



Smithsonian
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**Oral history interview with Richard Hood, 1964
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Transcript

Interview

RH: RICHARD HOOD

RD: RICHARD K. DOUD

RD: Well, could you start with the first question I've outlined here, something on your art background which will lead into how and why you became associated with the government projects here in Philadelphia?

RH: Well, of course, this goes back thirty years. At the time like everywhere else at the height of the depression, there was an apple seller on every corner, five or six apple sellers for that matter. Artists, as they have been at many other times in the past, were in need of work, like everyone else. Most people were in need of work, and I applied to the Federal Art Program which had just been set up in the summer of 1935. This was December, and I applied in December for a job on the project as an artist. I had studied architecture at the University of Pennsylvania and had also worked as a printmaker, and it was in the field of printmaking for which I applied. The requirements for getting a job on the project were not easy at that time, and they never were during the entire duration of the program. A committee looked at your work, and if they found it adequate, and if your background indicated that you were a practicing, professional artist, you were eligible for employment. I started to work on the project as a printmaker for Mary Curran who was then newly appointed State Director of the Federal Art Program. She had been a director of several galleries in Philadelphia, and she had been selected by Holger Cahill, who was the National Director of the Federal Art Program, as the State Director for Pennsylvania. The program was very new at that time, and actually, it started out pretty much with the idea of giving some assistance to fine artists, people who did painting, prints and sculpture and that sort of things. As it went along, of course, it began to absorb the other art activities.

RD: Did you have any association with Mr. Zigrosser in the print business? Was he active in this program at all?

RH: Mr. Zigrosser was in Philadelphia during a part of the early project period at the Philadelphia Museum. But, he was not particularly active on the project itself.

RD: Was there a separate print division of the Federal Art Project?

RH: Well, at first when I came on, the printmakers worked independently. They worked in their own studios. And then we came to realize that there were more printmakers and more artists, not only printmakers but perhaps painters and other artists who wanted to work in the print medium, and we found in order to do this we had to have some sort of a shop and set up, which subsequently became, I believe, one of the finest graphic art workshops in the project period. It became a kind of example of the way to solve this problem, and many people from other projects in other states came in to see just what we were doing. In a very short time, we acquired a number of presses, lithographic presses and etching presses, and we established a workshop over what at the time was a nightclub on Broad Street. They gave us some free space on the floor upstairs. Here we had a large area in which we kept our presses, and we set up the graphic art workshop for the project.

And this became a place where there was a great exchange of ideas. Not just the printmakers working, the ones who had already studied and knew something about the medium, but painters came in, sculptors came in, and they began to work in this way, too.

RD: Who was in charge of this print shop?

RH: Well, I was placed in charge of it. I was one of the first printmakers to come on the project in Pennsylvania, and subsequently, I became head of the print group here in Philadelphia, under Mary Curran, of course.

RD: Could you tell us about the events that led up to your becoming the State Director for the Federal Art Project?

RH: Well, this took a little time. Of course, the print department became very active, exhibited widely, sent shows out, and, of course, the work of individual artists was allocated to tax supported institutions. The institutions could then pay for some of the cost of the materials, and then these prints were made available to colleges and libraries, and any tax supported institutions were eligible. As the print program grew and other programs began to come into being in the state, I worked on some of these also and became an administrator's assistant to Miss Curran, and then subsequently, they called me a District Supervisor in Philadelphia. I was in pretty close touch with what happened to this thing from the beginning, in a very fascinating period of its history.

RD: Did you have anything at all to do with the earlier Public Works of Art Projects?

RH: No, I became connected with the program in 1935, under Edward Bruce, and was with the Treasury Project for a while from 1933 on. This was disbanded in 1934. Harry Hopkins had set up a number of art projects in isolated areas throughout the country, but there wasn't a national program, until, I would say, somewhere in 1935. And this was set up as the Federal Art Project under the Works Projects Administration, of which, of course, he was the National Administrator.

RD: Well, I wanted to ask you something about how this business really operated. You could probably tell me a little bit about it, having been the State Director. Just what was your officer operation? How did you go about scheduling artists to your projects, painters, silk screen artists, oil painters? Did you have people in charge of each department under you?

RH: I would say that our state office was at first in Philadelphia, the project did get started in Philadelphia, and then, as our program grew, we had a very active office in Pittsburgh, and of course, the main office for the Works Projects Administration was in Harrisburg, and this became our focal center, you might say, our business center. Eventually, my office, when I became State Director, was in Harrisburg, and I worked out from there. I moved around to the production units in Pittsburgh and in Philadelphia. Then, of course, we had a few art centers, Altoona, Scranton, Sunberry and other places in the state.

RD: What mostly happened at the art centers? Were they primarily schools or exhibition galleries?

RH: Exhibition galleries with teaching programs, usually. It came out of a community interest, community desire to see art, and this brought art, not reproductions, but the originals into the community and gave people a chance, many for the first time, to see an original painting, or an original print, or a piece of sculpture.

RD: Yes. Did the standards for hiring people on the WPA project relax at all during the later 30's? What I mean, did the person have to be a professional, practicing artist?

RH: Yes, indeed they did. In Pennsylvania, this certainly was true, and artists were accepted for work on the project on the basis of their background, their professional background, and they also submitted a portfolio. It was not easy to get a job.

RD: I wondered, because I know that in some of the states, many of these people actually developed on these projects. In other words, they perhaps showed a certain amount of native talent, if we could use the word. They were given a chance, then, to join the project and then perhaps developed, became an artist.

RH: Yes. I think this was due to the local committee that selected the artist. In Philadelphia, we not only selected artists there, but of course in Pittsburgh or Scranton, or somewhere else, there would be a local group who was familiar with the individuals in the area.

RD: Did you have the final say, as Director, as to who would be on the project?

RH: I left this pretty much up to the committee who selected them.

RD: Do you know where Marry Curran is? Is she still alive?

RH: As far as I know. I haven't heard anything to the contrary on that. I believe that she is in Boston.

RD: Benjamin Knotts came down from New York. Is that correct? To succeed Miss Curran?

RH: That's right, Mr. Benjamin Knotts was connected with the New York Project, the Easel Division of the New York Project. I believe he was Director of it at one point. Horace Jayne came from the University Museum and served for a very brief period after Miss Curran left, and Mr. Benjamin Knotts came in for several years.

RD: Mr. Knotts is now back in the city of New York?

RH: He is. The last I heard, he is working with the Metropolitan Museum.

RD: That's my latest on him. What about Mr. Jayne?

RH: Mr. Jayne is still in Philadelphia in connection with the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

RD: You mentioned a bit ago that you thought you had one of the finer Graphics Divisions. What about your other projects; what about your easel projects? Sculpture and so on. What was going on there?

RH: Well, our project was never as large as most, you know. In the state, it probably never had much more than several hundred people. In Pittsburgh, of course, in Philadelphia, they had small easel projects and sculpture projects. These weren't actually defined as such. People worked as sculptors, if that was their particular inclination, perhaps more than they would work at something else. It was a kind of an exchange of ideas, which I think was very good, in that they might work in sculpture for a year, then do painting or something else.

RD: Was there ever any program set up to follow this through as to what kinds of works should be done, or how much work would be done, or any quotas assigned to each artists work to turn out?

RH: As time went on, we found that we were wanted, so to speak, that we had requests for the work.

RD: Really?

RH: And we found that very often a school might need a particular piece of sculpture for a fountain or something like this. This was assigned as a project. Several of the artists involved on the program might compete for that. They proposed plans for it, and a selection was made from their submissions. We found that there was a tremendous demand for the easel paintings and prints. These were, of course, used for exhibition through out the state. We had a very extensive exhibition program which toward the end of the project actually at one point had done as many as 70 exhibitions a month. These were small exhibitions, where maybe 25 or 30 items would be sent out to a town or community to be shown in this area. Often times, prints or paintings had never been seen there before. And I think this was a tremendous stimulus for the art revival, a kind of renaissance we had in this country, in the 50's. It was not only preservation of the skills for these people, those who would probably have had to go into some other field as a necessity, but it was also bringing this work to the public's attention. It became a right sort of fertile background for what came to pass in the 50's. This tremendous revival in abstract expressionism, a break through in which this country has been called the art center of the world. I don't think this would have been possible without the project. I'm sure it must have played a part.

RD: Did you people in Pennsylvania have any projects that you consider unique? In other words, were you doing anything that wasn't being done elsewhere in the United States?

RH: We had the usual easel, sculpture and print making projects. We did have of course the Index of American Design. Although this wasn't unique to Pennsylvania, I believe Pennsylvania certainly made a worthy contribution to it. The state was very rich in the kind of thing that the Index was concerned with. Our Pennsylvania Dutch material, for instance in Lancaster, Bird in Hand and Ephrata and those other places that have become quite famous since, were a rich source of material. And we had, for instance, the Mercer Museum, which had a great collection of American art, tools and household goods and that sort of thing. And the Pennsylvania Museum of Art and the museum in Harrisburg had fine collections. And also private collectors, including Dr. Barnes and others, came to us and made us aware of their collections. So the Index had a very good area in which to work here, and this is something that had been accepted in other countries in the past, and for some reason, this had never been done in this country. We had no real record of just what our tradition in art was. The designers were demanding this, everyone wanted to know just what the American background was. So the Index filled a very valuable gap there. These plates were produced over a period of years. They are now in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. A very beautiful book has been published on the Index of American Design.

RD: Is that Christensen's?

RH: Yes, I have a copy of it, right here.

RD: Who made the selection on this Index? Was that a national thing, or were the selections made locally?

RH: The policy for this was established by Holger Cahill in Washington, so that there wouldn't be an overlap. He kept the states informed what other projects were doing, and each state then concentrated particularly on the material in which it was rich, and thus it was comprehensive.

RD: Wasn't there some woman who was particularly associated with the Pennsylvania Dutch folklore?

RH: Well, there were two people - one was an artist working on the project, Katherine Milhous who did some posters.

RD: Yes, that's the one.

RH: Pennsylvania Dutch posters which really made her reputation as an artist, and these we found were in great demand over the period of the project. We reproduced them many times and sent them out. And then there was Frances Lichten who was the Supervisor of the Index of Design, here in Philadelphia, and subsequently became an authority on the subject and put out a book of her own, Folk Art in Rural Pennsylvania, which is an equally famous book. So out of the Index came two very, very fine books, and they've both been used extensively since then, and give a picture of just what the tradition of American art in this area is.

RD: What happened to the Milhous originals? Are they still in Philadelphia?

RH: That would be pretty hard to answer. The poster design is frequently destroyed and silk-screen prints made. It is art work for reproduction.

RD: Yes.

RH: And they usually have to be handled gently by the printers. But the originals are somewhere around in collections.

RD: They are not in any collection by themselves?

RH: No, I wouldn't say so. I think you would find that there are some -- there were so many allocated to schools and libraries and colleges that I feel sure that you would find them in these collections today.

RD: Can you tell me of any of the persons who were working on these projects? Who were the leading people in some of these areas, whom do you think deserve mention, that you remember as Philadelphia or Pennsylvania artists?

RH: Well, a number of artists have achieved considerable prominence in this area. I think of Wallace Kelly, who is well-known for his sculpture, who was a member of the project, was a Supervisor of the Sculptor Division at one point. Julius Block, a very well-known Philadelphia artist, painter William Ferguson, and Leon Kelly, a painter. All of these artists achieved considerable prominence. I remember particularly the Japanese sculptor, Onaga. He was an example of a sort of dedication we sometimes achieved on the project. I remember that when he first started, he was very anxious to do something quite wonderful for the government since they had taken an interest in his work. It was sort of amazing, and he saved everything that he received from his salary, for the first six months, almost everything, except for what it cost him for a little rice, that which he could subsist on; he finally bought a rather huge stone which he carved and which subsequently became part of the Philadelphia Museum of Arts collection. The work produced on the project frequently went into museum collections. These were professional people. There are many more, 30 years is a long time to go back and remember names, but I did see a good deal of course of Katherine Milhous and Francis Lichten. Then there were the Pinto brothers, who were very active at the time here in Philadelphia as artists and have achieved considerable distinction since, as both painters and as photographers. And then Joseph Hirsch is going strong today in New York, and then there were many more. And you know, in New York, many of the names which became prominent in the 50's, Jack Levine, Doug Kingman, Motherwell, Stuart Davis, De Kooning, Burgoyne Diller, all these people

were connected with the project. Their skills were preserved, and it was possible for them to be a real part of the renaissance that took place in the 50's.

RD: I was wondering just what the situation was in Philadelphia. Were there any artists in the 30's who were not in the project, who were able to make a living from their art without Art Project help?

RH: Well, I would say that the area was pretty badly hit. There were undoubtedly some artists who survived without being on the project, but there has never been a real - never, until very recent years, a real support for artists, for painters and sculptors. You go back over the history of our country - only for a very short period during the Colonial times, there was some support for a portrait school. A portrait painter had a little following, but after 1820 until after the Civil War, there was very little support for artists here, and there was a slight flurry of art buying in the 1920's before the crash - but this was mostly toward Europe, and the collector bought not from the local artists but from the European sources. So, all of this, where there really had never been any real support for the artist was followed by the Depression.

RD: That's right - it compounded the misery.

RH: Yes. Yes, indeed!

RD: Well, can you recall during your directorship some of the problems, social or personal problems?

RH: Well, as I look back on it, they don't seem perhaps as significant as they were then.

RD: I'm sure of that.

RH: And the project really did receive wonderful support from the press, and tax supported institutions that were interested in receiving the work. We did have at the beginning perhaps a problem in acquiring sponsorship. The necessary funds for the materials. We did have a problem as we went along in what you would ultimately call government paper work. It seemed to me that reports were required very frequently and toward the end there were six or eight reports on everything. It was almost like the Army. But, the project in Pennsylvania was very enthusiastically supported by the press, and the problems seem to grow less after 30 years, they shrink away.

RD: Sure. Do you recall at any time any political pressures as far as hiring this guy, or not hiring that guy and that sort of thing?

RH: Yes, to a mild degree, perhaps. State Senators or State Congressmen might send or refer an artist to us, but we observed the usual procedure of submitting his work to a committee, and I don't think it ever became a very serious problem.

RD: What about social problems? I mean, in terms of minority groups and this sort of thing. Did you - was there any question of race, creed, or color or -

RH: No. People were employed on the project because they were artists. As to color, creed - there was nothing.

RD: I suppose so. At that time, there probably weren't too many, say, colored artists?

RH: Yes, we had a number of colored artists. I think of Dox Thrash and others.

RD: In the southern areas of the country, this was a problem. It was a little difficult for someone

who wasn't a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant.

RH: Yes, this might have been true in other parts of the country. It was not a major problem here.

RD: Was fluctuation of budget? Did you, could you pretty well rely from month to month on a certain amount of allocated funds or cash?

RH: Yes, we had a definite budget. The project work plan was set up, and the request was then made through the Work Projects Administration from the National Office in Washington which approved it, and then we knew exactly what we had to spend in the following years.

RD: You mentioned a moment ago a Japanese sculptor who saved his money and bought a block of stone. Was this necessary?

RH: At the beginning, yes. At the beginning, it was, perhaps, because it was a matter of not knowing quite how to operate a Federal Art Program. After all, it was the first one, and we didn't realize quite what some of the problems would become. One was materials. Eventually, we solved this, we provided materials for the artist in his work, and eventually, these materials became the contribution of sponsorship, by the tax supported institution. If a school wanted to have a mural painted, it made a contribution for the materials, and the program went along, and we had no problems, but at the beginning, we did.

RD: You were allowed, I think, normally 10% - non-relief staff?

RH: That's correct.

RD: Most of the time, who were some of the other people who were working with you who were not dependent upon the state for assistance? I want you to tell us, to find out, who was the core of this thing in Pennsylvania, aside from the very top people like Miss Curran and yourself.

RH: Out of this 10% frequently came the unit supervisor or the project supervisor for the region in which he was operating. Now this person might be suggested by the district WPA office, or perhaps it was someone prominent in or known for their work in the museum field. They would come in and offer the job of doing some particular thing. I think this was true of Frances Lichten who was known for her work, not certainly in the Index of Design, but we knew of her work as an artist and sought her out particularly for the job of Supervisor of the Index of American Design.

RD: Although these people were not on relief, they still received a salary from the WPA, is that correct?

RH: Right.

RD: They didn't have another source of income, they weren't particularly wealthy?

RH: No.

RD: Everyone was on a salary?

RH: Yes, everyone was on a salary. The only thing is -- which you mentioned, which was pretty much the figure that we worked with -- their other income wasn't necessarily in question, at the time.

RD: You mentioned a moment ago the exhibits you had throughout the state. Did you ever sort of cooperate in founding exhibitions with other states? Did you send Pennsylvania work to New York, or Virginia? Did you accept exhibitions from other states?

RH: Well, on two occasions, particularly, I think of the show in New York, which was from all the projects, this at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1936, I believe, there was the New Horizon show - and this was an exhibition which also represented work from the projects.

RD: Was there a show of WPA work at the New York World's Fair?

RH: That was in 1939?

RD: That was in 1939.

RH: Not WPA work as such. There was an exhibition at the New York's World Fair which was by invitation, and this was a national committee which had selected the show. It wasn't the same thing that we had. But the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art and the New Horizon Show were entirely WPA shows.

RD: I was interested in the public reaction to this thing. You mentioned that the press in Pennsylvania was quite favorable. Do you think the general public appreciated, or understood what you people were trying to do for art? Was there much feeling for artists in that tax money should be spent for decoration of the walls, or that sort of thing? Do you recall how the man on the street reacted to this?

RH: Well, perhaps the man on the street didn't always come to exhibitions, but he was interested. But public support, I think, in general was quite good. The attendance at our exhibitions was very good, particularly in areas where works of art had never been shown before, that is the work of live painters and sculptors. The press supported these exhibitions very well, and I don't recall that there was hardly ever any of this WPA criticism that you hear so much about. This boondoggle business. I know that many projects were criticized, but we never experienced that criticism - its amazing, as I think back about it. But, of course, the fact that we received a good deal of applause toward the end as the project went on, because after 1940, gradually with the war coming on, even before Pearl Harbor, we began to redirect our efforts into something which no longer was just an art program as such. This became the War Services Project and by the time of Pearl Harbor, shortly after that, the project in Pennsylvania was almost entirely converted over to art as being used for the war effort. And requests for our work came from as far as -- I can think of Ft. Leonard Wood in Missouri, requested work from the Pennsylvania project: posters, charts, training charts, all sorts of models and special devices which would be used in the training area. And this grew almost over night. Of course, the fact that the country was probably going to war emphasized this greatly. But within a very short time, about six months or so, the project was entirely converted to it, and an easel painter might very well be painting portraits of some general at that particular moment if this was what was needed for the USO Center or somewhere else in connection with the war. And ceramics, people who were doing ceramic, ceramic plaques, for the defense organizations and -- that sort of a transfer of our operations to the war effort.

RD: Well, at this time, you were still in the WPA, you weren't transferred particularly to any --

RH: Yes. It was in 1942 that I was appointed State Director of the Pennsylvania War Services Project.

RD: You were still operating on the basis of demand?

RH: And there certainly was a very strong demand.

RD: For national security.

RH: And eventually about the time the projects were disbanded, many of them were taken over by the Army and Navy as production units for the war effort. You probably know something about this part of it. Our silk screen units continued in operation and were taken over by the Army, by the Navy. Some of these people actually went into the Navy to do this same thing. The Navy set up the different units of operations for production.

RD: Based on the WPA?

RH: Yes, based on what had been started and established under WPA.

RD: Could you sort of give me an idea, now, of what you think of this whole project, what good came out of it, what good it did? I think you are in a position, if anyone is, to give an opinion on this.

RH: Well, certainly, it was a necessary solution to a very drastic situation. First of all, the artists needed work, as everyone needed the work, the common man. But then, more than anything, we were very much interested in preserving natural resources in this country, and our skills are certainly one of these resources. It preserved the artists' skills during a period when they could not otherwise have been preserved, and in a sense, I think, it was tremendously valuable for what happened in the 1950's.

RD: Were any of these art centers you mentioned before, are any of them still in existence?

RH: This is hard to say, I haven't traveled through Pennsylvania recently, but I know that the Sunbury Art Center continued for a good many years, as far as I know, probably is still in existence.

RD: Where's that?

RH: Sunbury, Pa.

RD: I've no idea where it is.

RH: Well, it's in central Pennsylvania, and this was an art center which was very enthusiastically received at the time and developed quite a following, audience and exhibitions.

RD: I think you mentioned, a while ago, that you feel that this project - the community art centers by bringing art to the people - was partly responsible for the renaissance that you mentioned later on in the 40's and 50's.

RH: Much greater support of art than we had.

RD: The public interest perhaps grew out of this. Do you think that this encouraged many people now working to follow the arts? Was this a shot in the arm as far as the artists themselves were concerned?

RH: That art might be more of a feeling of a profession than it was at that time. Well, it is certainly other things which might perhaps lead to the arts now, aside from the desire to be an artist. This is much better supported than it used to be and there is a sort of boom going on. Artists have an

amazing financial success today which was unheard of at any other period. And then the art users weren't aware of art in graphic design, which the project, of course, began to explore a deal where it was its use of fine artists in the design of posters and the designing of all sorts of presentation pieces. This has developed into what we think of as graphic design today, or advertising design, and it is a tremendous field in itself. Therefore, many young artists aspire to it.

RD: Something I just thought of -- could you tell me anything about the development of the Carborundum print? I think that came out of the WPA.

RH: Yes, indeed it did. The Carborundum print came out of the print workshop which I set up and was an experimental process, working with Carborundum grains on a copper plate. This, of course, had been done to surface the lithography stone, but not so much with copper. It was something like the idea of mezzotint, roughing the surface of the whole unit, but it caused quite a start. Many artists came to the state to see what we were doing. It was part of the general activity of this print shop which aroused such interest.

RD: Who got that going?

RH: A number of artist worked on it including Michael Gallagher, Hugh Mesibov, Dox Thrash and others. These were artists with whom I worked very closely.

RD: What's the actual process involved? Is it simply grinding Carborundum into a plate?

RH: Yes, the old method of surfacing a plate for mezzotint was with a rocker.

RD: Yes.

RH: And instead of a rocker, this was a ground surface. It gave considerable freedom, considerable control over the quality of surface you would get by fine grain, by coarse grain, the amount of grain that you would use.

RD: Is this still being used?

RH: Yes, I see examples of this in print exhibitions. And you know, prints were, technically speaking, a rather conservative affair in those days. There was a wood cut, there was a lithograph, and there was an etching. But today, we have mixed media prints which are perhaps not different from this to a certain degree in the project days. A cross-breeding of various techniques so that today you can hardly tell what a print is, you know?

RD: I know, I have trouble. Well, as you look back, it may not be easy to recall, as you say, the things that happened, the unpleasantness. Where do you feel were the big defects, or do you feel there were any, on the Federal Art Project? How could this have been better or more successful? How could it have been of any more help to more people?

RH: Well, of course, I did mention the red tape -- all the paperwork and that sort of thing and the business of sponsorship. Actually, you see, the object was not to help all the artists, but to help artists who needed it, and who were eligible for it, so we never made an effort to pay them such a handsome wage that they would stay around.

RD: Sure.

RH: And this was the thing - they moved out, moved out to outside things whenever they found an

important job outside.

RD: Were you people actually helping them find jobs? Or was that not part of your project?

RH: No, I wouldn't say that it was part of it. I would say many people were employed in private industry from the project during the time of the project. And perhaps the fact that they could keep their skills in tact and continue working made it possible for them to be employed elsewhere.

RD: Did most of these people who worked in the Art Project stay in the art field?

RH: Many of them who would otherwise not have.

RD: Do you feel that there is any need for federal support for artists today, or are there enough opportunities to make this think unnecessary?

RH: Well, that's a very sensitive question. The times are different now. They have had a number of bills before Congress; so far none of these have passed. I've read where Javits and Clark and Humphrey have all done something on this. It's been going on now for a number of years, off and on. A government art program such as the one in Russia, as you well know, just doesn't work. The government owns the artist, it owns their point of view and stifles all their creativity and initiative, and limits what they can say. I think it is certain that it can never become remotely like that here. Maybe the government should. I think it should continue to foster an interest in art in some way, through a federation perhaps, to stimulate private interests, private support for the arts.

RD: Well, so you think that the WPA Art Project proved that the government need not necessarily dictate to the artist. I get the impression that there was extreme freedom allowed to individual artists as to what he did, the type of work he did; that the government did not in any sense dictate to the artists in the 30's and a lot of people seem to be afraid this is what would happen if the government actively sponsored artists.

RH: Yes, that's very true; the government did not dictate to the artists. The easel painter, for instance, came on the project as a professional artist, painted in the manner in which he was painting at that time, and his work was accepted by the project as a work of art which might be allocated as such, and we didn't tell him what to do. The only time, the only instance when there were any specific requirements were perhaps for a specific job such as a piece of sculpture, a building, or a mural -- the size and that sort of thing, the limitations imposed on any artist. I suppose you could say that if it were properly run, the government need not influence the art in any way on a government program. This is the point I make because it is necessary not to limit the artist's creativity.

RD: This brought up something that I hinted at earlier. Was there of an active art union that could give you any problems?

RH: Yes, there was an artists union in Philadelphia. It seemed to grow with the project. Mostly, it came out of the desire of the artists on the project to receive larger salary, but this was contrary to the government's idea which wasn't intentionally increasing the salary, beyond a certain point, of a bare subsistence, so to speak, because they wanted the people to go on out to better work, integrating into private industrial fields that were outside of the project. The union frequently went to Washington to lobby over this, to get the salaries raised. They were attempting it for most of the period of the project up until the project was taken over in the 40's.

RD: Do you feel that there was any active so-called Communist movement in the project, because I

know that in some parts of the country this was rather pronounced, and I'm sure that perhaps the concept of Communism was different then than now. It wasn't quite the bugaboo that people feel today. Many people had perhaps better reasons in those days for seeking a different type of government. Were you troubled much by Communism?

RH: It seems to me that there were rumors of this in connection with the project, but I'm not really conscious of it. I am conscious of the Artists Union. This may have been infiltrated to some extent with the Communist thinking, but still its main interest was to do what unions are most interested in - in raising salaries, you know.

RD: Yes, I know. Mr. Hood, can you think of anything which we should have said, which we haven't said here in this discussion? You probably are in a better position than I am to -- think of things that might be important?

RH: I'm sure I'll think of many things afterwards. It seems to me that you are dealing with a period of almost ten years, or about ten years and during that time the project came from something which was quite small into something that was not large in terms of employment figures, but very large in terms of its production and demands that they received for various kinds of work. It certainly proved its usefulness and its worth.

RD: Might I ask you a personal question?

RH: What?

RD: How do you feel that this experience helped you? Did it prove valuable to you? Or what do you think it contributed to your future development?

RH: Well, I think the experience of setting up the Arts and Crafts Workshop was a very great one for me. I probably wouldn't have had this under different circumstances, and probably I got to work with many artists that I might not have met otherwise. Yes, I think this kind of thing - artists working together as a group and this kind of exchange of ideas that can come about from people of different types working together can be very valuable too.

RD: Do you feel that there was more of esprit de corp in the art field then than you find in artists today? That was sort of a common ground they had then, that they don't experience now? Or were they still individuals going on their own?

RH: There may have been individuals, but there was an esprit de corp, there was a great enthusiasm going on from all of this. The artists -- some of them were overwhelmed by the idea that somebody was interested in them; and the idea that their government was interested in them was a real challenge. And it seems to me that they went at this in a state of excitement, and they really contributed the most they could contribute. I know it never was a custom of not wanting to get to work. You got more work than you asked for, and there was no boondoggling about it, none at all.

RD: Maybe we are a little bit more blase about this sort of thing today.

RH: Yes.

RD: Perhaps some advantage in the situation. From what people say, it would seem to me that there was more sense of real appreciation on the part of -- or there was more dedication to do their job well for the sake of the job for their country, for their fellowman.

RH: Yes, you are right.

RD: It was a commitment.

RH: Yes, there was a commitment, and there was a real enthusiasm around then which I somehow have not found in other areas ever since.

RD: I think a lot of people would agree on that. Well, if you can think of nothing else then

RH: Well, it was very interesting talking about this after nearly 30 years, and it has stimulated my thinking about it again, after a long period. And as I was going to say, I'll probably remember a lot of things afterwards that I don't remember today.

RD: If you come up with any gems, I'd appreciate it if you drop me a line to that effect, and we'll try to do it over. In the meantime, I would like to thank you very, very much.

RH: I enjoyed it.