



Smithsonian
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Oral history interview with Alonzo
Hauser, 1965 Oct. 12

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Alonzo Hauser on October 12, 1965. The interview took place in Los Angeles, California, and was conducted by Virginia Nagle for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This interview is part of the Archives of American Art's New Deal and the Arts project.

The original transcript was edited. In 2022 the Archives created a more verbatim transcript. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

VIRGINIA NAGLE: This is an interview with Alonzo Hauser, who's a sculptor in St. Paul, Minnesota. It's taking place on October 12th, and I'm going to discuss with Mr. Hauser his participation in the WPA Art Projects during the '30s and '40s. And now, we'll just start from there. First of all, Lonny [ph], I want to know where you were born and the date of your birth.

ALONZO HAUSER: I was born in La Crosse, Wisconsin in 1909.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And then since you've been in the Minneapolis area—I know when we came here, you were head of the art department at McAllister—

ALONZO HAUSER: Right—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —and—

ALONZO HAUSER: —and I resigned from that in '49 and freelanced until '57. Till '57, I've been a part-time lecturer and critic at the school of architecture at the University of Minnesota.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: All right.

ALONZO HAUSER: And continuing with work in sculpture and drawing.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, I notice here that after your activities with the WPA, you actually went to Washington, D.C. with the resettlement administration.

ALONZO HAUSER: Right. I suppose what you'd like to do is get as much that I can recollect of the whole period on to this.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I think so. That's right.

ALONZO HAUSER: And my first recollection was meeting Bill Zorach one day, on Eighth Street, and Bill asked me had I heard that there was a wonderful new project going that would give artists, I think it was \$60 a month or something like that—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I think that's what you were paid.

ALONZO HAUSER: —and they just stayed home in their studios and worked. And turn—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: What a bonanza.

ALONZO HAUSER: What a bonanza. And he said to rush over fast to the Whitney Museum and sign up for it.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: All right. Who did you talk to at the Whitney?

ALONZO HAUSER: And I talked to Juliana Force.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, sure.

ALONZO HAUSER: Who I believe was the head of—I don't know what this was called.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: She was very active.

ALONZO HAUSER: It might've been the PWAP at that time, which was the Public Works of Art Project, and I think that this was under Ned Bruce in Washington, D.C.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: In the treasury department.

ALONZO HAUSER: In the treasury department—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: That's right.

ALONZO HAUSER: —and it was a—as I understand it, it was vitalized or came into being because Mr. Bruce had discovered that one percent of all public buildings could be devoted to artworks, or one half of one percent. And that is still operating today, and it had been on the books as federal law for a long, long time.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes.

ALONZO HAUSER: But it had never been turned to this, sort of, use before, for a broad, broad public thing. It was generally a little piece of pie that was cut up by the National Sculptors Association and the academic in-boys, and that. And this—I think it was under Mr. Bruce that it was turned into the Public Works of Art Project.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes.

ALONZO HAUSER: And became a definite Project as such as to assist artists. And this went on for a while, I recall I did a figure of Lincoln on a keelboat as a young man holding the big keel—the oar as it projected, and whatever became of that, I don't know. [Inaudible.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: This was a project that you did—

ALONZO HAUSER: It was a project—was proposed for a monument to Lincoln, but it was never executed. I did turn in a model—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: — on it. And then after this period, the WPA emerged, I think. And I believe it was under the WPA—at first, there was work for painters, but no work for sculptors. The sculptors were put on a project cleaning monuments around the yard, and this was actually a stone carvers project, and I had served an apprenticeship as a stone carver, so qualified for it, and I was transferred to that and that was a—paid pretty well. Stone carvers in that day—in those days were getting \$15 a day. So, we put in our three days or four days a month and earned our quota, and the rest of our time was free to work.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, you were—I see. You were limited to how much time—

ALONZO HAUSER: We were limited to how much time we could put in.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —you could put in. I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: Yes. And during that period, I helped remove the deposits that the pigeons had been putting [Virginia Nagle laughs] on the monuments around New York for a good many years. And we cleaned up Cooper Union—the monument in Cooper Union, and we cleaned up the monument in Bryant Park and in Union Square. Matter of fact, I worked in quite a few monuments restoring them. Later, we—it was quite a crew and we—a number of sculptors—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Do you remember any of the people that you worked with on this?

ALONZO HAUSER: Yeah—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Can we have their names?

ALONZO HAUSER: Well, it's rather hard. The only one that I come—comes to mind right off on this project was a young fellow named Deiner who died, and we buried him, and—

[00:05:00]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Right. During these years?

ALONZO HAUSER: During those years, yeah. A young sculptor, and it was a—sort of, sad thing because it was his very first break at all, in any kind of activities, and he was doing some good work at the time, and—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Do you remember the first name was?

ALONZO HAUSER: I think it was Michael Deiner or Mitchell Deiner or something like this. Deiner. I could look it up. I must have it somewhere—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: What is it? D-E-A-N-E-R—

ALONZO HAUSER: D-E-I-N-E-R.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: D-E-I-N-ER.

ALONZO HAUSER: Very sad funeral. We were—all the members of the Artists' Union were pallbearers, or certain selected ones of us, and he was buried over in Brooklyn in one of those mass cemeteries on a cold blustery March morning.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, dismal.

ALONZO HAUSER: And the way from the hearse to the grave was downhill, and the boys in the front lost their footing and the coffin got away and started to skid down between the [laughs] gravestones with all of us running after it—flopping at it—[Virginia Nagle laughs] trying to stop it, and we finally got it wedged sideways and carried it back up the hill and laid Deiner to rest.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Wasn't very dignified.

ALONZO HAUSER: And went back to the Union and got drunk as hell.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: [Laughs] This is the kind of anecdote I'm enjoying. [Alonzo Nagle laughs.] Now, did you ever at any time work with the Section of Fine Arts, which remained with the Treasury Department separate from the WPA?

ALONZO HAUSER: I did later. And now that—later on in the—around 1940 or '41, I designed some—and carved two figures in wood that went into a post office up in Park Rapids, Minnesota. I was living in Milwaukee at the time.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see, and are they there now?

ALONZO HAUSER: And they're there now, yes.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Fine. Post office in—

ALONZO HAUSER: In Park Rapids, and I believe that that was under the Treasury Department of the—what I—whether it was still PWAP then or not, I don't know.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: No, that was a very short-lived period—

ALONZO HAUSER: I see. I see.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —and then under Bruce and Ollin Dows the Section of Fine Arts really was established, and I think probably [cross talk] is still existing today.

ALONZO HAUSER: And that's what that commission was done under, yes.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And this was separate from the relief program.

ALONZO HAUSER: Right, right.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: It hit actually employed people—

ALONZO HAUSER: This was about 1940. You see, in 19—oh, well, after the nine months period of cleaning monuments, we begin to scream so loud. We watched these painters enjoying their selves in their own studios, turning out paintings for the WPA, and here we

were out in the cold and the weather, and with scrub brushes [Virginia Nagle laughs] and tools and scraping monuments. So, we sculptors began to scream so loud that finally they did transfer us into projects of our own.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: And I worked on that for about, oh, just several months, and I—then I had a one man show in New York—my first one man show at the ACA Gallery in 1936. And shortly after that, I was called to Washington to work with the resettlement administration, which was immediately under the head of Adrian Dornbush, but the big chief of the resettlement administration was Rexford Guy Tugwell.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes.

ALONZO HAUSER: Who was one of the original Brain-Trusters—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: —in Roosevelt's Brain Trust group. And we had the—that division was called the special skills and was—its purpose was to supply art to the various projects, and we had—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Now, what kind of projects would this be, housing project?

ALONZO HAUSER: Housing projects. There were three Greendale [ph] projects that were constructed, you know. The other sculptor on the project was Lenore Thomas and myself, and then there was Ben Shann was a painter and Charlie Pollock, who was a brother of Jack Pollock, and I believe a man named Boris Morris [ph] was also a painter on that project.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But, you would say, I think probably—

ALONZO HAUSER: And he also—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —that this came out of your affiliation with the WPA Projects in New York, wouldn't you?

ALONZO HAUSER: You mean my being employed there?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Your being employed in the resettlement—

ALONZO HAUSER: That and the result of this one-man show, I think, that I had that—which got a little bit of attention in New York.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And on the resettlement program, were you actually employed full time, or were you—

ALONZO HAUSER: That was a full time—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: You weren't restricted then about how many hours you could put in?

ALONZO HAUSER: No, no. That was a full-time, supposedly 40 hour a week, yeah—sort of an interesting story in connection with that. I'd been there about two weeks and nobody had talked to me; I think it was kind of typical Washington scene. And then one morning, the boss walked in, Mr. Dornbush, and said, Where were you last night? And I asked him—I said, Well, what do you mean where was I last night? I said, I come here and sit eight hours a day and nobody talks to me. Am I supposed to go someplace else and sit at night? [Virginia Nagle laughs.]

[00:10:04]

And he said, Oh goodness. "He said, Didn't I ask you—did I forget to ask you? He said, I had a meeting with all the architects, and they were supposed to meet you, and you were to plan projects together where we could use sculpture on the buildings. He said, Don't tell me I forget to ask you, which he had.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, my word.

ALONZO HAUSER: And so, that sort of set the tone for the Project for the next two years I was on.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: [Laughs.] Well, I hope they remembered you on the next guest list.

ALONZO HAUSER: Anyway, I was sent—finally after planning things in Washington, one of the projects finally came to fruition. The Greendale [ph] [Greenbelt -Ed.] projects got under foot, and there were three of these, one outside of Cincinnati, one outside of Washington at Beltsville, Maryland, and one in Washington—Milwaukee, Wisconsin. And I designed the sculpture and carved it for the Milwaukee, Wisconsin one.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: All right.

ALONZO HAUSER: Three of the panels that were used on the school building I carved in Washington, and they were shipped out. And then I went out and carved a large 12 foot by six foot panel in limestone for the rear of the school building, which was also the community building, sort of multi-purpose building, the elementary and high school and a community building it was used as, and then there was also a flagpole base, which had five figures about seven feet high—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, that's quite an undertaking.

ALONZO HAUSER: —that I carved, and that—when that was—when my carving on that was completed then that was just about 1939 or '40—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALONZO HAUSER: —and war efforts were brooding at that time, and this project—I think it continued until completion of all the projects, but then it gradually petered out. And Tugwell, if you remember, went down to Puerto Rico to become the governor of Puerto Rico at the time proceeding the—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: This would be just before the outbreak of the war?

ALONZO HAUSER: Before the—yeah, around that time, maybe during that time [inaudible].

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And then your activities and involvement pretty much had ended at that point?

ALONZO HAUSER: Right, and my activities were ended at that point.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Did you stay in Milwaukee or what?

ALONZO HAUSER: I stayed in Milwaukee, and taught there and freelanced as an architectural sculptor. Taught at Layton School of Art.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: And also did this one commission under the Treasury Department for— [Cross talk.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, for Park Rapids.

ALONZO HAUSER: —the Park Rapids, Minnesota Post Office.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see. Now, were there any other things? I'd like to go back to your Abraham Lincoln project to find out who suggested it and what happened to the whole thing.

ALONZO HAUSER: Well, we furnished our own ideas. There wasn't really too much direction. And we furnished our own ideas, what we would like to see accomplished, and for a long time I had thought of a monument or a figure of Lincoln as a young man during the—come to think of it, I don't know if he ever did steer a keelboat on the Mississippi or the Missouri Rivers.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Hard to say. We can imagine that he did.

ALONZO HAUSER: Mississippi River. And I don't think I researched that very well. Anyway, I

did the Lincoln without his shirt on—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: [Inaudible.] [Laughs.]

ALONZO HAUSER: —with a pair of—what was it—homespun trousers that they were supposed to have worn in those days and that—and standing there with his muscles rippling on his back, steering his keelboat. And it probably wound up where it should have wound up.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Never executed, eh?

ALONZO HAUSER: Down the river. [They laugh.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Let's stop this for just—[Recorder stops, restarts.] Now, I think what we—what I'd like to know is who were some of the people who were your friends who were also involved in the New York area at that time.

ALONZO HAUSER: Oh, practically every artist in the '30s in New York City was on the Project, anybody that had any establishment as an artist already, and, oh, just to name a few—they're spread all over the country now.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I think so.

ALONZO HAUSER: Humbert Albrizio, who's down at Iowa, I think, just retiring as a professor of sculpture there after the last number of years. And Louis Ribak is in Taos, New Mexico. And the Soyer Brothers and Louis Shanker was there, and oh, it's hard to recall them all by name. There was—Ben Shahn was in Washington with us on the resettlement administration. I believe he did a large mural for a project in New Jersey, and I think he went up there to live then after the resettlement thing was over. I think he still lives in New Jersey maybe. I forget the name of the community.

[00:15:07]

It was in the—it was another resettlement of community that was established at that time. But during the days, and in the projects in Washington—in New York—of course this was a company—the artists were very quick to organize in New York. And actually also in Minneapolis, because I remember the first Artist Congress, the Minneapolis group made quite a showing, and it was discovered at that time that I think that our pay in New York was around \$94 a month, and the Minneapolis—that group was the only one to secure that same level. The pay varied around the country.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: And it was sort of determined—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Now, who were the Minne—

ALONZO HAUSER: —that the pay scale vary according to the amount of organization that existed in the various communities. So, the unions were a good thing and were strong at that time—the artist union. Since then—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Now let me ask you, who represent—who made up the Minneapolis or Minnesota contingent?

ALONZO HAUSER: Well, of course, I didn't arrive in the Minnesota scene until long after it was all over. I remember Clement Haupers was—had some activity here as a member of the WPA. I believe he was a director—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: He was the state director.

ALONZO HAUSER: And I don't know, perhaps Mac LeSueur was on the Project, have you talked to him?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I think. I haven't talked to Mac, but I'm sure he was. I had been referred to him.

ALONZO HAUSER: Uh-huh [affirmative]. And I should imagine practically any artist 50-years-old in the Twin Cities who was here in those days was on the Project in those days.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: An interesting thing that I learned, and you'll be not surprised at this, was that the money they got from working on projects here, they took to use for bus fare to go to New York or Chicago, and these people still live in this area. They—this is an opportunity—the first bus fare they'd had in a long time, and went to work with very famous people as a result. This gave them background. Some of our finest artists—

ALONZO HAUSER: Right. And there's quite a bit of interchange—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —came out of this.

ALONZO HAUSER: —to the—to those days. It was really quite a vital period. It may be that it just accompanies my youth that makes it seem so, sort of, vital, but there was a unity amongst the artists. There didn't seem to be a personally competitive spirit amongst the artists. They were much more helpful. They were helpful trying to get one another onto the projects that warrant. They worked together to try to get better—a higher pay of scale, and they demonstrated together.

There were a lot of—several times—later on, the project went under Audrey McMahon, who was the wife of Professor McMahon of NYU, taught art history there, and Audrey McMahon who had some association, I think, with the college artists associations. She for a while, managed the WPA and suffered several big picket lines around her place. I remember one time 97 of us were arrested and taking—taken to jail.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well.

ALONZO HAUSER: And the artist union busily raised five dollars a head to bail everybody out. And it was a—it was quite funny because when the artists were arrested, they all gave names like Paul Cézanne and Mike Angelo, [Virginia Nagle laughs] and the poor clerk sat there recording all these names: Cellini, and Gauguin, and Renoir, and Rodon. And there was some artist—I can't—forget his name—we appeared in a court down in—off of Sheridan square. The one where the women's jail is now. There was a courthouse there, and we all had to appear there several days later, after the arrest—and when the clerk called off the names, one artist responded to Paul Cézanne and another artist jumped up and said, He's an imposter. I'm Paul Cézanne! [They laugh.] Sort of, broke up the court.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes, I think so. It must have.

ALONZO HAUSER: I think Anna Strong was the judge, and I read her name. She's become famous in juvenile work, I believe.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: For heaven's sake.

ALONZO HAUSER: And she was the judge at that time, and of course enjoyed—[Cross talk.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I wonder if there are any records on this particular—

ALONZO HAUSER: — enjoyed the whole thing—there must be court records of it, sure. And they probably have dug those up in New York, if they're making the archive.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes, they—quite a group working in New York.

ALONZO HAUSER: We used to demonstrate at the drop of a hat for anything, yeah.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well, I think this was a great moment for you people. There was never a time when so many really could work—

[00:19:57]

ALONZO HAUSER: If you just look over the roster of the Artists' Congress—our first American Artists' Congress in 1936 and read the names of some of the artists who signed the call. There was Bernice Abbott, Abramovitz, Ackerman, and Ivan Le Lorraine Albright, and George Ault, Milton Avery, Peggy Bacon, Phil Bard, Barnett—Will Barnett, Thomas Barrett Jr., Norman Bel Geddes Ben Benn, and Ahron Ben-Shmuel, and Saul Berman—and I'm just skipping through this now—but Henry Billings, George Biddle, Ed Biberman, Peter Bloom, Lou Bloch, Arnold Blanch, Aaron Bohrod, Ilya Bolotowsky, Cam Booth, and Henry Bodkin, Margaret Bourke-White, and Alexander Brook, and Benny Bufano, and Jacob Burke, and Paul Burlin, and Paul Cadmus, Alexander Calder, and Nick Cikovsky—just skipping through, I've

only got to the C's, but it goes on all the way through to the Zorach at the end. And—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And this would be representative of the people who were working at that time?

ALONZO HAUSER: The Soyer Brothers here, Max Spivak, and Bill Steig, the cartoonist, and Chuzo Tamotzu—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I also noticed Alonzo Hauser's on the list—

ALONZO HAUSER: Alonzo Hauser, and Walter Quirt, who's here a locally now, working.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yeah. I bet it—[Cross talk.]

ALONZO HAUSER: [Inaudible.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —would be interesting to talk to Walt—

ALONZO HAUSER: Sure.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —because he must've been very involved in this time.

ALONZO HAUSER: And Anton Refregier, Phil Reisman, and names that are pretty—Ted Roszak, and Concetta Scaravaglione, and Myra Shapiro, the historian, Catherine Schmitt, and all—Ann Wolfe who's here in this [inaudible]—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes I think—[Cross talk.]

ALONZO HAUSER: Joe Jones—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I'll talk to Ann, too. She probably—

ALONZO HAUSER: Sure.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —had a finger in the pie at some point somewhere.

ALONZO HAUSER: Right. Hilaire Heiler, Stefan Hirsch, and Minna Harkavy, another sculptress.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALONZO HAUSER: Waylande Gregory, and just [inaudible]—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Now, was Malvina Hoffman active at this time, by any chance? Do you—

ALONZO HAUSER: I don't think so. She's still active today though. She's just written another book.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Has she?

ALONZO HAUSER: Yes, and I saw—let's see, under this—under the *Hs* down here. No, I don't believe that she was—that she was a [inaudible]—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: She was fairly established. I do think that a lot of these projects were based on need and less—[Cross talk.]

ALONZO HAUSER: Yes. Some of these people—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: [Inaudible] Section of Fine Arts.

ALONZO HAUSER: —that signed the call, of course, were not—this was an Artists' Congress, which is separate from the Artists' Union.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes.

ALONZO HAUSER: Paul Manship gave a paper—read a paper at that time, and Francis Gorman [ph], Peter Blume, probably one of the most famous one, Rockwell Kent, Stuart Davis, and Lewis Mumford all give addresses at that—and Myra Shapiro and the [inaudible]—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Where was this held?

ALONZO HAUSER: This was held in—and Max Weber—and it was held in New York at the—and the meetings were held at the New School of Social Research. And John Groth, Harry Sternberg, and Saul Sherry [ph], Arnold Blanch.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And this Congress then was separate from the Artists' Union?

ALONZO HAUSER: [Inaudible.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: What was the Artists' Union related—how was it related to Artist Equity, for example, at the time?

ALONZO HAUSER: Well, Artists Equity came out as a sort of separate thing much later. I was an original member—charter member of the Artist Equity, but I've dropped all these organizations. I just—in a sense that—I think it would probably take another depression and that, which I hope we never have—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Never have, no.

ALONZO HAUSER: —and another case of need like this to get the artists to gather again into this kind of organizational activity. I don't think the Artists Equity has ever been very effective, really. In a sense that—artists just—they're individualists, and they don't work together as union [inaudible]—[Cross talk.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But apparently, during the—

ALONZO HAUSER: Also because of the nature of the employment, nature of sales. Do you know that at one time, museums used to pay us to exhibit?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: No, I didn't know that.

ALONZO HAUSER: I found a couple of old canceled checks from the Whitney Museum for exhibiting there. I think they were for \$10, or something like that. That was—all the artists were going to get together and not exhibit unless the museums paid us, and of course, most of the museums resisted, but the Whitney Museum was one that went along with the idea and there were a couple of others. And whenever we exhibited in these museums, we were paid a small token amount.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, for heaven's sake.

ALONZO HAUSER: But it was a small thing—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I think that's asking just a little too much of a museum, Mr. Hauser.

ALONZO HAUSER: Well, maybe. [Virginia Nagle laughs.] Anyway, it was a kind of a salutary recognition of the artist at that period.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yeah, of course it was. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And these were difficult times I think for—well, for almost everyone.

[00:25:12]

ALONZO HAUSER: There's still—[Break in audio.] [Inaudible.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes, you were in New York then, from 1930 and you were—

ALONZO HAUSER: From 1930, I left New York in, I think it was around '36 or '37 to go to Washington to work with the resettlement administration. And so, the WPA—I think the PWAP was in '34 and then the WPA came along in around '35, and eventually—first of course, the work that was offered sculptors was not doing sculpture. It was monument restoration project. And then the—shortly after that, I went on as a sculptor—specifically as a sculptor, that I was offered the job in Washington.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see, and at the time you were in New York, you were—

ALONZO HAUSER: And that's after '36.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: You were living with Danny Revson [ph], who was a painter?

ALONZO HAUSER: I had been when I first went to New York—who was a painter. And of course, I left New York in '37, and so, what activities went on in New York and then WPA, I don't remember too much.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see.

ALONZO HAUSER: There was a big sculpture project there, and it was under—I believe it was under the direction of a former teacher of mine, Piccoli, and he was in the New York area, and whether he's still living or not, I imagine he might be. And where he is now today, I don't know. But Piccoli, I believe, was in charge of the—I remember once going up to New York, and I visited him, and they were doing a lot of casting of—in concrete and cement then.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Were you ever involved in a project where a number of you work together on an idea, or were you always independent?

ALONZO HAUSER: Oh, I was always independent. I did— with the resettlement administration, I helped carve some of Lenore's work at one time.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I see. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ALONZO HAUSER: But she carved her own work, finished it up. And—but the rest of the time, I carved my own designs.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I see, and then what did any of your—were any of your friends involved with the Index of American Design? Did you know any of the people working on that?

ALONZO HAUSER: I didn't know any independently. I remember visiting their workshop several times. The Index of Design seemed—I think it was if they employed more commercial artists that had more specific skills in copying these things. And they would have a crew that went out and oh, got children's sleds from 1890, or things like that, and then these fellows would copy them exactly. I had a great deal of admiration for 'em because they did some—came up with some beautiful things, and I believe that some of that was published in books. [Inaudible] plates—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: The—I think the university has a complete a record of this.

ALONZO HAUSER: Where are these files are—when this went on—I remember in Milwaukee visiting a project once, and that—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well, it makes a marvelous record that we never had before, on our crafts.

ALONZO HAUSER: That must still be—these plates must be existing, unless they're thrown out. I believe that a lot of the paintings in New York were later auctioned off.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, were they?

ALONZO HAUSER: Yeah, yeah. When I was in New York last time, somebody was talking about a big auction, that they auctioned off all these paintings and a lot of the fellas went up and bought them for a dollar, two dollars, three dollars apiece.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, for heaven's sake.

ALONZO HAUSER: Five dollars apiece and then they've become pretty—some of them are pretty valuable today because of the names—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. Of course.

ALONZO HAUSER: —of the people connected with them. And that. Stuart Davis was active in the projects, and practically everybody.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well, Stuart Davis was one of the people who did a lot in protest about how much you were all paid and—[Cross talk.]

ALONZO HAUSER: I think so, yeah.

VIRGINIA NAGEL: —who—how fair were they—

ALONZO HAUSER: . He was the president—the first president of the American Artists' Congress—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. How fair were they in giving commissions and this kind of thing.

ALONZO HAUSER: And the Artists' Union in New York put out a publication called the *Art Front*. If you could ever find any copies of that, you'd find an awful lot of information about the activities in the New York scene. I suppose, maybe some of the better organized artists groups throughout the country had their own publication.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Are you familiar with any of the people who were working in the Milwaukee area? You have quite a checkered residential background.

ALONZO HAUSER: Yeah. I don't really—see, when I came out to New York the WPA was still active, but I don't recall exactly who might've been on it in those days. I was kind of a loner in a way, and then after I left the Projects, I left the union activities too, and I was a charter member of Artists Equity, but I dropped out of that, and from then on, I paid little attention to what went on in the way of the other Projects.

[00:30:08]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. Well, I think it gradually—

ALONZO HAUSER: I never was quite clear in my mind when I think back just when the WPA discontinued.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. I think it kind of drifted to a conclusion, but it was officially ended, I think in 1943.

ALONZO HAUSER: '43.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Although from '41 on there was no further work commissioned—

ALONZO HAUSER: No.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —because everything was going to the war effort. However, I think they did finish up some of the things that were underway.

ALONZO HAUSER: But there must be paintings in every community that were done in those days. Was Bernie Quick here locally?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: I don't know. I think I'll call Bernie and ask—

ALONZO HAUSER: You oughta call Bernie because—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: —about it because I'm sure he would be involved—

ALONZO HAUSER: —[inaudible] about that age level—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. Uh-huh [affirmative]. And I was wondering who's the little, short bald guy—

ALONZO HAUSER: Connected with the science museum?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: No, not with the—no—Alex Oja, I'm thinking—I do have him on a list, but the other one I was thinking of is a man over at the art school whose name I can never remember.

ALONZO HAUSER: Oh, Bradley.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well, oh, this is—and I keep thinking—I confuse his name with Biederman, [laughs] which is—

ALONZO HAUSER: Not Byron Bradley [ph]?

VIRGINIA NAGLE: No, no. Byron's young, I think and—

ALONZO HAUSER: Yeah, I think he's a little younger than the group. It's sort of like going to college, if you go back on the campus three years later, you don't recognize anybody, you know.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Anybody, that's right. Well, I'll get his name and I'm curious too about Biederman. I wonder if he was involved anytime—

ALONZO HAUSER: He's certainly of the age level—

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes.

ALONZO HAUSER: —and he might've been because I think he was in New York in the '30s.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: And I'll get a letter off to him. Well, I think that pretty much covers the time.

ALONZO HAUSER: Probably right after you leave, I'll think of a thousand things and names and incidences and happenings that went on. This is always the way.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Yes. I think that we have—

ALONZO HAUSER: You should take the tape recorder to a party some evening, that are just made up of the oldsters now. We're senior citizens in the arts. [They laugh.]

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Well, we'll have to do that, but I think we've covered all of—

ALONZO HAUSER: Get a nostalgia evening going, you know.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Wouldn't that be great?

ALONZO HAUSER: We'll just fill up all kinds of tape.

VIRGINIA NAGLE: Oh, I'm sure. Well, thank you Lonny [ph].

ALONZO HAUSER: Fine.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]