



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Raoul Hague,  
1964 November 4

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Raoul Hague on November 4, 1964. The interview was conducted in Woodstock, New York by Joseph S. Trovato for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

## Interview

JOSEPH S. TROVATO: To start from the beginning – where were you born?

RAOUL HAGUE: I was born in Istanbul, Turkey, in 1905. My real name is Heukelekian. Heukelekian was my last name. I came to this country in 1921.

MR. TROVATO: Where did you study?

MR. HAGUE: I went to Iowa State College for a year. Then I went to Chicago where I became acquainted with a number of artists, mostly painters, and then we all moved to New York City. There I studied sculpture at the Beaux Arts and Art Students League. I was monitor in the sculpture class at the League.

MR. TROVATO: When did you learn about the Government Art project?

MR. HAGUE: About 1933-1934. I was recommended by someone, I can't remember the name, to do sculpture on my own for which I would receive a weekly check, which, as I recall, was twice as much as we received later on the WPA.

This first program was handled in a fine dignified way so that the artist felt very free to do his own work in his own way – and this was wonderful – but unfortunately it did not last long.

MR. TROVATO: Then you said that you went on to the WPA.?

MR. HAGUE: Practically the entire time – until war came, when I was drafted in the Army.

On the WPA. – I turned over from my studio a work – direct stone or wood carving every three or four months. There have been quite a few attempts by Museums and individual collectors and dealers to trace the whereabouts of some of the pieces but they have not been able to locate any of these. The Directors of WPA. should have kept better records of the whereabouts of works submitted.

MR. TROVATO: As you look back on that whole experience do you feel that it was a good thing?

MR. HAGUE: The check was the best part – the way it was distributed was done in a most humiliating way by bunching artists in a hall and having them wait for hours. But such things were remedied in time when news of this condition reached the top at Washington.

MR. TROVATO: But how, in your own work, did this experience contribute to your own development as a sculptor?

MR. HAGUE: If it did, it was a very slow development, and this is a personal problem which has nothing to do with the WPA. My real breakthrough came in the late 40's.

MR. TROVATO: Do you have any notion as to what the conditions were that contributed to your breakthrough?

MR. HAGUE: It was the general atmosphere of all the arts entering a new phase.

I think that all the artists I have known appreciated the WPA. but, (for my thinking to the worse) – it changed the image of the artist from the "Fauves" type into a more respectable middle class type.

MR. TROVATO: Thank you very much.

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