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THE SKOWHEGAN SCHOOL OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE Skowhegan, Maine

Lecture by Louise Nevelson Summer, 1978

INTRO: -- she came to this country in '85, she came to Maine, and we think of her as a native of Maine. She spent some time here before going to New York City, where she studied at the Art Students League and other places. But some of the things you may not know about Miss Nevelson, beyond her sculpture, is the fact that she is not only a person who has been well known in the arts, in the art of sculpture, but she has been seen in roles in films; she has been an actress, on the stage, in this country and in Europe; so she has had a wide range of experiences, not only in the visual arts but in the emotive arts and the dramatic arts, as well. She has won every conceivable award -- prize -- that one could think of, for sculpture. She received the Skowhegan Award for Sculpture in 1971, which is a coveted award. And she is a member of the Board of Governors of the Skowhegan School.

There are many other things I could tell you about Miss Nevelson, but I suspect you know as much about her as I do, because her name is really a household word in American art. I do want to say, personally, that I am delighted to have "the experience in that beautiful temple, Ralph Peterson's" church, St. Peter's, I think it's called, in New York City, and those of you who have a chance to get there should, by all means, go by and feel the atmosphere of that very sacred place.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'm very pleased to present to you Miss Louise Nevelson, and she will want you to feel free to ask her questions, as she comes [?] -- Miss Nevelson. [Applause]

LOUISE NEVELSON: I'm very delighted to be here because I belong to many, many things, but I think the Skowhegan School, for me, comes first. First, because I am from Maine, and second, living in New York all my adult life, I must say that nothing in New York gives me more pleasure than to go to the Skowhegan dinners in New York, and all the activities. I think this is particularly a beautiful part of the world -- with the lake and all those places around it -- and for an artists who want their own time, and to really not be intruded upon, I think this is [?] --

Now I feel that my lecture I already gave this afternoon [laughs], because I think I touched almost all the work that is around. I didn't touch yours, [?] -- your friend's. [Laughter] But that

is true. So I think we will start right from there. What I've seen here is wonderful. When I came here the first time, I realized that many of the people who are here come from all parts of the world, and can really contemplate, meditate, and find out, really, something about themselves; they can talk to themselves. They can look in the mirror and know -- and, again, to know who they are -- because, after all, with all the books that have been written about art, in every country, you can be a student forever. Nevertheless, it won't do as much for you as doing these things for yourself; looking in the mirror; finding out who you are; finding out what you feel you want; and in the ultimate, after a long life, that's where life is. It begins and ends there.

So what I'm saying now is more or less what I did say to all of you this afternoon. I think I'd like to throw this out to you, because pictures you can look at. Sculpture you can look at. Books about art you can read. But maybe something psychological, or maybe something -- one thing is tripping you up, or you'd like an answer for. That's where I would like to come in. So may I ask, have any of you any questions you want to ask? [Laughter]

Q: The evening is over. [Laughter]

A: All right, dear. Would you all stand up so I can hear you?

Q: Do you think the competitiveness of the New York art world is a "worthwhile" goal for [?] - students?

A: Well, you see, that question wouldn't appear to me. I don't think -- That's a very good question, but I've got to tell you that that has nothing to do with art, you see. That's what I was trying to say. What difference does it make, there? Art is the place you live. So you don't necessarily have to think about other things, you have to think about art, what it means to you, and do it. It sounds simple, but in the end, that's it.

I gave an example a while ago -- Now take, for instance, Beethoven. It'll shift a little, but nevertheless, he used our kind of thinking, so he took eight notes (that's our octave) and he built an empire of sound. He wasn't thinking of competing with other composers, he was thinking of his work. And that's why he's Beethoven. So New York has nothing to do with it. Art has something to do with you.

Well, anyway, I hope this -- Yes?

Q: Could you talk about the works of [?] --

A: Look, darling. I think I'm getting a little hard of hearing. Speak a little louder.

Q: Okay. [Inaudible] -- that you went through in the beginning.

A: Well, I must say, I would emphasize the work, first, again. That'll be the second time. The work came first. Now I'm going to be daring, and you'll have to read between the lines -- because I'm quoted, very often, in the wrong places and at the wrong time. For me, the creation of life and the creation of art is the same place. Now, it's wonderful that the world always accepts God - or, anyway, every country has had its own God -- and we've never seen God. By the same

token (this is my experience, anyway), I feel -- because I've been asked by the *New York Times* and all the magazines how they chose me, and how I reacted to it. Well, I must tell you that I'm not caught in any orthodox concept, but I do feel that when the human spirit rises to a certain kind of height, you feel that there is a great power; that all the great minds on earth, no matter where, have ever thought -- the mystery of life is still mysterious, and in that place, I can create [?] -- or anyplace. Does that answer your question?

Q: Very much.

A: Good. Most people are still -- this title and that title -- and they probably live and finish their lives and never reach the height where they can encompass the whole world as one body of people.

Now, let's see. More hands? Yes. Would you stand up, dear?

Q: [?] -- I was wondering how long you've felt that way. Have you always felt that?

A: Well, I don't remember when I didn't, or I wouldn't be here. No, that's not true. Because I didn't relate so well with other things. You see, when nature gives you an abundance of one thing, it takes something else away. [Laughter] They don't give you the whole show. [More laughter] Well, but that is the truth. So you have to be willing to accept it. And who'd want everything? You'd be so busy. [Laughter] Anyway. Enough stories. I don't think that we think so much about it. I think we know what we want, and I think it may not even be in the realm of intelligence, as such. It may be in another realm entirely. And I think we're carried, like the tide carries whatever in life. So it isn't always through the logic that this step and this step and this step -- That has nothing to do with it. That's why I couldn't answer your question, you see. Well, I did, but what I mean is, there isn't a logical conclusion, because too much happens. Look how many movements, even in your young lives, have come into play in creation, and who never dreamt of it. I remember when I found the cube and Picasso, I really thought (and I still do, in a way) that that was the ultimate. We had reached another great plateau. Then, when Pop came on top of it, the world tumbled, because they were too close. Because I thought this was a great religion. Then Pop knocked it out, for a while anyway.

So you can't answer these questions, because logic is not the place -- Logic is a science, and art is where life is, you see.

Okay, dear.

Q: I have a question about your work. Do you have a "system" to work in your workshop? I was wondering, before you [?] -- has your work changed because of that?

A: Well, I don't have professionals working for me [laughs], my work will change, do you think? No. When I started, of course, what I did was find the wood, paint the wood, scratch the wood, tickle the wood [giggling] -- anything -- but later, as of now, let's say, we've come to this place. Well, the help are not necessarily artists, at all, you see. As a matter of fact, I prefer it this way. When I used to paint my work, I would have someone help me. The metal, I go to a

foundry. The etchings I did this winter, I would go to a workshop. Now when I leave here, in about a week, I'm going to Albuquerque, to do graphics. That's in a workshop. So you see how you divide your work. So you don't really call them assistants in that sense. You have help.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Yes. Yes?

Q: When you use your assistants, do you take time [?] -- come out immediately, or do you take time [?] --

A: No. When I want to be moved -- I have so much space, now, around me, and I'm a soloist, I make sure there are not too many intrusions. Consequently, if I think it's what I want to do, I do it. And if it isn't right, it's easy to correct. So there's no great problem. But I trust myself. As I told you earlier -- we already had a session, but for the others, who haven't been here, I don't want perfection. I have [?] -- time and again, and words like perfection and beauty only handicap you, because they shift. They keep shifting. There is no static concept of what beauty is, there's no static concept of what perfection is, and who are you that you think you have a right to expect it? What you can expect is hard work, and that's it. And that is its own compensation. The other compensations are nice. I'd rather have a bouquet of flowers than a slap in the face. Nevertheless -- We like to accept that side of life, but that isn't the important thing. The important thing is doing it. I think it's great, and that's where I feel right. If you get money you spend it. That's good, but you spend it. Everything else is not as important as living, and the work being parallel to your life. That's important. Of course you're going to have headaches. But you're going to have headaches if you don't do it.

All right, dear. Okay.

Q: Do you enjoy the process of making your work more than looking at it when it's finished?

A: When I'm finished, it's finished. Now that's a very good point. [?] -- When I am finished with it, I move [?] -- I'm finished with that. As long as I'm breathing, I want the next step, move into it. I know some people, they're, well can you say? They're "precious" about their work. I don't feel like that. That's why I won't use words like "perfection." If I got caught in those words, I'd stop. Now you don't stop breathing, do you?

Q: Hopefully not.

A: I'm emphasizing very carefully, this evening, one thing, and that is, you don't even say "I love my work," you say, "That's my life," and you move with it.

Yes?

Q: Do you think art is a reflection of life?

A: Is it the reflection of life? I think it *is* life. Now if you want, I'll tell you a little bit why I say it *is* life. You know that you can live just so long before problems come into your life. Problems. You begin thinking this way, you begin thinking that way. Is this worth it to you? Many problems. So [?] -- I had to dig. In other words, naturally, I wasn't satisfied. Worse than that. So I began digging, and I went to different lectures, I was a vegetarian, I was this, I was that, I was this and I was that, and out of all of that I took a few notes that pleased me. Now, you say, maybe they are not the truth (which I'll tell you about), but it doesn't matter. Because, as I said earlier, no one has seen God, and most people believe, somewhere, in the mystery of it. So I found -- I selected it, and I've kept it ever since -- and it's helped me carry through. And that is, in the Oriental philosophies, they believe that you project your life. You project it. Each individual projects their life, you see? Now I was talking to someone yesterday and they said, "It's awful tough, when you get out there in the world." You see? But if you think the way I do, there isn't any world but yours, and you project it. So you are responsible for your world. But the other guy is just as responsible as you are, for his world. So you give the other person the same privileges that you take for yourself. By the same token, you're not going to hurt yourself, so you can't hurt somebody else. But if things appear in your life that aren't, maybe, right. Well, listen, you have a child and they're not moving right, you spank them a little. There's a whole different attitude. So you don't think every day that, "Oh, there's a world out there," and -- I don't want to use certain clichés that are being used every day, because, first, I'm busy with my life, since I have a whole life. I'm busy with it. And, second, you don't pay so much attention outside. You pay attention to what you're doing. You see? And it changes your whole attitude.

Now I don't know too much about, say, Christian Science. They say all is in the mind. So if they look at this table, let's call it, they'll say it's in the mind. Well, it's "also in the mind, what we've got here." When you think -- We take it for granted that all of this went through the mind before the human species learned to make a chair, or a bed or a house. If you follow that -- that that's all in the mind -- and then we go further and say all is the spirit and we project it -- It isn't that easy, but if you can remember a little bit of that, your life will be a great deal easier, and you can do a great deal more. Do you think that's too hard to accept?

Q: No, I think it's fine.

A: It takes a little time, but we do everything through exercise, to remember, you see. If you want a good body, you exercise. If you want a good voice, you exercise. And you can exercise these things. I think with that kind of thinking, you don't let any other things, like that question or that question, intrude. Because it could intrude, and destroy your whole trend of life.

Okay. If there are any questions about these things, you ask me, and I'll be glad to answer them.

Where's my "gang?" Haven't you got some questions there? Where are they? I've got a gang here. I told them to ask questions. All right.

Q: When you're making work, [?] -- let ideas open up, or [?] --

A: Well, I told you two or three things. One, I said I'm prolific. Right? Second, I said I don't use words that are going to handicap me, like perfection and beauty. I have my mind centered on one

thing, and that is the work. I don't even like the word "work." And as you know, when I started with my black, I never wanted color. I had artists who would come to the house, and they'd say, "Oh, Nevelson," and I was never selling anyway. And they would say, "If you put Indian red here and you put white here, you'd sell." And I said, "Well, I'm not making anything." In a deeper sense, I'm not making anything. I'm living as full a life as I can afforded to [?] -- and spiritually live. That's where my interests are, you see. So it's not a matter of meditating, or sitting down, thinking. One activity brings another. One activity brings another. If I take two or three steps and want to go ahead, I just take two more steps. I don't sit down and meditate until I take those steps. [Laughter] Okay?

I think what I'm saying to all of you is that you should take your life and claim it. I don't even use the word "courage." I say "take your life," because, after all, that's the only thing you really have, and fill it with what you understand. I think it's the greatest gift of all. I never, in my life, asked myself, for a minute, "Am I on the right track?" I just kept going.

Yes?

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Will you stand up, dear, and will you give me a little closer to what you mean by "other people?" What other people?

Q: How do you deal with society? Or your friends -- ?

A: Well, I already encompassed that when I spoke [?] -- There is no society. It's something you project. Don't let the outside encompass you. That's very difficult, but, still, tell me, what can society do to you? Give me an example.

Q: Teach you things that you don't know.

A: Teach you things? Well, then it's you who wants to learn, it isn't so much society. It's you who wants to learn. It's still you, you see. Or, if you don't like a certain society, you reject it. You don't waste time there. Or you feel, for instance, an obligation, that you've undertaken? Well, then you must make up your mind not to let the other person encompass you, but you must make up your mind whether you can afford to, well, communicate on that level or not.

Q: So it doesn't really matter? You just do [?] --

A: [Chuckles] Well, it isn't quite that. Probably I do say that, but it isn't quite like that if you have problems. You know, if you have problems. But if they don't mean -- if they're usurping you, then that's not society, that's something you don't need.

Well? Okay.

Q: I have a question but it may already have been answered.

A: Well, ask anyway.

Q: The first word that comes to mind -- how long have you had the philosophy that you're describing? Is it something that from childhood you felt this way, or something you mulled over for several years, or -- ? Does that make sense?

A: Yes, it makes sense. But as I said earlier, I had problems. We all have problems, because we're educated a way -- not to hurt, and not to do, and not to do and not to hurt -- and you go on and on and on. But if you have something you want to do, that's your heritage. So I can't quite put my mind where these things happen, but I began to search. See, I'm repeating myself, because I've already said this. I began to search. I went to all kinds of meetings, of, let's see, almost every kind. And slowly -- I took just a few notes -- Well, I went for a long time, but I took a few notes, that made sense to me. I didn't say it was the truth or wasn't the truth, but they were things I could use, you see. So that, yes, took a long time, but I was searching a long time, yes. And without it, I could not have finished my life, I can tell you that.

All right. What's your next question?

Q: I just want to ask you if possibly -- If what you're saying has been built around your work, and everything else -- It seems like your work is in the [?] -- perhaps, and the philosophy has been shaped around your work.

A: Well, more or less intertwined, yes. But when you say in my life it seems as if this was the core of my life -- well, no artist can amount to very much if it isn't. That's true. Look. We're one human being. Why should we expect multiples, in our lives? Of course, it's like everything else - - all the [?] -- coming to be. Well, I could go on and say, look, an inventor makes a train, or an airplane, or a car, and "oil" and this and that, but eventually, it is an airplane. Do you follow? It's the same with us. In order to be integrated you have to recognize -- and it isn't even a matter of forcing yourself, it's your desire, and it's where you belong. The place where you belong. We want to live in a house. Well, in our being, we also want a place where we belong. The people who don't never find themselves, or never find much happiness, anyway.

Well. Okay.

Q: How did you decide that art was going to be your life, over theatre?

A: Well, I want to tell you, that wasn't quite right. I'm sorry, dear. I had not been an actress. I studied dramatics, and the reason for it is that -- I wish my [?] -- were here, because we were talking about it at dinner -- I was -- Probably every human being is shy. Now I don't think we're born shy. I think our environment makes us shy. And I think that is a very peculiar thing in human nature. Because you find it in any walk of life. King Edward, they say he stuttered because he was so shy, and certainly his brother did. You can be anywhere, and your environment may create something about shyness. So I was taller than most girls, and I was a basketball star in grammar school and high school, but I was telling them at the dinner party that almost my whole life I didn't seek things. Some things I wanted, but some things I didn't. But I was pushed into things. That may sound funny. So we'd go to -- Right from the beginning -- We

had a "harmony" club in Rockland, so, "You be president." I couldn't say no, so I said yes. Then they had basketball. "You be captain." And I went through this, went through this. So finally, when I was becoming [?] -- Then I realized I was taking the position in life where I didn't want to be a cripple and not be able to talk, and I realized it. And that's when I studied dramatics, for my voice, that's the best teacher. [?] -- I understood I had to have a free body. I couldn't [?] -- from my head to my toes, and I changed my body. And I did it for many years. Then I wanted to know about religion, so I studied comparative religion. That meant ours, it meant, well, the Oriental, and all comparative. So I got a grounding in myself, and I felt that if I couldn't get up and communicate, I was walking on crutches. It freed me. I think also it gave me the substance to use my body with intelligence, [?] -- I just coasted, you see. [?] -- So that all had something to do with the way I did sculpture, you see. It wasn't that I was going to make sculpture. I never wanted to make anything. That's why I said I didn't want to use red and white and things. I wanted to find out how to be. I could think. Now I suppose you'd call it [?] -- but that is the mechanics. [?] -- in my own way. I wanted to "free my being." And I think that's why I am [?] -- If I want to draw, I draw. If I want to do anything in the visual arts, I do it. So what? Either it'll be good or it won't be good. I never question my work, and nobody can ever say I make comments on my own work. Because that's not where my interests lie. That's why I can't do you [?] -- but I wouldn't do that piece without doing the next piece. You see how important it is?

Yes?

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Well, I imagine that every day that I breathe, something's happening. Now look. I came to Rockland Friday night. And what happened there [?] -- As long as you live, [?] -- Of course. [?] -- I don't want to learn anything, I just want to live it. So you have to be very careful when you choose words. I think words are so dangerous, if they are chosen badly. I don't care about the grammar, I do care that a word, like "learn," well, then you're out to learn something. That's not free living. There's a little difference.

Q: What word would you use instead.

A: I use the word "free living." Being aware, you see. And, of course, now look. I'm going to [?] -- even these three days are going to change my life again, so living is a constant change. But it's an "addition." And without it -- I see people who sort of vegetate, and I think it's sad. Because there's a lot to live for, and a lot to live with, and that's where creation is.

Q: Do you think [?] --

A: Yes, I do. Well, you know, when I said before you won't get it all at once, but being aware is aware, you see.

Now, look, dear, here we are, communicating, right? Now when you go home, things are going to happen to you tomorrow morning. You can reject it or accept it, or do both. Say, "Well, I think so," or, "Well, I don't think so. Well, let's see about it." But your life will be changed, to a degree. You see? Well, you see. [Laughter]

Q: It's a "confrontation," right?

A: Right. But you want to be aware of it, you see. If you think, "Now what is it?" and be aware, you're adding, adding, adding, you see. And you're not so frustrated, if you don't just say the world out there is tough. There is no world out there. We're tough. We're "sincere."

Yes, dear.

Q: Do you find that your philosophy has helped make you more aware, and make doors open?

A: Yes. Yes. Now, darling, I want you to know that this [?] -- that I'm talking about, I don't want you to think I [?] -- [laughter] I'm only going to repeat what I said. It is true that [?] -- but you liked it and you got it, so [?] -- [laughter] No, no, the point is, yes, what I told you has been a great help to me. [?] -- All the critics, and all the people who are using art to gain wealth, prestige and all these things, and if I had to think of that, they would eat me up alive. But we don't have to do that. Use what you believe, and know it. Don't be ignorant [?] -- but if you stay on what you like and want, at the end of a lifetime [?] -- How many times (don't tell me) do you hear old people say, "I've wasted my life." Because they never "touched" anything they wanted. Because either their father, or their mother, or because of [?] -- or the husband or the wife, someone banged them into position. [?] -- but society probably has that problem.

No, but [chuckling] we don't have to accept all these things. That's what I'm trying to say. We don't have to accept society, [?] -- pay no attention to what you have to do, and you come out like a banana. You throw away the peel, and you've got the whole thing. [Giggling] Well, anyway. Yes?

Q: Would you say that the tendency for a lot of visual artists to not want to talk, to be non-verbal, about what they're doing, is based on their own unawareness?

A: Well, I should think -- Of course, I'm a talker. I like to talk and I like to communicate. So I don't understand people not wanting to talk --

[AUDIO BREAK]

A: So I don't understand people not wanting to talk. Now I may be joking a little bit, but I'm serious. Why shouldn't you -- I saw your work. I know what you did. I really do. Now, under those circumstances, you go with other friends, and you discuss what you've done. That, I think, is wonderful, but you don't have to let everyone change your opinion, you see. But it's lovely to discuss it. Why not? No, I think it's great to talk about things, particularly where your interests are so keen. And what could anyone tell me that's more interesting than visual arts? Now I'll bet no one would dare to raise their hand. But it's the greatest, you see. And, of course, you can learn art, to a degree, but that is not all together a result -- I think you have to gamble, and experiment, [?] -- That's living. Every day isn't sunshine. Every day it's been raining. [Laughter]

All right, dear. You get up, please.

Q: Were you influenced [?] --

A: No, no. First, [?] -- Then I went to school, I went to [?] -- I don't know, you're too young, but I studied with [?] -- who's really kind of academic. I studied with them. Then I went to Europe and studied with Hans Hofmann. I wasn't crazy about him, but he was all right. In the ultimate, you go through periods. Look, no one is born [?] -- I approve of schools. Art schools, particularly, but any school. I approve of art schools for one reason; that [?] -- may be a family who don't know what they're doing [?] -- but you get in an atmosphere where everybody [?] -- and that's an environment that you want [?] -- So that's why I [?] -- But sooner or later, of course, from all you've absorbed -- You're always absorbing. You're always, whether you know it or not. First of all, what's around here [?] -- so you're always, whether you know it or not -- you have eyes, and you're absorbing. So then you begin to [?] -- yourself, what you want to say, right or wrong. It doesn't matter. But I approve of that one thing, where you get support, from each other. That's why I do approve of speaking about the work. Doctors get together and they talk. All the other professions do talk. That doesn't mean you have to give up anything, because it's a very peculiar thing about humans. Every human being that you touch, and they touch you, has some influence. And it's a tragedy when someone has too much influence over us. As we're growing up there's a mother, and a father, and we're always pleasing, and trying to please. So it's very difficult to become an independent being. But I think it's wonderful to.

Q: Who are the artists who've had the greatest influence on you?

A: I'm going to ask you to speak louder.

Q: What artists, or other forms of art, have been the greatest influence on you?

A: I won't admit it. [Laughter] Because, you know, I started, as I say, when I went to school -- Naturally I started to think like [?] -- It would be stupid for me to say that I was formed out of someone's forehead. You take and take and take and take, but then you take what is close to you, and you put away what isn't, and then, eventually, you take the tools you need.

All right.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: Not at this time, dear. [?] -- I'm never afraid that the next piece won't come, and I hope it's better.

Q: Do you believe that getting really involved in your work can protect you from leaving the right path? From the [?] --

A: Now, dear, I want you to say it again -- slower. [Laughter] No. That's nothing. I really want - - because I told you, words mean a lot to me. You might use one wrong word -- It's like singing. You get one tone out of sync, and the whole song goes.

Q: What I'm trying to say is, like, if I'm getting tough times, hard times, from the environment -- the environment is putting a lot of pressure on me -- do you think I can protect myself by getting into my work deeper?

A: Yes. Yes. I do. Probably the best thing that can happen. If everything is hunky-dory, you'll never do good work. [Laughter] There's a price to pay, as I said earlier, but there's a bigger price to pay when you don't do it, you see. So it's better, yes. You can be in an environment with people, and you can be so involved, here, that they don't have that influence. The work is more important, because the work is like a mirror of you.

All right, dear.

Q: Do you ever feel, let's say, that the fate of the Abstract Expressionists, or a lot of the Abstract Expressionists, was somewhat tragic? Do you ever feel that you want art, in a way, to reflect people living a somewhat wholesome life, or do you ever try to make something of a moral choice on the kind of art people are going to make? Do you look at, let's say, six artists [?] -- do you react to that negatively, because these people are living their life that way?

A: Well, dear, what I said before is, I don't look out in the world, so much. You see? Now I mean that. Of course, I know what's going on. But the point is that if it's a sick art, you're [?] -- not to get involved with that. Don't you see? Do you follow? I think we're in art just to get the whole life and understanding, not to let these different things penetrate so much. You might think it's hard, but this isn't hard. When you're self-absorbed in the work, naturally that doesn't come that easy, or we'd have heroes all over the place. But the point is, you can't be pulled out into everything. In the first place a sick society depends -- Of course, we have problems. Look, every time you see "Cancer, cancer, cancer," 90% dying of cancer, cancer -- It isn't healthy. But recognizing these things -- You know, you get involved in your own work, and it is, among all other things, curing. Now even in music -- I don't know said it, Byron or somebody -- "Music can charm the birds out of the trees." Now he didn't say it was a sick society. That's harmony. Well, I've had the rules of harmony. I don't know if I'm making this clear but it should be clear, because, otherwise, you're not going to have anything.

Q: You're an optimist, then.

A: I'm a pessimist with the world and an optimist with myself, yes. [Laughter]

Q: Do you think that [?] -- a work of art should be in harmony with nature?

A: Yes. Because nature's going to be there anyway. You might as well be in harmony with it. [Chuckling] When your feet start to go, and your hair turns gray, and you get this pain in the [?] -- or something, you've got to recognize nature, you see.

Q: Do you believe that nature [?] -- painting?

A: Yes.

Q: You said you like to communicate, and I'm curious -- [?] --

A: Now I said in the beginning, to him and to several people, that I studied a little, not [?] -- comparative religion [?] -- Consequently, I said this, dear, [?] -- this evening, that there were a few things that I studied. One was that you are the center of your world. And I said that we project our world. If that's the case, you're projecting and communicating with yourself, you see. So you don't give so much credit to everybody. Because you encompass it. People say, "Well, that was a [?] -- of people. They don't say there were [?] -- of people. [?] -- " You see? So what's the difference what "you take," if you're a little uncomfortable, and you need some comfort; that you take what makes you more comfortable and more productive, you see. Because, if you're -- I know some artists who studied, and they're all right, but they're not artists, because they said, "I can't be Picasso." Well, what's that got to do with their ability? And why would they want to compete with another artist? They don't say, "He breathes better than I do, and, therefore, I'm going to stop breathing."

Now I have really said these things several times. If you think of it, I'm only repeating things, time and again -- because there's not that much to repeat. After all, we have said there are all kinds of books on art, in every language. Wherever you look there's art, if you want to reinterpret it, and if you understand how to reinterpret anything. So it remains for you to find your strength in yourself, work it up a little bit, and do what you have to do on earth.

Did anyone raise their hand? Oh, yes.

Q: I was wondering, [?] --

A: Oh. That's a different kind of life. No, I haven't. I love "puppies," and I've had them. But no. That is not the kind of life I'm talking about, really. Now I also told the students this afternoon, and I'll repeat it, apropos of that. Now, Calder [?] -- Now he is a master, and he is entitled, because he uses it, right for him. But let's say "kinetics" came in. You know, kinetics. Now when kinetics came in, there were mechanical things, that moved. Now art -- I used this example this afternoon, but I could use another. When you look at Michelangelo, say the *David*, in Florence, just as an example. You are moved, and that is a spirit -- I'm not talking about "higher" things you think, but there is a place within us, the sum total, and the spirit moves us. When that speaks, what we call Fine Arts -- fine art will move us. We don't need the mechanics to move us. Do you see? So movement -- every movement that's ever come out, since I am in New York and working with these things -- I welcome, because it's another door that opens. That doesn't mean I need it, but I'm glad to see there is another door that can open.

All right, dear.

Q: [Inaudible]

A: You don't need that. I don't need it. Like a composer, I don't have to use words and "harmony," because where I think art is. You eye tells you.

Look. We walk vertical. We're either vertical or horizontal. Now the important thing is, in art, we have to have some [?] -- that we're born with. Now, we use the word "eye." We have eyes. But we also use "I went here," or "I went there," or "I came home," "I went to sleep" and "I went to eat." So there's another I/eye, the inner eye/I. Now by the same token, some of us are [?] -- Now I never used [?] -- in my life, because -- One has perfect pitch. That doesn't make great art. Look. When a man is tuning a piano, because he has perfect pitch does not make him a great composer or musician. Nevertheless, we need some of these mechanics, and my eye, when I look at things -- all I ask is, does it relate well? Does it stand up? And if I had [?] -- take it all down and put it back [?] -- I can't remember all the ingredients that added up to this place. Naturally, we can't. Nevertheless, we do have [?] -- your life. Now I don't say it's one way or another. Then, of course, [?] -- projected into the future, you see. But it's easier to accept things in the past. But the [?] -- came in through my lifetime, and the different movements that came in my lifetime, were very different than the younger people who are just beginning. They're going to have a whole band of other [?] -- But they have to be ready for that. That's living. And the politics, and the president, and the dollar bill, and the [?] --

All right. All right. Where did you come from? Is it time? Well, a few more questions. All right, dear.

Q: "What do you hope to accomplish in the years that are left to you?"

A: What dear? Wait, wait. Well, I haven't even accepted the fact that I've accomplished anything, so I can't answer that. I've lived life, you see. I've lived it as I understood it, and if you want me to answer the rest, I'll say I'd like to finish it that way.

Now, just one more. All right. One more question. Was there someone -- Who's the dumbbell there? Why don't you ask a question? [Laughter]

Q: I've asked enough questions [?] --

A: Okay. All right. Now are there any more -- is there anyone who would like -- yes?

Q: In all your references today, you seem to refer to [?] -- because a piano tuner may have perfect pitch, that doesn't necessarily make him a great composer. It may, however, make him a great piano tuner. And being that the "competition" between artists today is far greater than it used to be -- that being, you have travel; you have to consider all the things and all the situations these people have to cope with -- how do you look at that? Do you look at it from the point of view of great artists, or the fact that the amount of talent that gets you off the hook some of the time, to -- [?] --

A: Well, do you know how many questions you have in there? [Laughter] Now, look. Now if you listen [?] -- I said nothing like that. I said that I hoped people would fulfill "their potential." I made no [?] -- I did not say that. I said they should fulfill themselves [?] -- Well, I don't know what [?] -- means, anyway. You know, there will be [?] -- one soldier turns backwards, and they'll say he's smart because [?] -- So who knows what [?] -- means, really. Sometimes I look [?] -- and I have. If I do convey it, I'm sorry. But I believe that when you're born you have

a right to [?] -- I'm only sorry that I can't "make" more of myself. Now I can't answer that any more. I have nothing to do with a piano tuner. [Giggling] I only emphasize the "self," [?] -- If someone wants to fulfill their life [?] -- understanding what life's about. [?] --

[Applause]