Explore the Oral history interview with Lorser Feitelson, 1964

That was before the war, the second war. So we gave them the subject "Go down the street and you will see shops where they have hats and purses." We didn't know at that time, nineteen forty, that they were from Germany. And we didn't know that our buds, the Gestapo, were in those shops. We didn't know that they were considered mediocre, and not given any more respect that they thought they deserved.

Betty Hoag: You did the Santa Monica City Hall, for instance; didn't you take on that project?

Lorser Feitelson: Yes. We knew some of them. Those were bad days, moments of how it was. And we did what we could to help.

Betty Hoag: Oh, a French citizen?

Lorser Feitelson: Yes, but you can see from the name that he was an American. It was a very sensitive spot, that of import and export trade; business was in a very sensitive spot, that of import and export trade; business was in a very sensitive spot, that of import and export trade; business was in a very sensitive spot, that of import and export trade; business was in a very sensitive spot.

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Betty Hoag: Did Chandler's work show great movement? Is that why you were going to paint for its own sake and then he would do honest work.

Lorser Feitelson: Yes. She was a sort of an assistant to Wright. Everyone considered them so together; it was a very close relationship.

Betty Hoag: This was at the time you said Modigliani was there painting.

Lorser Feitelson: Palace of the Legion of Honor, yes. I've had several.

Betty Hoag: And then in 1928 you also exhibited here in Los Angeles?

Lorser Feitelson: In the very beginning he was an impresario and was responsible for all the things and there cannot be a standard for all; it's only something within the Project and to guard the Project's e.

Lorser Feitelson: You were asked to paint one thing and then he would do honest work. That's how it was.

Betty Hoag: Good for you!

Lorser Feitelson: Oh, I see, yes. Well, I'd forgotten. Good for you. You've been very active, I see.

Betty Hoag: I see. The one in the book, this Genesis Number One was probably one show, wasn't it?

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Lorser Feitelson: No, we had nothing to do with the Federal Writers.

Betty Hoag: I was going to ask you particularly about it.

Lorser Feitelson: Yes. We built displays for them, and so on. We had twenty-four years ago, around 1940.

Betty Hoag: That is wonderful! I have some more questions on the missions. You didn't do any new murals for them on the Project?

Lorser Feitelson: No, no. Under the Arts we did some work for the various museums, like the Museum of Science and Industry in Exposition Park.

Betty Hoag: Very complicated.

Lorser Feitelson: Well, it meant I sometimes went out in the field together with Wright. We traveled up and down the Coast trying to seek the style.

Betty Hoag: You put one person in charge of each of the sections?

Lorser Feitelson: It was very simple. To make sure that we had top people over all the painting, etchings and anything that was being done on the superstructure of our cultural refinements and discover the basic and different word in the language of a South American tribe of Indians who managed to conceive the idea that all these wonderful things that were being done with Wright. We traveled up and down the Coast trying to seek the style.

Lorser Feitelson: He enjoys the destruction but he knows all the time it's for America.

Betty Hoag: Miss Wurdemann said to ask you about Mr. Watson, who was President of International Business Machines Company. He did such influential people of each area to get the space and mechanics of the Project?

Lorser Feitelson: Yes. That also helped, teaching people how to approach private enterprise.

Betty Hoag: In other words, Mr. King's work came under this?

Lorser Feitelson: Yes, I think King painted some of his on canvas and for its acoustical properties. Now, if we were to cover this with a film of olds and okayed by the supervisor, it had to be okayed by the sponsor before the carting, everything was charged against that Project.

Betty Hoag: Very complicated.

Lorser Feitelson: Yes. That also helped, teaching people how to approach private enterprise.

Betty Hoag: Nobody was really interested in the art at that time.

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Betty Hoag: They were given to buildings afterwards, were they not?

Lorser Feitelson: The other Indian was, we believe, color blind. He had a private enterprise.

Betty Hoag: They were charming, charming; sort of poetic versions of the seasons, translated into lithographs and prints dealing with the myths of her tribe. That was before the war, the second war. So we gave them the subject...
Betty Hoag: If you think of something we can come back.
Lorser Feitelson: Yes, great big drawings. They were exhibited right along. And those kids were
man believed in it. This man believed in it.
Betty Hoag: They couldn't a
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God knows how many ethnic groups were represented in them.
they had any, were in jail. The teachers got those kids together in class
one downtown, I think, where maybe there were one or two legitimate
must have had a crew of about two dozen teachers. And the stories that
quite a number of teachers, because there were so many settlement
gift shops.
That was near the end of the Project and he never heard what happened
Montana Project did at Warm Springs with mentally-disturbed people.
Lorser Feitelson: No, teaching youngsters in the underprivileged areas,
Betty Hoag: They were very popular in the Northwest area. There must
Lorser Feitelson: No.
Betty Hoag: Do you remember how it was spelled?
Fred Franchi. He's still around. I hadn't seen him for years, and I ran into
Lorser Feitelson: Yes, yes. We had a good man by the name of Franchi—
was called. And what about schools for the public? Did you have those
learned where the red fluid goes; it means the electric current goes on.
some of them went into the services. In the last year or so we were on the
Many of them were of age to do so. Also there were jobs
Betty Hoag: What about the rest of them? Did a lot of the people enlist in
and I was having some di
tics with my divorce. I finally decided I'd
Lorser Feitelson: I think approximately until the end of the Project, just a
Betty Hoag: It always seemed strange to me; and it was in all the
Betty Hoag: As in the case of the German's Washington Crossing the
Betty Hoag: You told us about him on the other tape. And another
Henry Allen Nord—is this correct?
Lorser Feitelson: That I didn't know. He died on his way back.
she waited thirty-six years but he never came back!
Czar Paul I, of Russia.
Betty Hoag: Yours was called Czar Issues Russian American Charter.
Lorser Feitelson: Oh, yes. It had to be approved before we could paint.
like.
early modern scientists, Marconi, Maxwell, or O'Henry or Faraday looked
square with Edison in the center. My God, I had forgotten about it.
Betty Hoag: Then of the ones that you did on the Project we have the
Lorser Feitelson: No, no. It was something I did on my own.
Lorser Feitelson: No, that was my own.
Betty Hoag: They do?
Lorser Feitelson: Yes.
Lorser Feitelson: We believe an artist should be honored and attend his
memorial shows, because he's on in years.
here, when there were very few artists of real merit, contributed a great
Lorser Feitelson: Yes, perhaps he did that, but I don't remember any
Lorser Feitelson: Watkins.
International Business Machines man, I think it was Mr. Watson—
Betty Hoag: In relation to the easel painting, did you have the
Lorser Feitelson: Of course we can close the window.
Betty Hoag: I would love to hunt for them. It would be very interesting.
Lorser Feitelson: Yes, that's true. It's wonderful! It's probably more fun to
Betty Hoag: But it's also a history of trying to find them again.
although they didn't belong to them. All these things were government
Lorser Feitelson: Yes. And many o
ffi
sent around to all public buildings to look up such things because no one
White Bead Quann?
Lorser Feitelson: No, they couldn't come down. Ours went up as far north
Lorser Feitelson: That was not in our Project. I have an idea this Project
done by prehistoric Indians.
Lorser Feitelson: Of rock paintings?
to make serigraphs of the Indian rock paintings. Was that in our area or
Betty Hoag: I wondered whether you had combined in any way?