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An Interview with Richard O'Hanlon

An Interview Conducted by

Suzanne B. Riess

in 1973

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ANN OHANLON

616 THROCKMORTON AVE.. MILL VALLEY. CA. 94941

Dear Suzanne Riess,

I learned quite a bit from this interview!

My maiden name was RICE - unfortunately the original

RHYS was dropped somevihere along the line of time.

I do identify with the original spelling.

Another correction: Diego Rivera had already departed

S.P. when I arrived in 1932. I suspect that Dick had become so accustomed to our doing everything together that by the time you interviewed him he had forgotten.

Thank you for letting me share the interview. Also I have heard from the J.P.K.U. lady whom you mentioned.

Sincerely,

Anne Rhys O'Hanlon

616 Throckmorton Avenue

Kill Valley CA 94941

Dear Mrs. G'Haulon:

Here is the brief interview with Richard O'Haulon. I did take another look at it, just enough of a look to realize that it is ver> muca wortu saving, AKD that I'd like to have asked a whole lot more questions. Uiau was a long, long time ago, and my orientation was too much to the interview I was working on.

I think depending on how much time and interest you have in this you may find many places where your own marginal comment will be very worth having. Please feel free to write notes on a few additional pages and it can all be put into the library together. I expect that with a . bit of indexing and the proper cataloging at this end .that the informat ion and impressions of that period of art history that 1'r. O'Hanlon and I talk about will be useful to art history researchers who come Into tue Bancroft Library. I may also send a xerox to the Oakland Museum. Can't get much more aambitious because there is no money to be doing any of this in the first P lac<

The second part of our conversation, "What to do with tens of thousands of slides etc.," I have referred to Georgia Radford. She knows both the Museum Studies Program at JFK University and the Oakland Museum's art department, and she has recently completed a book on California sculpture. Fresa from all that, I think she would be alle to give you an idea how to handle tne collection you have been left with. I suggested she call you and plan to look at what you have. I am expecting this to be a marvelous match-making. And short of that, helpful to you and interesting to Georgia.

Please send the manuscript back as soon as possible. Now that it has risen from limbo I want to move it right along to the Donated Oral Histories Collection. I enclose a form to that effect for you to sign.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Riess, Senior Editor

enc: inss

Donated Tapes form

cc: Georgia Radford, 511 San Diego Road, Berkeley CA 94707

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INTERVIEW WITH RICHARD O'HANLON

Date of Interview: June 11, 1973

Interviewer: Suzanne Riess

Transcriber: Judy Johnson

One tape, one side

[Beginning, side I]

O'Hanlon: Shall we preface this? I'm Dick O'Hanlon; I've been some twenty-

five years at Berkeley, some thirty-five years in Mill Valley.

I'm an old school mate and friend of John Humphrey, who taught, incidentally; a great deal of what Grace Morley knows about putting up shows, she learned from John Humphrey. He was an artist, painter excellent painter--draftsman.

Riess: What had he been doing before the opening of the Veterans' Building?

I first met him when

O'Hanlon: /He showed me the Galka Scheyer show in Oakland, in 1927 or 1928, when

he was working for the Oakland Museum as elevator boy and general cleanup man and student at Arts and Crafts, where we both were

studying. He took me in the back room and showed me the Blue Four, which I had never heard of, obviously; I was having a rough time learning who Cezanne was at that point.

Riess: This whole thing of Galka Scheyer bringing the Blue Four to the

to
United States who was she, and why /Oakland?

O'Hanlon: She was desperate to get some money.

Riess : She was a German?

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O'Hanlon: Yes. She was from Germany, at least, and had Jawlensky, Kandinsky,

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Klee, da Blau, and Rightgr, and who was the other? There were four.

At any rate, that was my introduction to that kind of art, by John Humphrey in 1927 or 1928. Then we both quit our other kinds of JobsT-I was doing architectural interior work designing. We went back to art dhcooi, in our mid -twenties, at the Fine Aria in San Francisco (now called the Art Institute).

Riess : You talked about being born on the day Cesanne died.

O'Hanlon: No, the same year--1906.

Riess: Where were you born?

O'Hanlon: Long Beach. But that's not really fair, because I should have been

born in San Francisco. My mother and father, as kids, came out of Seattle, missed a boat, the trunk was late, got the next boat. The boat they should have picked up went down with all hands aboard off the Point Arguello. They came to San Francisco on the next boat, and they weren't allowed to land because there was no city. Father had a friend there, I was to be born there--! was getting ready to be born. So Bother says I could hear the earthquake thing, but I couldn't see it.

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Riess: You mean reilly?

O'Hanlon: Yes. The city was in ruins when they arrived. The shio came in and was sent over to Oakland because there was no San Francisco. So I ended pp in Long Beach, where there was another friend.

Long Beach, then, was the size of Ssusalito, majfbe. We left shortly afterwards, so I don't know anything about that area.

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Riess: Why were your parents just arriving?

O'Hanlon: They had come from the East, around, to work in California.

Riess: XaxotaMkati To do what?

O'Hanlon: My father was in woodwork cabinetmaking. He did things for Gumps.

Riess: California was just a good place to go to?

O'Hanlon: Yes, just to get away from the families of all kinds. fg^TougSt^i

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in^farm-- : ttather was from Europe. Mother wanted to get out of the

Middle West. So they stayed out here the rest of their lives. He did things for Gumps later--beautiful furniture and- ship models.

Riess: Were you the first child?

B'Hanlon: Yes, the first child of three.

Riess: When did your artistic bent start showing?

O'Hanlon: Mother says it started before I could talk, because I used to scratch

in the sand and make drawings. She said friends would comment on this --that I was always drawing in the sand. I wouldn't know about this. It has nothing to do with vanity or ego, because I was not aware of this. But it started very early.

In grammar school I was drawing, and by high school I knew exactly what I wanted to do--be an artist. So I did the things that kids do in high school.

Riess: Your parents obviously didn't discourage it?

O'Hanlon: Not really.

Riess: They didn't throw up the usual arguments about it not being practical?

Bianlon: They had other difficulties. I wasn't the difficulty; they had it

with each other. My dad went back to Europe [laughs]. I met him

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some years later and found he was a fascinating man. He was painting and drawing and writing poetry, as a more or less illiterate man, but they were beautiful, primitive things. So I never really knew him when I was in high school.

So they weren't focused on you?

They were so busy getting mad at each other that we could do what we wanted to. But that broke up, fortunately for both of them.

They each lived very happy lives thereafter.

Did you find some good training down there? Or where did you go?

I came up here for late grammar school. At that time I lived with my father, in a hotel, of all places, at fifth and Market. I

lived out in Golden Gate Park during the day when he was working, haunting the museums and things in the park. Then we moved to

Berkeley. Grammar school started, high school, scholarships to art school, Arts and Crafts.

You were really good, to get a scholarship.

That was from high school. I'd won a few prizes there. My first

one-man show was while I was in high school, at the Oakland Museum.

Who was the curator there?

Claop. The show had something to do with schools, and traveled all around the country. It never came back; I never saw the things again.

What are your memories of the Oakland Museum and that whole Society of

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O'Hanlon: Let me finish off the school thing, because at that point I was in high school, and then Arts and Crafts for a short while; then working for five years trying to earn money to go to school straight through, which was idiotic, I guess; then to art school.

Riess: What kind of work did you find?

I worked for the

O'Hanlon: Designing, the* Emporium Capwell Corporation, designing interiors and architectural things. I found I couldn't save that much money, and went to art school in San Francisco and paid down a full year's tuition. I was interviewed two weeks later by Lee Randolph, the director, and was asked why I was there and what I wanted to do. I was frightened: why would he ask me in the office the big boss? I was going to night school and day school; so we went from eight to twelve o'clock at night about every day. There was a bunch of us doing that. This was the Depression time--1930.

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After a short talk, he asked how I'd like to be his monitor in the painting class for one of the teachers, and he gave me back my check for the year's tuition. So it didn't cost me anything to go to school from then on.

We also worked in the cafeteria, where I met my wife. She was on desserts, and I was on salads. She was in painting and I was in sculpture.

Ries* -: That's why you're such a pro here.

Riess :

been doing things ever since.

That's a fantastic story for many reasons. During the Depression I

guess there weren't a whole lot of choices of things to do, but to

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Riess: be going to school day and night to be an artist seems like one of the more optimistic things done.

O'Hanlon: I've always known that this is what I wanted to do. If there had been no depression, I just would have been a little bit ahead of time. But in working I learned a lot of things that kids coming out of high school at that age didn't know. So I eventually found out I wasn't that far behind. I still worked at night all the time.

Riess i ""i T.r'i P"nrf-1-h J-iil lr1Hu n wnittrrfnl mnn?

O'Hanlon! He was a vety adequate Hit aihoul manager. Stackpole, whom I came very close to, was there; Diego Rivera was there doing his fresco, living in Stackoole's studio. Shortly after being Stackpole's assistant I was allocated to Diego Rivera for a year, to take care of his studio and teach Frieda J nmnugqnl1 if] Rivera how to shoo in North Beach, and to grind color for Diego and keep track of his phone calls.

Riess: A real apprentice.

O'Hanlon: Yes, a real apprentice kind of thing, with both Stackoole and the Stock Exchange at that time, and huge granite jobs, and Diego Rivera. It was very much fun.

Henri Matisse was here at that time, twice, on the way to Tahiti and back again. A number of us older fellows were incorporated into the art world. We waked windows or waited on tables to be at parties

or Europe

where there were artists from the East involved. It was one way of

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O'Hanlon:

Riess :

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O'Hanlon:

Riess:

getting us to be kind of part of the "team," although we were students. It was a very healthy, warm, wonderful thing.

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When--artists from the East came, we thought that they were just more advanced than anything that we had seen, and

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I didn't understand -the first part of that question. Artists would come through from the East Coast. Arnold Blanche taught at the school in the City for awhile at that time. Matisse was only a guest, and was in and out for a couple of weeks.

Did West Coast artists always feel there was something to learn from East Coast artists?

West Coast artists, in this sense, were all Paris oriented. All of them commuted. All of them had worked in Paris, many of them for many, many years. They didn't think of themselves as West Coast artists at all. This was merely their home and a place to work. Some would work awhile and go back to Paris or Italy, very much like Worth Ryder did from txa here.

So they were very much a part of the art world, which at that point was Paris oriented --some Berlin, some London; no Tokyo; and practically none in San Francisco, which turned out many people in the creative fields, all of whom had to make money elsewhere. Most of my work still is east of the Hudson River, because I happen to have had a gallery there for twenty years.

In about 1935, when the museum was gotten under way by Grace Morley, was when the West Coast style became the thing, wasn't it?

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O'Hanlon;

Riess

O'Hanlon:

Yes. Before that, students from here would all go on to New York. You sort of work in an art shhool in the United States someplace; then you go to the Art Students ' League or to New York and get your journeyman's card, as it were. Then you would go to Paris or go to Europe and get your master's card, as it were. You'd come back, and you were an artist!

Of course, that changed in 1945, violentlyr-very good, too. Mrs. Salk talked about how she studied in San Francisco with, I believe, somebody named Olga Mandelbaum Ackernan and a person named Julie Heincman? /-* 2-v n . = ^ ^ , - , .

These were all names that were long before my time. It was during

that period of working at the art school in the early thirties--1931, 1932--where I met Helen Salz because I worked for Ralph Stackpole, and they were old friends. She and her husband would come down to Ralph's studio, where Diego was working. I knew her as an older artist one of the older crowd. Albert Bender and all those people would come to Ralph's studio. Ralph's studio at that time was a focal point. It was a sort of Cite Bar of the West Coast. After work people would come in for a glass of wine and would sit and talk. Piazzoni f-tf would even come down and say hello to Ralph-

old, old friends. Piazeoni sponsored Ralph in Europe as a kid.

a farm in there were

Ralph was from/Oregon, They met in Stackpole s yard; rany MHHH

parties there, and

xgBtxnHxriad many people got married there. He was crushed

when Ann and I werenbt ma rriedd there; we should have been.

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Riess: It was aTStce^, tight community?

O'Hanlon: The implications of the word "tight"... it wasn't that, but it was

a very close community, because it was so tiny. There was no

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Berkeley at that time. Earl 4ka'icn was here; John Ha ley was here.

But the art ambience really was in the City at that time. Nkaax
xMHiiKHHxwaKxwtsHBtxan^xEiiRB^xttxMax Anything that happened,
happened at the art school. When Matisse was honored and wined
and dined, such was done at the art school. I was so busy setting

a big table for him. I was given forty dollars to buy all the
fruits of California in 1932 (or whenever he was here; whatever
year that was). I spent so much time on a forty foot long center
piece, with all the fall fruits of California, that I forgot to
set the table. In came Stackpole, Matisse, and all these people,
and they went over, including Matisse, and got piles of dishes and
went out helping me set the table, which I thought was very nice
[laughs] .

Riess: With Helen Salz and /Ibert Bender, could the audience and the patrons
and everybody mingle comfortably?

O'Hanlon: Very much so. Albert was down in Stackpole 's studio quite often,
and he would come out to the art school. The Albert Bender Memorial
came after we left school, but the Ann Brenner Award was the one that

my wife,
/Ann 'fatcej, fcf*xHBii won - I got the other one. We were to

travel in Europe for two years, but due to the stock crash that
wasn't possible. We Just had a year in this country.

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O'Hanlon: But Helen Salz and her friends...

Riess: It was Albert Bender who found you?

O'Hanlon: No. No, he merely donated to the fund to the art school. The

staff of the art school would nick the winners. After that he would meet the winners and wish them well and so forth, and send us on our way. Then he would keep track of you, after this trip. Today they're called hippies, but we lived in an automobile and traveled all over America and went to museums, studying; and we lived in auto camps and things, and lived on nothing. We came back, and Bender wanted to buy one of ray pieces and one of Ann's for his collection. That's the way he would do things. After you sort of proved yourself, you became a part.

Riess: I'm interested in how Oakland does fit in with this, because It's Museum. . .

O'Hanlon: It didn't amount to very much because of budget; among other things?-

complete anarchy on the part of most Oakland people, at that time, in those early years .

Riess: Does Siegrist fit into this crowd, or is he another time in history?

O'Hanlon: He was abroad, I think, and he certainly wasn't closely allied with the San Francisco group as I knew it. Now, he might have been away.

I met him some years later. He was closer to the commercial artists.

There was a group of well paid commercial artists who painted also

Maurice Logan was involved, and still is, with the art school in

Oakland. Siegrist did things; Maynard Dixon did posters. for Foster and Kleiser and the Southern Pacific.

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O'Hanlon: There was a period, something like when some of the artists in New York illustrated magazines and did paintings on the side. Winslow Homer did this, as you know, and so did Toulouse Lautrec in Paris.

It was part of that tradition, and somehow there was a slight

feeling that these fellows were in another area, I suppose.

Riess : It wasn't just that it was Depression times?

O'Hanlon: No. Of course, The Six goes back into the twenties, I guess, before the Depression, too. But that's all very well known by Louis Siegriest, who lives just down the way here.

Mr When I moved from Oakland to San Francisco, I suddenly found this enormous world of art--people coming and going. Fujita, the Japanese artist was here, for instance. Twenty years later I had the pleasure of being with him in Paris. He was kind of an illustrator in some ways, but he was an interesting person and had a wonderful collection. He had been down to Mexico, and I guess he came by to see Diego Rivera. That's how I met him working in Diego's studio. I had to sort of keep track of the guest list, so he would have time to work.

Diego Rivera at that time was illustrating Carlton Scales' Mexican Maze book. He was doing the sets and the costumes for Chavez' Mexican Symphony; Stofctawki was playing in Philadelphia. He was doing the Stern frescoes --the art school fresco and the frescoes for the Stock Exchange. He was doing all these things

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O'Hanlon: at the same time.

Riess: When he was here, was he the center?

O'Hanlon: Oh, no. He was here visiting, and very few people got to see him,

because he was just working night and day.

Riess: How about some impressions of him?

O'Hanlon: Warm; a huge man. He weighed the same as Stackpole's entire family--

Stackpole, his wife, and two children weighed the same as Diego

Rivera. He was an absolutely enormous man around three hundred

pounds, or something.

Riess: So he didn't climb the scaffold?

O'Hanlon: Yes, he climbed the scaffold every day, and would stay up there for

or eighteen

twelve or fifteen hours at a time. Many times Ann and I would be

doing art frescoes under Ray Boynton (an old teacher here, and also at the art school). We'd start at seven in the morning, wetting down our walls, finishing the fresco piece--as you know, you work in still 1 pieces each day. We'd finish around eleven o'clock or midnight, and go in and watch Diego still painting. We'd come back the next morning, and he would still be on the scaffold. He had the plaster to do two pieces a few hours apart. That happened more than once.

Riess: Why the frenzy of activity from him?

O'Hanlon: He had all these things to do, and wanted to do them. He was like any artist who is given these great commissions it's a great challenge. The Mexican government gave him large things to do, of

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O'Hanlon: course. Incidentally, he never spoke about politics. In Mexico he was very, very politically minded; he was very left wing, you know. He was a member of the Communist party, I guess, at that time. But

nothing like that was ever mentioned.

art school

Two or three of us would have dinner with him in this cafeteria; then he would go back Huostairs and paint on that fresco two stories

high J 2 - ? . He would ask what

we were doing and all this was in Spanish or French; he refused to speak English, which he could, but he wouldn't. He thought we should learn to speak French. I had been raised with Spanish a bit.

We would show him fresco designs, and he would give excellent

opinions and criticisms. I showed him a drawing one time, and all he said was,

"You're trying to do exactly the same thing that the 'foi et par jure'"

The weaver who did the piece that's out at the Young Museum (it was at that time)--the rabbit hunting scene. His problems were the same as yours; you go out and study that."

So I went out and made drawings and details and laid out the general composition, and came back to him. He said, "Yes, now see? What you're trying to do is the same as he was." And then I understood what he meant.

That's the way it was.

get us to

he was excellent as a critic, and very gentle. He would probe for

what we were doing in terms of our inner feelings the art part of it. He would talk about Giotto, and about Piero della Francesca, and, oh, the whole gamut of art. And like Picasso, or any artist,

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O'Hanlon:

he was very involved with art history.

Riess :

O'Hanlon:

Riess :

"Hanlon:

Riess:

I He'd talk about things in the Ajanta caves, which

he had never seen but wanted to. He was a very warm, outgoing, fantastically hardworking man. His wife, Frieda, with her huge Aztec necklaces and Jade and all, had the fun. She spoke no English; so I had to speak Spanish to her, and learned a lot during that year

that they were Jiere.

What did she do?

Frieda

She was a painter in her own right. She is in museums --rfcahlo is her name in the books .

When were the Coit Tower paintings? Were you in on any of that? No. We were in Kentucky, and my wife, being from the University of Kentucky, was given a wall to paint there. It's the largest fresco in America painted by a woman. It's still a very beautiful

<7,True piece of work. It's fifty feet long, eight feet high. -3&*o- fresco^

we learned to do under Ray Boynton here, and Diegols So I helped on that. I would go out around midnight and out the wall upp-plaster and float [?] it off, oolish it. Ann would come in around dawn and work until nighttime. So we went twenty-four hours a day, right around the clock for some six months. At that same time the Coit Tower was going, so we were not here.

You can't see the Coit Tower things at this point. They're recon ditioning them. They've been working on it for years, and it's just plain roped off in a semi -permanent way, because there's no money.

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O'Hanlon: Well, you could get permission, certainly, to go in. Dorothy

Wagner Pucc*nelli Cravath, who's doing the repatting, is part of

this wholefcsfwatJible} . <^-urtVfc(_ .

Riess : Is she somebody who's still living?

O'Hanlon: She lives right down the strett here. She's Dorothy Cravath now,

and she grew up in the late twenties, or early thirties. She had

a studio next to Stackpole's.

Riess: Htrw ab-nit mmrn in m-fr fn l nrr> *** How extraordinary was what

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Mrs. Salz was doing?

O'Hanlon: I frankly never saw any of her things, except a few pastels that she showed aiHtumtx to Ralph. Primarily, I think, she was doing pastels, and still is, I believe. But she had a very active social life and all. She had a studio, and still has one, actually. Her housekeeper, a Japanese woman is, by the way, an excellent artist, and wins prizes and Helen doesn't. It makes Helen furious [laughs].

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oman, practically

She's in my wife's grouo now, and exhibits in my wife's gallery-- the Sight and Insight Gallery, at the Cannery in San Francisco.

Riess:

Lee Randolph and Spencer Macky: we know about Lee Randolph; you know Spencer Macky?

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O'Hanlon:

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O'Hanlon:

Riess :

Yes , he was one of our teachers . He was to the art school what Neuhaus was to Berkeley.

You mean d^old school?

Yes. The same flavor in many ways. He was an Australian who came to Paris and then to this country. He was very involved with the

social end of the art world. He had good things to say. Lee

Lee R., and he was one of my drawing teachers. He told us of the value of Ralph Stackpole's drawings, which, as my UAT-a- ?

or, as it were, my teacher, I didn't really realize.

He would show us drawings of Stackpole's, and compare them with

renaissance drawings drawings by good draftsmen down through the

began to

ages. We gradually/became aware of the difference between just

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drawing for documentary, let us say, or making a sketch-^getting

really into the world of art more. It was about that time, in my mid-twenties, that I began to be aware. I was a little more mature

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than the first art school round, and drawing wasn't a gimmick or a trikk or a trade, or a way to make a living. It was an expression; it came to be part of an expression. I became more involved with the real world of art. That was the advantage of people like Diego being there, and Matisse they would talk very mature art talk. There was no talking teacher to his student kind of thing. They would talk about art, period. If you didn't understand, that was just too bad.

Are you contrasting this with the artists who were still putting a lot of time in commercial art?

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O'Hanlon: No, quite some time before that I had dropped out of that world
completely. I actually had had an office on Market Street and did
ads--commercial art ads--because I could letter fairly well; I was
skillful as a high school student; I could "draw" well." that kind
of drawing. I could illustrate; I illustrated magazines in high
school. We won prizes years in a row for our high school, where
three or four of us would put out that magazine. It was because of
that that I got into Arts and Craftsmen a scholarship, because
they thought this was tremendous; whereas the art school in the
City didn't think much of it at all. They thought it was very
clever, but that was about it. It took me a year or so to find
out why, of all those years I had been drawing, that didn't count
really--because I was learning a skill, which had nothing to do
with art.

The art school in Oakland, for instance, taught a great deal

Albrecht

about/Durer; we copied the rabbit, the praying hands; we knew about

Leonardo ZJa Vinci. But we never once heard the words Cezanne or Picasso or firaKht Braque, or any of that school. There it was, in Paris, working away; and here we were, in the mid-late twenties in

Oakland, and didn't f^cnow there was a Paris.

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I went back to work for a while to earn money; didn't work;

went to the art school in the City; and suddenly discovered there

was another world full of names like Cezanne, Braque, and right on

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backlike Barbazon--the whole thing.

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O'Hanlon: Then I began to realize that the commercial art crowd (and

this answers more specifically your question) were not interested in the Paris school; they were interested in and their books were from Munich, not from Paris. Their real excitements were the illus

trative kinds of things. The top names they talked about locally were Maneice Logan, who did ads, or Maynard Oixon, doing ads for

the Southern Pacific. Whereas the artists in San Francisco I began meeting never mentioned any of those things; they just never came up. But they talked about the change in France in the late 1800s and up to the twenties. They talked about cubism, which I had never heard of; they talked about art, in other words. I think there's where the big difference would be.

Riess : You must have come out of it ust at the right time in your life.

O'Hanlon: Because it was just developing here. It had already hit New York.

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John Sloane, William Zorff, and Stackpole as kids back in Paris-

young fellows--slept upon a roof in the summer in New York because

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they had no money. Robert Haflrock was one of their friends. They were always involved in the world of art, not in any snooty, superlative sense; but they were just more excited by what artists were doing, not by what commercial artists were doing.

Riess: Was there any difficulty penetrating all of this?

O'Hanlon: Not once you could see the difference. During this time of art school I had for a very short time at [] --four months, I think-

lan office^ in the Monadnock Building (wherever that is now) on

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19

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Market Street. I began meeting the older commercial artists, and found them to be after hours a rather tipsy, jolly bunch, who never talked about art. About the same time I also, through younger friends who had gone to the art school in the City, began to be invited to their parties and found a completely different kind of conversation going on. I realized there was an enormous differ

ence .

and

So I closed my office/ gave up commercial art-I thought that was a way to make money; but I discovered these other artists who looked as healthy as any of the artists I had known met, and they led much more interesting lives and traveled consistently, which is part of my great desire. They were far more fascinating and far more "real" as people.

Were you married at this point?

No.

How old were you?

Twenty-five when I started school in the City; so from twenty to twenty-five I was partly at the school in Oakland, and partly working. Do you think that if you had run into it when you were thirty, for instance, that you would have been too closed off by then?

That's such a hypothetical question. By thirty, certainly I was deep into the world of art. No matter where I had been, I would have probably found it or moved. I had done a lot of traveling in this country already, trying to find... I had been to many art schools .

So you found what you were looking for; essentially you were looking for this thing

20

O'Hanlon: I don't think I could say yes to that, because already I had been

to the o^xtest rt institute for forty minutes. It took less than
an hour to find out that that was no place for me. I went to
C.koij.i nctrd .in Los Angeles
.Schuch Arge /for one week. I went to schbol in Santa Barbara

for one term, where the entire staff were from England; at least
they'd talk about art. But I came up here.

I started to go to Paris to work with Antoine Bordell, and he
upped and died. Like an idiot, I came back; I should have stayed
on? because that's when Hemingway hit Paris, and all that crowd.
So I'd missed the bus there, but I was too young to know that.

As I look back, one of my ways of adjudicating these things
is to look at older people. If they -made sense; if they'd been at
something for a long time that began to make sense, I'd think that
whatever they did made more sense than what somebody BX else did.
Because I'd been to a couple of artists' parties where they were
all commercial artists, and I found that the chitchat was fairly
shallow. And they all hated commercial art. NTW, this, you see,
was in my early twenties.

have
More recently I had been with old schoolmates in New York to

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partieswith fellows who NBZB making absolutely enormous salaries

on Madison Avenue, who MKXK waxy way up at the top: art director
for BBDV^and all of that. Their parties are made up of making fun
of their art profession as they know it. So for twenty-four hours
a day--they can't even relax and have something else. They say what
a terrible thing it is, and how they're prostitutes; so when they

O'Hanlon: taw play charades or get drunk, they're still talking about the
thing they hate, which is the way they earn their money. It seems

so nathetic, somehow.

So at twenty I was through that. It sounds very vain and ego
tistical, but it was a happy accident, I suppose.

BeatriceJudd Ryan wrote an article...

She -waa-wAs one of the first galleries in San Franciscowas it the

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East West Galleryt
Gallery Beaux Arts.

There were two, and only two. There was Corbusier's, who made a

of

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stab at it and folded up. Jfhere were makeshift galleries, but/the

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real galleries in terms of Paris or London or New York was one/Bun
by Beatrice C. Judd Ryan. In that part of history, with her already
well developed background, with the kind of San Francisco audience
that doesn't buy wry' much, she ended up in the City of Paris
eventually, with them sponsoring the gallery. She was a devoted
she a lot,
person, who was quite knowledgeable, really; and/did/ certainly, for
that time, and for this city, with its ambience of no art, practically,
The artists would help her. Most artist still sold mostly
through New York; very little was ever sold out here.
She talks about two groups in 1925 the academicians retired to the
shelter of the Bohemian Club. . .
They were already in the Bohemian Club, and the non-Bohemian types
left and formed the San Francisco Art Association and the Art school.
and Randolph
Ralph Stackpole/quit the Bohemian Club because they had a big fight

22

O'Hanlon: with the sculptor who was the president because he hated modern
art or contemporary art, which to him was Degas that was too far
out for him. So they split off, and the Bohemian Club just kept
right on going as it always had. But it was this offshoot that
became the art school in San Francisco.

Riess: I hadn't realized that the Bohemian Club represented a shelter, in
a sense, of the old conservatives.

Some of the other names that she mentions that you might have
comments on are Renaldo Caneo...

O'Hanlon: Renaldo Cuneo was an etcher. He had a studio next door to Maynard
Dixon. I cleaned his etching presses and his and Maynard 's skylights.

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Then I was sent over to clean Ptezzoni s. I got up on the roof, and
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they s'd, "We'll r>ay for it; don't tell Bul.ui.iLi that we've sent
you over. We'll just pay for it, since he doesn't have much money,"

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although it wasn't true. But fortunately, thank God, Pieteoni was
in his studio and saw me up on the skylight. He screamed out
[laughs] to get away from there. I went down to ask what was going
on, and I explained that I was sorry and didn't know he was there--
that I had been going to clean his skylight. He said, "You do, and
I'll cut your throat. I spent thirty years getting that nice dust
on there." [Laughs] They all knew this, you see. He didn't want
his skylight cleaned. He had this beautiful dusty skylight that for
him was just right.

He was my sponsor in the Art Association Stackpole and Piezzoni
were my sponsor*.

23

Riess: He was a very different kind of character from the rest, wasn't he?
O'Hanlon: Yes. He was not exactly a recluse. There was a big joke among the
art students about how he and Stackpole would go out to each other's

houses. But they were both busy; both working. They were very dear
to France
friends. Piezzoni was Stackpole 's sponsor /when Stackpole was ayong
man.

Alwpys behind the scenes in those days there was money. Stack-
pole would tell us that any time he needed money he would do a
portrait of a bulldog or a horse's head or something, to get enough
money to go to Europe.

Riess: This imoHed a certain scorn for some art collectors?

O'Hanlon: Art cillecting was quite different then. The Spreckels family...

I don't know the names of those people, really, but there was enough money around.

Riess: The Sterns, Fleishha^kers , Haases--all of those people.

O'Hanlon: Elise Haas came alongshe was, of course, a girl then. She bought things out of Anne's and My studios. She does portraits, and they're

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not too bad. She's always been interested in art. Stackpole said that in the early days they could always get by either here or in Europe; two or three families would see to it. Of course there weren't any more than half a dozen young artists who amounted to anything. So it was quite simple.

Riess: At that noint were the Salzes one of the families?

O'Hanlon: I just don't know. I've never known. I would like to know.

Riess: Helen's family were the Arnsteins.

24

O'Hanlon:

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O'Hanlon:

I suppose that both Helen and her husband had funds. This never

came out in my lifetime, while I was around, but I'm sure that they might have helped--people like the Haases. But the Barnes I didn't know. I was completely unaware of the fact that there were sponsors. I didn't know what a sponsor was. That's why I spent five years trying to earn money to go to art school, vlf I had been more in that world, I would have know that all you have to do is go to art school and you get a scholarship. I didn't know there were

scholarships. They were funded by a very small group of peojble

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who KRXe still the same families sponsoring symphonies and museums

and all that. They are almost entirely Jewish, almost entirely beautiful people; and almost entirely the same group in New York or London or Paris. It's fascinating.

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Was there ev*r a mingling of the sponsors? When did they come together? The Salzes I can imagine, but...

During this period I was a "student" so much so that I just lived at the art school, quite literally. The only oeople I saw there

who were involved with scholarships, who helped me and some others,

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would be the coffee people MJB (-Bernstein?) . MJB is two families

that []

Miller?

Anyway, they did quite a bit for the art world, toor-one half did,

not the coffee half, but the other half.

social

I suppose that after while it became a competitive/activity.

You'd have to ask Helen or these people. I wouldn't know. That was

O'Hanlon: so far beyond my world that I was completely unaware of it. I'm still very naive, I'm afraid, there.

Riess: What impressions did you have of Maynard Dixon?-his style and behavior?

O'Hanlon: I suppose I was kind of intrigued. I also was involved in some ways with the background of the Indian in America, and have had some contact quite close contact with Navajos and Indians when I was growing up in the Southwest. Maynard was involved with this. But,

again, Maynard was deeply involved with the Southern Pacific and Foster

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and Kleiser. I thought he was interesting, and I helped clean his studio

once in awhile, just to see the interesting art effects he had, and I talked to him, because he was a perfectly fascinating man.

He carried a Kiixsx big cane with a silver top, and wore cowboy outfits. That lifestyle was an accident, and he told me all about it one day. ixaxkarfxkim He could ride a horse, but when he was younger he couldn't. He JOHH was in San Francisco, a western youth (where he was born I don't really know). He went to New York in his twenties. He already was clever at drawing. He had done some advertising, and went to the commercial art parties in New York. Most of them were that way in the group he was with. It was a costume party, and he rented or borrowed a cowboy outfit. He'd never had one on in his life. He went to the party and was a smashing success. They all thought he was a real, honest to God westerner. He put on a slight drawl and became a cowboy, with a few drinks under his belt,

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and never left it. He decided that was a great gift.

He was honest, and he said, "I'll paint whore houses or sigh

O'Hanlon:

Riess:

O'Hanlon:

boards; I don't care what I paint. I'll paint outhouses or Foster and Kleiser boards. When you need money you're hungry." He was very honest about it. If he needed the money, he'd do anything to get money to rent paint. He would paint lousy portraits, or whatever.

I saw things that were not very well done, and he said, "Oh, I was hungry."

But he was also very sincerely interested in the West, in a kind of illustrative, commercial art kind of way. This was very obvious. He was a nice person to talk to, but I could see that he was not remotely interested in Paris, which to us youngbloods (by then I had become part of that youngblood group) was where art was, or a lot of it was; there was such a thing as European art, there was a Renaissance. These people drew Renaissance kinds of drawings,

but they never talked about the things that I began to revere - Pierre-

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de la Francesca, Jacques D'Or, Michaelangelo. These names never came up. They talked about later things, always.

When you talk about Paris, what artists are you talking about? Not artists in particular, but the entire movement. Paris was a place where art was free and sponsored and alive, and very energetic, just as New York became later. I'm talking about the late twenties already, and the early thirties at this point. Cubism was only ten years before, so it was all brand new at that time. And the Impressionists weren't that much before then.

Whereas in New York (and I had been there by then) I could see that

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the Art Students League was pretty old had. I went to art school

27

Riess :

'Han Ion:

O'Hanlon: to learn to draw for a little while, and began to find that the students were heading for commercial art--the whole thing all over again. They wanted to illustrate and do all kinds of things that I didn't think were very much fun; I'd already gone through that.

When Galka Schiffr brought the Blue Four here, was that an eye-opener? It was very startling, because I had never heard of such jf things. This was when I was still at Arts and Crafts. John Humphrey tried to explain to me what was going on; he was already clued into that world, and was already reading about it. And I hadn't even heard it existed; I never heard of any of those names at that time. So this was my introduction to the fact that there was a world of art. It very well could be that that was the crucial moment, when it dawned on me that commercial art is not the way that there are other things going on that I better find out about.

Riess: It sounds like the excitement of the talk about it is a lot of the pleasure

O'Hanlon: It was exciting to think that in Europe things were going on that were not going on here. We all wanted to go there, but just couldn't afford it or we would have been there.

Riess: And art is a way of getting into things...

O'Hanlon: It's a way of life, not a living. Of course, when the Depression came everything fell apart, but we all knew [already] that this was no way to make money; but it was just what, we wanted to do, and making money wasn't what we were after. Because many people, like

O'Hanlon: myself, had been around money. I had lived with extremely wealthy people as a child and found them bankrupt later, or having problems.

Riess: I had assumed that you were a very poor boy.

O'Hanlon: I was from a very poor family always was. But at one point, when my father broke away the first time, I was seven, and my mother went to work HH "living in." She did cooking and cleaned up around the house of a very wealthy house--Pacific Mutual Life Insurance it was, frankly, who would have been in San Quentin later, but he died before they put him in. He made hundreds of millions of dollars cheating, like the Newman [new one?] [down there?].

But it was an insurance... The Teapot Dome man lived next door--Albert Fall. This was in Los Angeles. He had a house next door, and we used to swim in his swimming pool. I was Boy Scout age, so I wouldn't know about those things. Their children could not go on their bicycles to the Los Angeles River, as I could go, to buy fresh chicken eggs and things. They weren't allowed to go. Their chauffeurs picked them up from school and took them to school. They had a shotgun and a rifle and Cadillacs, The butler's pantry had rifles; all of the men carried big Lugers and pistols--the butlers and so forth. There was no Lindbergh law then.

I used to bicycle on weekends out to a little round back road-- a little one way road, through wheat fields and wild oats and grass, about twenty minutes from where we lived, to a hole in the ground where I helped dig up saber toothed tigers and things. That's now called the La Brea Oil Pits. That little one way, round road I

O'Hanlon: went on is now called Wiltshire Boulevard. That was way out in the country then.

Riess: So you really think you made the choice, then, between kinds of life?

O'Hanlon: I was sitting in the garden, drawing a rose. (I never will forget

that I can remember the drawing of the rose, even; and behind me Lee A. Phillips, who was a very wealthy man, obviously he owned the biggest yacht on the Pacific Coast, (that Errol Flynn bought later). He had been watching me, obviously, and I didn't know he was there. He said, "I would give anything in the world to be able

to do that." As a fourteen year old, it dawned on me that here he

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has..;! The day before he brought home a rose point lace table cloth

(my mother told me about this) to show his wife. He laid it out on the table, and she said, "You know I already have one of those," and she threw it on the floor. My mother was horrified.

There was a painting over their fireplace that cost more than our home. I thought, "All these things are so strange; Their kids can't play where I can play." I quickly saw that being a millionaire was a great handicap. It was kind of a wonderful philosophical insight for a child, to be around this very unhappy family with the biggest yacht on the Pacific Coast, with a fleet of Cadillacs, with country places.

They took me with the kids to the St. Catherine's Hotel¹W c
[End of interview]