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Archives of American Art

Transcript of an interview of Packard by Louise Gilbert, 1979

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When I returned from Mexico in November 1941, after my stay in Los Angeles I lived for a while with my parents in Berkeley. De-termined to understand Communis correctly, I read Marx's Capital very carefully, outlining each chapter.

After the meeting in Teheran with Roosevelt, Churchill, Chiang Kai-Sheck and Stalin, the American Communism Party dissolved itself as a political party. It became an association which took in many more middle-class professionals as well as industrial workers.

The California Labor School flourished during this time. Suh world cultural figures as Franky LLOYD Wright were sponsored by the Labor School and drew enormous crowds.*

I remember a huge meeting at the Civic Auditorium for Russian War Relief, where the Dean of Canterbury (the "red" Dean) spoke. Dr. Carleton Goodlett was an excellent speaker, Dave Jenkins and Holland Robert also. The "pitch" often brought several thousand dollars in for war relief. Big and enthusiastic audiences were not hard to reach in those days.

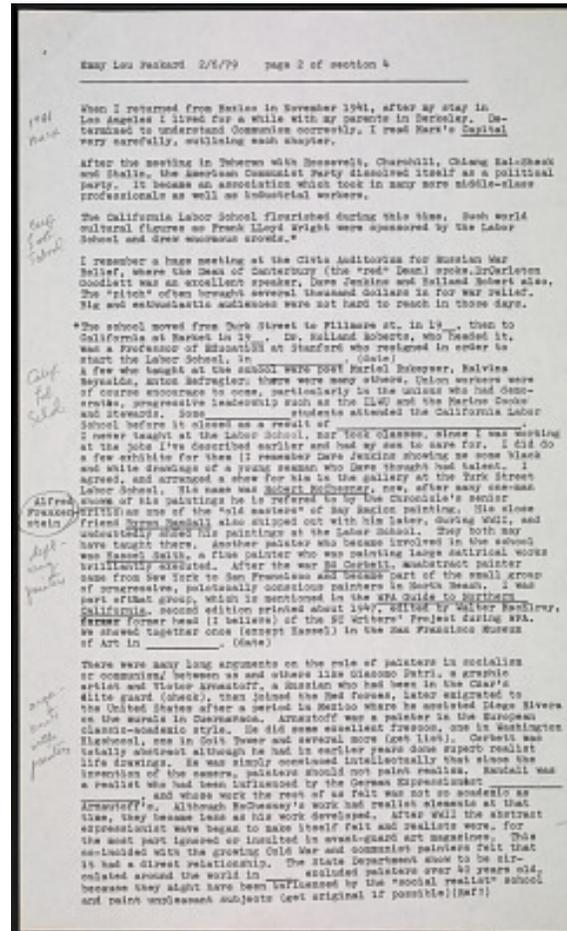
*The school moved from Turk Street to Fillmore st. in 19__ , then to California at Market in 19__ . Dr. Holland Roberts, who headed it, was a Professor of Education at Stanford who resigned in order to start the Labor School. in _____. (date)

A few who tauhg at the school were poet Muriel Rukeyser, Malvina Reynolds, Anton Refregeir; there were many others. Union workers were of course encourage to come, particularly in the unions who had demo-catic, progressive leadership such as the ILWU and the Marine Cooks and Stewards. Some _____ students attended the California Labor School before it closed as a result of _____.

I never taught at the Labor School, nor took classes, since I was working at the jobs I've described earlier and had my son to care for. I did do a few exhibits for them (I remember Dave Jenkins showing me some black and white drawings of a young seaman who Dave thought had talent.

agreed, and arranged a show for him in the gallery at the Turk Street Labor School. His name was Robert McChesney, now, after many one-man shows of his paintings he is refered to by the Chronicle's senior critic Alfred Franken-stein as one of the "old masters" of Bay Region painting. His cloe friend Byron Randall also shipped out with him later, during WWII, and undoubtedly shoed his paintings at the Labor School. They both may have taught there. Another painter who became involved in the school was Hassel Smith, a fine painter who was painting large satirical works brilliantly executed. After the war Ed Corbett, anasbract painter came from New York to San Francisco and became part of the small group of progressive, polotocally conscious painters in North Beach. I was part ofthat group, which is mentioned in the WPA Guide to Northern California, second edition printed about 1947, edited by Walter MacElroy, [[crossed]] former [[crossed-out]] former head (I believe) of the NC Writers' Project during WPA.

We showed together once (except Hassel) in the San Francisco Museum of Art in _____. (date)



There were many long arguments on the role of painters in socialism or communism, between us and others like Giacomo Patri, a graphic artist and Victo Arnaytoff, a Russian who had been in the Czar's elite guard (check), then joined the Red forces, later emigrated to the United States after a period in Mexico where he assisted Diego Rivera on the murals in Cuernavaca. Arnautoff was a painter in the European classic-academic style. He did some excellent frescos, one in Washington Highschool, one in Coit Tower and several more (get list). Corbett was totally abstract although he had in earlier years done superb realist life drawings. He was simply convinced intellectually that since the invention of the camera, apinters should not paint realism. Randall was a realist who had been influenced by the German Expressionest _____, and whose work the rest of us felt was not so academic as Arnautoff's. Although McChesney's work had realist elements at that time, they beceame less as his work developed. After WWII the abstract expressionist wave bega to make itself felt and realists were, for the most part ignored or insulted in avant-guard art magazines. This co incided whiit the growing Cold War communist painters felt that it had a direct relationship. The State Department show to be cir-culated around the world in ____ excluded painters over 40 years old, because paint unpleasant sbjects (get original if possible) (Ref?)

[[left margin]]

1941 Marx

Caug Sob [[?]]

Calef job School

left-wrong painters

argu-ments with painters

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