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Oral history interview with Richard Haines, 1965 Jan. 29

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Richard Haines on January 29, 1965. The interview took place in an unknown place and was conducted by Betty Lochrie Hoag McGlynn for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

This transcript is the result of a combination of the original type-script transcript created in the 1960s, a transcript created in 2021 from the digitized sound recording, and an audit of the 2021 transcript compared to the original transcript using the digitized sound recording as reference. Best judgment was used to make a transcript that would reflect the original interview and be useful for researchers and readers.

Due to the poor quality of the sound recording, the Archives used the original type-script transcript to fill in some inaudible words and phrases. However, the original transcript also contained gaps where the original transcriber could not understand what was being said which account for the still present number of inaudible and guesses in this transcript. Additional information from the original transcript that seemed relevant was added in brackets and given an -Ed. attribution.

Interview

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: This is Betty Lochrie Hoag continuing the interview with Richard Haines on January 29, 1964 [1965].

RICHARD HAINES: Five.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Five, thank you [laughs]. Mr. Haines, we were just talking about the Round Tower, and that's only four—[Cross talk.] [What was the next one? -Ed.]

RICHARD HAINES: As far as the rest of the projects, I didn't actually do any more work for the WPA project as such, but concurrently with my working on the project, I also entered numerous of these competitions that the government had on the various public buildings at the time.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, well, this was the Treasury Department.

RICHARD HAINES: Yeah. The Public Buildings Administration.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yes, there were four different aspects of the whole thing.

RICHARD HAINES: I see. Yes. Well.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] Federal Art Project, too.

RICHARD HAINES: Yes. Still, except those were on a competitive basis.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Right.

RICHARD HAINES: Yes. Well, so I had a number of those, and won a number of them as far as that is concerned, that first one, I mentioned—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wichita?

RICHARD HAINES: Wichita, Kansas post office. [Inaudible] two in it, the other one was executed by Ward Lockwood [ph] [inaudible] picture I saw [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, you didn't tell me about that. Did you? You—

RICHARD HAINES: Well, I didn't know whether this—whether—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Oh, very definitely.

RICHARD HAINES: —whether you're talking only about the working on the Art Projects and whether [inaudible]. These others were considered, at least by my people and by people working on the Project, as being something different.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

RICHARD HAINES: And there was oftentimes a question of whether you should do one of those because you were supposed to be only getting this so much amount of money, you know, working on relief as it were.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, there also, I believe, was a difference in the Treasury project, which were the competitive ones that were given a commission, were something that was to go to artists who were already established—

RICHARD HAINES: Yes—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —the WPA [inaudible] people who didn't—

RICHARD HAINES: They weren't limited to—you didn't have to be completely destitute to do it. [They laugh.] So, I worked on both. I worked on the Project and also, I did these competitions, and if I could get one [then the director would tell me to stay home for a while and work on that until he found another big job for me -Ed.]—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: That's amazing.

RICHARD HAINES: —between—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Because I've never heard of anyone who did that. [They laugh.]

RICHARD HAINES: Well, he was a nice guy [laughs].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Aw. [Inaudible.]

RICHARD HAINES: Clement Haupers [ph]. [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Clement Haupers [ph].

RICHARD HAINES: [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: And was he in Wichita? No, you were in—

RICHARD HAINES: No, he was the head of the [inaudible] Art Project in Minneapolis.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: The Minneapolis area must have taken—[cross talk]—or something.

RICHARD HAINES: Took in quite a section [inaudible] state, Minnesota, or at least he was in charge of the whole state.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: But this was down in Kansas, you said.

RICHARD HAINES: Well, this was a competition there.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see, and they were all over—

[Cross talk.]

RICHARD HAINES: They were all over the country, and they would post them, and you would make a sketch and send it in, and they would judge it. On the larger ones, if you didn't win [but was one of the runners up -Ed.], they would give you the—another commission for some other building, usually a smaller one, you know. [Inaudible.] And I got a few that way, also. But the next one, I think—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Well, excuse me, before you talk about [inaudible], I would—since we didn't go into it, I'd like to hear more about this Wichita, Kansas one. Did you and Ward Lockwood work on things that complemented each other? Or what was—

RICHARD HAINES: No, the competition was for two panels for the post office. So, I submitted two panels, and I'm sure he did too. But for some reason or other, which was never explained to me, and I didn't question it too much, they—the first one I had won, they gave him one of the panels and gave me the other. And that was that.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Were they near each other in the post office?

RICHARD HAINES: Well, I have never been there. [I shipped it down and someone else put it up for me. -Ed.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I see.

[00:05:00]

RICHARD HAINES: I had never seen exactly—I think they're at opposite ends of the [building -Ed.]. They weren't large. [Comparatively large, something like five feet by 14 feet or something like that. -Ed.] And—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Historical subject matter?

RICHARD HAINES: Well, the one I did was, I took the present day and the past—I mean, one panel was the present, one was the past, and I tied them together by similar composition—similar composition and structure. The figures here [first early days in the prairies -Ed.] and what's happening today. And it was—[that was my scheme of composition -Ed.].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you have any doorway cutting into the middle [inaudible] many of them?

RICHARD HAINES: No, this was just [inaudible]. So, I painted—it was painted on canvas and [shipped it down there and someone there was in charge of installing it for me, and sent me the bill -Ed.].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Sent you the bill? Didn't the government pay it?

RICHARD HAINES: Well, usually, the artist had to pay for the installation.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I didn't know that.

RICHARD HAINES: Which was very little. I mean, if it was on canvas, of course, you had to drive down there, or wherever it was, it would go there, and usually get a painter, someone to help you [inaudible] the wall with. They usually fit it into some sort of recessed area [inaudible] already framed. [And coated the wall with a layer of white lead paste, put your canvas up, and if it was small enough two men could handle it, rolled it out, got all the air bubbles out of it, and hope that it fit. -Ed.] [Betty Hoag McGlynn laughs.] [Or leave enough canvas on so that you could cut it out to fit. What I used to do was paint it a little bit larger—Ed.] [Inaudible].

The next one, as I recall [was a post office in a little town in Iowa—Prescott, Iowa—which is a small farming community -Ed.]. [Inaudible.] This was just a farm group washing up for dinner and somebody bringing in the mail and [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I'm just curious about one thing, whether you as a young artist and a muralist doing something for Iowa [inaudible].

RICHARD HAINES: Grant Wood?

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Yeah. In the same area at that time.

RICHARD HAINES: Yeah. I think this is—some of my earlier things were quite influenced by Grant.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Most of them, I think, probably were, and I just wondered if—

RICHARD HAINES: Yeah. Grant Wood and then—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Currier [ph] and—

RICHARD HAINES: Benton [ph].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Benton [ph].

RICHARD HAINES: [Inaudible] those two men—Grant Wood wanted me to study with him. [He wanted me to come to Iowa City, he -Ed.] started teaching in Iowa City, and would give me a scholarship if I'd study with him. But I was doing all right where I was, and I was aware that if I did study with him I'd probably become even more influenced by him. And I was trying to get away from him rather than go towards it. So, I—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible] glad you decided that.

RICHARD HAINES: —thanked him, and turned him down [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: He, I believe, had another kind of Treasury Department grant at that time [inaudible]. [Inaudible] could have workers in the WPA working for him doing the work.

RICHARD HAINES: Oh.

[00:10:10]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [It was interesting, I just learned that -Ed.] the other day.

RICHARD HAINES: Yeah, it was [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: It made almost [inaudible]—

RICHARD HAINES: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: —around some of these fellows, [marvelous training for the kids—Ed.] [inaudible].

RICHARD HAINES: Yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Never had training like he'd had.

RICHARD HAINES: So, after fresco [ph], let's see, another small post office [in Hastings -Ed.]. [Inaudible.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Is the mural still there?

RICHARD HAINES: Yes. [Inaudible.] Went back there in '57 [inaudible]. [Inaudible] not very good, and it's very expensive.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: You have prints of these that we can borrow to have microfilmed or are they all gone?

RICHARD HAINES: No, no, they're all [inaudible]. I've got them—I've got photographs of them [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I don't think [inaudible] microfilm.

RICHARD HAINES: I wouldn't think so. No. Yes, I have photographs [inaudible]. I haven't got any [inaudible] of the Wilmer [ph]—well, I take it back. We did take some black and white [inaudible]. I do have some.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Good.

RICHARD HAINES: I will hand them over [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] It does [inaudible].

RICHARD HAINES: So, Hastings, let's see—

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Wait a minute. We didn't get the subject matter of the Hastings.

RICHARD HAINES: Hastings was a rather simple one. It was a boy on a horse, an old plow

horse riding at the mailbox, picking up the mail on the farm.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Those were scenes of your boyhood, weren't they? [Laughs.]

RICHARD HAINES: [Laughs.] Yeah, they probably were. Yeah. Ride down to the mailbox and [inaudible]. Get the mail once a day. So, it was [inaudible]. Then let's see. I would enter all the competitions that I had time and that I was eligible for and [inaudible]. And I entered one for [inaudible] San Antonio [inaudible] large, which was 12 by [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Mother entered that one, too, she was telling me.

RICHARD HAINES: And I was [inaudible] which was a subject matter [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Had you ever [inaudible]?

RICHARD HAINES: No, but—

[Cross talk.]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: [Inaudible.] [Laughs].

RICHARD HAINES: [Inaudible.] I don't think I've ever seen [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I bet that community enjoyed them.

RICHARD HAINES: Well, they seemed to like it very much. [Inaudible.] It was fun to do [inaudible]. [Inaudible.] Shelton, Washington.

[00:15:05]

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: S-H-E-L-T-O-N?

RICHARD HAINES: T-O-N, Shelton.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Where is that?

RICHARD HAINES: It's on Puget Sound. It's near Olympia, between Olympia and Seattle [it's on the Western side of the Sound —Ed.]. It's a lumber town. And that was a competition—a national competition for various states—buildings in various states [inaudible]. And I selected [inaudible].

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: I think that was the year that the government had one for each state.

RICHARD HAINES: Yeah, that was the competition. Now the one I sent in on was a very good design. [Inaudible.] Well, they didn't give me that building, but they evidently liked the sketch, so they gave me a building out in Washington. [Inaudible] had submitted one. Someone else they gave—there were more artists around St. Paul/Minneapolis I imagine then they were [inaudible]. I don't know. But anyway, that was what happened. So, then I went out and painted [inaudible] in Washington, and I had never been there. And I painted it directly on the wall.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Isn't that gorgeous?

RICHARD HAINES: Oh, yes.

BETTY HOAG MCGLYNN: Did you paint it [inaudible]?

RICHARD HAINES: I used—

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]