

*This is a transcription of a lecture that was given at the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture, an artist's residency program in Skowhegan, Maine (www.skowheganart.org). It is part of an Archive of lectures recorded from 1952 to the present, which are available in audio form on CD at this institution. It is important to note that most of these lectures incorporated visuals, which are **not** available. However, the Skowhegan School of Painting & Sculpture does have a limited number of slides from a selection of lectures in the Archive. You may contact Skowhegan to find out if they exist for a specific lecture.*

*These lectures are **not edited**. Please be advised that there will be typos, misspellings and occasional "breaks" in the audio. It would be prudent to listen to the audio to help determine the lecturer's intent. You must obtain permission from the artists or their representative to publish any material contained herein. The contact information is available from this institution.*

**SKOWHEGAN SCHOOL
OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE
Skowhegan, Maine**

**Lecture by Katharine Kuh
Summer, 1953**

Introduction: I think two weeks ago in a round table talk, we talked about museums and may have let our hair down and said uncomplimentary things. And there have always been discussions about the relation of artists and museums, and contemporary problems, and now we have a very brave and very honest woman from Chicago, Mrs. Katharine Kuh, who is the curator of contemporary painting at the Chicago Art Institute who is going to talk on that very same subject of present day life in relation to art, present day everything that you can think of in relation to you as students and your points of view, and she wants to ask you questions as much as tell you what she thinks and so, I'd like to introduce Mrs. Katharine Kuh to talk to you [applause]

Katharine Kuh [hereafter KK]: Thank you Mr. Core. Ladies and Gentlemen. My subject, as Mr. Core told you is kind of ??? but I don't think it has too be to complicated does it? I asked to talk about how does present day life affect modern art, but I think I ought to first define the term ³modern² which is ambiguous. I mean, by modern art, not just present day art but art of-- and not of contemporary art which I gather would be just present day art--but art let's say of the last 75 or 100 years. Art that has grown up since the scientific, since the really important inventions in science. And I've divided the few things I want to say into three headings. I'm not at all sure that these are the three main headings that I should divide them into, and so in talking to you, I would also hope that you'll talk to me. I know that every speaker says that, because it helps the speaker out, and it makes it much easier. But in this case, there are no answers, these are just ideas that I want to, not even express, but let's say throw out. And in return, I hope that in certain cases you will have other ideas. As to questions, I don't really think one can ask questions about this, one can only perhaps, repeat one's own experiences or one's own thoughts. There are no answers after all.

Now each person who lives today would have to stop and say to him or herself, what are the outstanding influences in my life. What are the things that change my vision. Because art isn't just something that's made, it's something also that's looked at. So my vision, I who am not an artist, also affects, in other words, the way I look at something, is not as important as the way the

artist looks at it, but it also has to be taken into consideration, it seems to me, in the changes that are taking place today, and the last 75 to 100 years in art. Now, of course, history has always perfected art. At least I feel so. That may be one of the points that you won't agree with me on and I hope you'll discuss it as we go on. But the history of the art is sometimes, shall we say, predicts history? And sometimes it's the other way around, there's no doubt that art of a century reflects its own time to a great degree. We don't care to go back into history and try to show how Giotto reflected his time, or even how Rembrandt, or Piero della Francesca reflected his time, but I'm sure that we could do that. And we couldn't do it comfortably, because there are many other influences. What I think though, I think that there are perhaps 3 or 4 main influences today, in my lifetime, which have affected the development of painting and sculpture, architecture, and allied fields. Music probably also, but I don't know enough about music to talk about it. Literature, also again, isn't my field.

I would say that perhaps the first influence, and this again, you may not agree with me. I feel that the first breaking point is the development of individualism in the world today. And not only today, but for the last, or the more than the last 100 years, I would say since the late 18th century and the French Revolution. We have in the Western world, a kind of democratic philosophy, a kind of democratic life which has made possible what I consider individualism. That is, the stress, as each one of you work, is on your own individual work. But the tradition of the group is less important it seems to me, now I may be wrong, than the individual expression that each one of you want to give to your work. And of course the viewer, the collector, is also an individualist. He is also not the Church any longer. In other words it used to be the Church that was the patron of art at one time. And the Church was not individualistic in the same degree. Certain people in the discussion last night felt that the museum is over individualistic in that the museum depends too much on its staff. Now of course, that's also in question. There is no doubt that the present modern museum is individualistic. It depends more on the opinion of individuals than on a tradition, on a conception of a long tradition. Artists after all no longer really serve apprenticeships in organizations, or even in studios. They study as you were studying, in the school, which is a little different, than an apprenticeship, because you're given a much greater chance for individuality in this kind of a school than I'm sure the Renaissance Artist was given, the young Renaissance artist was given when he studied in the studio. When actually he didn't study, but worked in the studio of an old master. I think he had to work, at least to start with, exactly in the tradition of the man with whom he was working. ??? So that was true for the most part. So it seems to me that the problem of individualism is one that has affected the whole of 20th century art, and to a great degree, the last half of the even the whole of the 19th century. After all, the great painters of the 19th century that we recognize today are the great painters, Van Gogh,, Cezanne, Gauguin, so on, Lautrec, were individualist par excellence. And we admire them for that reasons. Now there is a terrific danger, it seems to me in over stressing the majority. It seems to be that the real danger is the undue search for knowledge. You feel it constantly. I will just talk about the problem in America. But it's true also of France, and it's true of most of the countries in Europe where I travel. To a lesser degree I would say France and America more, because in these two countries there's greater competition, more arts. And where you have greater competition, novelty becomes sought after more and more.

Now the novelty that I'm referring to is the kind of novelty that hits on a new method. It seems

to me that the method is less important than perhaps what the content. And I don't want divide method and content because I think that becomes dangerous too. But in other words, perhaps an artist finds a new and novel way of saying something. And it's a wonderful idea for a few minutes, for a few days. Then, you see he has to compete with his own novelty. It seems to me that perhaps the greatest example of individualism that I have ever met is an extremely important artist of our century, a man who influenced the development of 20th century art to great degree and I'm referring to Marcel Duchamp who stopped painting when he was 30, or even younger, I believe. I had to write a little article on Duchamp for a catalogue I did for an exhibition and so I talked to him at great length. He is perhaps the greatest exponent of individualism that I've ever met. I said to him, why did you stop painting, which everybody asks him, of course he didn't tell me. Every time somebody asked him ???, he gave a different reason. But finally, I think, I found the real reason and I think he told me the reason. He could no longer stand to compete with himself. In other words, very young, he had said what he felt, what he had to say evidently. And then he stopped. The pleasure was gone. Now that wasn't just novelty, please don't misunderstand me, I don't to mix up the two ideas. But it was an extreme of individualism that he had lost interest because he could go on simply saying, perhaps not being a great leader, because I think he was a great leader in his young years. He felt that he couldn't compete with himself. Of course when competition gets to that point, it is frightening. And for him it was so frightening I think that he stopped painting altogether. The fact that competition in chess doesn't worry him is interesting to me. Well it interests me very much because he continues to play chess avidly, and brilliantly I understand, and I've always tried to dope it out, and I've figured out that there are stronger traditions in chess and you're on perhaps a little safer ground. I use that merely as a symbol of my idea of the dangers of individualism.

Now there are of course enormous advantages to an individualistic approach in art. There are the advantages of freedom, which surely artists have to a great degree today. This freedom can also be very lonely. And it can lead to enormous economic worry. If you compare in the Western World today, the kind of freedom that artists who live in democracies have, which is a complete individualistic approach, to the kind of work that is being produced in Russia, which is a dictatorship, or which was being produced in Nazi Germany, you'll see the difference immediately. There is an established tradition. The artist is told that he is not free, as I understand, now I can't promise, but as I understand. And the work that I have seen from these two countries would indicate that individualism is dead, that there is no such thing. The artist is not allowed to express what he wants, but has to adhere almost entirely to the rules of the state, or of a higher organization.

There are other difficulties though, in this whole approach to individualism. The twentieth century artist, as I said before, cannot depend on the traditions of the church and of aristocratic patronage. He does not have anything to depend on. Therefore the competition becomes terrific and his problem becomes greater and greater as he wants to make himself felt and make himself known. He has to go through all kinds of difficulties and inasmuch as the collector is also an individualist, he must approach, he must try to capture the interest of this other individual, and usually this becomes an extremely difficult process as all of you I'm sure know. In other words, we sacrifice economic securities for freedom, in this case it isn't freedom of speech, in a sense it's a freedom of speech in these plastics, and how to work the two problems out. How to keep our freedom and still not starve is really a great problem I think faces every artist.

Now I'd like to ask you a few questions. I'd like to ask you how you think it would be best for me to proceed. I have two or three or four or five more points that I'd like to make. But rather than go ahead and make them, I would like to stop after each one of my points, if you would like that, or go on to the next. How do you feel about that. I mean I'd like to hear from the audience on that point because I don't think that this kind of talk will have any value unless there's something that is contributive from you. That is, I'm sure you will disagree and I'm sure you will also agree with certain of the things that I say. But also I think you might add a great deal from your own experiences as young artists. And I would like to know, for instance, if anybody would be willing to tell me how do you feel it would be best to go on. To continue for a while? And then throw the evening over to discussion? To finish or how? Has anybody an opinion?

Questioner [hereafter Q]: Finish.

KK: Well, that makes it harder for me [laughter] but I'm perfectly willing to do it. But I was afraid that's what you'd say. Well, we'll see what happens. I'll go along for a little while and then see what will happen.

That is my first idea. Now the second thing that seems to me to be tremendously important, and of enormous influence on contemporary, and not only contemporary but art of the last 100 years, but particularly art of the last 50 years I would say, is the great mobility and multiplicity of modern life. And now I suppose that 100 years ago people felt the same thing, but I think the degree that the mobility of life has been extended is almost prevalent in the last 50 years. In other words, the widening of horizons, due to speedier transportation and increased communication. This isn't a new idea but it seems to me that it has affected painting, let's just limit ourselves for a moment to painting. It seems to me that it has affected painting enormously. I would like to, for instance, examine speed alone. Not just visual speed which is certainly important and has affected all of us. I'd like to ask you if you had never traveled in an automobile, had never seen the art of ??? and never seen a different kind of perspective, as you sit in a fast moving conveyance, do you think you would see the world the same. In a perfectly physical thing, as perhaps a man who traveled by horse 150 years ago. How do you feel about that? Do you think that has in any way affected contemporary art? Does anybody feel that it's had this affect. I think it's a purely physical affect, but I think we have to take it into consideration. Speed. And also increased communication. The fact that we know so much about what's going on elsewhere. That's a little terrifying because it makes the artist, it gives an added problem. The artist may become too eclectic. Or there is no such thing perhaps as being too eclectic but there is the problem perhaps of knowing too much about too many things.

There's the problem of having to decide what to select, what to reject, and this problem of selection and rejection is becoming greater and greater because human beings are exposed constantly to more visual, more auditory, more psychological experiences. And so what to do, because life has become more complicated. The travel and greater knowledge about the world, it seems to me a factor. Perhaps a minor factor. But from this comes many rediscoveries. The rediscovery of primitive, and pre-Renaissance art is due in part, and only in part to increased communication. What I'd like to ask you at this moment, because this is something I've never been able to quite figure out. I'd like to ask if any of you have any idea why just now, in the last, well I suppose it is the last 50 years, there's been a great increase in interest in primitive and pre-

Renaissance art. You see, in the 19th century, the Renaissance was the great model. Why do suppose the 20th century has selected certain primitive arts, and also Romanesque, in other words, pre-Renaissance influences. That is something I would like to ask you. Has anyone any idea why?

Q: Could it possibly be a desire for a new kind of vigor, that was lost? Or could it be something to do with a dying civilization as comparable to the end of the Egyptian civilization, or the end of the Greek civilization, where they too went, ??? mannerist and ???

KK: Do you think we are a dying civilization?

Q: I asked the question. [laughter]

KK: No I'm asking you, I think this is very possible.

Q: There is a great parallel here, but you have a kind of mannerism, archaic mannerism

KK: That's right

Q: ...which we have taken up, and the kind of thing that they did in the late Egyptian art and late Greek art.

KK: Yes, Hellenistic.

Q: At the end of Hellenistic.

KK: The very late Hellenistic art. But you think that possibly because, and I use the word only historically, that we are living in a somewhat decadent period of history. I say that in no derogatory sense at all. Because after all, some of the late Egyptian and late Greek periods were considered decadent as far as art, but it seems to me that some of the greatest art was produced at that time.

Q: Well certain fields of ??? of our past, we certainly can't be too foul about having it around us, which is something that other ages in this civilization not had.

KK: Have not had?

Q: No.

KK: Now for instance which ones haven't?

Q: Well all the ages that came earlier. Since they basically have as much, if the problem is how much we have, we've added constantly and we know so much about these things...

KK: Too much.

Q: ...because scholarship and so forth have given us much more than other ages about their past ages.

KK: I know. It becomes both enormously ??? and terrifically ???, don't you feel so?

Q: Sometimes one wonders how much a given mind can ???

KK: I met this summer a psychologist, the head of the psychology department at Swarthmore, maybe some of you know him. A man by the name of Wallach who is doing an extremely careful, slow bit of research on perception, and mainly on memory. And of course that comes into the whole problem, the fact that human memory today, so much more is demanded of it than was demanded a hundred years ago. Therefore the whole process is changing. And we're terribly upset because we forget more. We actually more I suppose because we're expected to remember proportionately so much more. But to go back for a minute to what you said, you feel that perhaps this particular period, the first half of the 20th Century has concerned itself more with primitive and pre-Renaissance forms, one because they have ???, they are more vigorous, certainly they are.

Q: More obviously vigorous.

KK: More obviously vigorous, I would agree with you. And secondly because it's like an historic pendulum, that you go back to that kind of thing when you become over sophisticated really. Is that what you...

Q: What's certainly suggested now that we've had a whole host of historians who seem to think so, but I'm not so...

KK: Well I'm just wondering, what are some of the others that you saw?

Q: Also, isn't it the very thing you're talking about which is life has become so complicated, and we have so many different visions which we project on our work, that the very simplicity of the primitive is attractive. That simplicity of vision, particularly in the plastic arts. To somebody like say ??? who was struggling with the knowledge of Cezanne, the knowledge of people before him, but the very simplicity of the African art and a power ???. But the power came from its simplicity of vision, from its wholeness. And that becomes an attractive aspect. Even nowadays there's a great sort of revival of the amateur artist, that people feel somehow these people have not been educated with all this knowledge of the past and so forth, and therefore, they have a clearer vision. In a sense that's what they're saying of Grandma Moses or what have you, that they paint in a very simple way.

KK: More direct.

Q: In a more direct way, and it's a simpler vision, and it's a kind of relief ??? this is the people who admired them. ???

KK: Well what about photography? I mean I think that what you say is true, but what about

photography. Do you think the invention in the 19th century and the great popularity of photography. Did it have anything to do with a change in the visual arts?

Q: ???

KK: But I think that's ??? No, I'm trying to think of it in a little bigger terms. Do you think possibly, the artist got to the point where the photographer could do so much that he decided, I don't think ??? but to slow him, to free him perhaps to eliminate certain kinds of Renaissance techniques which actually I don't think was photographic incidentally. So I think that argument that I'm handing out does not have any validity. But the only reason that I'm mentioning it is because I've heard it stated so often. That photography has changed the progress of 20th century art. I think photography has, but in a very different way. I don't think it was the competition with photography, but I do think that photography has made certain artists of the late 19th and early 20th century see things differently. I think that Degas had a kind of, began to see figures cut off almost like a candid camera before the candid camera technique developed. Because he almost foresaw it and I feel that many 20th century artists, because they have certain types of things in the motion pictures, motion pictures, incidentally, I think, had a great influence undoubtedly on futurism, which was a development in motion. Some of the techniques of photography I think have been reinterpreted, not transferred, but perhaps reinterpreted by the painter because he sees things differently. When he sees a ??? in a photograph. Now I don't know whether any of you would agree, and I think this is an unpopular idea with most painters.

How do I make you feel about it? Do you think that any of you look at the world around you at all differently because you may have seen some sort of a strange candid shot in a photograph. Or do you think that the multiplicity of advertising that feed on our art day in day out, do you think the amount of visual material that we have to see daily, because I think we live in an age which is demented on the subject of words. We are given a direct ??? by signs. You know, written signs. And photographic signs, pictures of one sort and another, not painted ones. Do you think this has an effect on the artist? Do you possibly think that the incorporation of so many printed words in certain kinds of cubism maybe an expression of just that--that the words are used, not symbolically, because I don't think they are used symbolically, but simply visual. Do you think any of these things have affected the 20th century.

When I talk of the 20th century, I talk of cubism, which I think was one of the first great movements. I mean I have to include cubism. I know that today most of you are no longer interested in cubism, but I think many of you are probably still influenced in some strange way by cubism. The more we can choose one great mother movement of the 20th century--I think we would have to perhaps start with cubism. There again, you may not agree with me. And so I got to bring that in a little later, the idea of cubism.

One other question, and then I'll go onto another point. Do you think that the new perspective--these are all physical, some of these things I'm saying now, I want to go into more psychological influences a little later. Do you think that the influence of air travel has in any changed we think of perspective. I don't know. But do you think that young artists who flew during the War, I mean a great, I don't mean just took one flight, but who lived in the air. And who flew over the earth, had a new feeling perhaps for directions, and ??? and for scale. I don't know, I wonder. Is that true of any of you? Have any of you spent a good deal of time flying in the air? Has it changed at all, the way you look at things? Has it changed your idea of scale? Because for me,

the whole concept of getting above the earth and suddenly seeing the scale of things, is a kind of overpowering physical experience, visual experience. Not necessarily psychological.

Now I think there are other minor problems in this whole idea of mobility and multiplicity which affect the painter, which affect the artist, affect the architect. One of these, a small point is that the consumer moves from house to house. That no longer is there a tradition of somebody living, century after century in the same home. Because the consumers--dare call somebody a collector, whatever you want to call a person who buys art, who lives with art, because such a person lives leaves frequently because he lives in a new kind of architecture that's made out of mainly, and often mainly, of glass and steel, the kind of paintings that are developing, and the kind of sculpture that is developing is not from a conscious point of view, but perhaps the change is coming gradually. Art objects are, more shall we say, transportable. In other words, certainly, a simple thing like trains are changing, which is not important but which is some indication. Certainly materials used for sculpture is changing. The fact that now the church is no longer a patron, the aristocratic family ??? is no longer a patron where they put the art object in a given place and keep it there for centuries. Or certainly for a hundred years or more. The fact that now that most artists show their work in temporary exhibitions, either one man exhibitions in commercial galleries or in a large exhibition in museums. The fact that these art objects have to be transported, does this make the slightest difference, as one works? I think it does, in some strange way. I think behind the mind, not just of a single artist, but the mass mind, and I don't like to use that word, but shall I say the psychology changes. You are painting for a different public, or you are sculpting for a different public and therefore your problem is different.

Slowly, and despite the fact that each artist is as a rule a great individualist, he has to adapt to the needs of a new kind of society. Whether those are good needs or not, I don't know. I'm just asking you some questions.

Now do you feel that the lack of roots, because I feel there are a lack of roots, the lack of roots interferes at all with the artist's work? Do you feel. you as young artists find it difficult because you don't have actual roots, and because you don't know where you're going to be working next year. And because you don't know whether you will stay three years here or one year there, or two years. I talk to one or two of you, and one of you told me you've been working three years in Buffalo, and 1 year here and 4 years there and so forth. Now, how do you feel about that? Do you feel that that's difficult, do you feel that it changes your approach to your own work? Does anybody have an opinion about that?

Q: What amazes me as far traveling, ??? impressionists. They did so much traveling to so many different places, I think a lot of us ???

KK: Oh but I feel that they're very definitely ??? from what I'm talking about. When I said the last hundred years, I include very much the impressionists.

Q: I'm sorry.

KK: Don't be sorry because I think it's an excellent point. I include Monet and Pissarro because I do feel...you see that's why I didn't call it contemporary. I mean the effects of present, and I shouldn't use the word present day, I think it's the last hundred years really.

Q: I think contemporary art ??? and although they do move, I don't think they move as much as they did in the last half of the 19th century. ??? They might change the physical location, but I don't think they move now any more than they did at that point.

KK: No, I don't think more than then, but I'm talking about this whole hundred year situation.

For instance, let's compare the artists of the last hundred years. When I say lack of roots with an artist of the Renaissance. Now we know that many of the Renaissance artists went from court to court. Titian moved around, Velasquez moved, they moved. But not to the same degree.

Most of them pretty well knew, most of them, I would say if we read their history, remained for the greater part of their lives in one city, and worked as a rule, for one group of people. And so they had a kind of stability in their lives. You're absolutely right, I think the 19th century artists cast around, perhaps, certainly no more, but just as much. It was harder to travel in the 19th century you see. I would imagine that if you compared the amount of traveling that was done in the 20th century to that of the 19th, you'd find that it was enormously increased. Of course the impressionists, a couple of them did go to England, and they did try to get away from certain wars and things. But I think fundamentally, Cezanne traveled very little compared to ??? Van Gogh moved around, but where did he move from? Only from Holland to France where he moved really only within a very small radius. But he was the most restless of all artists I would say. And Gauguin certainly moved. No, I think they are a part of the modern tradition. In fact I suppose we would say that the whole modern movement started with the impressionists, with the pre-post impressionists.

One other tremendous ??? that I have felt, and I think it's perhaps the greatest, and the one that would take the most time to talk about, and that is the influence, in a very big sense, of science on our lives today. I don't mean just in the simplest sense of the word. But there are so many points that we could bring up under this, that I don't know where to start. But let's take some of the most obvious. The impact, let's say, of electricity. The impact of artificial light. I don't mean candlelight. The impact of Broadway on an American artist who had never seen it before, or who's seen it many times. I don't mean just Broadway, but I mean the whole vision of moving lights, of strange new shadows and new kinds of reflections. All of this I think has changed what we see in painting. Over and over I think the kinetic effect of moving lights at night in a big city must have had enormous influence on present day vision. The strange new spaces that are created by these lights. Don't think for one minute that I'm going to deny tradition, I mean of the past. I'm taking that for granted. I'm now only talking about some of the influences that are present. New forces. What about the whole impact of urban life? Of present day huge cities and the effect that this urban life has on the painter as a person, visually, and psychologically. I think it's enormous. As you go through large exhibitions and look at different kinds of pictures, and sculpture, you feel over and over the influence of the new kind of city. At least I do. I may be wrong.

New materials have been perhaps less important than people think, but still important.

Aluminum, plastics and so forth. Not for the painter, somewhat for the sculptor, but surely the idea of mobiles sculpture comes from present day life. You may not consider it valid, but it's here, and we see it around us. And it is certainly a form of sculpture that's developed consciously in the 20th century. Perhaps from 20th century movement, perhaps from the speed

of 20th century life. It also, it seems to me, grows out of nature. The union of nature and science, the way the whole thing has been conceived. Because there are new materials, it seems to me that new materials make possible new forms, and even new content. Also, as I said before, architecture, a new kind of architecture which makes for new needs and new problems. And the architecture sometimes grows out of paintings, and sometimes new kinds of painting are dependent on architecture. These are all ideas. I'm not elaborating them because I think we should discuss them together. I can't lay down the law, I'm not sure, but I'm interested. I'm interested also in the development of surrealism as a part of another style. The science, let's say, of Freud. Freudian psychoanalytic methods which you may not consider scientific and which really are ambiguous science, but still are related to new medical developments, certain new psychological medical developments. Now surrealism surely is somewhat tied up with Freudian developments. You can answer and say, how about Bruegel, how about Hieronymus Bosch, but I think it's very different in a way. I don't think it was as self conscious, and I think it was implemented in a little different way. There's no doubt that Bosch uses dream symbolism, but whether his dream symbolism comes as self consciously as the surrealist's dream symbolism is another matter to be studied.

Incidentally, there are a few more things that I'd like to talk about, but why not stop for a moment and take a few of these points. How do you feel about the last point? Do you agree with me in any way that Freudian methods have changed the course of 20th century painting?

Q: I'd like to suggest that maybe they've changed them, but I don't think they changed them in more than they changed other human beings, all human beings' ways of living. It seems to me that the painter hasn't been any more affected by these manifestations of contemporary than all human beings have. Maybe the way they've been affected by them is through other human beings, and through themselves in the normal world, rather than as ideas, as self conscious ideas...

KK: Well I think you're right.

Q: ...which are kind of abstract and theoretical.

KK: Oh I think you're absolutely right. You misunderstood me because I mean that these are the influences from everyday life which influences all. And have influenced us in one way, the non artists, but certainly explain certain kinds of art which developed around it.

Q: Well when you use the word self conscious, one of the things that comes to my mind, if you say Freud, was an expression of a certain self consciousness in that. That when we lost the church, and the belief in God, not that everybody has lost the belief in God ???, this was no longer the major relief, does he then examine himself? Before Christianity, he examined nature, but then he examined ??? or believed in a God, and he expressed that. ??? And then he became self conscious, and that to me, the most moving influence in modern art beyond all these things is the self consciousness of the artist.

KK: You don't think that for instance, the Renaissance artists were self conscious?

Q: No, I think he was examining man more than animals. That he examined the physique of man.

KK: You don't think he went beyond that?

Q: More than he did--the problem of the arts as such. You see it in the writers of the time in that they are writing about ??? artist that Picasso painted the clown who was an artist. He examined his medium, that all these things that you call science, or scientific explorations are in fact the self consciousness of the artist. That he examined his past...

KK: His awareness really.

Q: Yes. An awareness and a consciousness of himself as artist.

KK: Rather than just as a man. Whereas a man like Caravaggio, for instance, do you think he was just commenting on society, but not on himself?

Q: As an artist. That he becomes more...

KK: ??? You know I really never thought of it and I think it's interesting. That the art that we ??? in Picasso is more interested in the artist than he is in the ...

Q: The problems of art as artists. And that Freud is an expression of that rather than Freud so much influencing modern art.

KK: Well then how would you explain Dali? or Miro? at random?

Q: Well I would say that they again are exploring possibilities of the artist?

KK: Why with Miro? Why would you say that about Miro?

Q: Because he is examining forms in themselves, which is a very self conscious thing to do.

KK: Well I think he does much more than that. I think takes erotic material, and plays with it. So I don't think that he's examining the artist particularly any more than a man of the past would have?

Q: Well in the sense too that then I have heard. We don't hear it so much now, but there was a period when there were painters who discussed the business of the painting being on flat canvas, and therefore you could never have it perfected in the sense that the old masters had had, because you were actually painting on a flat canvas and that whole preoccupation with the flat canvass is to me, self conscious preoccupation. And that some things Miro, to an extent ...

KK: Well I would say more than ??? Well now, that's something I would like to ask you, because I think there is some point. Do any of you feel that is in any sense a new development in the 20th century--this feeling that because you have a flat surface to work on, you must respect.

I want to say just one thing that you must not forget the oriental artists who long ago thought of his surface as a flat surface that should be respected. Who also then, in certain ways. ??? insisted on denying perspective. Do you feel that was the 20th century? that for some reason that's a 20th century discovery? And that the 20th century artist is more self conscious about his materials than artists of other periods? Does somebody else have an opinion about that?

Q: I don't think any more so than the Japanese artists and primitive painters.

KK: You think primitive painters were terribly aware? I think they weren't aware. Do you feel that they were self conscious, I mean consciously worked in a certain way? Or were they primitive mainly--does the term primitive indicate that perhaps they were restricted by techniques, in techniques, but still had something so powerful to say that their very restrictions made it stronger. Because I don't quite know what we mean by primitive art today. What exactly is primitive art in most of your minds? Do you think that the African artists, who made these handsome carvings which became so extremely popular in France in the early 20th century, and which are still greatly admired, and which influenced Modigliani, and Picasso and so forth, do you feel that these men could have made figures with absolutely correct anatomy if they had wanted?

Q: There's a strange story about the man who traveling in New Guinea showed a photograph to some natives, and they failed to recognize themselves in the photograph, because they just couldn't see themselves as being on a thing that size, reduced, and in two dimensions. They basically only recreated their image in the round. There was absolutely no recognition. There were people standing all around them they could see. It's just a conception of how they reproduce themselves, that has something to do with it.

KK: And a tradition. But do you think, had they wanted to reproduce themselves, with correct proportions, they could?

Q: They had to be taught that.

KK: Easily taught, I'm sure. But they didn't.

Q: But they never come into contact with themselves.

KK: Do you think the Egyptian, let's go a step further. Take Egyptian art. Parts of it will surely, not really a primitive art, highly sophisticated art, but still the Egyptian artists, I mean this is a question that I've asked myself repeatedly. Still the Egyptian artist rarely showed correct anatomy. In other words, part of the figure, the frontal part of the figure was in profile, why?

Q: But we do have Egyptian architectural perfect thing in the fine portraits.

KK: Yes, but I'm talking about the usual tradition in the earlier was most sophisticated.

Q: Right at the same time were some of the early things ??? artist's models found in artist's

studios showing photographic likenesses, but only for the purpose of examining the form. They were never exhibited or used

[AUDIO BREAK]

KK: But what is primitive? What I'm trying to find out is what do you consider primitive art? Because we talk about it. We talk about Grandma Moses as being a primitive. We talk about African Negro sculpture as being primitive, and we talk about primitive influences, and I'm not absolutely sure exactly what we mean by primitive art, and by modern or 20th century interest in primitive art. What do we mean by it? What is primitive art? Is it the art of people who have not mastered certain techniques but still have a rather brilliant and strong way of saying what they have to say? Or is it something that is self consciously primitive? What is it?

Q: Could it be the primitive society?

KK: I think that's probably what it is. But wasn't the Egyptian society primitive?

Q: I don't think that this is a qualification of the art, this is a qualification of the society from which the art comes. I don't see that this has anything to do with the description of the art.

KK: Well do you think Grandma Moses comes from a primitive society?

Q: I don't know what that term means.

KK: You see what I mean?

Q: I don't know what that term means for Grandma Moses.

KK: I don't either. That's what I'm trying to find out.

Q: That's something else. We're talking about primitive art as you were talking about the past of Africans and so forth.

KK: Well would you consider Egyptian art primitive?

Q: I never heard it called primitive?

KK: You haven't? Oh I have. I don't think it is.

Q: It was the art of Egypt. And if Egypt was a primitive society, which at certain times it was in its early days, then obviously it was a primitive art.

KK: And you think that archaic weak art would be primitive? because you think the archaic weak society was primitive, I mean is that the answer? I'm very much in doubt because the term is bandied around, particularly today. Very loosely, and people call themselves primitives and this is primitive and that is primitive, and I would know exactly what the definition...I think

you've come close to the definition, that the art belongs to a primitive society. ??? But then to decide exactly what is a primitive society is.

Q: This is not an original idea, but wasn't it somewhat mixed up with fetishism and feeling the magic? That the representation of something conveyed a magic power over it? Or presented an object by which magic could be exerted?

KK: Perhaps. Would then you say, for instance, the North Pacific Coast Indians in Alaska who carved these superb totem poles, that that's primitive art? I suppose it is.

Q: I would say so. I don't think anybody calls themselves a primitive artist ???

KK: And this whole modern...and do you consider Rousseau, ??? do you consider him a primitive?

You do? I don't you know. I think that perhaps he painted certain things that seemed somewhat primitive, but fundamentally I don't think of him as a primitive painter. How do you feel as a group.

Q: He didn't consider himself a primitive painter.

KK: Oh he certainly did not. No. But of course his desire was to paint like a Renaissance artist, but I don't think he considered himself a primitive did he?

Q: The term unsophisticated, untrained? Painting things that he saw without worrying about perspective.

KK: He worried about technique a lot, I would say. He was rather a great perfectionist.

Q: That is one of the things that brings me back to this whole business of being self conscious. I mean the term primitive didn't come until the art became self conscious. ??? I'm sure that in early days they didn't say, how do you paint because in the Egyptian days they ???

KK: In the tradition.

Q: ??? And even in the Renaissance...when man became self conscious, that he could say well this is primitive art, looking back on other artists, and this is such and such a kind of art, and now a days, the first question that is asked a young painter is, how do you paint. And you're supposed to have a way of painting.

Q: Pardon me, I would just like to ask how the Dark Ages got their name. I mean if any that came after it called the age before, they'd be self conscious, and say, these were the dark ages, so that they were calling another a primitive in a way. ??? They had decided that their age was...it was a self conscious age of creativity. I mean they were reborn. I mean, besides if the age before had never been born, or at least been born in a very dark time.

KK: Well then you think that any period that names a period in history that came before it is

conscious of what...I mean you see I think that that gets very complicated.

Q: History makes us very self conscious. I mean and they had some kind of history, but not as much, so maybe it's just degree and not just a new thing.

KK: That's probably right. I think that's right. But surely it's true that no period has produced a greater self consciousness not only in art, not only the plastic arts but in other arts than ours, because there are so many reasons for the self consciousness. The means of communication which perhaps didn't exist to the same degree, and I'm still talking about the last hundred years. I'm not just talking about the 10 or 12 or 15 years because I think that's limiting ourselves too much. And inasmuch as I don't have slides and don't have pictures, I wanted to talk in a little bigger way about it. But, after all, the interest in primitive art started long before the rediscovery of African sculpture. It started really as long ago as Gauguin, who purposefully went to Tahiti. And I think at that time his pictures were considered primitive in a sense. They surely are. But they were influenced by certain obvious primitive traditions, you can put it that way.

Q: Before when you were talking about how conscious one's flat plane in relation to primitive art. When you look at very early Chinese painting or Japanese painting, don't you think they were very much conscious of their surface?

KK: Very. Because I think that the oriental art was super sophisticated, yes. That's what I meant. I think they were. ???

Q: But they were also very interested in representing space.

KK: Certain of them.

Q: ??? their stylization in a sense. I mean they did that big thing of the mountains. They give you a tremendous sense of space.

KK: Don't you think that Mondrian is just as interested in space?

Q: But a different space. He's not interested in the space of a mountain and a man. He was interested in a space on canvas.

KK: That's right.

Q: And that's what I mean, the difference between self conscious and a certain stylization, which has something to do with primitivism.

KK: Could we put it this way, because I think the way you're defining is a little ambiguous. Could we say that it's a different kind of consciousness. Do you see what I mean? Certainly, the Oriental artists who tried for this kind of really highly sophisticated scale and ??? was just as conscious of what he was doing, but it was different kind of problem he was connected with. He was perhaps ??? conscious of his own problem as an artist. I greet you there. ??? But another I'd like to ask you is what do you think has taken the place in modern art, art of the last

70-80 years, of the church? What influence? Is there any that has taken the place. Because after there were many years. You don't really believe that of course do you? You do? The museum has taken place? But it seems to me that the church was a much more vital interest than the museum can be in the life of an artist of that period. When the Church was the great patron, and certainly the Church was in certain periods, in the Renaissance, and the pre-Renaissance.

Chartres was a living example of what a great patron the Church could be. And all of the Cathedrals of France. The very thing that's going on in this room comes not entirely from the Renaissance because it comes from the pre-Renaissance too, but comes out of the idea of frescoes for Churches and so forth.

Now the Church was one complete consumer, if you like to use such a material word. What, if anything has taken the place? The Museum is not a consumer. They buy comparatively little, commission ??? never commissions. And so the fact that they show is very different than supporting the environment. Somebody was going to say something. Yes?

Q: Well I would like to add to her sense of being of important to ??? you say the difference between ???, but actually to the artist, ??? position, it means the same thing. It means his living or dying is the Museum's function. They may not buy the work, but ??? loan.

KK: Really? Is it really that important?

Q: Well how many people can make a name for themselves without living off of a Museum?

KK: Now do you that the fact that Museums are terrifically interested in publicity has something to do with all this? And have publicity councils and get a great deal of stuff in the newspaper and magazines. In other words, it isn't just the Museums. It's what the Museum does.

Q: Well, I feel it's also the Museum because to me, obviously much of contemporary American is painted ???.

KK: ??? because I think this is terribly interesting, particularly for ??? who work in museums.

When the former artists, let's say the artists of the Renaissance. Let's take specific example, painted for a given church. He was commissioned. He was told for so and so much money, we want you to paint such and such. So many panels, depending on what he was doing, or sculpture, or whatever it was, for such and such and such and such a church, in such and such a time. You know, how much time does he have to do it. Beyond that, I think that the Renaissance artist was given considerable freedom, probably not total freedom at all. He had to work in a prescribed area, and he had to paint certain subjects. But he knew what he was going to get out of it. And he knew what he was supposed to do. Now, when you say, that the American artist paints with the museum in mind, that's what I didn't know. You say the average home can't accommodate itself ????. What do you think the museum wants? I mean that's what I would like to know. What does the artist think will be accepted by a museum?

Q: I think the artist is more concerned with the individual than with the museum, because the museum itself becomes broken up into individual thoughts and everything else.

KK: How do you mean, what individual for instance? You mean the individual who is the collector, or the individual who comes to the museum to look at the art? I'm really trying to find out.

Q: Well generally, individuals that contribute to the museums, you know.

KK: But many of the individuals who contribute to a museum, and this makes me very sad to say, but it's nonetheless true, many of the people who give the most money, who are the richest, don't like contemporary art. You know that as well as I. So, how can you have them in mind? Then you just stop painting and copy the Renaissance.

Q: The church had a standard, you know. The museums have not much of a standard.

KK: You don't feel we have a standard?

Q: No. There are much better museums...

KK: Now wait a minute, I don't quite understand. The church had a standard...of what?

Q: Taste.

KK: And the museum does not have?

Q: No. [laughter]

KK: Well...

Q: I mean for instance you go to different cities, and you'll find a much different...

KK: That's right, absolutely. You mean there is no one standard?

Q: No.

KK: It seems to me that the church...but of course, what lasted from the church is the great work, isn't that true? But don't forget there were many fewer...the whole thing was on a smaller scale. But I think it's an interesting point. Yes.

Q: I think you're confusing something. Something is being left out completely which is, the whole strike on the economic point of view. I think it's a little too strong. I think the consumer is taking...it's as if everybody's painted a picture with the man who's going to buy it in mind. I don't think that was completely true. Maybe somewhat true. But I think that the great art of the church came not because somebody said, now paint this, but because the ??? painter believed in what he was painting. And as you were talking before about primitive society. I don't know what the consumer there was. But he was expressing something that society believed. And I think that the church paintings that are great and the church sculpture that is great are...you can't help it when you it feeling that this is something that was believed, no matter how much they

were paid for, and no matter how much they were commissioned, there was a story there that was believed. And perhaps it was a traditional story and it was believed on one level or another, but it was believed. And that's where I think, when you come to the museum and the modern artist, that you're falling into a trap, so to speak, because I don't think that the museum functions as a church did. And I don't think that there is a story that the museum is telling that the modern artist believes. And that's where I think that what the modern artist is saying--and even the modern architect even more--is that self conscious, I mean they say, what do we believe. We no longer believe in God, and Freud is ?? man. So they damn themselves as artists. And therefore they explore ??? mediums. And therefore it seems to me that you get your Mondrian and you get your houses that are built from the point of view of what in the medium to do, rather than, I want to express an idea that will bought by a museum. Then, this thing is expressed by the artist.

Then the museum comes along and says, will this is what is happening now.

KK: I think that's true, the museum tries to show what's happening now. And does not pick its painters, like the church did.

Q: Well they pick. This was going on the other evening at the round table that perhaps they pick one type of thing that is going on for the moment, and say this is the only kind of art of contemporary art. And perhaps that is a mistake. But nevertheless, I do not think they were the ones that influenced Mondrian. ??? ...the self consciousness of the art in our times produced Joyce, Elliot, whoever.

KK: Well look Mondrian died before practically any museum touched him, I mean I'm just using him as an example. I think there's some truth that the museum does not set the standard, but it tries to show if it's honest, what is going on. Now there is this great problem. How to show what's going on when there's so much going on. There is no doubt that certain museums become prejudiced in one direction because of their personnel. Human beings are as they are and there is no such thing as totally open minded human being.

Q: I think a group of men that are connected with the paper like Reality, show that the artist is concerned with museum, but they're not painting for the museum ???

KK: I'd really like to go on with that a little further. What do you feel that the paper Reality has to do with it. What do you think is really behind...I'm really interested to know what you think comes out of such a paper? What is the real reason for Reality? Have you looked at the ...I'm interested and I don't know. I read it carefully.

Q: The only reason I mentioned Reality...

KK: I don't know how many people here are a part of that paper. I'm just interested. I read it with curiosity and got a little confused by it. [laughter] It's perfectly all right isn't it, to talk about?

Q: My point just was, the original question was does the artist paint for the museum in the same way that men long ago painted for the church?

KK: No, that's the question I asked. I don't think they do. When somebody back there said so, I was amazed. Because I can't believe that the museum is a consumer of art. It's simply a place where art is shown.

Q: Is there anything that does take the place of the church?

KK: That's what I'm asking. I don't think so.

Q: I don't think so.

KK: I don't think there's anything that's taken the place of the church in present day art, in the last 100 years. And I think it's one of the things that has changed the course of art. And I think ??? said something very important when he said, make a point that the great artists who painted for the church--not every artist, after all Fra Lippo, Lippo was not religious and still painted some marvelous pictures. But most of the painters who worked for the church, as a rule, ??? people in the content. And what she's trying to say is that now, it's really the material that forms the content. Before it was the content that influenced the material a great deal. What were you going to say?

Q: I want to bring up a point, not that it's a non issue...Everyone seems to begin that artist like to exhibit paintings of the social life. Does the question of having the painting seen--there's the old story that everybody knows about the old lady who went to a psychiatrist because she loved potato pancakes, and what's wrong with that, and he said, well I've got a trunkful of them doctor. Now, I'm having ??? [laughter] You know, I mean this is another question. And there's where the museum really comes in and ??? I think hopefully that the museum will buy ...or the museum may support you. It's just a dream. But there is this business of exhibits.

KK: Oh certainly...

Q: Having an exhibition in the gallery... is the main seller, very successful. More ??? come back to the studio dashed.

KK: I know awful awful. That was really the question I was asking. And you're saying it over and over, what I'm trying to say. Has anything given the living artist a security of ???

Q: That's impossible. And that I think...[brief break in tape]

KK: You haven't mentioned the rather feeble attempts on the part of business which certainly have not helped the average artist. But there have been a certain small patronage from business which I think is on the decline right now, but was building up for maybe 10 or 12 or 20 years, but it was a small and minor thing. There are also a certain number of well to do, and other kind of collectors throughout this country who are important to consider, because when you talk about selling a picture, it's to them. Fundamentally, the museums of America couldn't possibly support the living artist. It's just crazy to think about because their job is also to buy and show old art from all periods.

Q: Is it ??? that there are many ??? when you do this kind of ??? because there are no junior ??? art scholarships.

KK: Do you know how many professional artists there are in America? Does anybody know.

Q: There are so many wars, ??? up to date proportionately ???. There are that many more editions.

KK: You see I think they're practically, with the exception of very few artists, let's limit ourselves to America for the moment. I made a kind of survey, this was about 6 years ago. I can't call it a real survey but I drove 9300 miles and visited from Chicago west, to the West Coast, I didn't touch the East Coast, because it would have been just too huge, and I kept a statistical account, which is of very slight value, because after all, I could only see such a small proportion of the artists in those neighborhoods, but I found practically no artist who didn't happen to have independent income, could live, and you know this, on their painting or their sculpture. Many many of them were teachers. Many had other ways of making a living, but there were practically no artists except a few very very famous older men, or a few artists with independent income, or a few artists who had marvelous wives or husbands who supported them. You know that's a rare thing to find a wife...but fundamentally one of the problems that meets the 20th century artist is this problem of having to find a way of making the living, and at the same time pursuing his work and not being destroyed.

Q: Well, you've been talking about the church, I think you ought go North a little bit and start talking about the middle class art support that went on in Holland and in Belgium and in France from the 15th century which was quite, I mean it was supported by the middle class.

KK: That's right.

Q: The artist had all kinds of support there. He painted for the home, he didn't paint for museums, he didn't paint walls, he painted small pictures that were hung...

KK: That's right.

Q: ...the business man bought, the guilds bought, the unions, the so called unions in those days bought. I'm thinking of the Rembrandts, the Hals, and so forth. That medical societies bought. And the artists had a guild in those days, he was a recognized artisan as much as the weaver, the clothier and so forth. He also had a place in society because he was the camera.

KK: That's right, portraitist.

Q: He was also the style setter, he was the uh, well any number of things, you can right through things. These things have all been in our contemporary day been supplanted. Except a few of them, like the man on the right here who designs buildings occasionally, and do pottery, and a few other things. But he is no longer hired to do the family portrait, you get the cameraman to do that

[AUDIO BREAK]

Katherine Kuh (hereafter KK): So it comes back to this problem of art being an individualistic process today, much more so than it has been in the past.

Questioner (hereafter Q): Well then there is the problem also, you mentioned the canvas supplants the portrait painter and so forth, but the artist himself, ???, by pressuring the outside found himself having to say things that people didn't want to buy. He found himself in the unenviable position of saying things that no one wanted. Rembrandt is an example. He was saying things that people didn't want. So here we have another kind of thing where history is providing an age which is no longer happy enough, or convivial enough for the painter not to see some kind of tragedy involved which the middle class is not going to buy. Now there is that kind of dichotomy that comes in.

KK: And the dichotomy goes a step further. You have the end of the 19th century, and you have history being shown very great names: Van Gogh, Cezanne, Lautrec, Gauguin. None of these are ... These men were totally neglected and they have become dramatic stories to such a degree, and they were terrific artists. To such a degree that there is a boom, and now, the simple layman, sometimes forces himself to think that he must discover a greater artist immediately--when he's young, when he's starving....and this artist is usually, what ??? has to be in a sense a novelty seeker. Because in that way, do you see what I'm trying to get at? In that way, the individualistic collector says look, I'm also an individual and I'm making a discovery, and I can't afford to make the mistake that was made in the 19th century when these great painters were neglected. So there's a fear psychology that's entered into this discovery business which I meet over and over again, and I'm sort of amazed by it. Instead of studying a person's work.

Each young collector who really ??? knows nothing about art, feels that he must become a great authority, by discovering someone. And after all, no one ever has discovered any artist. It seems to me that only artists discover themselves. I mean that's an impossibility. A man has to discover himself.

Q: The first of that whole element is the fact that Mr. Vollard, who knew so much about French painting and had so much to do with finding Renoir, Cezanne and so forth, and have quite a bit of their material when he died, had a cellar, garage, house, barn filled with thousands of other painters he missed on.

KK: Well, you would expect that of course. He was pretty good though.

Q: He was very good.

KK: I would say that his batting average was rather high.

Q: I still feel that as a group of artists, it's pretty sad when the emphasis ??? is on the consumer rather than on what the artist wants to express. To sort of jump a little...

KK: That is our problem.

Q: Well my point is take your painter who's painting for the middle classes, or take your Rembrandt or whoever. Those painters knew what they loved, despite the fact that the people around them didn't. That was not their interest. Their interest was in painting the thing they loved and saw and only they saw ??? Now, there is a period now where people are confused because of all these other considerations. And perhaps because of the self consciousness of the medium and the possibilities. And it seems to me that the most important thing for the artist is to know what he's sees and what he loves.

KK: It's hard to know that.

Q: But I was going to tell you another. The playwrights, Yeats and TS Elliot were both interested in theater. And they were interested in producing plays. And they knew that certainly there has always been an interest in the theater. And in the Shakespearean times one said, ah the audience came, and there were these wonderful plays, and they wanted them. ??? And the playwrights of our time, I'm using these two, said look, perhaps they are not wanted in our time, so we will write our plays, and they will be little plays that may never be produced. But still, we know what we're doing, and we're going to do it. And it seems to me that if one considered what the museum wants, or what this buyer wants, the emphasis is all on the wrong foot.

Q: Rebuttal. (laughter). I'd like to answer my wife, she's been attacking us for talking about economics too often, but, two years ago Sarah Lawrence had a great meeting of the poets, sponsored by Stephen Spender and all the great contemporary poets were brought together. And all they talked about was, 1) economics, and 2) how to get into Oscar Williams book of poetry. (roar of laughter).

Q: ??? That artists like ??? to starve to death. I have no desire to paint aesthetic pictures which express all I want to say. Not like ??? then go out and eat them. (laughter). They're not like food.

KK: Well it is a double problem and anyone...but I have feeling that any valid artist to answer...any valid, I mean any artist who deserves the term artist, the first problem's with himself. I mean ??? But then there comes this problem, it's worse than a problem, it is a way of life, a new way of life that we are living in the last 100 or 150 years since the French Revolution, and so far, it seems to me that the artist has been victimized by it. Very very much. There hasn't been a tradition that has set...there hasn't been a place...I think it's coming. I think we see it coming and perhaps hints of it. I don't know whether you feel that, but I think that surely...as this kind of society stabilizes itself. Let me ask you before...I just have one other point, and then I'd like you to talk to ??? about the breakdown that we see in certain kinds of...now this is 20th century...well not even. I would start again with the impressionists, I would go back that far. But it seems to me that, whether it's from science, whether it's from modern warfare, what it comes from I don't know. Whether it's because of new kinds of light, new kinds of reflection, photography...we have a kind of breakdown in painting which I saw in a great deal of work. But I don't mean break down in any derogatory sense. I mean, that color, for starters, is being broken down. In the impressionist period, in the the 19th century, the artist

began to experiment by breaking color so that they could suggest realistic sunlight, you know ??? It started then. Why, I'm not sure. Then came the breakdown in form. All kinds of breakdown in form, but particularly cubism, where the artist tried to show many aspects of the same object at the same time. A kind of ??? Then came a breakdown in light, again growing out of impressionism, but now there's a new kind of breakdown in light, where it almost kinetically flickers across a canvas. You see it over and over. A breakdown in design. Again, please believe me, I don't mean that there's a breakdown in the derogatory sense. I'm talking about in the physical sense. A breakdown in design, where there isn't necessarily a center of interest. But where the canvas is completely covered as in some of the very modern painters.

American painters like Jackson Pollack, like De Kooning, who used the whole canvas and break it up into areas. The breakdown in content, where the surrealists show, as Dali has, whether it's valid or not I'm not saying. I'm simply saying it exists--shows many many different suggestive themes in the same painting, almost as if they were detached fragments from various dreams that he's had, or from one dream that is drawn from many different parts of his experience.

Now why is the 20th particularly, starting the late 19th century, why has this been a period of great ??? in art. You see it all over, as you look at your own work. All over, wherever I go, in Europe and in America. The general direction. Even now for instance in the paintings you showed me this morning. There's a kind of transparency. I don't mean that it has never existed before, because it has. But not to the same degree. But a transparency that almost breaks through an object to let you look through it. That's one question I'd like to ask. And the other question I'd like to ask, is why do you suppose--these are more specific questions than I brought up before--why do suppose that the artist today is more deeply concerned with texture. At least most of the artists are more deeply concerned with texture in painting than has been true in earlier periods. Or do you feel that I'm wrong?

Q: Well I think the artist always has a problem to battle ??? such a consciousness of the past images. So many things have been done before. I mean it's certainly discouraging for any artist now to look back and see the artists who have modeled and formed so beautifully, who have worked in ??? One feels that to express one's self one must find a different way, a new way in which one can say a new kind of thing.

KK: Why not just your own way? Why not just your own way, even if it isn't so ??? If it's yours, you know. Isn't that valid?

Q: Yes, that's awfully honest and awfully hard to take.

KK: Yes it is awfully honest and awfully hard to take. But sometimes novelty is awfully hard to take too.

Q: Especially when the pressure in society is such that it turns its face at these very things and demands novelty.

KK: I know.

Q: One thing you mentioned, you said these were the last of your points. One thing you haven't

mentioned and it seems to me important, is the standards of taste, as they have changed. You mentioned the French Revolution and the standards of taste changed completely. And they throw out all of these things, David and so forth. But we have a new group. And it's a group of a mass kind of thinking. And so taste does take on certain different aspects, especially in America. And I think that's something that's happened today, which has forced the artist into a separate world. I mean going into a middle class home in Holland, a middle class home in the 16th century and going into a middle class home in the United States today is a different thing.

KK: Very different. And in Holland too. You don't even have to go into a ...in the United States..just go into a middle class home in Holland today and I assure you ??? more conservative than a middle class home in America even.

Q: ...That goes on back to what primitive is. ??? I'm think of my mother in fact, who never painted in her life and started painting about a year and a half ago. She is a primitive not unlike Grandma Moses. There's a thing about the line, and she wanted a heavy line or a thin line, but the draughtmanship wouldn't be called primitive. I call her a primitive because her perspective is her own, colors are her own, she hasn't been influenced. She doesn't think about what society will think of her pictures. She paints what she sees inside of her. She accesses influences unconsciously actually, and to me that's called primitive. Any primitives ??? I feel are really primitives. ???

KK: Well that's sort of sad too because if that's all that gives us great pleasure, then we would put a premium on knowing very little about technique. And I still feel that the greatest art is a combination of as perfect as possible technique. In other words, the ability to say what you want to say. But you do have to have it to say, and that I think is what's rather important, what Mrs. Simon has been saying repeatedly tonight. That it's important first to have something of your own to say. Why must one have it so soon? That's what I keep asking. Why does a very very young artist feel that he must show his work so soon? Let's forget the economic side of it entirely. And really just talk now in terms of the work itself. Isn't that awfully hard on a young artist? Before he really knows what he wants to do, or can do, before he is perhaps ready. It's like publishing a book too soon, it seems to me. To show. And by show, I don't care if it's a public thing. But yourself. The danger of seeing yourself suddenly crystallized before you are crystallized. I wonder if that isn't one of the dangers.

Q: This is a great American trait of the 20th century I thought in a way. America loves the young man. One year it's the young man in white, and the next year it's the man on the polo pony, and then go ??? becomes the worker, then it becomes the air corps pilot. It's always the young man. They have very little respect for staying power for anybody that goes on. Unlike France for instance where it took them a long time to pin a blessing on Bonnard so he was appreciated. But they really held back giving any ovation to him, or any young man, any painter in France. Here we love to discover very quick, and then forget them very quick.

KK: Yes, and we are and the artist too unfortunately is the victim of publicity.

Q: And prizes.

KK: It's a very mixed ??? Do you think we've had enough? Do want to go on?

Q: Well, being the amateur tonight, ??? to what extent is accomplishment in art something that ??? snob ?? For instance take somebody in mathematics. Anybody who wants to be a mathematical genius ???.

KK: Really?

Q: Many a time, as they are now ???

KK: I think music is a very ??? performer.

Q: There is no ??? I could use music. Is it so that there would be a great artist 50 if not as great or great an artist as 29.

KK: There's somebody who wants to answer.

Q: Especially the mathematic ??? He may be a genius at 22, but he won't know all the formulas.

KK: Yeah, that's a good answer.

Q: What about Einstein?

KK: This is a very interesting point.

Q: There's a very good analogy here between the performer and the composer. Because there is really no comparison. To hear the work of a composer of 25 today, and to hear a performance by a 25 year old performer who's well trained is all the difference in the world. I mean one is ready to perform, and the other is simply not ready to perform. Except in maybe...he may have all the tricks down, but then there's another problem. He can perform, but he may not have very much to do with what he says.

KK: But with the exception of a few rather famous names in art. Wouldn't you agree that most great artists have developed late. Take a man like Cezanne who really didn't start to find his own taste until about 40. Renoir went back to drawing when he was over 45 years old, gave up paint and went back to drawing because he felt he hadn't perfected his technique enough. Do you agree with me? This is not quite true that at 22 or 23, that the artist is already formed as a rule.

Q: I think in the history of painting, you're correct in saying that they develop late compared to a musician.

KK: It seems to take a longer time.

Q: In general, they have a longer span of life.

KK: Do they?

Q: The painters live longer.

KK: Oh really? I didn't know that (laughter). They certainly didn't in the 19th century. Van Gogh, Modigliani, Gauguin, all of those. Titian.

Q: I'd like to ask you a question. What do you feel, this obviously is a difficult time for the artist. There seems to be no place for him in society. What does the museum plan to do in the way of promoting this lack of appreciation.

KK: What would suggest? First of all, I don't really like the word promote, neither do you, I'm sure you don't mean that word. I mean it's a good question, and I think it's a very valid question. Why don't you tell me what you think we could do? Because look, I want to explain to you that we spend a great deal of time thinking and talking about as unquestionably you do. We don't feel that we've been anyway even slightly faintly approximate at answering that question. So what do you think we could do, that we're not doing. I'm sure there's a great deal. It would seem to me that you could help us by formulating certain ideas, communicating with. At this point, telling me what you think would be helpful. But you must keep in mind that, in talking to me, my museum is not a modern museum. It's a big city museum. It isn't a city museum, but it's a museum which serves a large city. The only art museum in Chicago. So our problem is to show not only contemporary and 19th century art, but the art of all periods. And not only Western art, but Oriental. And not only painting and sculpture, but decorative arts, prints, drawings, and so forth. So we have a big problem of trying to keep somewhat in proportion. Now I don't think that for one minute, as a group, that our trustees feel that their first obligation is toward the living artist, you see. I don't think they feel it. I think perhaps our obligation is equally toward the living artist as toward art of the past. I think most living artists feel, and I don't blame them at all, that the museum should devote much more of its time, energy, and money to contemporary art. I feel that the proportion of money that is devoted to contemporary art is too small. Because you see in buying old great masters, enormous amounts--just one picture is an enormous amount of money expended. I don't feel that the amount of money expended on contemporary art is any way comparable. And I think that might be the first approach.

Q: Well no. Let me restate my question. I don't feel that the museum, as you say, is in the position to support art in any way. I realize that the museum acts as an educator, like prints at your Cezanne show. Your explanations of the old works ??? certain elements in Cezanne's show and I think that's all very good. I was just pressing from a point of view of how this public, how the public can be brought around to finding some satisfaction out of painting to such an extent that they want it. Is it a public relations program? Is it a complete educational program? Is it a ...

KK: Both I guess. Well what would you suggest?

Q: I don't know.

KK: I think we think it's partly public relations, but that can only do so much. I think it's very important. It's certainly partly educational. But it's partly support with money it seems to me too. Just what I said before. A certain percentage of funds should be allocated, it seems to me, to the work of living artist. We have done that. But there are many museums that don't do it all.

Q: No, I think the museums position is a very small--because it's a very big problem. I'm just wondering if you feel that the government should take an interest.

KK: Oh I certainly do. I've been waiting for somebody to say it. I was waiting for somebody to refer to WPA. Do you feel that during the WPA, whether it operated absolutely perfectly or not, do you think it was a useful period in American art, because I do. Do you feel it worked? I know Mr. Levine worked under the WPA, didn't you at one time?

Q: ???

KK: So I didn't want to ask. I was waiting to see whether somebody in the audience was going to refer to the possibility of government in American art.

Q: There's an interesting point that it seems that the fruit of the WPA, much of it, has come after the WPA got taken away from us. I mean, much of the great developments of the painters that were under the WPA was provided. They were able to work and so forth. And what they were able to work at, has developed since then into far finer productions in many cases. But the WPA has gone, and we can't use it at any kind of a point.

KK: ??? answer. The WPA was on a wide base. It had a big base, and so it was not a highly highly selective group, and it operated over the whole country. And therefore you could operate it for such a short time. ??? Actually the benefits we are now gaining now, there's no doubt that some of the things produced were perhaps not as important as what the artist who produced them then are now producing. That's besides the point. It gave a large number of young artists to work. And many of them have since proved their worth. Now nothing of the sort is being done today. I can remember, a great deal of quality, as you might expect that went on during WPA ??? because of artists who wanted to be on WPA and couldn't get on it. But they will always exist. It seems to me, that if we could have some government sponsored program, which was not interfered with too much by politics. And that of course becomes utopia. It would be very important. And it would be something that perhaps we could all work for.

Q: Well that would be a great question at this point in our lives, where the government is interfering with education right and left. I mean the thing that's heartens me terrible, is that an art program somehow would be taken up under a kind of a ??? government.

KK: But right now, I don't there's the slightest chance with a government pulling in its horns. Frankly, I don't think there's the slightest chance of something like a WPA movement. Particularly as the set up is now. When things get better ???

Q: Worse. We need a different philosophy. In the WPA period you ??? painters who were unemployed were recognized as painters. But you see the idea was still that if you had firm

employment, painters would find work. ??? The government should subsidize how? beyond the mouth to mouth phase.

KK: I think the government should do it for it's own sake, and not just to help...

and we are one of the few countries in the world where government has done really nothing except for that short period. ??? interesting itself in the fine arts. And that is very shocking in a country which is today the richest country. It's just shocking. But it seems to me that that is a possibility. We tried to get it ??? devoted to Adlai Stevenson (laughter) and I am. We tried very hard to get, when he was Governor of Illinois, we tried very hard to get a fine arts policy put through. Perhaps the thing to do is to do it state by state, and then slowly we might get a federal...

Q: There is a fine arts bill up now.

KK: A Federal bill?

Q: Yes

KK: I don't have much faith in what's going to happen.

Q: Well the line ??? music and writing and a few other allied arts.

KK: We couldn't through in Illinois. We tried. It just didn't go through. Now perhaps it will. The only thing is it has to come some day.

Q: When you talked about a government program, what kind of government program would you suggest?

KK: Well honestly, that would take much thought. I agree with you that during the depression, the WPA was a program that answered a need at that time. Heaven knows it was wrongly manned, and you know it. I happen to believe in it strongly, but at that time, I remember that a great many people opposed it, and a great many people will oppose any form of government ??? again I'm sure. I think it would have to be a very different kind of a program, because we live in a different time and the needs are different. One thing has to be remembered, that the government did not ??? charity. They should consider it from their point of view as an enrichment for ??? and not just some ...

Q: ??? Fine arts?

KK: Yes, don't you think? Which I think was a very interesting program.

Q: I feel more of the actual, the real ??? WPA was the section of fine arts, and work that was done, was the work that was done then. Where the painters were actually given walls, given things where they had problems to meet and which was beyond themselves. And I think there's where art really develops when the artist takes him out of himself and has to. Solving the

problem that fits the people.

KK: Many many pictures were sent to hospitals, and I think it shouldn't be limited just to one kind. (applause)

[END OF AUDIO]