I attended the Academy of Fine Arts there.

SL: Didn't you go to Paris?

EB: Later.

SL: Where did you study there?

EB: I went to the Grande Chaumiere and spent a great deal of time traveling around other parts of Western Europe.

SL: And what did you specialize in, in your studies?

EB: Painting, and looking at painting.

SL: Did you have any special teachers in Paris?

EB: No. I deliberately signed up for a course at Chaumiere at which there was no criticism. I found it much more liberal after the Academy of Fine Arts, to go somewhere I could just work at my own theories, my ideas, the theories that I had at the time.

SL: Did you come back to Philadelphia after that?

EB: Yes, for a while.

SL: And what was your professional background in art before you became involved in the Project?

EB: More painting and, for bread and butter purposes, some interior decoration.

SL: What about this dude ranch you were telling about?

EB: That was after I moved out here. Also bread and butter.

SL: When did you come to New Mexico?

EB: 1929.

SL: You visited here, didn't you, as a younger person?

EB: I'm afraid that's the trouble. My parents brought me here when I was an impressionable child and it never seemed to rub off.

SL: So you wanted to come back?

EB: I came back for three months to see what it was like. And here I am.

SL: It's been quite a long stay. What were you doing at the time you started work for the Index?

EB: Like all the other artists were, I was scrambling around looking for something to produce bread and butter. I

had actually been working on the Emergency Direct Relief Program in the Santa Fe County office, with a number of other Santa Fe'ans. That seemed to be the most available opening for unemployed people in all walks of life, at the time, if they were able to serve as case aides and to distribute both money orders and food orders for the relief cases.

SL: And when was that? '34 and '35? Just before you started on the Index?

EB: That ran a little less than two years in '34 and '35 and was automatically closed and abolished by the creation of the WPA and its various projects.

SL: Then how did you get involved in the work of the Federal Art Project?

EB: Primarily I was interested in doing some sort of work which was going to be connected with painting, and by that time I had also been inoculated with a great interest in the local New Mexican folk school or Santero school painting and of sculpture. At the time there was absolutely no available printed information on the subject and there seemed to be very little knowledge, although later we found a good deal of information on the makers of these folk creations, mostly by stumbling through archives or tracking down their descendants. But the archives were still unpublished.

SL: Who contacted you about it, about working on the Project, or did you go to them?

EB: The late Donald Bear, who was at the time the director of the Denver Art Museum, in Colorado, was appointed from Washington as the Regional Director of the Federal Art Project of the five states. New Mexico was one of them. And he consulted me. As a matter of fact, he consulted me on any suggestions that I might have for a New Mexico artist to be the director of the New Mexico state project, who did not live in Santa Fe or Taos.

SL: Then you were instrumental in getting Vernon Hunter his job, weren't you?

EB: Yes. At the time, Vernon Hunter was in Texico which is almost on the Texas border and was not affiliated with one of the then two existing art schools.

SL: What was your first assignment on this project?

EB: At the time, the Index of American Design had not been dreamed up yet in Washington and so we agreed that it would be feasible and desirable to start making a series of literal renderings of the santos, where they were in churches in situ or in public and private collections, which would give some idea of their original color better than the then available black and white photographs which could be taken. Then they had no prospect for funds for publication but they hoped somehow to arrange that later, which they did, finally. And after the project had been going for some months, the over-all national plan of the Index of American Design was originated in Washington, and it more or less overlapped what I was doing, although of course it was much more extensive because it covered all sorts of material, not just one area of religious folk art.

SL: I see.

EB: After that I continued to work on the Portfolio (of Spanish Colonial Art) which was planned for a limited number of plates only, and at the same time worked for the Index and, in the end, all the plates that I did for the Portfolio and the Project ended up in the Index of American Design.

SL: I see. I never could get straight in my head about how the Portfolio and the Index fitted together.

EB: We had had the Portfolio idea first.

SL: Yes.

EB: And later on they just said well you can use what you choose for the Portfolio, which is a limited publication, limited to two hundred copies, but at first they included everything that was done. Then the great difficulty was to find, among all the self-expressive creative artists, anyone else who was willing to do literal renderings of work which they had not invented themselves.

SL: Now to go back a minute, you mentioned something about a conference with Bear and Hunter and some Archbishop . . . ?

EB: Archbishop Gerken. He was most cooperative. He was the first of any of the Archbishops of Santa Fe who took any honest interest in local history or the santos themselves, especially those that were in his own churches and parishes. So he was kind enough to write a letter of introduction in Spanish which I carried around with me as a sort of an "Open Sesame" for getting into remote churches where the villagers were still suspicious of any foreigners. Foreigners, by the way, meant anybody who came from outside of their village, including

Santa Fe.

SL: So actually this Portfolio of Spanish Colonial Art in New Mexico was organized and set up before the Index was, and it was through the cooperation of Archbishop Gerken and Hunter. Did you get any instruction from Washington about how the work of the Index should be done?

EB: Oh yes. There were universal instructions that everything should be done to scale, as nearly as possible.

SL: Were you asked to provide the history of each item, or just to identify them?

EB: We were to provide the history where it was available, but of course, at that time, there was very little history available. It was still buried in the archives which we had no opportunity to study.

SL: By the archives you mean the archives of the Catholic Church?

EB: Partly the Catholic Church and the New Mexico archives which have been catalogued and abstracted in two volumes, Spanish Archives in New Mexico by Ralph Twitchell. But those, you know, are public archives to which you can refer.

SL: Did you have anyone to help you with this research?

EB: Not on the research, no. There were two other workers on the Project who did the renderings and all of us were confined at that time to measurements of the objects and the names of the owners and the locations or areas.

SL: When you went around to these various villages, how did you go about getting this information, and what did you do when you located an item?

EB: Well, I usually had to persuade the custodian and the rest of the village that this letter was really from the Archbishop and they would usually take it to the general storekeeper, who could read. He would read aloud and they would say yes, yes, it really is from the Archbishop. And then they would assign an old woman or a child to sit in the unheated church -- it happened to be winter time and quite cold -- and watch me for hours on end while I sat there doing little renderings in water color.

SL: So you went to all these places that you listed in the report that you made up? Gracious, what a job!

EB: I remember I did some work at Santa Cruz in that church, before it was overpainted, as it now is, and it was in the middle of winter and, although they had a large iron stove which was supposed to be lighted early Sunday mornings for Mass, it was never lighted during the week, and it would get so cold that you could see your breath. I would go outside and jump up and down in the sun for a few minutes and go back inside.

SL: What were the things that you did renderings of at this time?

EB: Altar screens, missal stands, santos -- whatever happened to be at whatever point you were -- some of the outstanding and particular things which were not available in photographs in already published books. I did some things also in the museum -- our museums of New Mexico -- and I'm very glad I did some objects which were then for sale in curio stores for, of course, since then, they've been scattered to points unknown.

SL: Did you do anything besides religious objects?

EB: I didn't. Other people on the Project -- a few people -- did some textiles such as embroidered colchas, but for the most part we stuck to the New Mexican santos and associated objects.

SL: I see. You said something about the cattle brands that you dug up in Albuquerque.

EB: Well, they were ink drawings done by a man who was on the Project living in Albuquerque. He was assigned to go to the State Cattle Sanitary Board and to copy ink drawings from the original brand registry book to collect some of the old Spanish Ranch brands, which were very different from modern ones and to put down the names of the outfits or spreads that used them. I'm afraid the information was somewhat ragged, for I was asked to write up the information and found it was not worth sending in with the drawings to Washington. And the same way with the Folklorica Society and other groups of women where they had the family heirloom costumes. You had the name of the lady who was modeling it, with information that this had belonged to her grandmother or somebody. Not very good information.

SL: So you didn't actually get the name of the town?

EB: Well, all I could do was type what I was given -- that it was a Santa Fe woman, but that didn't prove her

grandmother lived here.

SL: That's right, so you didn't really have any history of it.

EB: Many of the clothes were obviously the type that came from St. Louis, or the east, and usually were never made here in the first place.

SL: I see. Did you have any direct supervision in this?

EB: Oh, once or twice a month I would turn in the work and report to the state office, the director Vernon Hunter, and assistant Joy Yeck. Otherwise I was more or less left on my own.

SL: You mentioned something about a reassignment in June of 1936.

EB: That was routine. When the Project had run six months it ran out and then it was rejuvenated.

SL: Oh, I see. I wonder if it might have been a reassignment to a different area.

EB: No, the Project was set up for six months and then they renewed it and they kept on renewing until the WPA folded.

SL: I see. Now do you remember specifically what those first five or six plates were that you worked on?

EB: I don't remember, but I have a notion that for practice I probably went down to the museum and tried a couple of small things. But I can't remember.

SL: Well, I wondered if there was a difference between those and the ones you did later.

EB: I probably improved as I went along.

SL: What happened to those renderings that you did?

EB: They were all sent every month or two months to Washington. And there they were kept along with all the other work being done in the then forty-eight states (I think about forty states probably). From time to time they sent out exhibitions from Washington of all this mass of work in suitable classifications. Just to show what other parts of the country were doing.

SL: Now, there were some of those you did that they made wood blocks out of, and then colored?

EB: Well, that was the final solution for getting out an edition of two hundred copies rather than one hand-made set. Because this gave more employment since there was no specific money set up for printing, although we eventually did end up with some money for printing a few pages of text. But various unemployed persons who knew how to cut either linoleum or wood blocks were assigned to take my renderings, which were done with water color and brushes, and reduce them to a wood block and this was printed in an edition of two hundred, and then assigned to other people in other parts of the state who had never seen the original. They were given a little box of water colors and they were told to fill out the . . . say, fifty sent to one person, fifty to another. This produced a great deal of confusion as the actual brands of paint given to these colorists were not the same as those I was using, and in the second place they hadn't seen the original, and in the third place, there was a great discrepancy between the neatness and efficiency with which they filled in areas of color or ran over the line. In order to guide them I always had to make at least four colored copies -- one for each colorist -- as a guide from my original one.

SL: Then they just hit it as closely as they could?

EB: Yes, and these reproductions often left something to be desired.

SL: But then these eventually ended up in the Portfolios of Spanish Colonial Design?

EB: Yes, and in due time somehow they came up with funds to print a short text, an introductory and explanatory text in the Portfolio. That, incidentally, is a very handsome piece of printing. It was done by Rydal Press when it was operated by its founder Walter Goodwin, who won a great many prizes in exhibits of the fifty best books of the year in the east.

SL: And you say there were two hundred copies of this Portfolio printed?

EB: It was never intended, or allowed, to be sold. It was supposed to be distributed among public libraries. Some of the copies were, some were given to persons who had allowed their personal collections to be used in the

Portfolio.

SL: You mentioned in your report about your interviews with Espinosa and Aberle, Campa, priests, traders, and so forth. Could you elaborate a little bit on what different subjects you discussed with them?

EB: These were largely interviews initiated by me in order to see if I could learn anything more about the material. I found the traders knew about Spanish or Indians from whom they had obtained the objects and the market value, and the priests knew less than nothing about anything. They usually never identified the subject and took a very dim view of the whole thing. Dr. Campa of course is a linguist and is still teaching Spanish. He had done a great deal of research and had published on local ballads and religious hymns and antique phases of the Spanish language that survived in New Mexico, but he had very little to offer in the way of information on santos. He was helpful in trying to translate some of the archaic inscriptions. Gilberto Espinosa, who is a lawyer in Albuquerque, and is of an old New Mexico family, had a collection of these santos, a personal collection of which he is very proud, but his information was mostly limited to the persons from whom he had obtained the santos or folklore on the subject, So he couldn't give much information as to their origin.

SL: It must have been pretty difficult to try to dig out information on any of these things. What about Dr. Aberle? I wondered what connection she could have with this.

EB: At that time she was the superintendent of the Northern Indiana Pueblos and I went to see her mainly to find out what could be done about getting permission to work in some of the Pueblo churches and, as I might have expected, she said that the Indian agencies had nothing to say about the Indian churches and that this was a matter between them and the Catholic Church, and the Catholic Church threw the ball back and said the same thing. Except for the shining exception of Laguna Pueblo where they're acculturated and cooperative, I didn't do any work in any of the Pueblo churches.

SL: You couldn't get into them?

EB: Couldn't get in. Oh, I could go in, but not work.

SL: What was the purpose of this photography project which F.A.P. was also involved in . . . ?

EB: Apparently to employ unemployed photographers.

SL: But I noticed you said something about the subject matter being of New Mexico antique items.

EB: Well, they were. In addition to the artists, they had photographers photographing all sorts of privately-owned material and buildings, as well as the ladies' consumes. They seemed to have no particular standards other than having a camera and being able to point it. As you can see they are very poor photographs.

SL: Well, who found these various items for them to photograph?

EB: I imagine that that was done as usual by hearsay. You hear of somebody who has something, or somebody has said they have something.

SL: Was there any particular research person in charge of this?

EB: Not that I know of.

SL: Just whoever happened to know something?

EB: Again, the photographers failed to get much information except the names of the owners.

SL: Did you work closely with them?

EB: I didn't work closely. I was just supposed to keep a serial list of the project numbers on each photograph, just as I had to on each drawing, and see that there were uniformly typed labels -- descriptive labels -- on the back. But this was all just more paperwork.

SL: Would you have even a vague idea of how many items were involved in this?

EB: As for the photography, I wouldn't know. That went on of course much longer than I was on the Project.

SL: I see.

EB: As you can tell by just looking over that great folder of photographs of Barela wood carvings or another great folder you saw, just the new material made for the Albuquerque Little Theatre, an enormous amount of

photographs for one little project.

SL: I wonder if you would explain further what you meant by the lack of standards of acceptability in any field within the art project that made you sort of dissatisfied with the way the Project was going.

EB: Well, in some cases they happened to have employed on the art project competent artists. Most of these competent artists wanted to express themselves, do creative work and most of them were allowed to, but at the same time they not only employed all artists in need but also any that claimed to be artists, or even those who had always wanted to take up art and never had time.

SL: That was a broad field! Ha ha.

EB: And this sort of led me to wonder what was the purpose.

SL: And then you said something about the low standard as far as the Spanish-Americans were concerned, who were hired to do some of these wood carvings, to make copies of the santos.

EB: They were encouraged to go in and sit and observe the museum collection and make copies, or around Taos, to make copies of what was in the Ranchos Church, but there were absolutely no standards there. If you're making a copy, my interpretation is that it should be a copy and not something that resembles the original but with a great deal left out and with poor proportions or distortion. Or with other ideas introduced.

SL: Who were the wood carvers who did this?

EB: One of them who is still alive and making imitation santos is Juan Sanchez. Another was Santiago Matta, who has since died. Incidentally, while working on his own he did some quite interesting original things in the field of 20th century folk sculpture. His copies make you weep, and he was most prolific.

SL: Well, I saw quite a good many of them down in Albuquerque, in the Fine Arts Department. They still have some down in the basement there.

EB: We have them scattered around at MOIFA (Museum of International Folk Art). These people made so many of them at the time. In order to bring culture to these isolated communities they set up what was called Junior Museum exhibits of material, which was not regular museum collection material but what was project production and so I would roughly guess there were about fifteen or more in New Mexican towns, and in the high school or the public library or whatever depository was available in these towns, probably fifteen or twenty WPA project imitation santos were assigned to each one of them. In many cases they were communities which were non-Spanish and non-Catholic and they were not appropriate.

SL: They were not really appreciated?

EB: They were not really appreciated because the citizens of these little towns had actually no background on the originals. This would apply to all southern localities, Southern New Mexico and Northwestern New Mexico.

SL: Who supervised that project?

EB: Well, this one, I believe, was the director Vernon Hunter, working in cooperation with the Director of the Art Museum who was then Mrs. Van Stone and Reginald Fisher, who at that time had some office at the Museum . . .

SL: That can partly account for it. Well, now would you tell us a little more about these exhibitions that you said traveled throughout the United States?

EB: These were, as I mentioned -- apropos of the Index drawings -- all sorts of original works by artists from various areas of the United States and of course they were classified in a sensible way such as "print exhibits" or "regional folk exhibits." They do have folk art in other parts of the United States too, and they certainly had a wide region over which they traveled. The main idea I think was to show what the art project was doing and also to show one area what other areas were doing because, up until that time, except for the Pennsylvania German material in the east, very little attention had been paid to any folk art of the United States by anyone.

SL: Tell about what happened in Philadelphia.

EB: Well, Philadelphia is part of the State of Pennsylvania and I believe since the founding of the Republican Party, it's been one hundred percent Republican for so long that the New Deal Democratic innovations were still being resisted as much as possible, so the general policy was not to avail themselves of the work projects or federal projects, "boondoggling," and so forth. So when it was proposed that they exhibit some of the Art Project material, including the Index of American Design, there seemed to be no available buildings or galleries in which

to have the exhibitions, which had already been seen in New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, San Francisco and other large cities. Finally a compromise was reached by the city Council of Philadelphia and the Art Project, and all of their art project exhibits were shown in the long underground corridor of the Philadelphia subway. This I suppose had a direct public influence.

SL: Yes, it certainly would at a certain level, let us say. Was there any reaction to this as far as the people of Philadelphia was concerned? Did this help to improve their ideas about the Federal Art Project?

EB: If you'll remember, the majority of subway users, as far as I can remember while living in the east, were usually in a hurry.

SL: Yes, that's true. So you don't think it did have much of an impact. What did you do after you left the Project?

EB: Well, then I moved to Arizona and, in the course of a few years, became a sort of "back door" archeologist and, at the same time, I must admit that, when the occasion permitted, continued to keep track of New Mexico folk art in public and private collections outside of New Mexico and also, where possible, reading back into Mexican history and, of course, keeping up some sort of research into Spanish sources.

SL: What kind of archeology was this?

EB: Southwestern.

SL: Was it Spanish-American at all, or just Indian?

EB: This was just sitting in on University seminars and so on -- a painless way -- and going out on field trips for digs.

SL: When did you become involved with the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles?

EB: Not the Southwest Museum.

SL: Oh, wasn't it?

EB: No, the Los Angeles County Museum.

SL: Oh, I always thought it was the Southwest Museum.

EB: That's because we both know people there.

SL: Yes, that's true, we do. Well, so it was the Los Angeles County Museum.

EB: Which is quite large and it had a good collection of Mexican material and European material that actually had nothing to do with my interest in New Mexican folk art. It was simply the usual pursuit of a job. And, while there, I did manage to have enough time on the side to do more research and occasionally write little articles on santos. In other words, I was still in contact.

SL: When were you there?

EB: In the late 1940's until 1951.

SL: And that was when you came back to Santa Fe? What did you come back for?

EB: Because I was asked to come back and work for the Museum. I started the infant Spanish Colonial Department which the State Museum of New Mexico wanted set up.

SL: How was that precipitated?

EB: I would say by one episode principally, which concerned this small private chapel in Taos, which, you may remember, is actually on the road to Talpa, outside of town, and was quite ramshackle. It had been a point of interest for sightseers and visitors for many years. It was architecturally fine. It's listed in the Historic American Building Survey drawn in detail and to scale -- and it contained a great collection of excellent santos made in New Mexico, all in excellent condition. Due to family circumstances, the owners finally decided to sell it. Whereupon it was bought by another museum in another state for cash. After all, the owners had a right to sell and the other museum had a right to buy, but when the word got around there was an outburst of popular indignation on the part of the New Mexico taxpayers who said that the Museum of New Mexico had to start at this late date to do something about preserving their regional heritage.

SL: Was Cady Wells involved in that?

EB: He was at the time away and everyone apparently expected that one or two public-spirited citizens of Taos and the same of Santa Fe would just rush forward and handle it personally, and Wells at the time happened to be out of the United States and, of the other public-spirited people, some of them were away and some of them just felt that after all there was a limit to what they should do -- that there should be some public responsibility. But he certainly was involved in pressing for museum action afterwards.

SL: And this was what year?

EB: 1950.

SL: That was when they started the Spanish Colonia Department?

EB: That's when they heard about the chapel, and in the early months of 1950 the Museum Board of Regents and the School of American Research, which were then affiliated in operating the Museum, began discussing ways and means. It was not a legislative year for starting a department of importance, and by about March they inquired if I would be interested in coming back, so I arrived to begin work as of July first.

SL: Did you have any staff?

EB: I never heard of such a silly question!

SL: It's a loaded question.

EB: I'm afraid you lose.

SL: I knew you didn't. How long was it before you had any additional help?

EB: Four years. Actually I had a little volunteer help, thanks to the volunteers. But I take it back, I think it was five years before I had a staff assistant.

SL: And what did you accomplish in those years, before and after?

EB: Well, in the years before it was a matter, in the first place, of over-hauling the old collections which were in bad physical condition and completely uncatalogued, and getting them accessioned with some sort of description, so they could be used reconditioned somewhat, or conserved. At the same time I had to do the usual thing -- acquaint the public of the existence of the material in the Museum department, which involved giving many little speeches to various small groups and organizations, writing little articles to get into the newspapers -- which I had to do myself -- and writing to outside institutions, publishing little articles in little magazines.

SL: Did the collection begin to grow after this?

EB: The collection began to grow surprisingly. I had rather gloomily said that it was too little and too late, but it was quite rewarding to see how, when there was someone responsible to be in charge of these objects and take care of them, there was a response and we were able to raise a little money every so often and buy things, and there was quite a response with Museum patrons giving things. The collection has been growing ever since.

SL: Did the New Mexico State Legislature appropriate any money for this?

EB: At their next session they did. They confirmed this new department -- although it wasn't much -- and they continued it. Of course the legislature actually appropriates so much to the Museum and it is up to the Museum directors to budget as they see fit among the divisions.

SL: I see.

EB: There wasn't any special allowance for collecting Spanish Colonial items.

SL: Has that situation improved any recently?

EB: Recently it has, inasmuch as they have appropriated enough money so that part of the overall budget can be assigned to collection material.

SL: Did you want to say something about the Spanish Colonial Art Society that helped to support it?

EB: They gave it a great deal of support. That is an organization which, as you know, was chartered in 1929 and again by a group of people who were interested in Spanish colonial culture rather than Indian, which was getting all the attention from the Museum and its staff, and many of its patrons. They seem to have organized for the

purpose of collecting information and material and also succeeded in inducing the State Museum to set aside at first one room in which they could deposit some of their collection, and they had intended to go on and build up a bigger exhibit for the public in the Old Palace. However, during the Depression and then the War, the Society had become -- what shall we say -- dormant? And that was another one of my jobs in the first years of my work for the Museum, to reanimate that Society. Fortunately a number of the founders were still living and they were very cooperative in helping me to get it active again, with a membership and dues and other incomes so it could function. That went on quietly but steadily serving as another source of money to acquire items and also to give gifts.

SL: About what proportion of the collection at the Museum belongs to the Spanish colonial Art Society?

EB: I would say about a third, and the rest of it was divided between the State and The School of American Research.

SL: What is your work now at the Museum?

EB: Just about the same except that the Museum is better organized and it has more of a long-range program. Some of the long-range program involves the reinstallation of the whole Governor's Palace as a historic building, which is what it is primarily. One of the most historic buildings in the United States and certainly the oldest public building. And by removing the archeological exhibits then we hope to be able to do a sort of kaleidoscopic panorama of exhibits which tell something of the history of the Palace itself, which of course involves the history of New Mexico.

SL: Yes, since 1610. Aren't you now the Curator of Collections for the entire Museum?

EB: No. For a while I was filling the job of Curator for all collections of the division of International Folk Art as well as Spanish Colonial. But we now have a curator for the international collection. And in the meantime we have gone ahead with another long-term project, Spanish Colonial has been expanded back to its sources so that we are collecting and doing research on and exhibiting material which represents the prototypes and roots of New Mexican Spanish Colonial and that of course goes back not only to Europe but the whole Mediterranean and the Arabs, the Near East and Far East.

SL: Would you tell us something about the recent identification of the New Mexico santeros and what you believe their status should be in regard to the Archives of American Art?

EB: I don't quite get that question. Do you mean what their status should be? You're speaking of the early Santeros, not living ones? You mean that their names should be interpolated in connection with renderings of their work, or what?

SL: The policy of the Archives of American Art is not to do archival work on artists that have not been identified, such as the early Indian artists. They are not included in the Archives, but the very fact that so many of these old Santeros have now been identified -- and we know what their names are and where they worked and what work they did -- and my question is do you consider them a legitimate source of material for the Archives of American Art?

EB: Oh, I would say I certainly do, although we don't have their photographs or letters or diaries. But, after all, what material has been found so far will all appear in that interminable book that I'm working on when it's published.

SL: Yes. Would it be possible to document this work from the existing archives in New Mexico?

EB: Well, when you do have an individual's name and you can look up either or both his baptismal or burial records, it seems to me there's some concrete documentation.

SL: Well, I was thinking about the Archives of the Archdiocese of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

EB: That's where you find the records.

SL: Yes, and also the work they did, and where it's located, so that there is

EB: Oh, that's going to be in my book.

SL: I see. Did you want to say a little more about your book?

EB: No. It's just a long time a-borning, but it endeavors to cover not only the santeros, but other phases of colonial material culture, such as their wood-working ,domestic furnishings, textiles, and minor arts. Many of those, of course, must be completely anonymous.

SL: Yes, of course. Well, is there anything more you would like to say about your period with the Index of American Design?

EB: Well, I think I got a good deal more out of it than a lot of people, personally, because it did give me the opportunity to concentrate on the material instead of working on it spasmodically, which I had been doing before, and it got me around to a lot of really excellent spots that I probably never would have bothered to look into, locked-up chapels and so on, and it put me in contact with all sorts of localities which at that time were still unspoiled by Los Alamos and recent modernization.

SL: What would you say was the public reaction in this area to this work of the Index of American Design and also the other Federal Art projects? Did you observe very much of that?

EB: Well, it depends on which part of the public you're talking about. Of course, all the unemployed artists or photographers, or others with professional skills, wanted to get on the band wagon and complained if they weren't able to do so. I think the public, by and large, didn't pay much attention to it depending on their political slant. Most people out here were Democrats and they thought it was a good idea to employ people and not give them direct relief, but I don't think they paid much attention to what was going on. In the case of the Albuquerque Little Theatre project, at the time, that made quite a bang in Albuquerque, and it was admired and appreciated by a much larger group of the public than those involved in doing the work.

SL: Oh yes, I wanted to ask you about that Coronado Museum, too. You said that it was built by WPA funds, which I didn't know before.

EB: Yes. Well, there again you have a ruin which had already been excavated by the University and reported on, but then it was left. Like every other ruin after excavation there was no interpretation and so, through the funds available and the staff available, with the cooperation of the University, they were able to set up a visitor's center and quarters for a custodian to take care of it. Due to the limited pay and the limited facilities of the custodian, of course, the exhibits had to be rather elementary, but the buildings themselves, I think, are typical of good old Spanish Pueblo architecture to look at and they still are. The actual construction was exceedingly Jerry-built and shoddy. Constant repair has been necessary ever since, but at least it did give a focal point for visitors near the main highway north of town. Visitors flock over to see a ruin, with some sort of background provided, and without the time consumed by going through a national park like Mesa Verde which is a whole expedition in itself. Kuava still has thousands of visitors, many of whom don't go to the regular museums but are led by their curiosity about a prehistoric ruin and the brief explanations which are still given by the Custodian guide. They also drop by and examine the small exhibit displays to get an idea of something which many of them would never have otherwise.

SL: Wasn't that the site of Coronado's headquarters, too, aside from being a prehistoric Indian ruin?

EB: Well, that's another sixty-four dollar question. There is one school of historians who claim that this is where Coronado spent the winter, right on the outskirts of the pueblo, and others claim that he spent it below the bridge or a mile downstream, or in the next pueblo down river. And it is true that you find potsherds of early-style majolica, that is of 16th Century Mexican majolica -- which come to the surface from time to time at Coronado, but whether his men broke the dishes there, or a later expedition, or whether it was something the Indians got in trade, is still a debatable point.

SL: What do you think?

EB: I don't think.

SL: Oh no? Well, wasn't there any evidence in the excavations that Coronado had been there, except for the majolica? Which of course is not conclusive?

EB: It doesn't prove that Coronado actually stayed there either, but the most interesting things about one of the kivas which was excavated at the ruin of Kuava was that, like many kivas, it had many overlayers of wall paintings -- ceremonial paintings -- on the walls of the interior, and during the excavations in which the university students removed these paintings layer by layer to see what was underneath and kept records and drawings, one of the layers indicated that the Spanish had certainly been in that area because when Coronado left he left two Franciscan missionaries behind him and there's one of the paintings on the kivas of the Franciscan missionary being transfixed with spears. Because naturally the next expedition that came up some forty years later found no traces of the Franciscans, and it has always been conjectured that they either died or were killed, but the fact was that the pueblos at that time were quite closely spaced along the river, and therefore what happened in one pueblo might have been depicted in a kiva of a nearby pueblo, and other kivas up and down the river so far have not been excavated or they haven't found any intact paintings. As far as we are concerned, this was a period of apparently general unrest among the Indians. Coronado's descriptions of the locations of the pueblos -- which is usually indicated by how many miles or leagues they walked north or south

between one pueblo and another -- are not very accurate. Also, they gave the names which are not the Indian names and also which are not contemporary Spanish names for those that still exist. By the time Espejo and later expeditions, such as Onate in 1598, came along, there were many abandoned pueblos and possibly other new ones had been built so there is still a great deal of argument about what pueblos Coronado actually visited.

SL: I see. What year was he here?

EB: 1540, and '41. Because he stayed two years.

SL: What happened recently to that museum -- was it taken over by the state?

EB: No. The Museum of New Mexico has always been responsible for its operation since it was built in the late 1930's and it had been disintegrating and deteriorating so that this present year of 1964 it has had its face lifted and the roof fixed, the interior done over and the exhibits refurbished.

SL: But it's still under the Museum of New Mexico? Well, are there any other general comments that you would like to make about this situation or about the project?

EB: I would like to say one thing a propos of the art projects of the WPA period: One of the greatest privileges in working for it was the contacts it provided with the five-state Regional Director. Donald Bear. He was an extraordinarily gifted and widely knowledgeable and also a most agreeable person to work with.

SL: What particular form did this take as far as his work with the five states were concerned?

EB: Well, he was always a supporter of the artist and the creative artist, without being sentimental about it. So he spent all his life, whether he was working for an art project of federal nature, or whatever museum he was connected with, in just encouraging artists, basically, and he also had a great background in art history.

SL: Well, I'm glad to have that comment about him because, even though I think Roland Dickey and Joy Finke also mentioned him, they didn't go into any detail about his abilities or his attitude, even though I gathered that it was a pleasant relationship.

EB: It was a pleasant relationship. He was an exceptional person.

SL: I see. Well, that's nice to know. Well, thank you very much, E. This has been very interesting and enlightening, and, in addition to the report that you made out, we have a broader picture of the Index of American Design in New Mexico.

END OF INTERVIEW

Last updated... March 9, 2005