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

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SKOWHEGAN SCHOOL
OF PAINTING & SCULPTURE
Skowhegan, Maine

David Hare
July 21, 1991

David Hare [hereafter DH]: Anyway, it is the total of the process, which I think of as art, the finished work is the vehicle. The art itself is the process. What happens to you as you work. How you transcribe this happening from your mind and spirit into paint or matter. A work of art is somewhat like those Japanese paper flowers compressed in a clam shell. You put them in water, and the flowers expand when they become wet, expand and grow. The work of art is the compressed flower. The water which causes it to expand might be likened to the mind of the observer. The expansion and growth itself is a replay of what the artist felt and thought while working.

Creative activity is one of the processes by which man turns mind into matter. Art is to some extent involved with magic. The mind dawdling in matter. Now comes the beginning, like where did you do this. And I say, in my head.

[Sounds play in the background] These are notes or a plan for this talk, or a finished work coming out of a talk itself. Actually I made them after I made the tape, but I put them in at the beginning. Notes are not necessarily the beginning, they're a point on the circle. I meant to explain what the words and lines mean, but I won't. The slide's not clear and it doesn't matter. These are doodles, they are like found objects, but instead of somebody else's found object, you make them yourself. But they appear to one's self as found, because one is not that conscious of having made them. Rather like creeping up behind one's self and screaming in one's own ear. I do them, not looking at the paper, or with my eyes closed, but always thinking of some object or feeling. In this sense, they're not like doodles done while telephoning. I think I get your point, but it's not very clear, you better clarify. Ok the difference is this: on the phone, one hopes you are concentrating on what you're saying. Or on what is being said, but you're not concentrating on your doodle. You're looking at it, but not thinking about it. These doodles are quite different. You're not looking at them, but you are concentrating on what they're about. I find them very useful. They tell you what you are feeling when you thought you were feeling something else. They help to keep one from losing contact with the self. Help prevent programming from the outside.

This one is a nose seen from underneath. Those two dark spots are the nostrils. That line with a sort of flower on top, that was meant to be an eye, and drifted off and landed on the forehead. An eye is a flower, a flower in the middle of the middle of the forehead is an eye. If I had been looking, I probably would have gotten the eye in the right place. To have it appear on the forehead is a mistake. But an eye in the middle of the forehead is the all seeing eye. The eye of advanced consciousness, the cyclops, attainment of spiritual freedom. In this sense, the misplacement contains reverberations, expansions of meaning, Had it appeared on the cheek for example, it would not have suggested anything to me. Doodles of course are often only a mess and meaningless. But equally often, within them, appears something startling and unexpected. This is what one is looking for. The sub-conscious in its pure state is too incomprehensible to be of much use in art. But elements can be used. The doodle is the landscape of the subconscious. Elements from this landscape may be chosen and clarified in the same way as one can choose and clarify elements taken from an actual landscape.

That's another nose. Two noses in fact. For some reason, noses seem to be quite erotic. Just let me ask you something. Where are you making this tape? I keep hearing noises of traffic, and automobile horns, and all kinds of things. There's one right now. Well I'm making it in my studio and I can't help that noise. I don't have any sound proof room. So you just have to put up with it. Well I can put up with up with it, because I know about it, but I don't know if anybody else can. I can't help it, that's all.

It begins to make different shapes now. There's the nose and mouth again at the top of the picture. But at the bottom, well forms are curious. They only mean what they mean when they are in juxtaposition to other forms. There is an eye and two nostrils on the nose below. It is also somebody in bed with a pink blanket. They're reading a book. The head is the left hand nostril, the book, the right hand nostril. The eye, over at the left, might be a lamp or a bedside table. It isn't the double image which interests me, it is that I feel one is made more aware of form when there are subliminal suggestions of other meanings. It is not necessary nor even desirable that the subliminal meaning should be clearly scene. The point is not to arrive at an ambiguous image, but rather to open doors to other places, to invite correlation with other realities, to increase awareness. How big is that doodle? Thirty five millimeters? I don't mean the slide, I mean the original. Oh well, it's about 48 x 60 inches. That's a pretty big doodle don't you think? Well it wasn't actually a doodle. That's what a meant. If it wasn't a doodle, you shouldn't pretend it was. I wasn't really pretending, it just got mixed up with all those other noses. Actually it was a drawing I made from doodles of lots of noses.

Here is another doodle. This time I think it was a figure bending over.

I am not going to explain each one. Whatever you see in them is what they are. But I would like you to remember that in this tape slide combo, I have tried to give all forms and some words, subliminal suggestions of other forms and other meanings. Words can be an art, especially in poetry, dealt with the same way as form. Her thighs and arms were very beautiful. She had beautiful tharms, spelled t h a r m s, not only a combination of thighs and arms, but also associated by sound with the word charms. Aunts are anybody's, yours or mine. Ants are insects, who cares whose they are? Or, everybody has an aunt, or at least an uncle. Mice belong

to big Max, what's he want with mice? Perhaps his name Big Max the cat, or, perhaps he is Big Max the lumberjack, and the mice are his girls. Well that's enough of that. I just want to remind you, that I just want to remind you that everything is what it seems and a whole lot more, and a whole lot more.

[Foreign syllables are uttered as song, phrasing, utterance with intermittent sounding gongs]

Did you do that? No, I only did the slides. I don't mean the slide, I mean the music, what was it? Oh, that, that was a sort of song from Africa, it's called Tiki Rhythm, it's all done by one person, very difficult. Yes, I can imagine it would be.

This is Morgan having his face washed. It made him happy because it tickled him, that's his mother washing him. She isn't really that fat. That's a maternal role. She had other roles also.

This one for instance.

That's Morgan again, walking along the beach when he was 2 or 3 years old. He liked it on the beach.

Here he is again angry. His nose gets very long and he has three eyes.

Here he is sad. He is shaped the same way as when angry, but he's a different color.

Some people came to stay for the weekend, and one of them took a bath. The person was quite large and the tub very small. I couldn't see, but this is the way the sound looked, half sea anemone, and half chicken. That sort of arrow on the right hand end of the tub, that was the cold and hot water faucet. They had everything in that house.

It's easy to see what this is, this is an elephant. There lots of curious things about elephants; they're big, antediluvian, primordial. They're intelligent, they don't speak English, and they're too few of them. If you were to look at his head and trunk, you will notice that it is encrusted. Huhm. That it is constructed like a human knee. The forehead makes the kneecap, see. And the eye sockets make the same hollows as our found on the sides of the knee. There's a tendon coming down from the forehead into the trunk, so the trunk resembles a shin. There's no particular reason why an elephant should remind of the knee, but there's no particular reason why not either. Elephants are frightened of mice, not because they're cowards, but because mice run up their trunks and get lost in their heads.

When an elephant has a calf, she goes into the woods and has it all by herself. Afterwards she brings it back to the other elephants. Sometimes they all stand in a circle and trumpet because of what she's done. I'm very fond of elephants. When you speak to an elephant, you should say Sir.

I bet you wouldn't know what this is if you hadn't seen the other. It's a baby elephant. His trunk is up and you can see his mouth. It's very big and as wide as a wheelbarrow, most unexpected. See how long his legs are in relation to his body. Baby elephants when they are

born, are pink with long black hair, very peculiar. I want to point out that things are often the way they look, and not the way you think they look. If you draw an object, don't draw the way you think it looks. Draw it as if it were the first time you ever saw anything like it. It's not really possible, but it's a good thing to try. What we know about an object, and the object itself are often quite different.

These are horses. One of them is trying to bite the horse in front. When horses are biting, they don't look like horses. But it's surprising to find how hard they can bite. These horses are running through a bed of green grass up to their knee. Catherine the Great died in bed. She was killed by a horse.

Owls. A whole crowd of owls. It's strange to see a whole crowd of owls all at once. There may be even more owls in back.

That's a man's arm. It doesn't look much like an arm, does it? I wonder if women like men with muscles like that? Not being a woman, I wouldn't know. I do know I don't think much of it, but it's kind of fascinating anyway.

That's a young wildebeest and some dogs. The dogs look friendly, but they're not. The dog that seems to be kissing him and might be wagging his tail, if he were in the picture, is not. He is biting the end of the wildebeest's nose. He wants to eat it. The other dogs are walking around him looking for choice morsels also. It's a wild wildebeest in Africa, and the dogs are wild dogs in Africa.

There he is again. He's all sweaty and paralyzed with fear. He can't run anymore, this is the end. He fell down, and one of the dogs snapped out an eyeball and swallowed it as his head hit the ground. The curious part of this is that if you don't know what is happening, it doesn't look bad. And in way, really, it's not. Those dogs are meant to do those things. They know it, and perhaps the wildebeest knows it. People aren't supposed to do this, but sometimes they do, and it's horrible. Some things look bad and they are not. Other things don't bad, and they are. One is often fooled like this, by life and death, and even by advertising, law, medicine, insurance, and other things.

That's Durer's Rhinoceros. He made that wood block without ever having seen a rhinoceros. On the surface, it doesn't seem too outrageous, however there is quite a lot of magic in it. Supposing you'd never seen an extra terrestrial being and you drew a picture of it, and your picture turned out to be correct. After you got over the ego trip, you'd think it was pretty magical, wouldn't you? The only thing I can think of is that Durer gave his inherent rhinoscerousness room to escape. It is quite possible, that in a subconscious, we are familiar with things about which we have no rational knowledge. The trick is to separate the personal garbage from the universal. It's not something you can control, but you ought to keep open enough to use it when it happens.

Those are dogs, bred in China many years ago to attack wild beasts. Their skin and fur is so wrinkled that their enemies got a mouthful without too much damage to the dog. I put them in here only because they interest me and because they don't look as you would expect.

That's a girl. Lots of girls are very beautiful. I've heard some men say all women are alike, but of course it's a stupid remark, and not true.

As you can see, this is not a lecture, nor even a talk. It might have something to do with art, but it is not a work of art. It's art in the head before it comes outside. All these doodles and animals, and this soundtrack. Art while it is still art, before it becomes a work of art. You can hang a work of art on the wall, but you can't hang art on the wall. Art is how you feel, what you think while you're doing it.

[audio recording of old movie dialogue]. Man is real, but his mind is not.

In the mind, you can draw in love without question, destroy and kill without regret. Art, in all its forms, is a process of mind becoming real.

Do they sell insurance against loneliness? Do they pay an amount calculated to make up for any loneliness claim he may have felt, or may feel in the future? What is the relation of reimbursement to loss? What's that thing on the ground? It's a dead elk. You mean and killed an elk just to take a picture. No, a bear killed it. I was walking in the mountains and came across it by chance. It was quite unsettling. You don't see very many elk, dead or alive, bear either for that matter. I put it in first because it's rare to find, and second besides it's sad. Sad like insurance. That's why you know. What? Well, that's why.

It's all too easy to fall into the trap of morality and judgment, but without morality and judgment, there would be no such thing as man as we know him. The way things are going, there may not even be man as we knew him, with both his faults and his attributes. But after all, who are we but a nervous mass of morality and judgment. So to hell with art, culture, and philosophy. Let's just fuck, eat, sleep in that order. But it really can't be appreciated without art, philosophy, and history. Fucking, eating, and sleeping are fun, if you know you're doing them. Without art, philosophy, and history, we don't know we're doing them, so it's no fun. With morality and judgment, you either think it's not enough fun, or you think it's too much fun. But at least you're thinking, not that it means much. But it is man's undoing, also his pride and joy, so baby, you might just as well keep on doing it because if you don't, you're lost. Not that I care if you're lost baby, I just don't want to be left here all alone.

The preservation of life is one of man's higher aims. There may be no better way of preserving life than to practice complete sexual freedom, and so the cockroach who at all times prefers sex to anything else, should be the moralist's ideal. The fact that this is not the case only proves that man is not a cockroach. What's all this jazz about cockroaches? Why pick on the cockroach. Well, I'll tell you, the primary interest of most living creatures is self preservation. But the cockroach goes one step further. They believe in the preservation of the race. A cockroach always has sex on its mind. Starve a cockroach and then present him with a crumb, and if a girl cockroach runs by, he will drop his crumb and chase her, no matter how hungry he is. Almost no other creature will do this.

It would seem the cockroach lives entirely for pleasure. Of course this pleasure may be an

anathema to him, this we don't know, not being cockroaches, but we do know, it's anathema to man. The cockroach can stand any amount of pleasure. It would seem man can't.

[recording of poem:
I've been born and once is enough/ You don't remember, but I remember, once is enough.
Under the bamboo bamboo bamboo
Under the bamboo tree
Two live as one, one live as two, two live as three
Under the bam, under the boo, under the bamboo tree

Where the breadfruit fall and the penguin call
And the sound is the sound of the sea
Under the bam, under the boo, under the bamboo tree.

Where the ??? mates in the banyan shades
Where we farm ???
Under the bam, under the boo, under the bam boo tree.

That's what life is, just is, what is
What's that life is, life is death

I knew a man once did a girl in
Oh Mr. Sweeney, please don't talk
I cut the cards before you came, and I drew the coffin,
You drew the coffin, I drew the coffin's very last car.
I don't care for such conversation, a woman runs a terrible risk.
Let Mr. Sweeney continue his story. I assure you sir, we are very interested.

I knew a man once did a girl in. Any man might do a girl in.
Any man has to needs to wants to once in a lifetime
do a girl in.
Well, he kept her there in a bath with a gallon of Lysol in a bath.
These well as ??? get pinched in the end.

[second recording of exotic musical instruments and sound]

What was all that? Well the poem was excerpts from Elliot's fragment of an Agon, and the music was Tibetan gumpo trumpets. They're 10 foot long bronze trumpets. They must sound fantastic high up in the Himalyas.

Now then, all the foregoing, doodles, words, music, animals, and wool gathering is raw material. Raw material and yeast to make things with. As yet, it is feeling only. It still must be sorted, selected, and organized before it becomes a work of art. The finished work must situate the subject within the feeling, relating these feelings to a more objective framework. Process controls the flow by feeling and emotion. The finished work should control the emotional

complex. Removing it from much of one reality, the internal, and situating it in a more objective reality, the external while at the same time maintaining as nearly as possible, the same temperature.

All right, that's about enough, don't you think? Yes it is except for two things I seemed to have forgotten. Well, be quick about them. Ok, I'll try. First there is often a magical dialogue which takes place between the artist and his materials. As soon as you put down a line, a form or a color, it begins to talk back to you. Much of what is said is confusing and meaningless, but listen very carefully because within this dialogue, between matter and spirit, there are elements which will strengthen and clarify your intentions. Second, one should be aware of what is going on in art in the present, not as many do, in order to copy it but because creative activity requires tremendous amounts of psychic energy. If you swim directly upstream, in the center of the current, you use all your energy to stay afloat. If you swim downstream, the work will be of little interest, and not in the least original. So swim diagonally upstream, like this, you will keep your individuality and know who you are.

The following group of slides are finished works. For the most part, they came out of material much like the that which the first part of this tape was concerned.

[END OF RECORDING]