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*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Anthony Velonis,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Anthony Velonis on October 13, 1965. The interview took place in Hackensack, New Jersey, and was conducted by Harlan Phillips for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Interview

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I think you ought to give me some insights by way of beginning as to what you fell heir to in the way of talent, family. You mentioned family out in the shop.

ANTHONY VELONIS: There was a certain continuity in the print field, printmakers; printmakers generally.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was this the background?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No. Actually, my grandfather was an ecclesiastical painter, on Byzantine style, you know, Greece. In fact in the backwoods of Greece -- there are no woods in Greece, I mean in the hills of Greece. Then my uncle inherited that on my mother's side. He went to the various schools -- polytechnic school in Athens, and then at the Art Students League here [NYC] in the early part of the century. But he got smitten with the Renaissance stuff.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Let's see: we were going back to the 30s to find out something of background out of which you came.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. As I said, my uncle, who was quite an inspiration to me, was originally smitten when he came back from Greece with the whole Renaissance thing -- you know, Old Master drawing and whatnot. The Art Students League in those days helped him along in that sense. The "free-est" they got at that point was something like Sargent (he laughs). He sort of made it a cycle.

But he got smitten with the Byzantine idea, then he'd get into the Old Master idea, and then finally Gustav Dore, even. And then finally it dawned on him that he was missing out on what he started with originally. The beauty of the Byzantine idea, especially for ecclesiastical use, had a very special tone to it, a mystique.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Indeed.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And he went back to doing it to some extent. It was a sort of compromise, which is not a good one, unfortunately. But my grandfather's stuff is not a compromise and I think in that sense it's better. As a kid, you know, you're kind of over-awed by an artist -- he was a very handsome man, a lot of flair to him and so forth. That was kind of an inspiration. I would say I would draw anyhow in school.

So I was a local boy, you know, James Monroe High School in the Bronx, a great school. I got a scholarship to the College of Fine Arts at NYU, which I never thought I'd make -- I came from the tenements, you know, and thought I'd never be able to afford to go to college, so this was a big thing for me. And of course after I graduated, we were smack into the Depression.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You couldn't have arrived at a better time -- '29, wham!

ANTHONY VELONIS: (laughing) Yeah, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: How about the School of Fine Arts? Anybody there give you a kick, or open a window, or --

ANTHONY VELONIS: We-e-ell, not really. Except for the fact that it kept me on the track for the years I was there, instead of being diverted. But it wasn't particularly useful in terms of any large sweep --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Who at the NYU School of Fine Arts opened a window, printing, this kind of --

ANTHONY VELONIS: It was Walter Pach. He was one of the lecturers. And Frank Jewett Mather, and a fellow by the name of Cross, Professor Cross, I forget his first name. And John Lombardini Northern did a good deal of work for -- I got a little grounding, well, not engineering but sort an architectural sort of a background which was helpful to me later on, thank goodness.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did you take to painting?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah, sure. Painting, and sculpture, watercolor, the rest, the whole thing.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Where was it going to lead? Did you have any idea?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No. I had no idea at the time, except that the area fascinated me and I felt sooner or later I'd find a niche somewhere.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was it aimed toward teaching?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, teaching in fine arts and so forth. I took a course in Education at the time but I thought I wanted to continue art.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's part of the offerings which you can use subsequently.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But then as you say, '29 came along.

ANTHONY VELONIS: (laughing) Yeah. And the best I got at that point was a job (laughing again) which the family really warmed to. I got a job at Stern Brothers as a letterer on suitcases and trunks, so I used my skill! (hearty laugh)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Look: groceries are groceries.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: How big was your family?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Four kids.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Four kids... That's rough.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And the father out of work.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's rough.

ANTHONY VELONIS: I was the oldest.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, that's like carrying a mantle too.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Well, after a year of this Stern Brothers business, I said the heck with it, I can't keep doing it forever. So I told them -- you know, I was stuck, there was the family, the only one with a job. So I told them, the Personnel department, that I wanted my brother to take my place, because I had to develop a career elsewhere, you know, and I would break him in for a couple of weeks, free, just as long as he could take my place. They agreed to it. I did that. And as soon as they got him installed, they reduced the salary.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I'll be damned. Were you mad!

ANTHONY VELONIS: I was furious. I'll never forgive them for that.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Give them the whole approach, with continuity, which was your idea --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- and help the family at the same time, and they reduce the salary.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Just because he was new, you see.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Where did you turn then?

ANTHONY VELONIS: I tried to develop some free-lance work in commercial art.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was it beginning to grow? This is in about '30, '31?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, no, '31-'32. '32.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Had you developed contacts that way?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, I tried. I did a few things here and there. There was a coffee ad that I did that was reproduced in a poster, in lithography. And then I got fascinated with silk screen. There was another artist that I teamed up with at the time, Fritz Brosius, who is now the art director of Time magazine. We thought we'd

investigate the screen process, and by supply houses and so forth, seeing what they had to offer. It was plenty of fun. You discover a lot of technology, especially if you work at it, you know, little by little. We went through the whole bit -- you know the basic principles, don't you, the screen process?

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, what is the state of the art in 1932?

ANTHONY VELONIS: They used it in textiles quite a bit. They also did large backgrounds for, I'd say for department store windows and wallpaper. Some poster work but it was rather crude, as a matter of fact. There was a studio that did work during the last War and I got a job there for a bit, called Dolberry [phon.sp.] Brothers. It doesn't exist any more. That also helped me a lot, after all I didn't have the capital to open up a shop of my own or anything, so I worked there for a while and that helped.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: In terms of technology.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. But Fritz and I did start a little place out in Astoria. Actually, my cousin had a little place and we just fooled around there. You know how it is, kids are really --! And I did painting as I could in between times --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: This is your own?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. And I had a friend who's a poet and I illustrated his book at the beginning, it's (he laughs) got to be somewhere in the attic.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But you hadn't illustrated a book before. It's like the first, isn't it?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, right, except the yearbook in high school. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Had you done that?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But not the printing. The design?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Well, and then the CWA came along and I got on the mayor's poster project.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did you! How did this come about?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh because the family was in serious straits, and since I was employable I made an application and so forth, and sure enough, that helped a lot. My training combined with my need, you know, helped me a lot. And then I got on Mayor LaGuardia's poster project.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Who'd you see? Mrs. Force?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah! (enthusiastically) Juliana Force, right. When we first started, I was right there in the beginning.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Were you really! That's when it was at the Whitney Museum.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You talked with her? Or Lloyd Goodrich?

ANTHONY VELONIS: I believe so, yes.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: A fellow named Porter too?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, Porter.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: George Porter; I forget --

ANTHONY VELONIS: The name escapes me. Not Cole Porter -- (they laugh) Cooke Glasspold [phon.sp.] was there --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Right.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Juliana Force, Lloyd Goodrich, and -- well, the very first thing, I'm sorry it wasn't quite the poster project in the very beginning. I did get on a project -- Mayor LaGuardia wanted to popularize "Fish Tuesday," fishing was a depressed market too, same as everything else. So I was sent out on a commercial

fishing trip for two weeks to the George's Banks, with a wonderful crew of people.

They just picked them out of the Fulton fish market, you know, the docks there? There was a German captain, a partly Portuguese partly Norwegian crew; a wonderful combination, and great people -- they were wonderful people; very hospitable. The Mate gave up his berth for me. I thought at first they were so hospitable they were probably interested in the political stuff, political contact, Department of Markets and stuff like that. I was surprised to learn that they weren't the least bit interested in that. They were just being good, nice, that's all; just human.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: This was a research trip for you?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. I took photographs and sketches and so forth. That kept me busy for about six months later making paintings. I don't know where the devil they are now any more, they were for the Department of Markets.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Photographs: had you worked with a camera before?

ANTHONY VELONIS: To some extent, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It wasn't an alien thing?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh no, it wasn't alien at all.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: This was just to deepen memory, capture something you saw?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh, yeah. I made notes, sketches and so forth, and I took photographs also. Then from that I would enlarge on it.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: This was the initial thing that you had with the CWA.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I'll be damned... I'll have to look into the Department of Markets and see what's happened to them. You have no idea?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was there just this one trip?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah but I did quite a few paintings as a result of it. They were all on the subject of fishing.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did you turn those into the Department of Markets?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure, sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You don't remember who it was?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No. Not any more.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: McCormick... He was Department of Docks.

ANTHONY VELONIS: No. I don't know where they are.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: How long did this continue?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Maybe four or five or six months, I haven't the vaguest idea exactly how long it was.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: What sort of thing did you do? From the paintings? You did posters?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No-o-o! Paintings.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh, the posters came later.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yes, I'm sorry, these were paintings. They sort of glamorized [garbled voices] we have this print, this is from that, you know, we called it a half-ton fish, sort of an idealization of the thing, the Portuguese fisherman with a stubble of beard and so forth; the smell of the docks, and the city in the background.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Let's see now, the New Bedford docks --

ANTHONY VELONIS: We stopped at New Bedford.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And Nantucket Island.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, New Bedford is their home grounds in this particular. The captain's name was Hans Hammer [phon.sp.].

HARLAN PHILLIPS: (laughing) Must have been a fantastic experience. Had you ever been to sea before?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh no, no, I wasn't. And I was seasick most of the time, too. (Phil. laughs again) When I got back, with my beard and sallow and everything else, my sister opens the door and says, "JESUS CHRIST!" (hearty laughter) "Himself!"

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, it shows you, when you confront grim necessity what a man will do.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah, sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But I think this tided you over for six months.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, at least up to six months. I did quite a few things. And, oh yeah, the captain himself was quite a character, a philosopher, bound to be.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: They have that special kind of wisdom you can get only from looking at vast expanses of water and being drugged by it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. People need passports to leave milltowns, you know; slaves, you know. He made a gesture, "slaves, you know." And yet they worked harder than anybody I've ever seen.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: There's a special zest to it --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- even when there's no communication, where they don't talk, they work with --

ANTHONY VELONIS: I know. This was an education for me, believe me --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I bet it was.

ANTHONY VELONIS: -- because I hadn't really a true respect for the relatively uneducated person until that point in time, you know? Then I looked at them with new eyes. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Not only that but they're infinitely more wise than many of the educated ones. That's the interesting , that kind of wisdom. That's the rarest thing, incidentally. Because I wound up on the same -- they mixed up my cards and I was shipped to an illiterate battalion during the second World War, fresh out of college, won a fellowship to Harvard, I knew all the answers --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- mixed up my cards and sent me to an illiterate battalion and my education began. Because these kids, illiterates, had more knowledge, more wisdom on how to live, how to get along in the woods, trees or otherwise, than I ever dreamed of knowing. But it's the same kind of thing -- when it's good, it's like, well, it's indelibly etched for all time.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. It was more than that, it was a deep kind of thing; non-verbal. It's the humanity of the thing, the deep understanding that they have of what are the true values. You know.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's true. Well, you had a rare time then, despite your seasickness.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh sure, and I've never regretted it. In fact, it's a wonderful subject for an obsession/for a session. Anyhow, after that I got on the Mayor's Poster project which was hosted by a fellow by the name of Weaver [he spells it] and on one side of me was Ted Agree [phon.sp., he pronounces it "Ay-gree"] on the other side was Alonzo Landsford, who's now one of the curators at -- I forget, I think it must be Georgia, the Atlanta museum, one of the big museums down there. Ted Agree I should have followed up. His brother Charles was a fairly well-known commercial artist. I'm not sure what Ted wanted to be but he had a lot of ability.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: What was the design of the --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Vera Bach/Bok was on that, she was very good too, she's got a good bit of reputation too.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: What was the design of the Poster project, what were you supposed to do?

ANTHONY VELONIS: We were supposed to serve the City departments on whatever campaigns they wanted, whether it was the department of Parks, Fire, of whatever. Of course, later on when the WPA developed and so forth, we did stuff for the theater -- not the commercial theater [groping to remember name of Orson Welles, "the fellow that played in the Hearst movie" --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh, you worked for Orson Welles.

ANTHONY VELONIS: No, not even for, directly, but for the things he produced. Living Theater, it was called.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh yes. What was her name -- [he probably means the woman who headed Living Theater, Hallie Flanagan]

ANTHONY VELONIS: Gee, it's so vague now ...

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Orson Welles had the Harlem --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. These are the things we did posters for.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh did you!

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, yeah, as well, later on. Any number of things. I forget now. And some federal departments of course, also, we worked for. It was the Mayor's Poster project, then later on it became federal.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Where was it housed?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, in the (pondering) -- is it the GE Building, or Westinghouse Building? On Lexington Avenue at 51st, something like that; tall building, 40th floor or something.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did you have equipment?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Plenty of supplies?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And this was CWA.... Correct me: Is this part or an offshoot of what was called the Public Works of Art Project? The PWAP, which was under the CWA?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, exactly. That's exactly what it was.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: So, while Mrs. Force began it with the headquarters at the Whitney Museum, it moved away, because there was a lot of uproar --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, exactly, it moved away from there. And then eventually it moved to the WPA, the Federal Arts Project became a part of it. Weaver had some difficulty as far as the personnel was concerned, all these young artists in there -- you know those days --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: (laughing) This is the days of the popular front --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Ideas are in the air.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And Mr. Weaver was very hidebound, so he got out after a while. He had to! (laughter) And then Richard Floethe [he spells it] took over. He was a Bauhaus graduate. He's also a graphic designer, he does book jackets, all kind of illustrations for books and whatnot, an exceptionally good artist. And a very quiet, efficient administrator. (laughing) Didn't get himself in trouble.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: As you think about it now, the days of the Mayor's Poster project, and the one before it, where you worked for the Markets generally -- is this a youth movement? Were the people generally young?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Ye-e-e-ah -- not all of them, though. They were reasonably young. Most of them were in their late 20s and early 30s. Yeah, that's true.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Which would make a difference --

ANTHONY VELONIS: A few years later, when you were older, just a few years later when they had the NYA, the National Youth Administration. They had an art group too, in the late 30s. We were old folks then. (laughter)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: As I understood the CWA, particularly the PWA aspects of it, they wrote into the resolutions sponsoring the CWA a minimum wage of 25 cents an hour. This was national in scope. There were a whole bunch of regions but the effect of this minimum wage in the South was to have sharecroppers leave the farms and go to the cities for a better wage, so that the Southern Senators got quite angry about the CWA and they terminated it. That was one of the price -- Roosevelt's strength lay with the Southern Senators who were leaders in the various Congressional Committees.

The sharecroppers began wandering away from the soil and into the towns and the consequence was that CWA terminated. Now, publicly it terminates in April 1934, having started roughly in December 1933, the first announcement in Washington. Edward Bruce headed it up, Juliana Force was the New York regional and it was headed up at the Whitney Museum. I think they had to close the Whitney Museum six weeks early because people were marching up and down --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, I remember seeing numbers outside, a problem, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: So that it was in a sense terminated. As far as the easel painters were concerned and those people who were working on murals, somehow or other that work continued. Yours continued --

ANTHONY VELONIS: That's right, it did.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: There was continuity, unbroken continuity.

ANTHONY VELONIS: I personally got on in the beginning and got off at the very end. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Because I know Stuart Davis, for example, who was an easel painter, worked till April and that was it, he got on something else somehow. But a lot of work was still in progress.

ANTHONY VELONIS: I don't really remember. Now, Stuart Davis was working in the very same room that we were housed in. (pause) It was a later room, he had moved or not, I don't remember now, it's kinda vague... It was later, I think, because Richard Floethe was the head of it at the time. I remember his big things right on the side.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: [Philip] Guston was there.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Burgoyne Diller.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, when it became the WPA, Mrs. Force was somehow replaced by Mrs. McMann/McMahon.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And she had it ever since, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Right but she had earlier continuity with the College Art Association.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did that play any role?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yep, that was in there too.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Because she seems to have been a storehouse or gathering, collecting agency of information on artists and particularly in the New York area, even though the College Art Association was designed, in terms of tours, in terms of publication of a magazine --

ANTHONY VELONIS: That's right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- she turned her hand to just surveying the local scene, what was going on, having shows for artists, and so on. So that she ultimately became head of this --

ANTHONY VELONIS: That's right, and the first thing I did when she took over and Harry Knight was her assistant, since I had my experience with the Department of Markets, I had heard they wanted an artist to take a trip in the Intercoastal Waterway and make some kind of a survey, art reporting. Gee, I thought that was great, (laughing) I wasn't married then, a great adventure. And I remembered approaching Harry Knight especially for that. I said, "If anybody's going to go down, remember me." (laughing) I didn't go. That fell through or some damn thing happened, I don't remember.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: The place was alive with ideas then, wasn't it.



ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Harry Knight had been there earlier too, not just in WPA, he'd been on the CWA, as an assistant and I think in this instance to Goodrich.

ANTHONY VELONIS: I don't know, I never really questioned him how early he was there, I think you'll have to find out for yourself.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Would you turn your hand to when it became the WPA? Was it still in the Poster --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, it was still the Poster thing and Richard Floethe was quite an advanced guy, I mean, most modern things, he wanted high quality. To me that was quite a challenge and I was delighted with the fact that he did. I just said, well, here's where I learn as much as I can learn, you know. It was a great school.

At the same time I used my -- I suggested that the Poster division would be a lot more productive and useful if they had an auxiliary screen printing project that worked along with them. And apparently this was very favorably received and immediately we got to work on --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: When you say "immediately we got to work," what did you have at hand? Did you have a shop that had enough materials to work with? Or did you go out and get this sort of thing?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Went out and got them, made them, this kind of thing. It's very inexpensive relatively, you know -- screen process to start, and we didn't have a rack in those days, we designed a rack for us to print on, to dry the prints, the posters and so forth. That was useful, because we'd have editions of several hundred to a thousand, five thousand pieces which we delivered to various departments. Of course, this couldn't have gotten too big because then of course it would be competitive with the business outside --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I wondered about that.

ANTHONY VELONIS: -- but this was only in places where they would not have it anyway, otherwise, wouldn't have done it otherwise. We just got away with it. It wasn't that large anyway.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: No but it was experimental.

ANTHONY VELONIS: It was experimental. And this continued. Naturally, with all the easel painters around us and the fact that my own orientation was painting and so forth, and sculpture, we put two and two together. I said, "This is a great medium for the artist. Look what it can do -- with the least possible expense you can make all kind of things."

So I started then experimenting with making a fine art print, using the medium. I got so enthused with it that I approached the PUAC, the Public Use of Arts Committee. Theoretically it was supposed to be a committee of lay people but naturally the artists, they want to promote themselves. Their main function was because the Federal Arts Project couldn't be self-promoting, they were out on a limb, and they couldn't use public relations, they couldn't use anything, you know. And they couldn't be supported by anything outside. So we filled a vacuum then -- the Public Use of Arts Committee filled that vacuum and they propagandized for art in the parks, in the subways, et cetera, et cetera.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Sure it became womb. [partial sentence after interrupting phone call]: the value of turning the shop into a kind of service for the fine-artist anyway; across the board.

ANTHONY VELONIS: No, it wasn't quite that way. I saw the value of making fine-art prints but the Poster project had its own uses, its orientation and so forth; I couldn't get into that. But through the Public Use of Arts Committee, we presented this as part of -- every time we saw Mrs. McMahan and her board or whatever, we presented this as part of the agenda. As in most things, she looked at it reasonably.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You say she was receptive to the idea.

ANTHONY VELONIS: She wasn't quite receptive right off the bat, naturally every administrator has to be suspicious, (he laughs) so she was, but she would listen, at least, you can't take that away from her, and didn't give it much credit in the beginning. There was about a year of putting this on the agenda from time to time till we got some action. You don't do need more than that.

Of course, this built up quite a bit and in the meantime I was making some prints. I submitted them as part of the experimentation I did personally, you know, and I think they made an impression, apparently. So she assigned me finally, took me off the Poster project, to the Graphic Arts division where they were doing etching, lithography, woodblock, and so forth. I was to take a team of six artists under my tutelage, so to speak, one after the other, and each one of us would make a print.

Naturally, I made a print for myself first, to demonstrate. This is all written up in Carl Zigrosser's whole historical thing and Hy Warsager was one of them, Gene Morley was another, Louis Lozowick, Harry Gottlieb, Elizabeth Olds --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: A good crowd.

ANTHONY VELONIS: -- and we all did prints one after the other. The man I was impressed with most, though, was Gene Morley.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Why was this?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, there was something extra about him. Unfortunately, he's one of those people that -- later on he became a partner of ours, you know, and he did a lot of good work here, especially when Hy and myself were in the Army. But unfortunately he -- he's a redheaded chaps and I think redheaded chaps can't take drink too easily, I think he became alcoholic and eventually died.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But there was something in his work that you liked.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Not only his work but his attitude, his approach. There was a systematic attention to detail, to the proper kind of paper, the proper kind of ink, and yet, no compromise so far as the esthetic impact was concerned. He married the esthetic with the material better than anybody else I've ever known. And he had a very unique style; solid, real solid. But unfortunately... I think he would have become one of the best people on the American scene today if he'd stuck to the right paths.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Life is filled with many --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Tragedies, yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, tell me this: In terms of paper, was there experimentation in paper? Could you get paper? What about the materials that were available?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh-h-h, that's a problem, because we didn't make large editions, so for the experimental edition we'd only make 25 or 30 prints. Who knows where they were, with I could get some of them back.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You don't have a copy of yours?

ANTHONY VELONIS: I have one, of mine --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's all?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Hy Warsayer may have one of his somewhere, but -- well, shortly after that the whole thing blew up. Then we started the National Serigraph Society. And then I got together with Hy Warsager and Bernard Shard, Joe Leboit -- yeah, the four of us started out. Then Bernard and Joe Leboit dropped out and I took on my brother, who had some technical background in the screening anyway, and Tom Quinn, who was president of the Artists Union and who had also a commercial background, which was helpful to us, as well as a fine-art orientation because of his contact with the field.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was there any realization of the possible commercial use of this? How the devil did you balance the impulses you had in terms of your own work with the commercial side?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, we had gained a number of skills --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: On the Project.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. And of course we knew of the important lithographers of France, Paris and so forth, that made a passable living at least printing for artists. And we thought that would be one of our ideas -- working with artists, and since they didn't know the process too well, we would act as their studio for them, you see, work with them. And we did, there were a number of them. Adolf Dehn was one. Who was the other chap, Castellano? Well, anyway, and we did of course our own prints. (he laughs)

We had an idea of making rather fancy Christmas cards -- not fancy so much but big, expensive ones, and calling them sort of "gift cards", "card gifts." In those days they sold for a dollar apiece -- big ones, you know, big envelopes, fancy paper and so forth. And for that time it was reasonably successful, we sold quite a few of them, to more of the better Fifth Avenue shops -- Jensen's and so forth.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Whom did you have as an outside man?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Tom Quinn. He was a very personable chap, very good, he got around.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But in any event it was sustaining.

ANTHONY VELONIS: We-e-ell, we worked ourselves, and our wives worked a good deal of the time. (laughter)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And you lived in back of the store.

ANTHONY VELONIS: That's right. Quite often we didn't bring anything home at the end of the week. And when we hired somebody, we eventually did, they got more than we did. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's part of the , too.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure. But we continued in that fashion, and improved. We did point-of-sale displays for the same Fifth Avenue shops, since we had contacts already. And we did Christmas cards, and once you do Christmas cards you enlarge it, for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and for Tiffany's. We tried to choose who we did it for. And then we did limited editions for Hyperion Press, which is defunct now but it was a very fancy limited-edition then, you know. Marcel Vertes was one of their people. And after that we did a lot of work through him. The work varied, as you can see.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's the beauty of it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: There were all kinds of things.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: The pasture was always green.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, right. We got into this bottle business in a very peculiar way.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I wondered how you got involved with glass.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Imagine: my brother wasn't being paid enough at the time even though he was a partner and he wasn't used to the kind of (laughing) deprivation that the WPA involved. So he had free-lance job on the side -- not a free-lance job but he used to pick up free lance work, and there was one fellow who wanted to get into the cosmetic business; a fellow named Mills. He had my brother make these profilm stencils, 10-point type, cut by hand, and used to make small runs on bottles. Didn't amount to anything. I don't know what happened then, and we weren't the least bit interested -- that was just a commercial thing, you know, we didn't mind doing commercial work but it just wasn't --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Glass didn't seem your cup of tea.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, at the beginning. What happened, finally, was that one of the Fifth Avenue shops that we had contact with, Dunhill and John Moore wanted to put out a shaving lotion, and they used the flat or rectangular bottle, and wanted to call it The Sportsman. He wanted to have ducks and flying fish and sports things on it and make a man's shaving lotion, which didn't exist too much at the time if it existed at all --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It was an after-thought!

ANTHONY VELONIS: And it caught well, this was avant-gard, you know. "Try it." It was a flat bottle, and you print on paper which is flat, why not print on a flat bottle? The only difference is you had to use enamels, which could take the gaff/take to glass a little bit, you know. So we did a little research on enamels, the best that were available at the time, and we printed on the front and back and this was patented -- the idea that printing was seen on the back of a flat bottle, and then putting the animal or whatever was the sport thing in front.

That became quite a famous line. So we had to invent a few of these little hand machines that could print them and this became a steady operation. It began to dawn on us that this was making a little money for us and the other stuff we were just breaking our hands over, a lot of attention by all of us who were at the head, --the technical attention, the sales attention -- so that we never had any time at all, we were always chasing deadlines. Whereas this little thing that we looked down our noses at was really doing much better.

END OF THIS SIDE, A  
BEGINNING SIDE B

ANTHONY VELONIS: In those years, the first year it was \$25,000 on that alone; put everything else in the shade.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: (laughing) You'd reached the Elysian Fields and didn't know it!

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I'm wondering -- you know, this is a problem of balancing the impulse that one has as an artist with all the continuity you've had, as opposed to doing something which is a challenge in itself in terms of setting it up, isn't it?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure. And we rationalized this whole thing by saying, well, what the devil, life is nothing but a round of cocktail parties and manoeuvring and much paranoia of pushing yourself, and -- let's be honest, the heck with it, let's paint when we feel like it and as we feel it, without any commercial intent at all; and let's make our money otherwise. It just sounded good. And it is good, I mean, basically it's all right if it works.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's a hyphenated existence but necessary.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Necessary, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And of course, family starts to come along too, you can't keep putting off having children forever. So, all that kind of thing. (long pause) Then the War started to come along and brass went to war and lipsticks didn't have any substance to be made with. So we got into plastics -- printing on plastics.

And we worked out a system and we were the only ones at the time able to print on the plastic and still have it stick. By a very device. At that time I didn't know any better but I took some lipsticks, ground them up and made a resin out of them, that dissolved them, and used that as a vehicle for grinding some pigment in. Then that stuck but no other paint except itself because it had a migrating plasticizer in it. All these things we had to learn the hard way. And of course since we were one of the few people that were able to do these lipsticks, we got an enormous amount of -- and that also pushed the business up. Eventually we had three lofts on 17th Street instead of one loft we'd started out with on 23rd Street way in the top.

Then we had to move from there and we had a couple of lofts in a very large building, 200 Varick Street, something like 32- or 33,000 feet, with substantial offices and so forth and so on. But Hy and I had to go in the Army. A couple of years later, they started taking older men. But he was in first. Then he became as Master Sargent, assigned to a graphic arts or photography and printing and so forth kind of unit out at Lowery Field. And naturally, since I was a screen-process expert, when he heard I got in the Army he said, "Hey, we need you right here." So he got the commanding officer to send a letter to the induction place to get me in right away.

I got there without any basic training. I got to work right away, but then I had to take my basic training eventually; six months later they sent me back to get my basic training (laughing) six months after I was in.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Did you use this period in the Army to deepen technical advance and so on?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yes, sure. We did all kinds of things there. We set up the whole screen processing and graphic arts section of the Army. It was useful, from training aids to all kinds of things.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But if you began to get the richness and variety, then you can come through the transom.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. Although eventually I was transferred to an area that was apparently more needed, which was in at Wright Field at the statistical control department where we did a lot of management engineering. In my particular division they compacted all the dry statistics that used to come in and they'd have to make sense out of them and transfer them into a meaningful visual shorthand -- graphs and small little spot illustrations, et cetera. So that the generals, even literate generals, could look at them and make some sense out of them.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But again the scene shifts, makes new demands, and the technique and skill you have preparing to supply it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, Eugene Morley and Bernard Sharp were in charge, we took them on later, and Harry Knight too. Bernie Sharp was with us originally, he shared the first month's rent, but then he dropped out; much later he came back with us. But when we got out of the Army there were just too many of us around, so eventually we had to sort of -- not to liquidate so much as share what we had, and they started a business of their own.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, it was a fluid field, wasn't it --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- there wasn't any shackles on a man with imagination, and there was all kinds of demand.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. And we moved out to Newark and were there for about eight or nine years. Then the last ten years we were here.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's a fantastic plant.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And that's where we are now. Now, again I'm beginning to get interested in painting again. I haven't touched it since 1939, though --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Really?

ANTHONY VELONIS: -- except drawing, occasionally. We both had a block. Hy has done an awful lot lately, painting, trying to find himself again. And painting is easier than the graphic arts for the time being, you know. When you're working in the plastic arts you've got really to apply yourself day in and day out, otherwise it doesn't pay. So painting at least in your spare time you can at least work at it, and you're right in the esthetic medium all the time, not just in technical problems, you know? So I've done the same thing. As a matter of fact, except that he's worked at it much more diligently than I have -- this engineering thing, you know, takes up too much of your creative energy.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's a great challenge, but some of those machines you have to --

ANTHONY VELONIS: It's fun you know. Wonderful toys, but they're more than toys, obviously.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh, yeah, there's a dollar and cents factor --

ANTHONY VELONIS: But they drive you bats sometimes.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, how did you get the silk-screen process to apply to metal?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Apply to metal?

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Yeah, these raised -- some of these examples you have out here in the shop --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh, that's -- well, that's a sensitizing of the glass to receive the metal. That's an entirely different process. In fact as yet I don't take that too seriously because there's no money there.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: No, but I mean it's there, I can show you an example and I say to myself, "Well Jesus --" from WPA days experimentation of whatever kind, here's an idea where it can be used to raise metal, just ever so slightly.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, you can say my brother was one of our original partners but we bought him out during the War. He started a business of his own -- that's another, a third one, you know. That went broke, unfortunately, and then he worked for the guy who was working for him (laughing) and that didn't screw, and then that went broke. That was Graph Art [not spelled]. And so he's been with us ever since. Back again, not as a partner. And Harry Knight's been with us all along since then. Last year he retired.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Was he an outside fellow?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, as you think even in terms of the major stake outside -- glass and so on that pays the freight -- what about these stained glass things? That's a variation on the theme.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Well, right now I'm working on something for the Museum of Natural History, 15 panels, 2x8, for their new restaurant, using stained glass technique. But it's a different technique than stained glass altogether.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's building.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, it's an entirely different thing, and it has the beauty of being dimensional.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Yeah, and how.

ANTHONY VELONIS: As you walk by things start to --

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's alive, right.

ANTHONY VELONIS: It's alive, yeah. I love that, oh I just love that part of it.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: This is what, an offshoot?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. Well, my brother has been assigned to do a lot of the research, you know, and he was

doing this on the side. I encouraged him, because apparently he stumbled onto something quite interesting. As a matter of fact, we applied put in a "patent applied for, but he's been doing this from time to time we he had a little more time.

Until this year, when quite a lot of pressure developed in this glass business, so we couldn't continue to work on it and we decided to put it aside temporarily. We had started to make contacts to develop it -- we had print in the architectural journals and we got a good response but we couldn't follow up on it.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Couldn't develop it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, we couldn't follow up on it in a practical sense, you know. So somebody's going to ask us for an order, we couldn't produce (he laughs) until you have a setup for it.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But then a showcase can be the Museum of Natural History.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Could be, yeah, right. At that point, maybe we'll give it a good try.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's a fascinating thing, looks gorgeous! It is alive.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. At that time we'll give it another try.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: There are requirements in a business like this just to keep those ovens moving.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, exactly.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You're like the play, "The Hairy Ape" -- feed 'em!

ANTHONY VELONIS: And if you don't feed them, they still have to be on, because you can't drop them and put them up again to temperature all the time.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: No. But you know, in terms of that, which is also esthetic, like your own glasses that you do, there's one gorgeous thing out there. How many designs can you make before one really hits? Like that big tall one that you have out there, the one with the coins.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, that hit, and that's a perennial. Sure, we've had that going -- 1953, and it's been going ever since. That's rare. All the other designs have come and gone. Sometimes we unearth an old one and (he laughs) it goes again. We had a Persian design once that didn't go at all. Two years later we put it on the market again and by golly it went, with minor modifications.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, in this glass, in addition to providing a service to clients who have things they want done specifically, you have your own line also in glass that you do, that you market.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. We have two companies really -- Seriglass and Serigraphic Serigraphic does the manufacturing and Seriglass does the marketing for our own product. And if Seriglass wants some glassware, we give an order to Serigraphic. That's the way it's usually done.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Oh sure, but you wouldn't have thought of this on 23rd Street, would you?

ANTHONY VELONIS: No sir! (laughter)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It's taken a dimension which nobody had envisioned --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- except for that period of the WPA and the frank experimentation that went on, then to seize an opportunity when it comes along is a different wrinkle.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And you've had a succession of partners in or out and so on, and I suppose successive moves -- bigger plants and so on, because demand gets that large.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yep, that's right. We had 23rd Street, and 17th Street where we took on a number of lofts one after the other, then we started to get so scattered. From there I went to Varick Street, and there we had two floors. From there, to Newark, and there, even, we had especially good street-level quarters, like this, only it wasn't large enough. Even there we had to go elsewhere and get storage space, working space and so forth. And we had two or three places even in Newark. It was not too practical, until we got all under one roof here. Here we have 56,000. And even now, it's tight.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Has the volume gone up steadily? The commercial side.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Up to last year, the volume went up very steeply at times to the point where we couldn't satisfy a customer. At other times it would drop away. It was a very unprofitable way of existing. But in the last year we've been in a fairly steady volume.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: That's good, for whatever reason.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And you can speculate for a number of reasons.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: They talk about technological advances being the saving grace from the point of view of how to do something, which may be so, but once you get that how-to-do-it, you've got to feed it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Exactly.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And overlook that, and maintain it with some continuity, why, you're running three shifts here.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But that hasn't been a feature all along, has it?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, it's been a feature for the furnaces. The thing is, it's a heartbreak sometimes when you don't have enough capacity, your furnaces are running all the time, and then at other times one or two furnaces are idle.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I don't suppose -- no one advertised "living's a cinch!"

ANTHONY VELONIS: And the margin isn't that great where you could take a lot of these shocks, you know. To the point where with all the years we've been in business, we're still, except for this year -- thank goodness it's continuous -- we'll be able to pull ahead. But gee, up to this point it was just on and off, on and off. And we've grown in such a way that we aren't too conscious of it, because the only way that we've grown is only through commitments.

In other words, a job comes in, you have to satisfy it and you have to get some special machinery for it, you need more space for it; and another job comes in, and gradually the place grows as a result of your commitments more than actually spending in advance a given amount of planned capital to do a certain type of business. It wasn't that way at all. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It couldn't be that way at all, really, could it.

ANTHONY VELONIS: No. I suppose now there would be a saner way of doing it. For instance, we know we can survey a market and say "here this market exists, let's design and build a plant to satisfy that particular market, let's build it in an ideal manner." You might do it now but even now we don't have capital of that order.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And even a survey, in a way, doesn't allow for expansion, because it grows, too. (pause) Well, how do you look upon the WPA days from this vantage point?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, it saved my life, put it that way, literally. I mean, literally, you know, it gave it some meaning, and it was the best university I've ever gone to. I couldn't have asked for anything better. The contact and the dialogue with all those artists and the work that took place was just invaluable. You couldn't have gotten it in any other way. I was conscious at the time how precious it was and I said "I must get the most out of it." Even at that I can look back and say, "gee, I could have done this, I could have done that."

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Second-guessing.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But you know, this whole notion of a group of artists, X, working in a room never happened before.

ANTHONY VELONIS: No.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And whatever takes place --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Except in Byzantine times or in Gizeh, Egypt. (he laughs)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Yes. But the individual, cussed, cantankerous, unique --they don't run in schools --

ANTHONY VELONIS: And the amount of fellow feeling that was developed among these "cantankerous" artists is amazing! I mean, in spite of the leftish tendencies of, say, outfits like the Artists Union, there was a tremendous amount of forward thinking and good positive healthy stuff going on.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, even where the Artists Union was concerned, however leftist the orientation may have been, it was on the horizon, coming up over it, you know.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It was in the air. And artists being sensitive to anticipating, seeing around corners, whatever, were consistent with the atmosphere. This is the legacy of Sacco-Vanzetti ad infinitum.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yeah, sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: And that was a talking point.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And there was also this kind of fiction that society should be able to so organize itself and in some logical, reasonable manner. This stuck in everybody's craw -- I mean, here were sensible, reasonable people, and society looked as though it was organized in the most ridiculous, insane manner that you can think of. At that time it looked to us that way. Something had to be done.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I think this phrase you used, "something had to be done," is the condition precedent for the whole thing.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: I think people generally felt that irrespective of their political persuasion. Something had to be done. We're high center, you know.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, once you open that up for grabs, I hate to say this but I suspect that the imaginative wellsprings of man generally is equated to the narrowness of his pocketbook. You know, once you get swollen you figure "I'm riding the crest of the wave and don't make waves" --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right, right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: -- but while he isn't in that, somehow it gives rise to all kinds of ideas. Here, the artists, individual as they may have been, reached a kind of collective voice which they had in the Artists Union.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah, and they sensed this. And some of those parties and they got together in discussions, in meetings and so forth. Some of the most vigorous contributors, also in terms of life and limb for the Spanish Civil War, for instance, came from the artists. Some never came back, some good friends of mine too.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Yeah. We should been in the Spanish Civil War. You can look at it retrospectively -- I didn't like the Johnson Act myself --

ANTHONY VELONIS: We should have been in it, we could have avoided the second World War.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Possibly, yeah. Well, the Artists Union, the earliest organization that goes on record about Hitler and Mussolini abroad, I would anticipate this, because they think in those terms.

ANTHONY VELONIS: You know we had the first sit-in strike on record?

HARLAN PHILLIPS: The teachers in what's-his-name's office. Sommerville.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. (pause) Oh those dramatic days!

HARLAN PHILLIPS: (gleeful laugh) Heehee! It was fun.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Sure.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: There was a sense of joy, too.

ANTHONY VELONIS: And even the people --we had the administrator locked in his office overnight.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Harold Stern



ANTHONY VELONIS: Right. And he was calling up Washington and all that kind of thing. And you know, he didn't feel the least bit put out or sensing danger or whatever. Everybody was conscious of the kind of social pressures that were existing and everyone was playing his role as though they were actors with tongue in cheek!  
(laughing)

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, you know, this whole sense of organization was in the air as an idea. As an example, we never decided as a nation that men had a right to organize and bargain collectively until 1937 with the Steel case, and the Greyhound case, and the Fruehauf Trailer Company. The Supreme Court decided it.

So it was all open, it hadn't been decided yet, it was in the air. And artists, I would expect them to have a common employer. And they were doing the thing they loved to do most and were being paid so that they had a nickel for a glass of beer once in a while. They didn't have to wash dishes and then paint, because they had pennies. I would expect them to take a vested interest in what they were doing enough to get a kind of voice where they would put pressure on Sommerville or even Audrey McMahon; either way.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Well, you see the price tag on all of this was cheap enough, and even if you had 90% -- it was just the reverse: 90% of the people who actually were employed it was a worth-while employment, something good came of it, you see. But even if it were the reverse and 90% were, say, the whole thing was useless, for 10% it was worth the whole price tag.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: But even look at the fact that the Government recognized artists as individuals by virtue of establishing it, you know? Of course, like the glassblowers in New Jersey, they set up their glassblowing project in New Jersey. They had to stop that because it was competing with industry. (they laugh) Crazy thing. I wondered whether you ever had any rumblings from commercial houses?

ANTHONY VELONIS: Oh yes, definitely.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: How the hell was that done?

ANTHONY VELONIS: I don't remember any more, but we had to back off on occasion and it had to be spelled out specifically that this outfit wouldn't have gotten certain services except for this. Usually it had to be something like hospitals, possibly, or a public service like the forests or the parks or whatever.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: It was a tightrope to walk.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: How did you face the recurrent quota reductions from Sommerville's office?

ANTHONY VELONIS: That was pretty wild, yeah. (laughter) And Sommeville would say, "I don't know anything about art except what I like, after all I know more about plumbing than I know about art." (laughing) He used these statements to the artists all the time.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: At least he was honest.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Well, he was dealing with artists as one would deal with peas in a pod, as though artists were fungible goods, you know? And it's not so. And the quota reductions led to the sit-in, in part.

ANTHONY VELONIS: Right.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: You know, what criteria are you going to use? Congress never liked it. They kept the WPA on an economic snafflebit, it was almost always a deficiency appropriation thing, so you never really knew, there was always this edge of wondering --

ANTHONY VELONIS: Yeah. Always, I remember that.

HARLAN PHILLIPS: Even so, it was an opportunity for development.

ANTHONY VELONIS: The fact that we were able to start up a little studio of our own right after that was significant in itself.

(At this point a loud ring on telephone obscures some remarks and tape goes blank thereafter.)

END OF INTERVIEW

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