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

**Lecture by Paul Georges
Summer, 1965**

Transcriber: Judith Stoodley

RECORDING BEGINS WITH LECTURE IN PROGRESS

Speaker:...like a *bigger* feeling about what art is, not just a... limited idea that you put paint on a canvas, and it comes out to be something *pretty*; I think it's, in a sense, more than that. But I don't think it's a *social* (da da dada)—I don't believe in social art in the sense that I work for a cause and the cause wins. That's something to do with allover winning; and I think if these things can be directed into what is... (unintelligible) Pollock to me... who has dealt with a kind of thing that made it possible for him to win; but like an atomic artist, in that sense; in that he had an allover scheme that would work, and he could do it, and... it was an allover painting, even—The whole painting was filled with the same attitude, when it was really most successful; but in the end it couldn't succeed from the same limitation that allover solutions aren't possible. That is, they are not solutions; they leave... more destruction in their wake than they leave... gaining. Now... I think that... I'm against *ideas*; that is, an idea as a finite thing, which is, to my way of thinking, in obtaining an allover idea, an allover way of... solving a painting. Such—I think that's the curse of Picasso, in a way; in that when I talk in a derogatory way, I don't really mean that I'm trying to eliminate Pollock, or I'm trying to eliminate Picasso, because I think they're *necessary*, and I like their paintings; but for *me*—this is just my own personal idea about it. I think that Picasso... didn't really care about the *thing*; he cared about the idea, which was an allover way of solving things; and once he'd solved the idea that he'd set out to do—like if he wanted to... use a double portrait, and he wanted—or if he had an idea that a man could be

hooked—that his body and legs could be hooked to his...head, without his—rather that he could leave his body out and just hook the legs and arms in inverse ways—whatever idea; that is, whatever would be an idea to invert something, or an idea to divide it, or an idea to... multiply it, or duplicate it—I think that’s the sort of ideas that Picasso worked with—Those ideas, when they were answered, finished the painting. That is, in other words... if I wanted to make a double portrait, and I make an eye from the side, and then I make two eyes from each edge, and I have three eyes; or if have two eyes up and down—such things as that, when they were put in, the painting was satisfied; there wasn’t any... need to go on... because it explained itself—the original precept of the painting was answered, and the painting arrived at a logical conclusion, in a sense. There wasn’t anything more to do. I don’t believe in that sort of a painting; I... think that an *intelligent* painting is important; that is, the kind of thing that has a multiplicity of ideas, if you like. And that one idea is not a satisfactory thing, and that when one paints—when I paint—the hell with one—I try to arrive at a... *arrive* at an idea—or arrive at *ideas*. I arrive at one idea, and then I add another idea to that—or attempt to—and then attempt to add another idea to that, until I can’t really unwind it any more. And when I don’t know how it’s done; and when I really am... mixed up, then I sort of feel that the painting is not finished, but at least I can’t do anything more to it; because it’s not an idea of completion— An idea I think is something that you can complete; whereas what I’m talking about is something... it isn’t possible to complete. Now...I’ve had a sort of short rapid-fire whole bunch of things here; I can shoot a few more things... but I’d like to... I’d like to... sort of make something meaningful here. I don’t know exactly.... I know sort of what it is, but I don’t know exactly what it is. I don’t know if any of you have read **The Unknown Masterpiece**, the Balzac... the story by Balzac a man who—Well, I’ll tell you the whole story, just ‘cause in listening you all look very blank at me up here... so I’ll at least tell you this story, and you’ll get some idea of what I’m saying. This is about a... the young Poussin, who was a great classical artist who—you probably *must* have heard of, see? And he was at this time fifteen years old; and he was walking up the stairs of his master’s...house. And he goes up the stairs, and he opens the door, and he goes in, and bangs on the door, and there was a tremendous doubtful pause, and his... master finally opens to his door and lets him in. His *master*—in other words, Poussin’s master, who is—obviously must be quite good. And when he gets in the door, he sees his master, and he recognizes this beautiful painting of the master; and he says, “How beautiful that painting is,

Master;" and the master is sort of a little cool, and all of a sudden he looks over and sees this very old man with a white beard... twinkling eyes, who... says, "Well, I don't think it's as good." And Poussin is sort of horrified by this, because after all it is his master; but the master says, "No, it's terribly interesting what you say; I'm terribly impressed that you think it's not so good. Do you think you can make it better?" And here's this great painting of all Poussin's idea; and the master says, "Of course I can make it better!" And he sits down; and he puts a dash here and a dash there, and all of a sudden all this kind of life comes into the painting. So Poussin is fairly interested (laughing) in this, and sort of *amazed* that this master's thing can be improved by this great man. And so... he says, "Well... I'd like to see your paintings." Poussin has gotten a little courage by this time, since the master is so attracted and everything. And... the old man says, "No, I can't do that, because I have this great painting at home that *nobody* can see." And he said, "Well why can't anybody see it?" It was "because it's a *perfect* picture of a nude; and I haven't been able to find anybody to match it—the perfect nude so I could tell whether it really is perfect or not." And Poussin says, "Well, I have this girlfriend. She's perfect. (laughter) And if you'll let me see the painting, I'll let you see the girlfriend." (laughter) And...the old man said, "Well, that's very interesting. I've looked in Arabia, and India, and here and there and everywhere, (laughter) and I haven't been able to find anybody to match this painting." But... Poussin says, "Well, I'll try and go home and talk to the girlfriend and get her... look at—you know, let you at her, so I can see the painting. You can look at the girlfriend, and I'll look at the painting." And he says, "All right." So Poussin goes home, and he tries to get his girlfriend to show herself to the old man. And she says, "Oh, let him (laughs)—It doesn't sound like a very good idea. (laughter) Besides," she says, "when you look at me, you don't look at me the same way when you paint me as when you really look at me you know when you want to make love with me." So this is a terribly difficult situation, but finally she says, "All right, if you really state so; it you'll really love me forever..." and all the things that women demand, (laughter) "All right, I'll go." So they go up to the old man's house; and... come in the door; and the old man's waiting for them, and he's very happy, and he says, "Come in, my child..." And so the girl goes into the room; she takes off her clothes; and the old man looks at her.... And here Poussin and the master stand outside; and they listen to this—all that's going on inside. And the old man says, "Yes, it's perfect; it's perfect." So then the girlfriend comes out, and the old man says, "You can come in. It's perfect. It looks better than she does." So they come in to the...

door; and... they look at the painting, and... Poussin says—who really still has illusions, says, “I think I see a foot!” And in fact there’s nothing there. And the old man says, “Yes—“ I mean, the master says, “Yes, maybe there’s a foot.” And in the end they both realize that there is nothing, absolutely nothing to be seen. And that the old man is really mad; and the old man says, “It’s beautiful, isn’t it?” And they say, “No, there’s nothing.” So he breaks it up and ruins his painting. And that’s sort of the end of the story. But my point is that that... That’s us, in a way, I think at least, come to the point, from *my* point of view, and from that of many people’s points of view, that that’s who the artist is today.... Now there are... There’s another person, who’s a sane artist; and he’s like the man who was—used to live next door to you—or to me—I don’t know if you’re that old yet... who... says, “What do you want to be an artist for? Can’t make any money that way.” And the *sane* artist’s answer is, “What do you mean you can’t make any money that way?” (laughter) So that I... I think that my feeling is that the artist is, in a way, mad and cut off; and that’s probably where he belongs. And the man who’s sane, who knows where the money is, and goes where the money is... is a sort of whole other kind of person who’s issued to us, really, and who’s not so important from my point of view. But I think that... if you acknowledge—if you acknowledge with me that the artist is mad, and that he has to be content to be lost... which is a state that I am in; and actually the difference between you and me, so far—until tonight, maybe—is that I’m content to be lost; I’m not so worried or excited about being lost; and I have the feeling that you’re all still terribly excited, and wish you weren’t lost. And... so far as I can see the ones among you who will become artists will be the ones who will be ultimately able to accept the fact that you don’t know what the heck you’re doing... and you’ll be able to still do something... without having to say what it is. Now... and I’d say that’s the end of the first part; you can bow your heads, and we can go on to the *next* part of this lecture. (laughter) (laughs) I’d say the next... part of my lecture is from *my* point of view to examine what art is... I’d say... this lecture is being made orderly; it’s made up as we go along here. I’ve been trying to accept the fact that I don’t know what I’m going to say, exactly. I have an *idea* what I want to say in general, but not a particular idea; and the idea might change... with the emphasis. I might decide something else and I hope you—telling you that ideas are the *greatest thing*, and you should really be working terribly hard to get an idea before you begin. Now... I think that artists—art is... interest—One of the interesting things about painting and sculpture is that it is the only thing that one man does, in this society, from the beginning to the end; and he

dishes it up, and you get the direct product of what he's done. In other words, I begin my painting, and I finish my painting, and that's it. Nobody stands in between me; if I'm any kind of an artist at all the dealer can't say what I hang up; nobody can—That's it. There's no editor; there's nobody who crosses out a lot of words; there's nobody who sets type in between me and them; there's nobody—no camera, no box, no system, no nothing. It's a direct thing. I put something down and I hang it on the wall; and you can see what I put down. In the same way... Rembrandt put something down; and I go up and I stand before the very same thing that Rembrandt made... which is about as direct as anything you can get. Now... if I were to die tomorrow, all the little brushstrokes that I've put down would be finite; that would be the end of them. If I'm alive tomorrow, all the brushstrokes that I have in my command, in my studio, are subject to change; and it's amazing what the difference is between a live artist and a dead artist in that sense. If you—I have this friend Jan Muller who died; and I... went to a show—to a show of his paintings afterward; and the real thing that struck me... his images were quite beautiful, the whole thing—but the most amazing thing was that his hand had left off someplace and stopped, and that was... that was his real expression; that was a real direct thing from him to me. So that I—that's a property of art that no other—of painting and sculpture, I say—so it's a chisel; but it's rather—the sculptor is also rather direct—that no other form has. And therefore it's very valuable to keep that quality. And anything that stands in the way of that, like if somebody wants to eliminate all the brushstrokes and... make a flat area, and... think that it should be a machine-like thing, or any kind—anybody that stands in the way of just that kind of expression, I would object to... very strongly, and I wouldn't believe them; that's the way I feel about it. And I'd say further that... anybody who wants to extend that—the way I felt about—the way I feel about is that, for instance, I feel that Van Gogh or – I wouldn't necessarily have to attribute it to Van Gogh, but someone, at any rate, started the idea—maybe it was Titian—of making a brushstroke. And the brushstrokes got bigger and bigger and bigger. Titian made a few brushstrokes, and then maybe it was (unintelligible, sounds like Slogoff) for a while; and Rembrandt made a little bit bigger brushstrokes and they got down to someone like Van Gogh and Cezanne—the Impressionists—who made the brushstrokes bigger; and then the German Expressionists made it a little bit bigger... until the brushstroke became a very important part of art. And I think that De Kooning, in his last things, made the brushstroke the size of his subject (unintelligible)... replaced the subject with the brushstroke, which is, to my way of thinking, a

valid thing to have done; but it ends the subject, in a sense, as a subject. You can't really again make the subject as big as the brushstroke and make it significant, so you still have to go right back and put the—from my point of view—the subject into the brushstroke again; and the brushstroke into the subject; and they have to—are an integral part, and there's no such thing as an allover solution. You can't just now make the brushstroke as big as the subject and get away with it. So that... I feel that the end of the—of allover art is over; you can't really solve all your problems with one—I can't solve all my problems—forget about it; you know, maybe you'll find some way, but I can't solve all my problems with one... one sortie, you might say. I think that has something to—of the... the idea that I was talking about a minute ago about death and the artist is something to with also I think the reason that—one of the reasons, I think... one of the reasons I'm interested in art; and that is that... I think it's one way to beat... mortality. One of the other things is you do leave something with... It's something significant, or it's something nothing; but you can leave something very direct of yourself, not something... manufactured, or something... -- For instance, somebody told me the other day De Kooning didn't buy anything, even once, in the world, except for a De Kooning painting... Which is... a sort of thing... You just simply can't buy them; you have to make them. And when you made them, you can't really touch them. I have a very... great faith in New York City, not that I... I don't really wouldn't say that my fate is directed toward New York City so much as to New York City as a cultural... a cultural home... and I don't know if that'll last very long. Under enough attack it *won't* last, obviously. But I do think that... art has to be done in a center; it can't be done in a... in a backwash. It has to be somewhere... where there's a whole community; and what you have here is something like a community, where you can interchange ideas, where you're exposed, where you have to answer for what you do to a...cultural...environment. Now New York City happens to be, to my way of thinking, the *world* cultural environment. If you move to Brooklyn, you get *all* your friends to move to Brooklyn, and all your friends' friends to move to Brooklyn... it *still* isn't a place where you can communicate with your—somebody who *doesn't* move to Brooklyn. And there all kinds of kooky people who aren't your friends who won't move to Brooklyn. So that ultimately you need to be in a place where you're exposed to everything. My... idea of it. And if you move out of it, you're suckers; there's no way that you can create an art in a... in a... vacuum, I think. Now... my wife's great proof for this is that there's never been a painting created south of the equator. True that they're in a homogeneous culture like... African Negro

art, where they were isolated, so it's possible... to make a culture. But it wasn't a Western culture, and it wasn't a culture with which I can... identify; it's not like *I'm* an African Negro; even I know that. Now... culture means that you have to be exposed to everything that exists, it seems to me... and... I think that art is a cultural phenomenon; it's not something—for all I talked about individuals—that can be done by an individual. I think that in order for an individual to be able to respond to his time, feel something about it, he has to be in a place where he feels his time.... Really. He feels his time in terms of his fellow artists, and in terms of the pressures of whatever his time is. You can live in a place like... like the Sahara Desert... or, for instance, I—they once offered me a job to come to La Jolla, California, which is apparently a desert—I've never been there, and be myself. Now it's just not possible to do that. (laughter) (laughs) If I can talk to you at all here, it's because I've been someplace where I had to talk to people, where I had to *deal* with them in some kind of a realistic way. And I think that... if you want to be an artist, you kid yourself if you think you're going to the desert in California and be an artist; it's not possible. You can't partake of society from there. You might take it—or take the culture away, like Cezanne did, or Van Gogh did, but that would be the *most* you could do—just go there and get steeped in it, and then take what you can away and work with that. But it's my experience that people who live in a remote area end up by burning their paintings; that's part of the thing... There's no... You just can't have respect; you can't believe in your work; you can't believe that art is a valid thing to do unless you're surrounded by people that think that art is possible... that art is a viable, valuable thing—that, in effect, what I'm making a plea for, is that one man can do one thing, because that's the only one thing left to be done.... That it's—that describing an artist can only—is the only one, so far as I know who does one thing from the beginning to end, puts it on the wall, and it has a greater meaning than... than the properties put into it. It's like the Bible in that sense, that it talks about something outside of the four sides of the canvas. Now I think that... that's another property of art which interests me; and that is the fact that it *is* just a convention, that you accept the four sides of the canvas. Most of these people (unintelligible) over here, or divide it into... a common... dimension, whether it be a little longer or a little narrower, nevertheless they accept those four sides; that's part of the heritage, really. That heritage is given to even most people in... well, it's maybe perhaps not the *Sahara* Desert, but certainly as far west as... Paris—if Paris is West—You have to go *East* to get to Paris, but Paris is *the West*. That's a convention that we accept. Now... those four sides, and the

fact that it goes on a wall I find to be very important; those are sort of the realistic facts of a painting... which are... are... as far as I can see the only maybe true facts of a painting. Just like the print of a Bible is very important; the cover of the Bible is very important.... (unintelligible) A painting is on a wall, and the fact that a painting has four sides, the fact that you have to *hang* it on a wall has implications which dictate a great deal. The fact that it is something. You put something on it, you have to continue to respond to the something you've put on it. I have a model at home there who tells me about the... inner min—the inner landscape, which I think is... a sort of interesting idea too. And that is that... the things you put on the canvas—at least this is my interpretation; I know it's not the interpretation that she made; and I said, "My idea of the inner landscape is that what you look at—what I look at—goes through my mind, and comes out my hand; and I never really even know what's in there until I see it on the canvas, really. And I don't even know what I've seen until I go away from the painting and come back a year later. So that that's in a way the only way I can get a look at what's inside of me. I can talk to you all I want, and I can ramble a bit, and rambling is a part that's most like what's in the inner landscape, I'd say. A good, solid, cold fact I thought of before... and they're not—so true. They're just a veneer behind which I can hide. But when I ramble and get mixed up, something might come out that might be more interesting than... just talk. I think the... it is interesting that the—if it's true what I say that I can only get my mind off through my hands... the only time I could see my hand was when I put it on the wall. I could put it—I can hold it in my hand, and it's like a medieval manuscript, like a book or something, you know. Only when I've put the painting on the wall can I have an idea of what I've done. I just did a couple of little paintings here, and it's absolutely true; it's true again. It's eternally true that if a painting's supposed to be on wall, you can never see it until you put it on the wall. And I find that most people I've dealt with... in art never really see their paintings on the wall, which is an outrage, as far as I'm concerned. That's why I object to slides, because they have nothing to do with the subject; you can't tell how big they are; you can't tell how bright they are.... They all look alike. It doesn't tell you anything. The only thing that really tells you anything, as far as I'm concerned, is when I take the painting and put it on the wall. Something happens. The *kind* of something that happens is that... you think you see your neighbor, and when you look at him, and you realize that all the space between you and your neighbor is bigger than they are.... Like for instance if I look at that girl sitting over there—she's not so far away—there's about four times or three times

her size between me and her. From my feet to her, if I look at her, I see that all that has to be accounted for. When I look at her I see that I can't see her feet and her head at the same time, as if there's some kind of magic that happens between her feet and her head... that *has* to happen... that there's no way to encompass her. If I stand back thirty miles I increase the space between her, which means I have to paint all that space anyhow, really; so that I'm... eventually faced with some kind of magical moment when I can't see—I can't... make the shift between her head and her feet. And if I hang a painting on the wall the same thing happens; that's the same sort of thing that happens... that there's a magic that happens, or it doesn't happen, and you never know until you put the thing on the wall. And unless you've seen lots of paintings, you can't believe me; but I advise you, if you haven't had your paintings hanging up on your wall, just take them home and hang them up, really—all of them, as many as you can. Fill the whole wall full of them. Because that's where they belong. I think the same thing is true of a canvas that you work on that you have before you; if you just work on the canvas, and you're so close to it, chances are you work on the part that's in front of you. You can't really work on the part that's below you or above you; you've got to lift the painting up and down to work on the thing. I think that there are *physical*—in other words I'm trying to say that there really are physical properties to a painting, which I feel that I've dealt with, which I'm interested in, and which dictate to me, in a way, what I can see in the inner landscape. So it's not a pure... not a pure phenomenon; it's a terribly mixed up thing. When I talk about things coming out my eyes, and through my eyes, and out my hand, they might go the other way around; that's not so easy, really. Or what would happen if I changed my mind—my inner landscape. After all, my inner landscape isn't fixed either, really. But one thing I know is that what I paint isn't what... what I look—what—When I look at nature, that isn't what my painting looks like, but that's not because I'm not trying to make it look like nature... because that's really simply all I'm trying to do. The better I get at painting, the less I'm able to make it look like it. Nature. And that doesn't mean that I'm not trying, because I think that's the only worthwhile objective; that's the same thing that Franz Hals tried to do, or Rubens, or Titian... or any painter that I know of... And the main thing that's changed is the facts. What are the facts now? I don't think Franz Hals, when he sat down, was conscious that the world was going at twenty-four thousand miles an hour; and he was going with it. And if he would stand still, like he was trying to make the painting do, he'd go shooting off at twenty-four thousand miles an hour. Or... let's—did Franz Hals *exactly* have to sit down

with twenty-four thousand *dollars* in his pocket, which makes it impossible for somebody to make a painting, it seems to me. There are... physical limitations that an artist has... that are... -- that change, if you think of somebody from the Twenties, and what they looked like, how they presented themselves, how they danced, how they moved, how they acted—what your ideas of the people from the Twenties are; and you try to put yourself in their place, it's not possible. That's the same sort fact that's changed now; and the artist is the one who feels the changing facts, who feels the difference between us and somebody from the Twenties. But he tries—if you think you paint like Cezanne—I heard of there's somebody around here, a young boy who paints like Cezanne. If you think you paint like Cezanne you have to try to put yourself in his time without any internal combustion engine—or without any airplanes... or the whole streets are full of horseshit, and there are odors everywhere. That's... it's just—you can't do it; you can't be Cezanne; it's not possible. But that doesn't mean you can't *try* to be Cezanne; the way to try to be Cezanne is to try to look at *your* world, and to try to have a feeling about what it is, not a feeling about some other past world. And there's no reason you can't even have a feeling in terms of other paintings... about your world... I think anyhow. But I think you can only have it—the feeling that you can get from other paintings is how they related to these four walls of the thing, really; and how they magically got out of the four walls. Those are like... you can only really look at the magic of the thing, and try to deal with that magic... in your way. But in fact a Rembrandt that comes down to us now is a fact; you can look at a fact, and each one of us sees a Rembrandt through the eyes of his age. For instance, if I lived in 1920, I might see—I might care which way the hand was turned on Jesus; and I'd care how many nails were in his feet. I'm quite sure, even as late as 1920, there were people that were involved in that—and certainly in 1890; that was the topic of conversation. That's how Rembrandt survived, were by the number of nails in the foot of Christ. I think that's... And that's the way people looked at things; that was the revolution of Cezanne. Now I want to talk a little about revolution, too; because I think that—I don't believe those things are revolution. I think that—I feel a little like Dostoevsky in this, and he's the only real revolutionary that I can claim in... in this respect— And that is that I think that... if you can imagine a living vibrating organism that moves around the world and consumes itself every twenty years, by the tail; and therefore turns inside out—or I don't know what would happen if you consumed yourself every twenty years; but you wouldn't have very much left. I think what... along the lines of a heritage, what one needs is a past and a present

and a future. And if you deny the past, you try to kill your daddy, you won't have very much of a future, because you'll someday be a daddy; and that's... is implied in everything you do, I think. You have—I was... An old friend-- we were talking about earlier this evening, name of "Aristedemis Caldus", and he says it takes three generations to build a building; and exactly what he means by that he hasn't said; and to be artistic, I shouldn't go farther than that. But I think it can clear something is to say that you—that is the heritage; you need a past and you need a present and you need a future. And if you deny any of those, if you deny your past, or you deny your present, or you deny your future, you'll cease to exist, by consuming yourself. And each implies the other. Now... I think that... you should keep your mistakes. If you paint a picture and you don't like it, once you're done with it, once it's out of your grasp, and once you don't care about it any more, you should keep it. You shouldn't paint over it; you shouldn't redo it, or... change it; because I think that's your past. And...if you can't learn anything from your mistakes, in effect, you'll never really improve, I think. If you say, oh, it's terrible, and get rid of it, you'll never really be able to learn anything from it. You should keep it until the day you die; that's what I think. And then it requires a lot of—it requires twenty-four thousand dollars; you could find something to do with your money. You have to build a house big enough to create [sic] all the works you've done, when I get (laughter) done talking to you (laughs) here. But I think that it's absolutely necessary. You should... do—that, in order to see what you've done, you have to be able to keep it. And... when I see an artist who burns his work up, which one does as one—if one has honest communication with the world, and when there's no *value* attached on them.... I think that art...is...value. That's—As a matter of fact art is about the only value that we have. We don't value a new Buick; we junk it... in a year. It makes us feel impervious while we ride around in it; and we feel impervious by buying a new one... so that art isn't that. But if there is any lasting value, worth actually money, which is a terrible way to... a terrible thing to attach to art, I think it is art; that's one of the things that it is. It's the lasting values of our civilization. And... you can't create lasting values without mistakes; it doesn't come full blown; you don't have this full-blown art coming into the world. And we have to keep our mistakes. I think the same thing is true in building. If you build a building, and it's a lousy building, if you tear it down right away, you don't have any idea what a lousy building *is*, really; and so you build another lousy building, and you tear that down right away because you have no idea what a lousy—and it goes on and on and on, and it just eats itself up. I'm speaking as a

traditional painter, in that sense. I think you have to... use the past, insofar as you can, in connection with what you look at. And you have to look. It's—Curiously enough I know a lot of abstract painters that say, "Aw, you don't have to draw," and this and that. In fact, I think in order to be able to see a painting, you have to have looked; you have to have looked at something. If you never look at anything, you'll never know what a painting looks like, and then you'll be able to make one. So I think the exercise of looking at things, which is really drawing, or painting, is the... a... enormously... indispensable thing to art. Anybody who doesn't draw, and who doesn't look at nature, whether it be the... spare tire of a car, or a tree, or—I don't care what it is-- but look at some thing outside of self, will never be able to see paintings; because paintings are also things. They have that property. They're not just... They're not like the Bible, that you can read... and put away in a Dead Sea—you know, a dead—big vault somewhere, under dim lights, or.... They're not Kodachromes that you can put away in a slide... in a—You know, they have a property and a presence all their own, which is... another thing that I—another one of my little... beliefs. I've got so many beliefs... that fortunately they all contradict each other.... (laughter) And when I (laughs) sit down to paint, I don't have to think about them; I just... paint... and so all these beliefs I'm dishing out here aren't things that I... when I sit down to paint I say, "Well this is what I really believe," and I sit down and paint them. They're... really a... montage, or compilation of beliefs that I wouldn't really like set down as Gospel; I don't really want you to bow your head. They're just a lot of things that I think, and I think them one day and the other thing the next day, and they... And I have to defend them, unfortunately, till I die; and then I could defend the opposite also. So they're not so firm that you can't deny them or... I'm completely scot-free—any questions—if you ask me what I think of De Chirico, or something like that, I won't have a *thing* to say about it. I'm talking about myself here. (laughter) Now... I was—What *was* I talking about? (laughs) (laughter) What was I talking about?

Audience: Yourself....

Myself. Yeah, but I—

Audience: The present period.

Oh, the present period; we thank you. I think that that has something to do with the four sides of the thing. I think it also has something to do with how you can win, really. If you put a painting in a room, and you can't see it, there's no hope for the painting, really; I don't care what happens. I would say that presence is also cumulative... so that... we know who Picasso is. I happen to also like Picasso; at the same time I can attack his idea of ideas, he has a fantastic presence. You come into a room and there's a Picasso, that's present. It's right here. When you say Picasso, it says, "Here." Which I think is terribly important, really. I think that that is one of the physical properties you can't talk about in painting. You can talk about it; I can tell you about it; but unless you've seen a painting that has presence, it's just talk. If you go to the Rembrandt in the Frick, and you look at it—like the self-portrait—that has (unintelligible); that's a painting that's really there. There's no kidding around about it. I think that... since I'm interested in... the... --to say *noble* is too much—I like to depict man as he is. That's what I set out to do, in a way. I like to paint a picture of the world with people in it as they look to me. Now that implies... Which really means I only want to have a feeling for the facts that I have present—that's what I'm talking about. The fact, the main fact—I'm like a *dog*; I walk down the street; I really skip all the people and all the cars, except for the fire plug and things like that.... And I only like the fire plugs that have messages on them from the other dogs, really. (laughter) That's what I mean (unintelligible). So in that sense I'm just an animal looking at the other dogs. And I want to look at the other dogs, insofar as I can, like they are. Now what do the other dogs look like? Or the other—well, we'll get back up to a higher strata—the other people. What do they look like? They have all kinds of properties. For instance, just to give you an idea of how complicated it is, if I want to impress you terribly, I want to make a lot of presence with this girl sitting here... I want to really show her as she is, so I make her like... twice as big as she is. Well, in fact what I do is, when I do that, I make me feel small—or the guy who looks at it. So that he's littler than this person with all this presence; and I'm not really depicting man like her really is... but man blown up to twice his size, or whatever dimension size he is—three times he is. On the other hand, if I pick the picture life-size, and I hang it on the wall, and I look at her, she's actually *smaller* than she is, because she recedes from my vision, and she really is also back in the wall, because that's hanging on the wall. So in order to get... And this is not a formula... all these things are complicated. If I want to make somebody this high, but I make as much space between she and I so that she—when I look at her she's really this high.... And I

could make that completely convincing and *seem* to be life-size with that much space between her... and me. On the other hand, if I want to make her sitting in a room, I have to make her slightly bigger than life-size, because it's really on the wall. But if I make her too much bigger I blast everybody out of the room and they all feel little. (laughter) So it's a terribly complicated thing. Who—who *are we*? —in a sense. I'm just talking about the *physical* properties; I haven't even touched on the emotional properties—the look in her eye; whether she looks at me, or she looks away; or whether she makes a dirty face; or whether she has her clothes on or whether she has her clothes; or whether *he* has *his* clothes—I don't want to be prejudiced. (laughter) I think these things are—It's a terribly complicated thing to say, who are we? You can make riddles—Who's on second? — you can say; I'm sure you must have heard of him too. It's a terribly complicated thing when you try to deal with who you are—Who I am. That's really.... If I look at you it's really because I want to know who I am. Or maybe I want to make a *match*, even; maybe that's how I'll find out who I am. Now I think... I don't know how much—I think I'm going to end this pretty soon here; but I'd like to... say... that *going* to New York, and being involved in the whole mess there, and devoting your whole life to art, and putting yourself in a position where you devote your whole life to art are to me terrib—Or I—all these things are—Change that “you” to “I”—are terribly important things. And in a sense the... what I carry with me is an attempt to make a profound, deeply based effort, with terrifically widespread roots... that I can build up to some kind of a pinnacle to be called art. I wouldn't even mind to be a little... piece of—one of the *pyramids* in a thing that builds up to be a-- one generation, in effect. But I think that the effort you have to make has to be absolutely all-consuming; and everything you do has to be absolutely pointing in that direction. You have to get *married* for that reason; if you marry an art—

(AUDIO BREAK)

much energy than you can possibly imagine to it. And that's, as far as I can see, both intellectual energy and physical energy. I think, if you examine—If you think you know what *big* is, just re-examine that... word; because *big* is a relative thing; and... a big effort is a relative effort also. There's such a thing, I guess—suppose also, as a *too big* effort, such as I described that might blow you over. But I think at any rate it's a... It's a—I think it's a valid—It's almost *the* only valid thing that I can think of to do.... So that... I'd be very happy now if could entertain some

questions, because I may have said things that you didn't (unintelligible) in order, more or less.... Have I done my duty here; have I talked long enough and confusingly enough? (laughter) (laughs) I have a friend who said, "If it—When in doubt, contradict yourself!" (laughter) (laughs) I don't know; does anybody here have anything they'd like to ask. I haven't really told you what I paint like; but I assume that when I'm all done you'll have a good enough idea to want to find out, because that's also—If you're going to go to New York City, you have to find out not only what I do, but what everybody does. You have to know everything about art, not just a little teeny piece. But if you think that it's going to help you to know what I do, or have seen my paintings, I can assure you it's not. If you don't take *all* of my advice, I'm not going to give you any of it. (laughter) So *now*, I'll ask a question—*You* can ask a question. Yes.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Yeah. Well, I think it depends on what he turns his energy toward. If turns—If he can *use* that, I think it's good. If he can't use it, I think it's bad. I mean if he... if he works, and that *consumes* him, I think it's a lousy idea. So obviously he has to be able to discern that energy—I've done a lot of crummy things in my day, (laughter) and they all... I've somehow managed to do something with them. Like for instance I once had a lower net line—I was truer when I was more rich than I was when I was poor.... (laughs)(laughter)—I was asked by the container corporation to do a... one of those things—they have some kind of a program; and the program is they give you a famous saying, and you're supposed to illustrate that saying for the thing. So I got a call on the(unintelligible), and told Mike "It's not my cup of tea; I just can't do it. I don't—Every time I've tried to do anything you guys I fail miserably." And he said, "Aw, c'mon...." He was actually sort of a nice fellow, but... I won't make him a caricature. And he says, "You can do it; go ahead, try it." So he sent me this thing, and the... just to give you an idea, the gist of the thing was—the gist of the famous saying of Marcus Aurelius was "Be true to yourself." (laughter) So already I was compromised, right? (laughter) But I said, "All right. I can *trick* them." I said, "I'll do a self-portrait." (laughter) I drew a self-portrait, so I was—I was really being true to myself. So I told them, "Well, I've got a self-portrait here, and I'll give it to you, and that's it!" And... he said he thought it was a terrific idea; but he wasn't the final judge, so he went to the Board... of Directors. And he told the Board of Directors this wonderful idea I had, and they said, "Oooh, no." They didn't want me to do a self-portrait. So the guy came back

to me, and he said, “Well, I’ll tell you what.” I told him, “Well, I’ve already done the self-portrait.” He promised to give me two hundred and fifty dollars if I... did a sketch; and I told him, “Well I’m not doing any sketch; I’m just doing this self-portrait, and you can call it a sketch if you like.” I’d already done it, really; I didn’t have to do anything. (laughter) And he said, “Okay, you do that.” So he came back, and he said, “Well, they don’t want a self-portrait.” “Well,” I said, “I’ve already done it, so you just give me the two hundred and fifty dollars and I’ll go my way.” And he said, “Well, I’ll tell you what we’ll do. We’ll call the self-portrait you did a portrait of Marcus Aurelius...” (laughter) So... he was obviously on my side, right? He wanted me to be true to myself too. (laughter) So he presented the thing to... the Board; and they saw that it was a self-portrait, and they said, “Ooooh, nooo, no, we’re not going to take it.” So he just said, “All right. That’s it.” So I sent him a bill for two hundred and fifty dollars, and he sent me back the two hundred and fifty dollars. And about two months later I get this letter in the mail saying, “We see by our books that we owe you three hundred and fifty dollars.” (laughter) So I didn’t answer. I was true to myself—and then about another month later I got a check for three hundred and fifty dollars. (laughter) So I cashed the check, and I was true to myself! (laughter, applause) No... uh, yeah.

Question: (unintelligible, concerns speaker’s previous remarks on keeping mistakes)

Speaker: Well I think... a painting is a mistake, really; that’s what—(laughter) And if you keep your painting...

Question: Well for example, that’s what you said—

Speaker: No, I’m *serious*. I really think that’s the only answer I can give you. I haven’t seen your work or anything; but I really think to make every painting is a mistake, and you should keep your painting. (laughter)

Question: Do you ever think when you’re painting on a canvas that... well, I should have stopped... yesterday... because this (unintelligible) what I’ve done today. Have you ever said that?

Speaker: I may have said it, but I didn't know.... really. I don't think you do, either; that's why I think you should keep your paintings. And that's how you eventually know, really. Do you have something....? Like you have your *hand* up. (laughs) All right, yes.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: I didn't say that; I didn't say that....

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: But I didn't say "shouldn't." (laughter) Who am I? I'm just—I mean, I'm not going to tell Soutine what to do; I'm just (laughter) (laughs)—No I think that you—I think when you're emotionally done with the thing, then you should keep it. That's what I said, really. I didn't say you should keep the thing....

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: I don't care how long it takes; when you're emotionally done with it, you should keep it. You shouldn't burn it up. I don't care if it takes ten years; I'm not interested in that. What I'm interested is the concept that you can learn from what you've done, if you don't destroy it or paint over it—change the whole... concept of the thing. And that you're really—no one is really a good judge of what he does. And no critic is a good judge either. Only in a sense time is a good judge. And if you're at liberty to destroy all your paintings while you're working on them; if that's your statement about life, and if that's your feeling about the world, it might be the most true statement. I'm not going to tell you what you should do.... I—Marcel Duchamp stopped painting on purpose. I'm not to say you shouldn't do that at all. I'm only saying he should then keep that mistake. And if he starts painting again... (laughs) —not really. (laughter) Yeah.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: In the last show that I had? Pretty much, yeah. But I—When you say done from life outside, it—I can only tell you that just *try* to do something from life outside, and you're not doing anything from—you just have to invent the whole thing from the beginning to the end, in some way or another. You really invent it in terms of your mind's eye, finally, again.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: No, I didn't. I got three women since then; and that's again a whole different scene. (laughter) But it's—with all the work I've done, if—when you consider that half the population of the world is women, three is nothing. (laughter) Yeah.

Question: Do you have a reason for painting the same (unintelligible) of work in every show?

Speaker: Yes.

Question: How do you (unintelligible)

Speaker: Oh, it's... I don't dwell on it too much. I mean, I... I once (laughs)—I was making a picture of my wife, and some critic said something about my work, and I stabbed it with a knife.... (laughs) (laughter)

Question: Did you get in trouble? (laughter)

Speaker: (laughs) Actually it wasn't really... It's—I don't really respond so much to criticism about my work as things that make it impossible to paint. Those are the things that really annoy me the most. I don't really care too much what they say about my work. You know, as long as they talk about it a little bit. But there are some kinds of things that make it more difficult to paint. Like I don't know if you saw this thing that Cannaday wrote in the last *New York Times*.... "Well you just take that thing up to your art dealer and try to negotiate a better contract with that thing, and see how far you get." That really annoys me, I must say. What the hell—it's hard enough without having that guy around to tell me-- (laughter, applause) Yes.

Question: I was wondering.... You said before that you need to be interpreting... man... as he is... or something like that.... And my question's (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well... But then I asked immediately, how is he?

Question: Yeah, okay, well... in some of your paintings I find a very incongruous situation almost.... (unintelligible) no clothes on. Now it seems to me then incongruous... a setting like this for... a nude woman.... (laughter) No... Okay... but...

Speaker: I understand what you're saying.

Question: You know, does this incongruity...

Speaker: No. Well, I think that you *bring* to this—to my work the baggage that you have in your pocket; and you see a naked lady sitting before a dining room—That *isn't* what the painting was... which is very interesting, but—in fact—No, that isn't what it was—that was not what it was, though; it really wasn't that. It was just like in my studio... a girlfriend—That's neither here nor there. The fact is that you *brought that to it*, you see; and I think if you bring a romance to a painting, I'm not going to try to take it away.... But I didn't put it there... directly, anyhow.

Question: I see—No...--

Speaker: I really tried to see man as he was, and there was, absolutely in that particular painting you're talking about, *no incongruity*. The pure act of trying to see a *girl* as she was... then... without anything in between... which is very interesting that—that's how romance gets into things; I think that's where romance begins, if you like. And if you see all these other things in it, you brought them there. And they may have been put there by me too; maybe that I wanted to serve a girl for dinner.... (laughter) It's neither here nor there; you know, I didn't go at the thing with any of those ideas.

Question: No—I'm sure you didn't (unintelligible)—I didn't mean it—

Speaker: No, no. I'm not trying to put you down; I'm trying to explain, exactly, the impetus that went into it, very openly, without any....

Question: Yeah. Okay, but... no, it just seems that... the whole idea of... almost... It seems like these aren't really everyday appearances, is what I'm trying to say.... I mean (unintelligible 781)

Speaker: Well, I'd say that you spend more time nude than you do in a green shirt. (laughter)
But what am I supposed to do? I'm trying to see you as you are. What do you want me doing—looking under the green shirt? (laughter)

Question: No, but... (laughter) Can I talk to you later? (laughs)

Speaker: (laughing) All right. But it's true, I think, and how are you, really? I'm only asking that question—I might paint you in a green shirt, too; but I do know that you're basically not a girl in a green shirt.

Comment: Okay...

Speaker: (laughs) (laughter) I don't really think that's any for... you know. I think I'm mainly interested in looking at what *is*; and... it's very hard to say what is. I think that's what so beautiful about it. Anything might be.... Yeah.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Truthfully I think not. But I thought I... I don't really know, you know. I don't—like people say Pollock could have drawn better than Michelangelo if he'd wanted to. I don't think he was emotionally suited to draw like Michelangelo; and therefore he couldn't draw better than Michelangelo. It's nothing to do with his native ability; he just simply couldn't do it. And I... See I think an artist looks around... and sees something empty in the world, and he fills it up. And when I started out to be an artist, there was no emptiness of abstraction. I mean, it wasn't a

conscious thing, exactly. I've made it conscious now, but... abstraction—the world was full of abstraction when I came into the world, in a sense, really. And it's true it was just beginning, but it was absolutely full of it. Everywhere you went people told you that's what you should do. So there was no void there; there were just thousands of people rushing to fill up—choking—it was like too many filling stations in every corner. And you just—I... so that's what kept me from it, even though I made my efforts. So to say I painted abstractly for a number of years could—In my biography I might say that, but in fact I don't think it was really true. Yeah?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well, I think that... you find out in a way... I mean, I can be wrong in all my analyses, don't misunderstand me.... But I think that the direct comparison is how you find out how they are different from how they were. I mean, if I change a subject—Like for instance if I now, instead of making a rabbi, a picture of a rabbi by Rembrandt, like Rembrandt and stuff, just sitting down—If I'd bring a rabbi in a room here, and have him say a little few prayers for you... it wouldn't be a good comparison; there wouldn't be any way to compare. So in other words I'd have changed the subject. I'd thrown the painting out the window and brought in acting, or... like the... So I'm talking about not changing the subject when I do that. For real reasons—I don't think Poussin had any better reason to make “Three Graces” than I did; it was really—it's a marvelous thing if those go through the ages, and each man says, in the same terms that the last man said, what the facts are. And those facts are just, as far as I can see, presence. I don't know what three Graces mean at all. That's also evident in my painting, I think. But how do I interpret them, as compared to how Botticelli interpreted them, or Maillot.... Well then—You understand my reason? It's not because I'm interested—although I am interested in Classicism—I'm interested in comparison; that's what Classicism really is. And if each generation that sees the facts differently has to see them differently in the same terms. Otherwise the comparison is spoiled.

Question: Do you find any sort of consistency (unintelligible)

Speaker: Yeah, well they were speaking about their time. So that's why they had a similar image.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Yeah, I think there is a consistency in this time too. I think that we may not even be able to see it, but I think it's there. And that we—I'll probably be thought of as an Abstract Expressionist... because that's where I come from, really. And I think in all those people that are influenced by Pop, there's a terrific consistency.... I may already be an old-fashioned painter... and that maybe it... this—I wouldn't doubt it at all! I think when—I think you get *old* when the subject changes, really. And if I can hold the subject—but I can't hold it by changing my subject; I have to hold it by holding to my... means, and... in effect hold the audience, hold myself as the audience; because if I lose myself, I'll lose the rest of my audience, too. It's not—I'm not interested in them. But if I feel that what I'm doing isn't relevant any more, I'll obviously lose interest in it. And that will show, I think. So as long as I believe in it passionately, I think it'll... it is—the subject really hasn't changed, even though it may seem to have changed. It's interesting, because I think that the... these Op art and Pop arts are the first things that have been issued to us. All the other arts, I think, came from underneath, came from living in a loft and having a certain kind of feeling about a romantic—really romantic idea. The same as the unknown artist, in a way... the same—You're all alone, nobody gives a damn about you, and you do something in your studio. But I think these things have been to a greater extent issued by – like Rock and Roll music is issued... a created culture, which is... might not be a culture at all. It might be that they've changed the subject away from art, and that the romantic guy is still sitting in his studio painting, is still going to be painting; he's just not going to make quite so much money, or what-have-you. It isn't going to change anything, in other words... as far as—that's my feeling about it. Yes?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Uh.... I don't own a camera. (laughter) What?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Oh, there are some, a few; but I haven't done anything consciously about it.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well I understand that very well; that's exactly what I'm talking about. I think that they can do marvelous things with slides.... (pause) Besides that, if you're interested in my—if you're interested in painting at all, you're going to have to run across my work sooner or later. And if you're not interested, I don't care anyhow. (laughter) What you think of the...(laughs) All right. Yeah?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: What did she say?

Various voices: unintelligible comments.

Speaker: (laughs) Was that in English? Did you speak in English? (laughter)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Yes. (laughter) (laughs) What?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well I think their heritage is a main contradiction. The heritage that you have is the main contradiction to that. And the fact that there is a place like New York where you... can... modify your... alone-ness. I think to say "an artist who is alone" implies that he's not alone because he's an artist. If you ask me if *people* are alone, that would be another thing, because

maybe they are and maybe they aren't. But artists *always have* Rembrandt and Raphael and Titian and Tintoretto and Picasso and... Jackson Pollock and his friends. (laughter)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: That's true.... But that doesn't mean that you don't have friends...who are in the same boat in a way, really. And it's—I think it's a her—If you try to do it in the Sahara Desert, with you—just you and your camel, it'd be impossible... so that you must not be alone. There must be some difference between the—being you and your camel in the desert and being in New York City—or even in Skowhegan. There's a *difference*. Paintings don't work by themselves; they need someplace to go when they're done, too. They don't just sit home working; you know, they're not like a machine that turns off... type, and that... would set up every *New York Times* from now till Christ was born.... (laughter) That's not what paintings do; they also require response, even if it's *just* from you. So that I think it's impossible to go on unless somebody does something about it, unless you have encouraged them, unless people prop you up and help you. Yes.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: (laughs) All right, very good, I'll do that. Very good. (laughs) (laughter) Yeah.

Question: This idea about being in New York, in a community of artists—Do you think essentially art is the thing that (unintelligible)

Speaker: What about that idea?

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: I have friend I see some—that's—I have a friend who, when I... I went to once to a musical concert with her.... And she sat through this whole thing, which was a private thing, and it was a friend of ours tape who I couldn't *stand* the guy's music, and I had to sit there and listen

to it; and she sat through the whole thing like this. (laughter) And she went to Sarah Lawrence or someplace like that... (laughter) and I thought, My God! She must really know a lot about music. She's listening to all this stuff, and she really cares so much about it and everything. And about two years after I asked her, "What were—I remember I saw you were sitting there like this, and you had your head like this... What were you doing there?" She said, "I was (exasperated sigh) doing absolutely nothing. I was hiding." (laughter) I don't know what that has to do with the subject. (laughter) Just came to mind.... (laughs) Yes.

Question: (unintelligible) because in a lot of your paintings it feels like (unintelligible), and what that felt like wasn't it; and there was a realization that that was just a means to (unintelligible) something else. But—

Speaker: Well I really think there are questions, that in order to remain artistic, you can't—I can't answer. I mean I think my first duty is to be an artist—even if I say absolutely nothing—to give you some kind of feeling that it's a good thing to be an artist, that it's sufficient, really. You're not going to remember any particular thing I say, as far as I can tell—not that—no reflection on you; and I just don't think it's any good for me to answer particular questions. That isn't going to help anybody; it isn't going to—just going to make *me* less of an artist. And *I'm* the one who I finally care about. So... I refuse on those grounds, that they may tend to turn me into something else.... Yes.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well I think a lot of contemporary artists have... something to do—I think mostly they think about that; that's one of the things they really think about. If you're a real painter, I think that's one of the things you think about. For instance I know—It was really quite a few years ago, Milton Resnick, you probably have heard of him, used to talk about an *unseen* presence; in other words a presence that you couldn't see... which was an interesting... idea. And if you go and look at his last paintings, I'd say that's exactly what he was trying to make there. It's very interesting, but if you look at them very seriously, you can—I think they look like an unseen presence. Very curious. Which is a whole other idea about presence, what presence is.

That's—really what it means is... I guess the Jewish God is an unseen presence. But how do you depict that? It's very interesting. I don't—I mean that's just another idea about presence, but as long I have something *more* to say about it, I'll say it. Lots of—I think all painters are interested in presence, because that's really what there *is*, that's the materialist side of painting.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well... whatever you do has to be present. Well I say whatever you do has to be present; if you're going to put subject matter in there, the subject matter has to be *present*.

Question: What about (unintelligible)

Speaker: Yeah, I think it deals with presence. Oh—let me say something, I'll say something about...reality; because that is a kind of presence also. That is, in other words, the fact itself, like the rabbi who comes in the room; or if you pick up forty feet of sidewalk and bring them inside.... I think that...painting is a *focused* reality, like for instance I was here—maybe not so *old* enough—but if you remember back to first things you remembered. I—to *me* the first things I remember were movies; that is, movies are—I saw ten years ago; they're not the first things (unintelligible, laughing) (laughter) I... Somebody asked me once if I remembered a "Great Dictator," which was a Charlie Chaplin film; and I said, "Yes, I remember it; and I know I saw it," but when they—when I finally... got around to seeing—got around to trying to say what I'd seen, I couldn't do it really; I couldn't say what I'd seen... and in fact the only thing I remembered was Charlie Chaplin throwing a world up in the air... which was—out of that *whole thing*, throwing it up in the form of a balloon, and it's sort of a mad dance.... And what I *really* see is a still of that—not the dance, even, but just like the balloon up in the air, and Charlie Chaplin throws it in a certain... position. And that's where I think that, for me, the imagery of painting comes from. And not that it *consciously* comes from there; but you try to make a distillation of an experience, which is, I think, how your memory acts. That's why paintings can live, I think. Because you can go to a movie that moves and jumps and hops and does all these things; and finally, when it's all over, your mind reduces it to a small thing. And I think that young people have that in their first memory, that they—If you think of the first things you

remember, I remember the first thing I remember was my father putting on a 1928 license plate in front of Sunday School with sort of a purple blue light on it—very strange thing; and it's absolutely still. (laughs) I can't see myself there—There's my father, and there's this old 1928 car, changing the license plate to 1928. And I think that everybody has memories like that. And that's what a painting—why the still image of a painting can be as viable as any moving image. It has something to do with a higher reality, a focused reality.... And you can't... You might create it, but I've never tried to paint a picture of my father next to this 1928 car, putting on his 1928 license plate, because you know who *that* sounds like—Or I don't know if you know, but *I* know. That's not where the image comes from; that's the image in my mind... but I think it's when you paint, you create that image, really; you create the memory simultaneously. And when you've done it, then it has presence. (laughs) I've answered your question, right? (laughs) (pause) The next person who swats a mosquito has to ask a question. (laughs) (laughter) (pause)

Question: This might sound like a silly question, but how do you feel about teaching, or... how do you feel about being here, lecturing? Is this being true to yourself, going to a school situation—an art school (unintelligible) and teaching... art. How do you feel about that?

Speaker: Well I feel perfectly all right about it, in this case; I'm here for one day... two days... and (laughter) I take a potter and that's more or less the attitude I take; that's more of the kinds of jobs I take.

Question: Do you want...?

Speaker: I have—What? Yeah, I don't *mind* a job like this at all. I think it's a worthy thing to do. I happen to believe that painting is a magnificent thing... and if I can communicate that, and just leave one little iota of higher... level with you, I'll think I've done something worth having done, really. And I... so I can't see that I'm... selling anything out for that. And I don't need the money, even, which is really impressive. (laughter) (laughs) So if I'm here, it's out of pure... feeling that it's a nice thing to do. And it's not that I always want to do it; and I—I mean... But as long as... on this... you know, like a few... circumstances, I think it's a very good thing to do. Also I think of things; I don't stand here and talk. This isn't uncreative, in a

certain sense. In some sense I have to begin somewhere, right? But it is, in some sense of—pretty much...not the way I think when I paint, but just additions to the way I think. When I paint I forget all about this and just paint. But I like to make my paintings more profound by such... processes. Once I had some kid in my studio, and he looked at my paintings; and I was painting—I had a bunch—what happened was I had—The South Hampton College has a... branch there; and they—in South Hampton, Long Island; and they... sometimes they have all kinds of activities around; and they sometimes go and visit artists' studios.... And these stupid kids, they were the dumbest things you've ever seen in your life, came to my studio. (laughter) And I thought, boy, they were absolutely impossible! They had no manners; they had no way of acting—nothing. They were just terrible. And they came in there, and they looked at my paintings, and they all looked at like me... So I didn't really say very much; I just sort of let them go around and poke around. And they sort of made—asked some really terribly dumb questions. And finally one kid had a big painting; he said, "How come that painting has all the lines around it?" And I really hadn't realized (laughing) it had.... So I lied out of it a little bit, and I kicked them out, and then I took all the lines away.... (laughter) And it was—By some kind of *exposure*, you get a certain kind of sharp (laughter drowns out word) you don't get by just staying home in your studio. (laughter)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: I—I was—Yeah, I've got—it meant something to me....

Question: What was it to do with? The atmosphere (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well, I was—One thing impressed me terribly, and that is that those guys were scared to death. Really, it was impressive; they frightened me. (laughter) I realize (laughter)—It was like reading an article by John Cannaday; it really was *frightening*; and it was... I don't know what the reasons were; but I really did have the feeling that they were really—the world looked so enormous to them—It was really frightful. And I... I—then I realized that you really have to deal with—there's one other significant thing--that you really have to be in the center. Even to be next to the center is not good enough; you really have to be where you see what's really is

going on. Otherwise you get all this hearsay... and all the hearsay seems to be terribly frightening. But that was—that's like the most superficial... version; and I think you get something out of these things, if you—If I do them all the time, I'm sure I won't. But if I just go once in a while.... And another thing is, whenever somebody asks me to do something, I always say yes; and then I decide whether I really want to do it or not. So that's—I never know what (laughs)—you know, I say yes, and then sometimes it takes and sometimes it doesn't. But I don't think teaching is a really good idea. I think if you teach in the highest possible level; and you go and talk like I talk to you. And... It's not bad... but wouldn't consider this exactly teaching, because I'm not committed to you, I'm not committed to the intrigue of—and I don't this place has any intrigue, but most places are full of intrigue.... And I have nothing to do with those intrigues. I don't care what happens; I don't think—

Question: What do you mean by intrigue?

Speaker: I don't know.... Like faculty, students, everybody who's trying to get ahead this way... I don't know what kind of things—There are so many possibilities... There are so many possibilities for intrigue in a situation like this, and I have absolutely *nothing* to do with it; I couldn't care less... which is a very good thing, I can assure you. I got into—I was in the University of Oregon earlier this summer, and I got into a tremendous argument with a—with the guy who ran the school. (laughs) And I didn't care at all. Everybody else was bowing and scraping.... (laughter) And I couldn't have cared less. And I assured him finally—He wanted me to have more respect for his institution; and I assured him finally that Sartre was right...in refusing the Nobel Prize. And I thought the Nobel Prize was a *much* better institution than their crummy place. (laughter)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Are you complaining to me? I can't influence anybody; I have no power... I have nothing to do with anything; I don't know anything about juries; I don't know anything about anything!

Question: You have served on jury....

Speaker: I never served on a jury in my whole life; nobody ever asked me. (laughter)

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: I might... I'd say yes to start with, anyhow. (laughter) I don't seem to be that sort of artist....

Question: (unintelligible) (laughter)

Speaker: Wonderful. I think it's a marvelous way to end this evening (unintelligible 1060) and you did it; you can be very pleased. (laughs)

(Several unintelligible voices) (laughter)

Speaker: You're saying it all for me; I don't have to say another word.... (laughs)

(Various unintelligible voices)

Speaker: That's right; I think you should go home and paint.

Question: (unintelligible)

Speaker: Well I've tried to call this thing off; is it too early to call it off? Should we go on?

Comment: No, no, no.

Speaker: Well it seems to me that you ended it so beautifully.... (laughter) We'll *spoil* a really poetic experience if we don't now just get up and walk away. So I'll just do that. Thank you very much. (Applause)

END OF RECORDING