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

Lecture by Elizabeth Murray
Summer, 1985

INTRO: I've known Elizabeth for ten years now. If you were at my lecture, you'll know she's had a big influence on me and a lot of other people I know. I guess I can say Elizabeth's a really good painter, a really good person, the mother of three children, and I think she's one of the best painters I know. I think we're really, really lucky to have her here. [Applause]

ELIZABETH MURRAY: Okay. I'm plugged in.

What would help me, while I'm talking, is if you have questions that come up, it's more interesting for me, and maybe more interesting for you, if you aren't afraid to interrupt me, and ask questions, if they do come up for you.

What I'm going to do is -- Actually, Louisa has heard all this before, and for any of you who are unfortunate enough to have heard this before, I apologize.

I'm going to show you some slides. I'm going to give you a history of my work. The reason I used to do this was because I thought it would be more helpful for young artists to see that nobody comes from exactly nowhere, and everybody goes through enormous changes; or, certainly, I have gone through radical changes in my work. It hasn't been easy. I've not been someone who sort of started out with some flight of genius -- if I ever do reach that point.

So what I'd like to do is show a lot of early work, maybe more earlier work, actually, than later work. So we can turn the lights out, and get started.

I went to school in Chicago, at the Art Institute in Chicago. I started going to school there in 1958, when I was eighteen years old, and this is the first painting I did that I thought was worth anywhere [sic]. It was the first painting I did where I felt like my arm, my head and my heart were all connected in the same place. I think one of the things that amazed me when I made up my mind that I was going to be a painter was that it was actually something that was enormously

difficult to do. When I went to the Art Institute, I didn't intend to be a painter, an artist. I went there because I intended to be a commercial artist. I really didn't know very much about art -- fine art -- and the thing that's wonderful about the museum, about the school in Chicago, is that you have to walk through a museum to get to the school. Or, you used to have to. You don't anymore. As I would walk to the school, through the museum halls, I began to look at the paintings, and from the time I began to look at the paintings, I felt attracted and pulled into them -- which I don't think everybody does. Everybody isn't a visual person, everybody isn't pulled into painting as an art form. I began to want to do it myself.

This is another painting I did when I was quite young, in Chicago. In Chicago, at that time, I went to school with the people who have since become known as the "Harry Who?" group. Some of you may know their work. All of us were very influenced by the same type of thing. I then went out to California, to Oakland, California, and went to graduate school. I met there a young man who was going to the same graduate school, named Carlos Villa -- who's an artist Roy may know. He was a very dynamic young guy who really showed me the ropes in that area. He took me to a place called Byzantine Paint Company, where you could buy gallons of cadmium red -- there it is! -- for \$3.00 a gallon. What I learned there was something about large-scale painting. I learned --

At the art school I went to in Chicago, everyone was deadly serious. I mean, it was grim. The idea was that if you weren't a genius, you shouldn't even be attempting to make work. It was a very macho scene, too, which I didn't even understand until I was well away from it -- until a few years ago, actually. But the thing that happened to me in California was just a kind of process of loosening up, not taking myself quite so seriously, and beginning to have fun with paint -- which is a really valuable experience. Also, I think, beginning to feel that I really didn't have to be a genius to make a painting, to attempt to make a painting.

So while I was in California I worked on a very large scale, and I introduced myself, then, to a lot of different kinds of painting. At that point (this is about 1962) I saw the work of Rauschenberg and Johns for the first time, and they had an enormous influence on me, particularly Rauschenberg. I saw the work, for the first time, of the Pop artists. They were just having their first shows, and their work interested me and influenced me a great deal.

I moved to San Francisco, had a studio there, and this is a painting I did there. Another period from that period of time. What I was doing was just throwing everything I could onto the painting. I was, obviously, really influenced by Rauschenberg's combine painting, except I was much more interested in using the figure -- a painting I made out of a shirt, my painter's shirt.

This painting -- I was trying to do a circular painting -- a painting with a circular stretcher -- but looking back at it, or looking at it now, what I guess I got involved in was that some of the things that I was involved in then (this is about twenty-two years ago) still seem to be things I still feel very involved in, although it's been quite a bit of time before I've been able to make the connection.

But the painting is about an interior space. There's a bird in a window, over to the right. There are some feet and a hand coming up from the bottom of the painting, a chair and a table.

Precisely what I was thinking about I have no idea. I can say, abstractly, I was thinking about something in terms of motion; I was thinking about something outside coming inside. I don't know. But some of the images in the [?] -- painting I really think I'm pretty fascinated by now.

This is another San Francisco painting, a painting about a broad jumper, jumping over a -- What do you call those things they jump over? Whatever. But this is a painting I decided, when I left San Francisco, I was going to bring with me to Buffalo, New York, where I got a teaching job, in 1965. We were very poor. We could hardly afford to bring anything, but I was determined I was going to bring this painting, which was basically put together with Elmer's glue, plywood on canvas. I crated the painting very carefully and it arrived in Buffalo in about 140 pieces. It didn't survive the trip -- and I barely survived it myself.

The painting I did in Buffalo -- the theme of the painting then, for me, was poverty. It was a painting about starvation, but formally, what I suppose I was interested in was Lichtenstein and the benday dots. And, again, some kind of painterly feeling that would have to do with Johns and Rauschenberg. Again, there are the add-ons, of the arm, and the top of the chair. I got very involved with using Orphan Annie and Dick Tracy in my work, and at this point I also began to do a lot of writing. I think of this -- This is a piece using Orphan Annie, it's a tomato can, actually, and her body is in the middle of it, then her neck comes up to the top, and over to the doorway, and that's a head over there. [Laughter]

So, at this point in my life what I was thinking about mainly was how to get to New York City. I was married, and not really thinking, at that point, of raising a family. Primarily, I was involved in getting to New York City, and I really wasn't sure why. I was very ambitious, but at that point in my life, my ambitions about my work were all focused on trying to figure out how to do it, how to make it, and how to get it someplace that was satisfying. That last piece I showed you was, in a sense, the last piece I used where I really tried to deal with sculpture. What happened to my work at that point was, it got more and more sculptural, and more and more out of my hands. It got to the point where -- which was what was happening at that point. The artist I was most interested in was Oldenburg, then, and I had gotten to the point where I really couldn't afford to do the kinds of things I wanted to do, but it really didn't have that much to do with money. It had to do with wanting to do work that I could deal with myself, that was done by my hand.

So when we got to New York I started to paint again, in a lot of confusion. In a way, I still really didn't feel happy, or totally committed to what I was doing -- although, you know, you always find ways to string yourself along with your work. We were living in a loft that was right in back of the Empire State Building, and I truly had no idea what to paint, so I began to paint the Empire State Building, and these paintings are all the same. This is a plaster cast of the Empire State Building, and by this time -- and this is something I always find fascinating about working. My experience is that, usually, what's going on in my life, unconsciously or consciously, really crops up in the work. In this case, what I was doing was painting baby blankets around the edge. I was pregnant at the time I did this painting, and the border of the painting is some kind of a baby blanket. And this painting, as well, is really about my son -- who's sort of at the bottom of the Empire State Building.

Now when I came to New York -- I came to New York in 1967 -- and what was happening in New York then was minimal sculpture. It was just hitting its heyday. It wasn't that I felt against it, or against the kind of painting -- I guess the ideas of lyrical abstractionists were really being debunked, and the young, hot artists were all working toward this very minimal, very reductive kind of statement. The other thing that was happening was that people -- the old theme, "painting is dead" -- you weren't supposed to be painting, you were supposed to be thinking, and not using your hands so much. It wasn't really that I wasn't influenced by this, but something in me -- it went against my grain to feel that one couldn't do anything. It was also very clear to me at this point that whatever else I was, I was a painter. So partly, I think, in response to what was going on, and partly because it began to feel like the best possible thing I could do, I began to drop everything else, stretch up canvases, get out my oil paint again, and I began to paint. What comes now is really what I think of as where I started, from this point on, to really do my work. All these paintings are done, say, from 1970 on.

And, of course, once I began to work with what to me was just very simply, with paint, everything began to fall into place and to make more sense to me, about what I was about. I also think that another clear experience I had then, that helped sort of settle my mind about what I should be doing with my work, was when I had my first child, it was extremely difficult to do my work. There was enormous pressure, then, because you love the baby and you want to be with the baby, but there's also the desire you have to do your work, and there's a lot of conflict. The thing that was very positive for me was that I realized, for the first time it came home to me, that my work was something I was really doing for myself; that I wasn't doing it -- I don't mean that I wasn't doing it to communicate in some way, but it was quite clear that it was something I needed to do, that I was doing for myself. And I think when you work surrounded by a lot of other artists, when you're young, when you're ambitious -- when you're in New York City -- while you're doing your work sometimes can be an issue: What am I doing this for? Am I doing this to please this person? Am I doing this to have a show? Am I doing it for this reason or that reason? This was well before I showed my work, but it was a good experience to have at that point.

Still, all through these next pictures, I felt very involved with images for the next few things, although I was beginning to wish, or to want, to get images I was relying on to push the paintings out of the work. This is a painting about Madame Cézanne turning out a light. It begins like a cartoon, up in the left-hand side, and moves across, down to the right-hand side. It's about three feet by three feet. Another one of these paintings.

The jump here -- Most of the work I did between the last painting and this painting I destroyed. What I decided to do (which is what I mentioned a few minutes ago) was to get the image out of my work and try to work very physically with the paint. It was a very big move for me to make, and very frightening. Exactly what I was thinking about, psychically, I'm not sure, but at the time it felt very much like the right direction. So I pushed very hard to really, radically change the look of my work with these paintings, and it felt like an extremely rewarding thing to do, emotionally. I felt like I'd really -- It was like getting a chance to sort of change your skin, somehow, to be able to make these paintings.

Of course, what happened immediately was that other kinds of images began to come into the work. These are all very small paintings, very thickly and heavily painted. At this point, also, I had always felt very much -- pretty isolated from the art world. I didn't know a lot of people, I didn't really go out a lot, and at this point I began to meet a lot of people who really had a big effect on me. I met Louise at this point, I met Judy "Fath." I met an artist named Ron Gorchov, an artist named Marilyn "Lankowski," John "Torriano" -- people I could talk to, exchange ideas with, and think about work with. That was very exciting for me, too. Also, at this point, I began to show some of these paintings.

So as I went along with these paintings, what naturally began to happen was, after you take something out, for me, what happens is there's a kind of moment where everything's perfect. You've taken everything out and there's a kind of emptiness in the painting. I'm speaking very symbolically here, too, because I think you can then put something in, and there's a moment of perfection where everything is loaded, or unloaded, in just the right way. What always happens for me is there's a hiatus of feeling for a few paintings, that you really are floating. You have something to work with and everything's fine. Then everything begins to crack. What I find is I have to go back again, to find different ideas. With this painting -- this painting began a sort of high point for me, where I began to feel for the first time that I was really beginning to understand color, and how I wanted color to fill the spaces in the paintings.

I went back out to California to teach at Cal Arts, and I began to work with shapes. This is the first shape painting I did. During this time I began to work with the shapes, but then, in terms of what was inside, the work was getting, to me, tighter and tighter. So with this painting, with this next painting, what I tried to do was -- Let's see. This is a painting from 1976. It's a very large painting. It was a very important painting for me to do at the time, because it was the first time I began to use organic shapes again, and I began to sort of relax -- a feeling of wanting to keep back any kind of image. Also, I began to feel more and more sure of myself in terms of just how the paint was going onto the canvas, how I was painting.

This painting is called *Singing School*.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: That one in back? I don't remember. This is called *One or Two Things*. I do remember that.

These next paintings -- I was pursuing the idea of working the shapes, with a shaped canvas, without really having a clear idea about them. I didn't know where it was going to go. I was really interested in them, but I didn't really know what to do with them, and I wasn't sure what kind of --

One of the things that interests me the most, inside a painting, is how to bring out conflicts; how to give myself as many conflicts -- how to give myself as many problems, as many conflicts -- as possible, and then how to, somehow, make it all seem all right; like, bring it together somehow. So I think that's partly what that odd shape -- sort of a star shape, the edges, being in conflict with the inside -- was about. What went wrong for me, with these particular paintings, as I

pursued them (I don't know if I have more slides of these or not), is that they just got too busy with their little colors, and their squares. Too much going on.

Q: Were you stretching the canvas before, and then finding the forms in that particular shape, or -- ?

A: Ask me that again.

Q: Were you stretching the canvases, then drawing internally, in reaction to the shapes? Or were you -- ?

A: Well, yes, I would say it's more that way. Because the way it happens is that the stretcher gets made, in whatever way I want it to be made. Then the canvas gets stretched, then I work on the canvas. So what happens internally is very much a response to the edges, or whatever shape I've chosen to work on. Is that what you're talking about?

Q: Were you doing a lot of drawing at the same time?

A: I sort of draw in spurts. I don't draw for a long period of time, then I draw. I don't usually draw about a painting. I don't do any drawings for paintings. I really never do that. Sometimes I'll do drawings that have to do with paintings, as the paintings are started, but -- I like to have the canvas in front of me, and really just confront it, and work through everything right on the painting -- with the painting. The kind of drawing I do about it is just sort of like taking notes in a little notebook.

Q: The shape of the canvases here -- are these very planned, or did you -- ?

A: They're all very planned. This shape and this shape are the same. I had two stretchers made. One is just turned on its side -- which I do a lot. I turn them around, backwards, or something like that. What I do is -- these are relatively simple, compared to some of the things I'm doing now. I draw a template on the wall. I tape up big pieces of paper, and I draw the thing out very carefully but very quickly. That's the one place I try to be as free-associating as possible, when I'm drawing out the plans for the shapes. I cut it out and give it to a carpenter to build.

Sorry this slide is so dark, because this painting was a very exciting one for me to do, and the other one, too, because I began to feel like I was getting the shape away from a kind of design. I felt like I was beginning to move the kind of ways I was working out the canvas internally, into a more specifically personal feeling -- not so decorative, or not as designed as some of the work that preceded this felt to me. This is a painting that's two large panels, though.

Somebody unplug me. That's the way art should be, you know? [Chuckling] This is really --

And this is another painting. I'm sure Louise will remember this painting, because I remember dragging her upstairs with me, to give me a shoulder to weep on as I was painting this painting. I had a terrible time with this painting. Finally it began to work out.

I don't know. Paintings work out for various reasons, I think, for me. Sometimes I'll find the right shape, then the color will happen. Or first the color will -- I'll finally realize the color -- and the shape will come together. But I was thinking of this painting -- It's actually a very sexy kind of painting. I was thinking of two profiles, or two heads kissing. I don't know what the little purple sausage thing is -- some kind of a thought, message or whatever [audience chuckling]. At any rate, someone came to look at the painting, and they said, "Oh, it's a broken heart." Which is certainly one way to look at the painting. But it really teed me off [audience chuckling], because I felt like here I've been painting all these years, and here I end up painting -- sweating blood -- over painting a broken heart. [More chuckling]

Now with this painting -- which is called *Breaking* -- I tried something I hadn't tried before with the shapes. I felt pretty up against it with the shapes. I felt like I wasn't getting anywhere with them. Again, I didn't really understand why I continued to try using them. So in one desperate moment I tried taking two shapes. I was actually going to make two separate paintings out of these two shapes. I turned one upside down and put the two of them together, put them up on the wall, and the minute I saw the negative shape, and saw this thing against the wall, I understood a lot about why I'd been pursuing it, and why the shapes -- the ideas I got from using the shapes -- interested me so much. Also, what it let me do was -- just the idea of the cracking canvas, of taking the whole thing and cracking it -- was put in a very clear image, to me, inside the painting. What was fun with these paintings, for a long period of time, was that nobody could see the image -- which is a beer glass.

But, at any rate, I also tried, with this painting, to do something that I hadn't ever done before -- which is to be a little, deliberately, droll, I guess, with the kind of Cubist, synthetic Cubist divisions of the colors. It was fun to play with that image in that way. Like, first you give it, then you take it back, with the shape or with the color.

This is another beer glass painting.

So, really, what you're looking at with the slides -- which are not the paintings, they're the slides (and what I'm trying to really describe to you, here) -- is how, for me, things go up and down and in and out. I feel like I've reached some kind of understanding of what I'm doing, and I do think there's a moment when, in your life, as working -- when you do begin to feel like you have a vision (you're not really clear all the time what your vision is but you do have a vision) -- and you do have something to say, for better or for worse.

This painting was very important for me in that sense. I think the date of the painting is maybe 1981 -- '81 or '82 -- but it's the first painting I ever did where I felt that, psychologically, and formally, and emotionally, I really got to something that was very, very fulfilling. What it was, specifically, in a very simple way -- because it's not exactly a brilliant idea -- I took a lot of different canvases, stretched them, then put them together on the wall, then painted one solid image on them, which is a "face" kind of palette, with brushes coming out of the eye, into the canvas. What I think satisfied me so much was, in working with conflicts and trying to make something whole, or find a gestalt -- having a shattered canvas and then putting the whole image into it -- was enormously satisfying. I certainly understood some of the things I'd been searching for when I did that painting, and this one, as well, which is the same idea, really.

These paintings are all kind of continuing the "cop" image.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: In this painting they're all separate pieces, put together -- just nailed, like you'd hang a normal canvas, except the nails are all at angles. Sometimes I'll put steel plates and connect some of the ones that do, actually, connect. But most of them stay in pieces. They're very difficult to hang up. Actually, this painting right here I sent over to the gallery I show at, and they called me up and said, "It's up on the wall. It looks good. Come over and see it. It looks fantastic." I went over, and they had it upside down. [Laughter]

Q: [Inaudible]

A: What? Yes, they had the template, but the person who was putting it up was so sure he knew exactly how the painting went that he just turned it -- or else he -- I don't know how it happened.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Well, actually, it was a little embarrassing to go tell them, "It's upside down." [Laughter] It's wrong, it's all wrong." And they never said a word to me about the painting later, when they had it upright. They liked it better upside down, I guess. [Laughter]

This painting is two overlapping shapes, and it's the first painting using these ideas that I specifically tried to find a center shape with a specific image, which was the keyhole. I call the painting *The Keyhole Painting*. It's another glass painting -- beer glass painting -- with a keyhole in the center of it -- a painting with three overlapping shapes.

This is a painting with all rectangles, that I just sort of sandwiched on top of each other.

Q: When you were painting that painting, did you paint the [?] -- separately, and then [?] --

A: No, I put them together, then I paint on them. Sure. Yes. Sometimes I add or subtract shapes as I'm working on them, but I'm always working on one whole thing. And this is just a flat painting, which I find very healthy to go back and just work on a plain, two-dimensional surface.

Q: What is the difference?

A: Well, there's an enormous difference just working on a flat, smooth surface, and working over bumps and holes and -- it's like the difference between walking in a cornfield or walking down a highway in Illinois, and walking in the Rocky Mountains. It's a very different, physical feeling. But, psychologically, for me -- I don't know. I did this painting in the middle of my involvement with a lot of complicated shapes, because I wanted to sort of see why I was working on the shapes, and if I could still do just a plain, flat canvas painting. Also, I wanted to be up-front with myself about some of the images I was using, too; like to put them flat, and not disguise them with the shapes.

But I liked this painting, and it was exciting to do it. And it was certainly challenging. But I realized I was more challenged by working on the shapes. I really couldn't begin to tell you why. Then there are times when I think there's no difference at all. But I know there is a difference, for me.

These paintings got incredibly complicated. I'll show you these last slides, here. I took the numbers one, two and three and made shapes. It's a little hard to see the numbers but they're there. There's a one going this way (it's upside down), a two, and then a three. Then I just sort of squeezed them together into one canvas. And an exclamation mark is in there. When you see it physically it's a little bit easier to see it than in a slide. Exactly what I was thinking about, using the numbers, was really -- I didn't know what shapes I wanted to work on. It felt like an arbitrary way of giving myself some ideas, then putting them together and not being able to recognize them really interested me a lot, too. But putting them together and taking them apart got, physically and technically, very complicated. This is the same numbers, the same exact shapes, just put together in a different configuration. And both of these paintings are about tables flying.

These were two letter "Cs" that I put together.

This is an installation shot of the last show I had at Paula Cooper's.

And, I think -- Tada! [Applause] Do you have questions? Ask them now. Yes.

Q: Is there a lot of difference between [?] -- in light, bright colors, and dark colors. It looks like you changed the colors in your work [?] --

A: Yes, yes, they do change. Yes. I hardly ever end up with the color I begin with. Once in a while it happens. But I seem to find it best -- It's like tricking myself, I think. If I start with real dark colors, and I want light, the best thing for me to do is start dark and work up to light, and vice versa. But I seem to have to play tricks on myself all the time, to get to what I want. I never, hardly ever, get it the first time around. It's just my method, I guess. Was that what you meant, Yvonne?

Q: Yes. They don't look like they were ever preconceived, and that's what's so wonderful about them.

A: Sometimes I do have a preconception, but it's really -- Like a few years ago, for the first time, I decided I would paint a blue painting (I didn't show a slide of it), and within a few weeks the painting was red. [Laughter] But, I got back to blue -- which really surprised me, because I was sure, by the time it got to red, that that was it.

Q: What medium were you using?

A: Oil paint. Was that what you -- ? Oil paint. I used the oil paint straight, with that regular "Meyer's" -- I use a mixture of linseed, [?] -- and turpentine to thin it down. But when you said that it reminded me -- Once this Frenchman came over to the studio, and he kept pointing at this painting and saying, "Weeks, weeks," and I said, "No, it didn't take that many weeks," and he

was saying, "Wax. Wax. You put wax in your paint." Which is something -- "No, I do not put wax in my paint."

Q: The paintings of yours that I've seen in person -- there's something curious, but it might just be [?] -- but they all look like they were painted -- the intensity of the painting in the center, and the way you touch the edges -- you don't really pull up to them? I don't know. I always found that curious in your painting, [?] -- technical [?] --

A: Well, it's escaped me. Well, it's not technical. It's probably -- I often am aware of not going to the edges, and I'm often -- Actually, it's something I really fight against, because I tend not to want to paint down at the bottom of the paintings. I like to just let the activity of the paint drips or whatever sort of be there. But sometimes I'll want to change that very much, and go to the edges, just to make myself do something different, or break a habit, because very often those things seem like signatures, but they're really just bad habits that you don't really think about anymore, when you're making --

[AUDIO BREAK]

MURRAY: -- make myself do something or break a habit, because very often those things seem like signatures, and they're really just bad habits that you don't even think about anymore, when you're making -- But maybe that's very true; that the activity tends to be in the center, and not toward the edge.

Q: Well, it just seemed strange to me, because the "drawings" are dictated by the shapes, and [?] --

A: I'm not sure what you mean, exactly.

Q: [Inaudible]

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Well, at this point the shapes have gotten so complicated that they're made in my studio now, and I'm much more involved in making them than I used to be, when they were simpler, because they have to get changed, from inch to inch. So I'm more involved in the carpentry. Unfortunately, because I hate stretching canvas at this point (I've stretched way too many, and I have to stretch them a lot, too, because they're harder to stretch), and I'm not supposed to be doing that anymore, right? Instead, I'm doing it more and more.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Gee, nobody's ever asked me that before.

Q: I just happened to go there [?] --

A: I loved it. I hated southern California, but I loved teaching at Cal Arts, and I liked the students very much. I really enjoyed it there very much. I thought it was a very good place to teach -- very undemanding and very understanding of artists, of wanting to have good artists who worked there, and giving them plenty of space. But I do have to say, I didn't feel that worked so well for the students all the time.

Q: In your first paintings, when you were throwing all this [?] -- at the canvas -- It seems like you got a little "tired" of it, and decided to strip down and try to find something that was entirely your own imagery, or [?] -- you just [?] -- then worked your way back up. But do you think you started using the canvases and shapes just to have something to "trigger of of?"

A: At the time, I think that's probably a very -- Yes. I think that's a very accurate description of what I was doing. I didn't really tell myself that at the time. I just really wanted to try to do something different, to try to keep myself going, somehow. That seemed like an obvious direction, in terms of the way I was painting -- an obvious thing for me to choose to do.

Q: [?] -- to that, you talk about, throughout your work, overcoming certain problems. Is there anything so complex that [?] --

A: Yes, it is problematic for me, because the way it works is, I draw the shapes in a very immediate way, and almost everything (not everything) I put down -- I discard some things I draw -- but almost everything I draw I make. Then I put them together, and when I put them together, I don't really have a clear idea of what images -- what the painting's going to be. They just get put together, they get stretched -- they get put together -- I put them up on a wall, and I look at them. It's sometimes baffling to me why I would want to paint on it.

I think it's quite simple for me. It's a way of trying to call things up, and in terms of painting the shapes, when they're put together, they're surprising for me, to some extent.

Q: Do you always feel you should be connected to the shape? I often think [?] --

A: Connected how?

Q: [Inaudible]

A: No, because I think they do have personal meaning. I think that's not anything to worry about.

Q: Do they ever get beyond you [?] --

A: Yes, they certainly do get beyond me, where I really feel, (1) that the whole idea is kind of silly and what am I doing this for, anyway? And then, really not being able to resolve them, they feel so difficult to resolve. Because I think what I'm always trying to do is put something very -- I'm trying to match something that doesn't match.

Q: In another area -- you have three children -- [?] -- artist, children taking away from the art [?] -- Has that affected your work?

A: Oh, yes, it has. I think having children, for me, has just been the most positive thing that's happened in my life, because I think it's -- First of all, it's focused me a lot. I think, with having my first child, I realized I'd better get busy; that I really didn't have that much time to get down to things. And I think that focus was just very positive. But there's no question that it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of time to do that. I just think it's about things that can only help you with your work. To me it's very similar. Like, the emotions of raising children, and the emotions of making paintings -- I don't think they're that different. And they're all struggles.

Q: When you did that *Broken Heart* painting, and you said it "teed you off" that it was interpreted as [?] -- How do you think [?] -- because often your image, such as the [?] -- itself is sealed in the shape and leaves you open to [?] --

A: You mean about whether images are obvious or not obvious?

Q: When the public will interpret something completely different, such as [?] --

A: I don't think I can even think about it. I don't think you can think about those things. Because it's not that it doesn't matter -- because it does matter -- but there are things that you just can't think about; how other people interpret it. It's always interesting to hear -- how somebody else interprets it. (Sometimes it's interesting to hear. Sometimes it's not so interesting to hear.) [Laughter] But I know what you're talking about, and I think it's serious, but I come to them from a certain place, and they're made from a certain place, and after they're made, what anyone thinks about them is really up to them.

Q: You mentioned earlier that [?] --

A: Well, do you understand what I was talking about by looking at [?] --

Q: [Inaudible]

A: I'll try to go at it from a sort of psychological place. I think that when you feel, in your work, there's a kind of rigidity, and you're using devices to put something together, and there aren't any surprises in it for you, that's when I start to feel disconnected and unhappy with it. I think that unhappiness with it is the thing that pushes you into really getting into contact with yourself again, in terms of what you want to do, even if it just sends you into total confusion. But then, of course, when you reach those places, they're horrible, because you don't really have answers about what it is you can do about it. Ultimately, I think one of the things that's really difficult -- has been difficult for me -- is, I think, at this point in my life, is resolved -- is accepting my own limitations. I think that's a hard part when you're younger. You don't want to have any limitations -- and, of course, you shouldn't have. You're artists! But, you have to figure out how you're going to accept the fact that you have limitations and still not admit it [laughter], every time you start a new painting. And that's what you're doing. Every time you start a new painting you're hoping that you have no limitations.

Q: Elizabeth, I really like your [?] -- drawings, and I wonder what [?] --

A: I'm glad you like them, but I don't think it's really an integral part of my work, and I really don't like the process very much, because it's so indirect. I have a lot of struggle with it, and I haven't done it too much, because of that. But the drawing I really feel is very important to me, and I learn a lot about what I'm going to do next sometimes, by drawing.

Okay?

[Applause]