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Oral history interview with Salvatore Del
Deo, 1977 July 13-November 3

Funding for the digital preservation of this interview was provided by a grant
from the Save America's Treasures Program of the National Park Service.

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Salvatore Del Deo on July 13, 1977, November 3, 1977. The interview took place in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And this was at the—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is July 13, 1977. Robert Brown interviewing Salvatore Del Deo in Provincetown, Massachusetts. You were born in Providence in 1928?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's correct.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were you fairly early interested in the arts? Can you reconstruct some of the tendencies of your boyhood?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, as long as I can remember, I've always been interested in painting. I think it started when I was about six years old. I loved—my greatest joy was to copy Old Masters and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really? Meaning even as a small child?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: As a small child. That was because my older brother, who's five years older than I was, was very precocious in the arts, in music, painting, and literature. He was sort of my mentor, so to speak, and he directed me from a very early age toward the arts. And all through my early youth, I can recall night after night of drawing from the Old Masters, and that's where I've gotten a lot of my historical interest in the arts and painting especially came from those days.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was this? I mean, you had colored reproductions—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —of those paintings?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, you see, one of the big influences at that time was the Italian newspaper *Il Progresso*. See, my family spoke no English. In fact, my sister and I were the only two out of six children who were born in this country. The rest were all born in Italy. So that our background, our family was—was totally Italian in, you know, in flavor. And the only paper we bought was the *Il Progresso*, which was a large, national Italian newspaper that came out of New York, and it had a very big circulation. [00:02:02] Well, they always included in every week's issue on Sunday reproductions of Old Masters, and most of them were always Italian Old Masters naturally. [They laugh.] And there's so much to draw from that, uh—that you could do that forever and ever, and I used to copy them a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you as you—can you think back? What were you really—seemed to be interested—have been interested in?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: At that time, it was—I hoped to be a great religious painter. It's funny, all through these years, it's been—my ideas about religion and depicting religious motifs have changed considerably, but in the back of all that, I still have a strong desire to do oil painting of a religious nature.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. What—now, these copies you made, were these in paint, or were these drawings?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, I don't. We didn't have any—you know, we were like everybody else. Money was hard to get, and it was mostly just drawings on paper, pencil drawings. And then the first break came when I was about—I'd say I was in the sixth or seventh grade. I got a summer scholarship at the Rhode Island School of Design. They used to offer Saturday-morning-class scholarships at the school of design, and I got one, and that was the first time that I ever saw an oil paint and was actually involved in an art situation. And it was a great

experience. I still remember it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Just walking through the halls there was—the smell of the turpentine there, it's just so—so beautiful to me. And that became almost a yearly thing that I would win the award. All through my school days, I was always connected with the school of design.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: So much so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you immediately leap right into oil painting? Did you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, no, I didn't do it—I didn't touch oil. I just saw oils for the first time and smelled them, and I desired them very much. [00:04:00] Just like an alcoholic, I was drawn to them. But the environment was a great influence on me to see, uh, the students who were triculating there were coming into school on Saturday and hobnobbing with them and getting to know some of them personally and some of the instructors at a very early age. And it was my one dream that someday when I get out of high school, I would go to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Go there.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —the Rhode Island School of Design.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of things were these—the older students talk to you about?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, they were—they were telling me what it was like to draw in front of a nude figure like I've never done anything like that. It seemed drawing is what I—I couldn't imagine how it was done. Oh, some of them showed me how to use the side of Conté crayon to do a quick sketch from the figure or—I forgot. They just showed me different things, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: The teachers, did they, uh—were they very paternalistic, or would they let you—turn you loose and just supervise—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. At that time, it was sort of formal. Like for instance, we'd spend—well, it was all so new. Like we'd spend a day just studying what you could do with a Conté crayon—getting different effects, cloud effects, bark effects from trees. Or another time, we would draw from stuffed animals and use pen and ink with wash. It was more of technique oriented, which is, I guess, general for most schools.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. You've found that, as you look back, as a very valuable basic training?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —training?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it was, yes. I think any training is valuable in view—especially since I was so deliriously happy to be in that environment. So this carried on right through the very end of my school days, and I think when I was about 13 or 14, I got a big scholarship, the Rockaway Scholarship, which would make—I could go three there mornings a week, and that was really something. [00:06:08] Then I really felt like I was involved in the school. I remember going to the different classrooms and seeing the art of the students, and I was so impressed by everything. I remember going to Mr. Wilfred Duphiney's studio who was a famous portrait painter at the time in Providence, and he had his own studio at the—you know Providence?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You know that beautiful hill on the side where the Providence Art Club is?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's one of the very—a very old building. It was Shakespearean, Elizabethan?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he had a studio in that building.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A studio in that building.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, jeez, going in that building and smelling that room—I could still smell it, and all these years, I still remember it. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, by that time, were you doing painting too?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, not yet.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. You're still on drawing?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Just drawing and drawing outdoors, pastels. Like every time we went to the beach, I would take my pastels, and my father and mother used to pose for me a lot and my brothers, and it was strictly drawing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mostly figures? Figures?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Heads, heads and landscapes, I would do some.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you find you had a real—a basic color sense that came early?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think it did because people always commented on my sense of color. And, oh, they were impressed when I get it to look like someone, and still the layman's criteria of art, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Was that perhaps your chief criteria at that point too, how accurately you could depict something?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I don't think so. I think—I think I developed compositional awareness at a very early age. Having done so many drawings of the Old Masters, I saw—I connected things together. I think I became aware of human nature at a very early age [00:08:03] And that carried on—I'll skip ahead a little bit, and that carried on until I end—I finished high school. Well, mind you, this was during the war, and, uh, I had my brother who was my close friend and advisor, he inspired me. He passed away when I was 14, and from 14 to 17, I was completely demoralized. By demoralized, I would say I lived on the streets. Like I rejected everything that was part of my past, and I very nearly didn't graduate high school. In fact, I probably wouldn't have graduated had it not been the war years when they were just throwing the kids out. And it was so bad at the time that we graduated mid-year. They had a graduating class in January as they used to—as they did during the war. So they got me out of there as soon as they could because I was a total wreck. I spent every day in pool, and I lived in the big Italian section, and that was very common around there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And yet you—in the summers, you still went to this—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —these classes—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But that was—that was—well, it must have been just before that. I think I must have been 13 when I got that the Rockaway scholarship.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Those years, you didn't even do that.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But after 14, I didn't do anything. So when I got out of high school—oh, and my other brother was in Europe. He was at the front. He is my number one brother. He was oldest. And it was then one of the most critical periods of my life that I decided I was going to the Rhode Island School of Design. I took the exam, and I remember it so clearly to this day, the excitement of going up there on a Saturday morning and taking the exam. And I was totally unprepared for what happened. Here, I—the kids had told that I'd have a drawing test. [00:10:00] They didn't say anything about a math and English test. Well, it was just about that time that the school of design was swinging away from the vocational reputation, heading—going more toward a college-oriented art school. So that they suddenly—with the influx of the veterans coming back, they suddenly became very tight because they had so many to draw from. They didn't have to be accepting everyone. So that I drew. I remember I drew that chair. I think—you know I had known that I was the—everybody was looking in my chair, and I felt so confident. But then when I went into the room and I had to take an English and math test, well that did it. I was rejected at the school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. And that was a terrible blow.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That was probably the biggest blow of my life at that time outside of my brother dying. I was so upset. In the meantime waiting for the results, I was working in a jewelry shop in a real grimy place downtown, and Providence has many of them—in those days, they're pretty rough—and we're working with the confidence that I was going to be going in the fall to the school of design. Well, when I found out that I was

rejected, I was really down at the bottom of the heap, and I decided that I was going to volunteer and join the navy. Mind you, I was 16 still. So I went down and took my physical and was accepted, even sworn in. But when it came time for the petty officer of the law to pick you up at your house at five o'clock, such and such a day—we lived in a tenement house, and we had a steep stairway and so this poor man came up to get me, and well, my father, he answered the door. When I told him I was—I had volunteered for the navy that night, he was furious. Here, we'd just lost my brother. My other brother was at the front. We didn't know what the hell was happening to him. Oh, he was coming—I guess it was just about the end of the war, and he was furious. [00:12:04] So the petty officer came up to this stairs to get me, and he threw him down the stairs. He said, "Out! I don't want my son—" See, I didn't have his signature yet. You had to have the signature of your parent. That was the only thing I needed. So that was the end of my naval career. [They laugh.] And from then on, I was in limbo. Then my brother finally got out of the service, and he enrolled in law school at BU. He saw my condition, and one day, he said, "Come on, I'll take you to Boston. We're going to the museum together." And when he did, he secretly took some of my drawings that I had done years ago and put them in this portfolio. We used to take—we took the train up to Boston from Providence and we went around to the museum, and finally, um, after the museum, we—he said, "Let's go look at some art schools." Well, I had heard—I used to have all the catalogs of all the art schools in New England. I used to love to look through them and compare the student drawings with my drawings and stuff like that. He said, "Let's go to Vesper George School of Art." So, at that time, it was beginning to build up again because the war was just closing down, and GIs were returning, and, you know, it was going full blast. And, oh boy, that was quite exciting to go in another art school again. So my brother asked at the desk if there was any chance of my getting in. Well, being a non-veteran at that time, they said no because they were giving preference to the veterans. So I walked out kind of disgusted, and my brother said, "Well, look, I'd like to just show you what the boy has done." And I guess, as I look back, this probably was one of the most important things in my life was that there was such a man with the sensitivity that Mr. Harold Lindegreen. [00:14:05] I think he did—I should recognize him more in my development because he was influential in my development, he being the director of the school. A very sensitive man, Harold F. Lindegreen. He looked at the drawings, and suddenly, my brother came out outside. He said, "Sal, come up here. Mr. Lindegreen would like to talk to you." Wow, I go in this man's office, and he talks to me, and he says, Well," he said, "Salvatore, it's obvious that you haven't had much training, but I see potential here, and you, obviously, have a love of the classics. And if you're willing to really work, maybe I could find a spot for you." Well, that's all I needed. I was so excited, I literally could have run all the way home. So he gave me a chance, and I was one of about six students in the class, and we went—I had to start summer school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, this was, what, in 1945?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: This was 19—no, this was 1946, 1946. Yeah, 1946, right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you support yourself?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I worked. I, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You lived in Boston?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: See, I quit the—I quit the jewelry shop, and I got a job in a big produce market in the middle of town, and I worked weekends so that I could sustain myself. But Mr. Lindegreen not only accepted me in the class, but he gave me a scholarship. And for three years, I went to Vesper George on a scholarship.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You didn't—did you live in Boston there—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You came from Providence?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: See, I couldn't. See, my brother—my brother was going to law school, my sister was away, and there was no one at home. [00:16:03] So someone had to be home to take care of the daily things that came because, as I said, my mother and father spoke no English and couldn't deal with bill paying and things of that sort. So someone had to stay home. I didn't mind. I was so excited like I'd get up at five in the morning and make my own breakfast and get ready to go to school. I'd walk down to the station. It was about, you know, a mile and a half or two, get on the train at seven, go to Boston, and for three years, I never missed a day of school, three years. The summer—uh, that summer and then went to this for three years. I had a perfect attendance. In fact, I used to be there painting in the studios when kids who lived across the street in the apartments because of the snow wouldn't come to school. That's how—you know that's how—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You were really intent.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I was really, uh, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really intent—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —excited. Yeah, it was—it was a great privilege and I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the—can you—can you describe a bit the—what's some of the memorable aspects of the teaching and some of the teachers?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, as I look back, the teaching was not the greatest. They had—because of the influx of vets, they had to pick up what they could because all the schools were in the same position. They had to immediately get a big faculty to cope with these, so they were turning out—any graduate student was a given a position if he wanted to, to take the freshmen class. Oh, they went in and picked up whoever wasn't working around the community. However, there were a few good men there. One of them was the director Mr. Lindegreen, and he—I understand, he's still alive. He's a member of the guild who does these beautiful Japanese-type paintings of birds on silk, a very cultured man. He was the first man I heard talk about the artist in the sense that I had dreamed about, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which was what? [00:18:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, sort of historical and appreciative, aesthetic, you know the aesthetic evaluation of Titian and Rembrandt and all these other great men of the past I had read about but nobody—I hadn't had any teacher taught—like in high school, a lot of teacher never talked about. So that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you somewhat on your own—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —while you were in there—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I was the only student. He allowed me to have—see, that school was basically a commercial art school. I went up to him, and I said, "Mr. Lindegreen, I really want to be a painter. I'm not interested in commercial art layout and all these things." He said, "All right, look, I'll make an exception of you, and I'll make our one fine art student." [Laughs.] So that allowed me to discontinue the paced-up subject and other things that are related to commercial art. So that after my second year, all I did was paint and draw from the figure every day. Or occasionally, I'd do an assignment like the other students, but basically, I was either painting still life or figure every day, and that was marvelous. Now, in the meantime that summer, we had a lecturer come to the school. Who was it? Henry Hensche.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. From Provincetown, yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: To me, you've got to understand that although we were only 120 miles away, Provincetown could've been 5,000 miles away. As far as I was concerned being a boy from the slums of the Providence, having never been away from home, I had no idea where Cape Cod—I never heard of these places. Oh, I had heard of Cape Cod because my brother had come here as a young man, my brother who passed away. He was friends with Mr. Corbridge who was a painter who used to come here many years ago. I don't know if you have anything about him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, Edgar Corbridge.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, he—at that time, he had no children, and he and his wife adopted my brother because he was so artistically inclined. [00:20:01] So they brought him to a place called Provincetown, but I didn't connect it till years later. He told me about this place that was beautiful by the water with fisherman shacks on the shore and artists painting the streets. He says, "Someday you're going to go there." Well, I didn't remember this until 10 or 15 years afterwards when I had been here for a while that I related that place that my brother had come to and so that I would finally be there in the place that I was in, which is kind of strange. But anyway, this man came to the school. His name was Henry Hensche, and he was going to give a painting demonstration. Well, up until that point, we hadn't touched oil paints, still hadn't touched the oil paints.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. This was just before you became a fine arts pupil at Vesper George?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes, right, exactly. I was in the freshman—in the summer freshman class. Now, you can imagine; you've met Henry Hensche?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he was very much like he is now, only more so. He was very fiery, he was very energetic, and he painted like I've never seen anybody paint. He drew this head up, and I'll never forget it, it was the head of a girl that later became John Whorf's son's wife, Marjorie Osborne. She was a painter in her own

right and a very good one. She was a student at the school the same time I was. He did this head in three hours, and I just couldn't believe my eyes. I was really drunk with the desire to paint and to study with this man, so I went up to him. Now, mind you, we were—there must have been 3[00] or 400 kids that many people that saw him, and I was the only one who went up to him and said, "Look, I want to study with you. Where do you teach? Do you teach anywhere?" And he said, "Yes, I have a school at Provincetown, Cape Cod." I said, "Where is that? I have no idea." He said—he gave me the information. "You write to me, and we'll see." I said, "How much is it because I have to know," you know, my resources were limited." [00:22:04] He said, "Don't worry about that. You just write to me. If you're interested, you'll find out where I am." Well, I was. I was really, terribly interested. And at that time, I was 17. I turned 17, not yet, that's right. So I went home to my mother, and I told her about this incredible thing that had happened. And I said, "Mom, I've got to study with him because this is—this guy has got it. He can teach me." Well, she was a little reluctant. She found out that it was out of state, and that I'd have to stay. That'd be the first time I'd be away from home, and she didn't like the idea. Well, one of the guys I had met at the school—he used to take the train with me—was Charles Couper. Have you met him?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, you should. He is a very nice—he lives up on state road, going out to Race Point. Well, he was five years my senior just like my brother, and he had been in the army, and he'd travel around, and my mother and father were crazy about him. We used to have him over for dinner. He lived near Pawtucket, Rhode Island. So I convinced him about the merits of Henry Hensche because he had been absent that day from school. I said, "Charlie, this guy has got it. We've got to study with him." I said, "Why don't you come to the house, and maybe if you come, maybe my mother would be less inclined to resist it." He came over one Sunday for dinner, and we talked about this thing, and my mother finally realized that this is where I had to go, and she consented to have me come to Provincetown.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Huh. You said you were going to go in the summer?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The following summer. Yeah. So Charlie, at the time, had a 1930 Studebaker. I'll never forget it. It looked like a great, big hearse. We came down that winter to visit Henry, and again, Henry, I owe him an awful lot too. [00:24:02] He said, "Look," he said, "all right, you haven't any money? You'll be the monitor of the class. You take care of the class, and I'll considered that tuition paid." So that what I did. In those days, the class was much more structured than it is now. We had morning classes at the school, either outdoors or in depending on the weather, still life. And in the afternoon, I'd get some kid around the neighborhood to pose on the beach on a barrel the way Hawthorne did just like those pictures. Every day, it was my job to settle the class down on the beach, and we'd paint the figure against the—against the sun, against the sky and the sea, and it was fantastic. And he had—right after—he had big classes then like 60, 70, 100 kids. From all over the country, they've come. And that was the beginning of my days in Provincetown. And I'll never forget it, as so many have done, I'm sure that when I came over those hills—and mind you, this was before the highway—and when I saw Provincetown, I fell in love with it. And I knew that this is where I'd probably make my home.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was—what was it you think that that really struck you then?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think it was even—at that time, I was struck by the fact that here were painters and fishermen living alongside each other. And that the inspiration that a painter gets from a physical force like fishing could be a never-ending source of inspiration as it had been in the past and it still is today. Even with modern interpreters of painting, they can't help but be influenced by the gear and the light and the life of the sea. I think there's a very strong attraction here. I know that Hawthorne, reading some things about him, one of the things that drove him here was the fact that this was a fisher town. And that all the painters prior to coming here used to go to Europe and always settled in fishing villages, you see, because there was a strong attraction to the—to this very physical act of making a living that's so beautiful to boot. [00:26:11] All you have to do is look at the skeleton of a ship, nothing more beautiful than that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or in the slums of Providence, you could have been around a lot of physical work.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But it wasn't the same. It didn't have the beauty. At least, it didn't have it to my eyes. I was always attracted to the water. My family comes from an island surrounded by water, and I guess it's in my blood, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. Would this—with Hensche then, how was your painting? What was the first painting—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The first time I touched paint.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And how was he? Was he brutal, or was he gentle, or was he—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: He was tough. He was really tough. We had to work with a set palette that he prescribed, mostly the cadmium range and—and no black, no ambers, no earth colors except burnt sienna and yellow ochre.

Those were the only things. We weren't allowed to use amber or raw amber or burnt amber or black or raw sienna. None of those colors were—and we worked strictly with those primaries and white. And we—and so unique for me because we painted on boards that we used over and over and over again. The one thing that he drilled in our heads, which was so different than all the other training I'd had in art school, was that we were creating studies, scales. He called it the scales like in music. We were strictly learning the scales of painting. And you'd think that we spent our whole summer—well, what turned out to be four or five summers for me of continual painting—every day, seven days a week and come at the end of the summer with four or five little studies. It was very hard for people to understand, "What the hell did you do all summer?" [00:28:01] "We were studying." And Henry—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were wiping out some and painting over them.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, we painted over the same boards. So some of them would weigh a pound and a half at the end of the summer. We used Dutch Boy white lead, which at the time was the cheapest way of getting around buying white. It was a very good, rich white, and we all used it in the class oblivious of the dangers that went out, so. Advertise about lead poisoning and stuff. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You weren't going to eat it, so.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, some of us did in—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —advertently. Well, in those days, the accommodation in town were not what they are today. Generally, boys get together and rented one room, like four or five boys, and it was rough. It was rough living, but it was beautiful. It was very exciting. So that's where I came every summer was to Provincetown. I'd be the first student here and the last one to leave and—

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have any talks with Hensche at that time?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he did most of the talking; we did most of the listening. However, there were moments when we had some wonderful times, oh, many times. When I look back, I think I had probably the most beautiful young manhood that anybody could ever want.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you make friends with some other artists and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, that's the thing—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —at the time?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —I wanted to bring in here now. I think that's very important. Although I was completely sold on impressionist painting as advocated by Hensche who was a follower of Hawthorne, who espoused certain impressionistic ideas, although he elaborated the technique of painting that the impressionists didn't know anything about. Rather than using the dot, he elaborated the big spot, you see, the silhouette. I don't know what it was, right. Again, I say I think it's probably due to my early training with the Old Masters that I was drawn to something beyond. I was always in conflict with myself, and I don't know what it was. [00:30:07] I think it was the sense of composition that Henry would not—he would not let his students deal with because he wanted them to solely concentrate on color. Because he said the summer was so short that you could get the other in school in the winter. Well, what he knew, but he wouldn't say was that in school, they don't teach you composition today. In the old days, they did. They had dynamic symmetry of Denman Ross, and they used, uh, Hambridge and those guys who wrote those wonderful books. And Moffett, he knew all that stuff back before and so did Dickinson, but in the years that I went to school, it wasn't taught in the art schools. It was all thrown out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you used—you had a growing need for it and so you satisfied some of this through some of other people you met?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, 1949, I used to go to all the galleries, you see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Here in Provincetown?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. 1949, I saw the first drip paintings of Jackson Pollock. What is now—well, it's where the *Advocate* used to have its office. There was a big gallery—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I've been there. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What was the gallery?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It was a numbered gallery, 261, or something like that, but it was started by Weldon Kees and Freddy Hemley's father, Cecil Hemley. And it was in the story *Gallery Town* because it showed the first drip paintings of Pollock, and simultaneously with the showing of them, *LIFE* magazine had that famous front-page spread on Pollock. It was on the cover with a big caption, "Is Jackson Pollock America's Greatest Painter?" in derision I think more than anything else. I was fascinated by them, and I remember seeing many of the modern painters like Gottlieb and Pollock and, uh, Gottlieb—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Kline and—[00:32:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Rothko. Kline I don't think was here yet. You know, incidentally, Kline studied with Hensche.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I don't think Kline was here at the time, but I know that Pollock was, I know Gottlieb, and I know that Rothko and Fritz Bultman. Peter Busa, I think he was in that too, I'm not sure, but I remember Pollock. He's the one that stuck in my mind. And I was—I was perplexed because we were studying traditional painting values, and yet, I was attracted to this other thing, and this dichotomy has always been with me all my life. I've tried to reconcile the flatness of much of contemporary painting with the thing that's been part of my youth and all my traditions as a three-dimensional form. So that, I think, my work does reflect this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think it began too at that time?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of course, with Hensche, you had to paint his style.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, I had seen his way, and I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But when you got that winters in Boston—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Exactly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —did it matter?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. I would start probing other areas and investigating other things. And that's the way it—that's where it came and that's what's made—that's made me what I am today I think, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get the—in the late '40s when you would come down here, were there any artists you particularly got to know?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Yes, I knew—I got to know—I got to know Karl Knaths. I got to know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, these were much older men.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did they talk a lot with you and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, Knaths not at that moment did, but I did get to know him. One of the most interesting relationships I had was with Gordon Peers and a little bit and Herbert—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Rhode Island School of Design, Herbert?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. Right, Herbert Fink, Gilbert Franklin, all the school of design guys. Again, we got friendly, and I used to go up there, and we'd have weekends out at Gordon's place, and we used to have wonderful times and talk about painting. [00:34:03] At that time, Gordon was—naturally, he was a pupil of John Frazier's. And John Frazier broke away from the Hawthorne technique by going back to a Cézannesque concept of painting, little dabs, building up the form from little dabs like Cézanne did. And I was at odds with that being the young wise guy, knowing everything about painting. When I think back how tolerant Gordon and those guys were with me, but I guess they must have sensed that I was really sincere when I was—I wasn't trying to show that I was anything.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you argued, I imagine?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: We have wonderful discussions—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, it's probably good for them, yeah?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah, it was good for me, I'd tell you. So that Henry would—he'd get a little upset when he knew that I had been talking to these other guys, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, because he didn't consort with them?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. He had long ago cut his ties with the outside world, I mean, mentally. He said to me once, he said, "Look, I've been in this thing so long, it's foolish for me to even involve myself with these otherisms, with these other ideas because it's too late for me." Because he said this quite a few years ago, but I mean that's the way he is. He found something, and he's developed it, and I respect him for what he's done.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you felt you wanted—you were still explorative?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, yeah. I—and as a result, the gains that I've made sometimes were lost in the process. And by that, I mean you'd gain certain skills, but in probing in unknown areas, you lose some of those skills, but you gain other things, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And I was hoping that I was gaining other things, but I did lose some of the skills that I had developed when I was strictly with Henschel. The color scale that—it's basically a technique. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because Peers was interested in forms? He wasn't color?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, he was interested in form and color but approaching it from a different way at that time. [00:36:06] Later, Peers in the '50s went into abstract expressionism for a while. That didn't last long then he went back to what he did. Peers was a very tight painter [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these men, Peers, Franklin, the others from the school of design, were they [inaudible] anything?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, no. Well, Peers more than—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Being teachers I mean, were they—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They were good teachers, but Gordon was a tough teacher I know from his students. One of my best friends who was a student of his at the school of design told me he was tough, but he was a damn good teacher though, and they respected him as I respected him. But at home in the summertime, he'd relax a bit, and he loved to just discuss things and not be the—play the role of the teacher as much as just an older painter talking to a younger painter, and it was very nice. I loved that. I remember that very well.

And then I met—and then when I was—after my third year in Provincetown, I became—oh, second year. No, wait a minute. The third summer, I got the position of cabin boy at the Beachcombers, and that really opened me up to the whole art community. I was there for about three or four years as a cabin boy every year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were more accessible—they weren't too accessible otherwise, and this made them—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, this made because every Saturday, they'd come to the club and then they would invite me to their studios. That's when I—that's when I first met Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Gonzales—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —Charlie Heinz, I mean all—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These men were pretty open to you, weren't they?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah, most of them were, most of them—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Could you characterize Dickinson, Edwin, Edwin Dickinson at that time in the late '40s, early '50s?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, he was a phenomenon even then. I mean, his whole—his whole idea of his painting, his visual concepts were so revolutionary to me then as they are now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were they? What was he trying to say at that time if you remember? [00:38:02]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he was talking about—well, he—it's funny. Dickinson was an interesting man in this respect. He knew that I was studying with Hensche, and one of the things I've learned from Dickinson, he said to me once, "A man who paints a number of years doesn't have to justify himself any longer in the eyes of the world," and that stuck with me. And Dickinson, although he veered a lot from Hawthorne, he had a reverence for Hawthorne, and he respected him. And when Hensche—when I studied with Hensche, and I was connected with Dickinson at the league, he would—he would gear his criticism as if he were Hensche to talking to me as a Hensche—as a student of Hensche's. In other words, he talked to me in terms of color, whereas other students who had nothing but total experience, he would talk to them in terms of tone, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: In fact, he almost had an uncanny ability of being able to look at a work of a student in complete understanding of that student's background. If you—if one student was interested in composition alone and had no color sense or no total values, he would work on the composition. In other words, he always picked out the strong point in the student and built on that, and I thought that was so incredible. Whenever I try to help somebody today, I always think of his—of his technique, and I try to incorporate it myself. Because I think that's such a marvelous and revolutionary way of teaching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So he was not doctrinaire?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not Dickinson, no. He was individualistic, but he had the ability to sort of ride with the punch, you know? He'd go along with what you had. He could be tough too of course. [00:40:01] But when I—like when I was in his class, he talked about the color of the model, and we used to relate it always to Provincetown. He'd say that "This—the thigh of that particular model looked like a clamshell on the beach" and that sort of thing. And it was beautiful. At that time in the league, there was John Whorf's son, Junior and myself all in the same class, and, oh, Dick, he'd go crazy. He loved that because we're from Provincetown. There was a strong feeling of camaraderie with anybody being connected with Provincetown whenever you went anywhere. It was beautiful.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When did you go to the league?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Nineteen forty-nine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. This was for the whole winter? You lived in New York?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I had to work, and I didn't spend the whole winter at the league. I finally got enough money to enroll and then I met another man there, a very little known man that I think should be more investigated because he was one of—a very fine teacher. His name was John MacPherson, a tiny little guy. He was a—he was a Scotsman with a strong Scottish brogue, and he was from the South, so you can imagine. He had a southern accent with a Scotch brogue. But that guy, jeez, he was terrific. He had a locker full of books, mostly sculpture, and what we learned in this class was—was the projection of the sitter—of the person drawing to the model. He was very strong on the planes, and the drawing should show whether the sitter was looking up at the figure or looking down at the figure. In a way, it tied in with Dickinson's idea about perspective, you know—the perspective of figure in the landscape, in the environment. [00:42:05] He had these books of Egyptian and Greek sculpture, and he used to use charcoal and draw right through all the pages and show the planes. And by the tilt of the plane, you could tell where the viewer was, where the artist was when he did the figure, and how much knowledge he had. It tied in, in a funny way, with what Henry was teaching me about form through color.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Because Henry when he draws, his drawing is very strongly three-dimensional. Henry's early training in sculptures stood him in good stead when he does—when he does a figure. He knows the form so well and the volumes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this would be reflected in the colors too, whether that—the angle of light striking just the parts of the—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. But knowing the volumes of the figure, he introduced the color on top of that, it made a very vibrating effect, a very interesting effect.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So how many winters were you at the Art Students League?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I was only there two winters. I couldn't afford it. Right after that, I got drafted.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you were—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I finally got drafted. They finally caught me in the Korean War, and I spent two years in

the army, much of which was spent in the Southwest, and I did a lot of painting out there. I did murals, and I did portraits and landscapes and did a lot of drawing, and it was an eye-opener. It's a great, great experience.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, back to Provincetown the time you—through being a cabin boy at Beachcombers, you knew Dickinson. You mentioned a couple of others now Charles Heinz.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Charlie Heinz.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Little known today, met him in Illinois. What was he like and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Never said two words. He was very, very quiet, and he was the skipper at the club one year, and you never heard of him. [00:44:02] You know, he just didn't talk.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Was the club a big—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, it's big.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —effect on you at that time?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh God, it sure was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Inaudible] social club and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It began to—it was the first time I started to draw away from the Hensche circle, not only—I started to paint by own—by myself, which was a revolutionary thing. It was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And resented by Hensche, I suppose?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he didn't like the idea because he could see right away that I was beginning to be attracted to other ideas. But he was—I must say as I look back, he was pretty tolerant in a way because he knew that's the way I was, you know what I mean? I think he sensed that I was not satisfied with just one thing. That I had a mind—would be the type that I had to find out the answers for myself.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Beachcombers, the artists, that's where they talk and reveal about their work, didn't they?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's how it was then. It was truly an artist club. And I can recall John Whorf on the porch. He'd come early in the daytime because that was his life. On Saturday, he was at the club, and here, he had these young guys. I used to bring kids from the Hensche class down just to listen to Whorf talk about Sargent and about Hawthorne and his experiences in the class and his experiences with Sargent and his experiences painting in general. And that was—you know, that was beautiful and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you all admire—did you admire him as a painter?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, at that time I did, yes. Yeah. And he was a terrific storyteller. Boy, he could—he could hold anybody for hours. So that was marvelous. That was really great, and at the same time through the club, I met people like Harry Kemp who became a lifelong friend of mine. Jake Spencer, probably the most—probably the best cartoonist that ever came to Provincetown. [00:46:01] His drawings lined the Mayflower bar. Have you been in there?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-mm [negative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, you must go in. There are works of art. You would see the whole history of Provincetown in phases right there of the '40s and '50s. He's got them all. I met writers. I met musicians. In other words, I was—through the Beachcombers, I was finally introduced to the whole art community, and I just was—in fact, we were so intense in our studies at Hensche, it took me three years before I found out that a boat came here from Boston. Isn't that something?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really insulated, huh?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: We were—we were totally absorbed in our work up on the backstreet.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But on the other hand, that time at least, in the Beachcombers and in Provincetown generally, it's a very fertile time, was it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Many artists and musicians who—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —were prominent?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —when you think—at that time there was—Hofmann was holding square at the west end with a hundred student of his own.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Hans Hofmann.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Hans Hofmann. Knaths was up the street from him then you got Hensche, and Dickinson was still very much a part of the community. Then you had—later on like in the early '50s, there was Rothko here, there was Kline that came here. Well, Pollock had been here in the '40s. My God, you name it, they were all here, and not only just one type of painting but all kinds of painting represented, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: So it was very open and tolerant times.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It probably was.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: A very exciting, a very exciting period. Ross Moffett was here, Bill Longol [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these were—did—Moffett was a veteran here, did you get to know him beginning then?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, because, see, being at the Beachcombers, Moffett at the time was very—he used to keep the Art Association in line practically singlehanded. I used to make extra money, like living money by helping hang the shows at the—and cutting the grass, so I got to know a lot of the painters that way. [00:48:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the role of the Art Association at that time? You said he kept it going singlehandedly.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, it was the only place—it was—first of all, it was a place of acceptance as an artist that you got in. Secondly, it was one of the few places where—well, it was prestigious. And probably more than that—more than it has now unfortunately, and I think we're trying to bring that around again. But it was—in the '40s, there weren't too many galleries. In the '50s, the galleries sprung up. In the '40s, there were just about two or three galleries in town.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Would critics and dealers from New York and Boston come down though?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah. Dorothy Adlow from the *Monitor* and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And dealers came in too?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. And I remember the—what all the painters talked about was, well, you never sell anything in the summer. You always sell it in the fall. August and September were supposed to be the big months when the people with money came down. And it was true. People came here for the whole summer then. They didn't just come for a day and then take off. There was no highway. In fact, when I first came here, there was no airport. It was really a remote fishing village, and when you came, you stayed. It was beautiful. I wish that we go back to those days. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, was your time in the army, was that very disruptive?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, that was pretty rough. It was rough for me because I had always been sort of a free spirit and to be segregated and regimented to the extent that I was, like haircuts and wearing a tie and everything, it's totally, totally foreign from my nature. It took a lot of doing, a lot of heartaches, but I managed to stay for two years. [00:50:01]

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—were you out in '52?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. No, I got out '53.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did you—what did you do then? Was that about when you went down to Mexico?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I got out February, and I went to Mexico for about three months—two months. I was going to go to school down there. I got down to Mexico, and I visited the school of fresco painting. And I—it's one

thing I always wanted to do from my early days. I wanted to do wall paintings, see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And I said, "Oh, this is it," and I met Rivera.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You did?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And I met Tamayo who was doing the—he was painting the big frescoes in the parts of Bellas Artes. I went up on the scaffold to see them close hand, and I visited Orozco's home and studio in Guadalajara and saw all of his frescoes. I was totally convinced that's what I wanted to do. Well, just about that time, I got a letter from my family—my mother was very sick. In fact, she was near dying, so I gave it up and—to come back to be—to help her out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Those Mexican muralists though, were they pretty obliging? Did they explain what they were doing?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, yeah. They were very nice, gee.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you sort of given—asking a lot of questions and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not too much because I was in awe of them especially Rivera, you know, he was internationally known. But they were very, very pleasant. They spoke as much as we could anyway. I didn't speak that much Spanish. But just being near them was enough and seeing the work while they were working on it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then you had to come back—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Then I had to come back—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to Providence.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —and not—and I stayed for a while, and my mother got better. And, uh, then I came to Provincetown early—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because what was your plan then? To continue painting and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, yeah. I was going to continue painting. In fact, I was going to go back to study with Dickinson because that had been cut short. [00:52:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean at the Art Students League?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: At the league. And as the best plans sometimes don't turn out, I met Josephine that year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —now, she was one of the family that used to come down here in summers or—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. She—her family—her mother had a farm in Berlin, East Berlin, Pennsylvania, and she was a craftswoman. She toured all over the country, and Josephine used to go with her quite a bit. But Josephine had been through college and art school, Tyler, and she came—she was weaving at the time under their mother's influence. And she fell—and she came here to visit and fell in love with the place just like I did and decided to leave her job in Philly and come down here and set up a weaving shop thinking that she might be able to earn her own way. Well, that's when we met, that year, 1953, and we got married that fall. That sort of cut my ideas of going to New York up. But by that time, I had realized that I think maybe I'd studied enough, and that I should just start painting, and that's just what I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At that point, were you pretty confident of where you were at?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No? Because you had two years knocked out.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, I wasn't. I was very—one of the bad things about me is I think I don't have enough self-confidence. I sense it, and I know it. I question myself too damn much, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: On what grounds were you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, my painting, my painting. I'm always changing things. I'm always changing things. When I look back at all of my work, and God, there was—I—I mean I've done a lot of paintings, but I sure don't have much to show for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why? Because you go over it so much? [00:54:00] You work it a lot—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I go over—yeah, I go over too much. I think a lot of this is due to my early training with Hensche of studies, studies, studies whereas other painters would stress finishing a picture. Henry was the complete opposite—start, make another start, make another start. And I think that I've—this is inbred in me now. It's ingrained in me, and I find it—one of my things I have to face every day when I paint is to finish something. Like I say, I'm not easily satisfied. But at that time, a lot of my contemporaries already shot right up. They were showing in New York and other places, and I wasn't showing anywhere.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Were you trying to show?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. That's another thing. Henry—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were still back here making studies.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Henry always discouraged, and to a certain degree, I think it's good. I think today, we've gone—the pendulum has swung the other way. The kid goes to art school one year, and the next year, he's having a one-man show. I think that's not good either.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They have their [ph] hopes in.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They're too fast in exposing their work, but I was too slow in exposing. I was the other extreme, and a lot of us who were of that period were the same way. I wasn't alone. But we were taught to believe that you've got to sing a finer note before you can be [inaudible] to the public, and therefore, go back to the studies, go back to the studies.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But did Hensche himself realize that this was happening to the younger people? Did it bother him? Because he, after all, was always selling something.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. But you see, he was in an enviable position where he could sell. He didn't need a gallery. He didn't need the general course that most painters need; that is, trafficking with galleries because he had ready-made audience every year, and that audience kept getting bigger every year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Namely his students.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Namely his students. [00:56:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And it started initially by his—by Hawthorne helping him. You see Hawthorne helped him a lot initially, and one thing led to another, so he really never had the pressure of having to show. And I think it's for history to determine whether that was the right course or not because from what I've understood, working with Moffett that if you don't have a gallery lineage, your chances of your work being around are very slim.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But were there—at that time, did you get to know any dealers? By the '50s, there were dealers coming into Provincetown.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah. I knew Boris Mirski very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these people—did they pick you up some of them?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. No. Because I didn't have anything finished. I knew Mirski. I knew Mr. Kootz when he was in town. I knew Grace Borgenicht very well. I knew—in Boston, I knew the Stewart Gallery people. That was a big, modern gallery there. I think all these people would have helped me if I had—but I didn't dare. I just was too timid about it. But a lot of my friends were already exhibiting in New York on a steady basis.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they encourage you to as much as they could?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not really, no, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They're so pretty caught up on their own—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, they were—they were all—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —feverish beginning?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But I didn't mind, and I don't mind now. It doesn't bother me anymore. You know now that I'm—I'll be 49 in August. I really feel that my best work is ahead of me. I'm very confident and very excited about painting. And things are getting better for me all the time. I'm going to have a show in New York next fall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You are?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, and I've been in a few shows here and there, invited, and I'm satisfied. I've sold a few things here and there, so I'm happy. [00:58:00]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you did—in Provincetown, apart from working on your work though, you did throw yourself into the Art Association, didn't you? For a number of years, you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You better believe it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —were involved there.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You better believe it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why did you do that, do you think? You felt that was an important thing?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I loved this town so much, and it's given me so much that I've tried to help it, improve wherever I could, my little bit, and that's why I ran for school committee. My youth in the school was—it was a disaster. I felt having two kids that maybe I could improve things somewhat, and I hope that my seven years in the school committee had done something to improve, for instance, the art program and the music program and the literature program and even sports because I have strong belief in the sports as well. Deemphasizing the competitive aspect of it, just getting all kids involved in some activity, I'm very much for that. So my work with the Art Association is along the same lines. I just naturally feel that if we had a stronger association that we'd be a stronger voice in the community. It would be a beneficial—you know, be a benefit to the community at large if we could become a part of the community as they were once many years ago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How? What do you mean by making it stronger the Art Association?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think representing different aspects of art and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or on a group of—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —supporting younger people's efforts, but not to the—not to the expense of exclusion of the older people.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right. Just generally, more broadly representing the artist—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes, right—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it beginning to—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —which is the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to be kind of narrow at one point and so—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It was once and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's one thing you tried to—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it became—and then I tried to get away from that, and we try to represent different things. I started a children's class here, which hadn't been done in 30 years or so. I think the last children's class was conducted by Phil Malako's mother-in-law, Mrs. Brown, Barbara's mother. [01:00:10] I think she had a class many years ago. And for seven years, we had a marvelous children's class. This was in the wintertime when I was one of the officers of the club, of the Art Association. Then we had—we had the show in the early summer, and we've done a lot of things. And then I got involved initially with the Fine Arts Work Center before it was even called the Fine Arts Work Center. There's been a lot of misunderstanding in the history of the Fine Arts Work Center that I should correct someday.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now of what sort?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think they're tried to overlook the contribution of a man like Reverend Vanderburgh, what he did to create what is now a very viable—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, who was he? What was his—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: He was the—he was the original director and promoter of the idea.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When was this, about 10 years ago?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Nineteen sixty-eight, '67-'68. In fact, the first concept, the first and this should be—and this is very important historically because it's been completely overlooked. The first idea of a school type of thing for Provincetown was brought to our attention by Pat Saffron. She is the wife of Anton Van Dereck. She was the wife of Anton Van Dereck who was one of the directors of the Art Association in the '30s, and in her own right an artist. She's a photographer. She wrote us a letter many years ago saying what could Josephine do and I to create some kind of a situation in Provincetown where painters and writers could live and work. We had been toying with the idea ourselves in conversation at—this—mind you, this was quite a few years ago. [01:02:00] And we were at the low end. The abstract expression really just tailspinned, and everything was in a dormant stage in the town, clockwise.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean? I see. You mean that was no longer—abstract expression is no longer sold or—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Was beginning to go out, phase out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And there was nothing to replace—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Hofmann had died.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —it here—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Hofmann had died and that whole influence of Hofmann was already buried. So we had a—we had a meeting up in my house in which we invited—which is interesting because we invited John Bell and we invited Munroe Moore and another person, plus ourselves.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who were these men?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Bell was a writer who is now a building inspector, and well, he writes for the *Advocate*, but he's a freelance writer and very much interested in the town, a wonderful person. And Munro was also—he's now the president of the Fine Arts Work Center. It's interesting. And a selectman in the town and very much active in the cultural affairs of the town. So Bell came and this other fellow, this other man who was a businessman came to our meeting in our house, and we discussed the idea of starting some kind of a school and what they thought about it. Well, my idea was to have a place where we would appeal to older artists, older painters, not beginners because there will be a babysitting problem. More or less people who had already been through an art school experience or a college experience in art, and to provide them with some kind of a fellowship here, and Ernie got involved in it at that time

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who was—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Vanderburgh, Reverend Vanderburgh who was the vicar of the Saint Mary's of the Harbor.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Episcopal Church here that many artists had helped—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. Well, that was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —just decorated some.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes, the history of the church has always been tied in with the artists. So Ernie got going and we got him to—he, on a different tangent, got started with Huddy Walker on this idea. [01:04:06]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay. Hold on a second there.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Okay.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: We were talking about the Fine Arts workshop, Reverend Vanderburgh, and now, Hudson Walker as well.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Apparently, Hudson, I guess, gave them a little money or encouragement to start

investigating the feasibility of creating such a program, and that's when we got together, and we formed the first group of officers. Ernie was retained by us on a very small fee and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: To do what? To organize?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: To organize—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —be the administrator?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —a program. Yeah. He was the director, and that meant that he had to go in the community and get money and create a staff and create a fellowship program.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did most people seem to agree that you needed—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to subsidize younger artists—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to rejuvenate the Provincetown—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, some people did, but you see unfortunately, when we started the idea, there was another idea that was also traveling around, and that was called PALA. I don't know if you've heard of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Provincetown Academy of the Performing Arts, P-A-L—Living Arts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Living Arts?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, PALA. And many of the people who were influential in the art world on the Cape, Lower Cape got involved with PALA. Some of us didn't, and we were one of them—we were two of them and Ernie. We thought of something. See, they were interested in performances; we were more interested in creating a place for creative work for—a haven for painters to work in, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: We were different in that respect. But because we had come in late on this venture, we were not getting the support from the people who normally would've supported it because of PALA. [00:02:06] They were throwing their ball in with PALA. It's kind of ironic because the very people—it turned out 10 years later that—well PALA, in the meantime fizzed, just evaporated. And the very people who were interested in PALA are now all connected with the Fine Arts Work Center, and that's really amusingly ironic.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But do you think they finally were convinced that this was more essential?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, I don't think they were convinced of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think that just a question—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —when the others did—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —of jumping in on the bandwagon. Because by that time—by the time Reverend Vanderburgh left, the Fine Arts Work Center was definitely a viable thing, and it was going to continue.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About when was this, early '70s?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: By the early '70s, it was definitely. I feel very strongly connected with the Work Center because almost to a man, the last six, seven years of faculty or staff of that center were people that I recommended to my board because the rest of my board were laypeople. They were not painters, and they didn't know the people like I knew them. If you go over the list of all the people that have come here—not in the last two or three years because I've lost interest because I'm working now with Josephine at the museum, and that's taking all my time. But when I was still interested, you go over that list and all the visiting lecturers almost to a man where people that I recommended.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: For example, Gill Franklin—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —what—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —Kahlil Gibran. We wrote a letter—we even got a letter returned and answered from Jacques Lipchitz. He was almost going to come, but he couldn't fit in the schedule. Karl Knaths, Henry Hensche, Ross Moffett, Jack Tworokov, Fritz Bultman—these were all people that I recommended because I was the only member of the committee at the time that had any understanding of the arts. [00:04:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your being there to bring in a variety of—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes. The idea—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —artists?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —was to have a continuing, changing forum so that painters and sculptors would have a diversity of ideas presented to them from people who had already established themselves in their field. And since they weren't talking to young people, it wouldn't be like they're swaying these kids immediately, but it would reinforce what they believed about their art, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What form did this take? They would speak to them? They'd—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They'd come here for a three-day seminar. Some of them just spoke. Others performed, either painted or sculpted. I remember Gibran gave a very informative demonstration on welding. Ross Moffett gave a wonderful lecture on composition using the Old Masters and slides. Hensche gave a very good lecture. Karl Knaths gave a marvelous—like we have it on tape somewhere. Jack Tworokov, a beautiful lecture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you brought in younger painters to talk to them as well, I mean even midcareer?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Then we introduced Jim Forsberg. He was another one that I recommended. Fritz Bultman who I thought was of the younger generation. But I always thought of Gibran and then Gil Franklin as being younger generation, you know, middle, middle generation. So that there was quite a diversity of opinions about their art, and it was a very exciting time. And just about that time then we—there was a terrible schism that developed in the board. There was dissatisfaction with the directorship. Up to this day, I still am not sure why or what—if the reasons were well founded for his departure. [00:06:00] Because Ernie—I'll tell you what Reverend Vanderburgh did. He tried to make the program self-sustaining. He had developed certain ideas of making the fellows have—develop a sense of self-pride so that they didn't—they wouldn't feel that they were getting something for nothing. So he developed a work program where we were going to have basic shop skills available to fellows, and it would be paid an hourly wage for two or three hours work a day or like 10 hours a week, whatever it was at their discretion. They would have an income coming in that would make them feel like they were an integral part of the community, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Maybe doing—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not just—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —things—assigned work?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That could be sold for the benefit of the whole program. Initially, we started with these bird feeders. We went all over New England selling these things. We were planning on making stretchers and frames in the future. And Munro Moore through his generosity let use his basement of the Bull Ring Apartments, and we had a—we bought a saw, and people like Victor Dekalo made a few bucks every week by spending a few hours—social and then it was also constructive. And Ernie did all this. But somehow or other, some of the people whom I recommended to the board, the staff—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The young people—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —were dissatisfied with something that was going on. And suddenly, they took a vote, and they decided with Hudson Walker's support to demolish the board I was on because they want to get rid of a certain individual who was being very disruptive. I won't mention his name. They assured me that the painters having the control that it would be along the lines that I had envisioned. Well, one of the things I envisioned was that the staff would always be a changing thing every two years, and what happened was the ones who took over the control of the school never changed. [00:08:08]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. Why did you want them to change?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Because of this very idea of not entrenching one school of thought.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I got you.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's the one thing—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what is staff—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —that always keep popping back out.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what's the staff—I thought it was something more than bookkeeping.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not really a staff. It's a staff on paper. There were people who came down and gave seminars—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see. These people—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —did the same analysis, this—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, they finally got a few changes. In the last three years, I don't even know the place anymore because they've—see, one of the things that I wanted was I wanted to debunk the idea that only New York can produce things. And that's why I went to the regions like Boston and Providence and places around us who had always had a history of association with Provincetown rather than hit New York. It was my way of rebelling against the status quo or not, you see, so that I had people like Gil Franklin—a lot of these people didn't even know who they were.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And Gibran, unless you come from Boston, nobody knows who Gibran is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But I think he's a very fine teacher and artist and individual, and I think he's worthy of presenting himself to a group like this as well as Gil Franklin. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did the students come from all over? They—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They came from all over the country, yeah, and it's still a very good program. What happened after that, uh, there was a very critical point where they decided to introduce creative writing into the program, and there was a great deal of discussion about it whether it would be worthwhile to do it or whether it was going to be detrimental. As I look back on it now, I think it has been a little—I think it has changed and altered the original concept of the program because originally intended for the physical arts, you know, painting and sculpture. And now, the preponderance of the kids who come are literary, which is fine too. [00:10:06] I mean, I think it's a wonderful thing, but it is veering a little bit away from the original intent.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But they do—I mean they and the visual arts have a lot to share at least in conversation.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, especially nowadays where the visual arts are all enmeshed like a mulligan stew. You know, you've got literary and art all together, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what effect—as far as you can see, what results has it had on the people who have gone through the workshop program?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think it's been a very good influence in the community. Many of them have returned and stayed and become residents of the community. Some have been real positive contributors to the community at large.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean through—also through what they're doing through their art?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, through—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or through involvement?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —just participating in the community. I think the Work Center has brought a certain

sense of recognition as Provincetown. What it has done is it altered its original claim to fame as being the great summer art colony and has established it now—what we wanted to do—as a place for a winter colony of artists.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About how many artists are you talking about would be there in any given winter?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, I don't know, probably 20 or 30, maybe 40.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's a pretty considerable number.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's quite a number, yeah. They were able to acquire this property, which was originally a day studio, which is historically important because Hawthorne painted there, Moffett painted there, Dickinson, Hofmann, you name it, they had all—Paul Berwyn—they all painted up there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: So it's a historical spot on Pearl Street.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In a way, you're getting involved in all this and creating this art, helping to create the Fine Arts Work Center. It sort of goes back to what you wish you'd had I think when you came back from Korea and were married now, right? At that point, you wish you had—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think you hit it right on the head.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because you had to scramble, I suppose, when you came back after—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. And it was a singular thing. I was alone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And I think you've hit the nail on the head there, Bob. It's exactly—I've always—we all have dreams, utopian dreams. [00:12:04] And I'm not the first one to think this, and I was interested to know that Moffett went to the same kind of utopian idea of a socialized state where the artists and the working men worked together. And van Gogh, he envisioned that in Arles when he invited Gauguin to come down. It's been a recurring theme with many painters through the centuries. So what I'm thinking is nothing new, but it did happen to me too that I'd like to have seen a community of artists and workers together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it has happened here, hasn't it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think in the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's beginning—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it's beginning.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and it's still, yeah?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it must have had a healthy effect with these young people from diverse backgrounds. It, sort of, reinvigorated the Art Association right and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Indirectly. It's been a symbiotic relationship.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see, well—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, for instance, before they had this place, the annual shows of the Work Center were held at the Art Association. In fact, they still are when they have the big show once a year, and when we needed something from the Work Center like volunteers or some equipment, the Art Association lent from them. So that, like I say, it's a symbiotic relationship, and I think it's been good for both. I think that—I think the Work Center is a wonderful thing, and right, it's good that it's still around.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, now, to get to the subject of an art association, is it so as a lot of people seem to observe that an association, periodically at least and sometimes perpetually, gets in the hands of a certain group. And so one of the most difficult things is creating a rejuvenating mechanism, right, to bring in new people from new points of view and all that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I couldn't agree with you more, Bob, but you see, to say it and to do it are two different things. I've always considered myself one of the members of the younger group for years, but now all

of a sudden, I'm in another group because I've reached that point in my life. [00:14:02] But I still relate to the younger people. But the thing that I found that's been very disconcerting is that whenever you invite the younger people in, like they're very vocal like to open meetings. But when it comes down to the nitty-gritty of changing the light bulbs and getting a show on and doing all the things that are required to operate a place like that, they're never around, see. Now, I won't say all of them. There are a few exceptions naturally, but by and large as a mass, it's always—who are the ones? It's always the old timers who pick up the pieces, and I don't know why that it is, but it seems to be true with everything that I've been connected with.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But on the other hand, you're—you perhaps—your age group, there are probably only a small minority of you that helped. There's a lot of your peers that are out there that don't help either, are there? Or would you say, in general, the older artists seem to have more of a communal spirit with this, with regard to the Art Association?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, they—I think they felt it was more their place. You're talking about guys like Eddie Eula [ph], Bruce McKain, Ross Moffett, Dickinson, they have a feeling about the Art Association that the young people probably will never have because the times are different, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. Because when they came down here, as you said, there was no airport, there was just a road, and you're isolated here, You've got to make do with what you have.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah. These—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These younger people had many outlets that—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. They've got—there's such a diversity of interest today that they can't have the same intensity about a place like those fellows did or even like in my generation did. I was connected with them when I was 18 years old. I was already connected with the Art Association working around there, knowing the place intimately. So it's been a part of my life too, but a lot of these, you can't expect them to have the same feelings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, no.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: However, they're very vocal about making changes. there have been occasions where we have made changes, and many of them have not been for the good of the association. [00:16:01] But, thank God, there's always that real gut feel like some people, Oh, I've always picked up pieces when it was important. But I must say that the Art Association in the last a couple of years, two or three years, has shown in a new vitality and shown a new interest and an awareness of their past, which has made me feel good because I was very critical of the direction it was going in three or four years ago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Which was what, do you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, they were going to—they were going to—there was a point there, they were so much in debt, there was talk of selling their collection to pay for their debts. I was furious about this, and I made myself known vocally at one of the meetings. There was talk of selling the Hawthornes. You know, I—to me, I couldn't see that we were nothing more than temporary custodians of that collection being of this time and that we had no right. Those things were given in good faith for the—for future generations, and our position was to retain that possession or guard them for them now. And that if we had made mistakes and we couldn't run our place, we shouldn't sell the past at the expense of our mistakes to pick up the deficits that we've incurred.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you see the Art Association as in part a museum and in part an exhibiting entity?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it for members only?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's for members only, but the public is invited naturally, you know, but anybody can become a member. You don't have to be a painter. The expansion of the facilities in the last two years is going to help a great deal. I think they—like I say, it's a recent awareness of their past, and they're putting it to good use now, and I feel I've had some little measure of input in that. I think it's going in the right direction now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How do you handle the jurying like for the member shows, the three shows a summer and they're roughly—[00:18:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, I'm—being a vice president, I'm supposed to be part of that, and I find it very difficult to do. I suppose I should be more active in that respect. But I have juried some of the shows along with some of the other vice presidents, and it's worked out pretty well. When one can't make it, the other one—the other two does or three does, and so they've always been covered.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you call it the outside jurors ever?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: We have, and every time we do, it's always a disaster.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It seems to be a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —disaster because, again, you're playing into the hands of one particular taste. In the most recent years, we've had outside jurors come in, and what turned out to be the fair thing to do turned out to be a debacle. Because people of great value to the Art Association historically and some financially and some artistically were rejected on grounds that the particular individual didn't like what they were doing. These people have been around for years. Well, as an association, you can't afford that kind of liking.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's right.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You see.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You have an ongoing need to sustain yourself.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's a community. It's a community of artists. Association, that's what it is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's almost like a gallery that you can—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Gallery—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —pick and choose drop and then—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They can do whatever they want, yeah. It's the taste of one person or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I recall, this is about five years ago, I think it was Kennedy reviewed the show and talked about it as—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The Clothesline.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The Clothesline. They just didn't seem to show any criteria for quality, and everybody was shown then.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, everybody who—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were your feelings about—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —knew—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I was very much against that because the person that was called in to view the paintings was somebody from New York and had a New York point of view, and I think the show was definitely slanted toward what was recent or current in New York taste. And it didn't reflect the fabric of Provincetown's art scene. [00:20:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this particular show was reviewed?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. I don't remember word for word what Kennedy wrote, but I thought the show was a disaster because they showed painters of—paintings of painters who would probably visit here for a short period of time. They weren't an integral part of our art community. Again, these things happen like—just to digress a little bit, this recent show at the Everson Museum—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Syracuse—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —nice show and everything. Everybody said it looked beautiful, but, jeepers creepers, they put out a catalog, what did they put on the cover? Gifford Beal paint, not Gifford Beal—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Charles—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Charles Hanson. Well, I'll bet he wasn't even in town a week, and it was just an ordinary

landscape that I think that's been done thousands of times as good if not better. But because he's got a big name, they used this picture. My God, all the painters who have lived there for years who really understand the Provincetown, you know, I can name a hundred of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So you're saying it's important to look at artists who know this place?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You've got to know the territory. And that's why I'm fearful of outside—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And yet—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —so and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —there are a lot of the painters who aren't going to be interested in the geographical territory. They might come here and live, right, but they're not necessarily going to be effective in any sort of literal way with Provincetown, are they?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, not—well, let's take for a classic example, Motherwell who's an international celebrity. I mean, I wouldn't say his painting represents Provincetown.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But he finds some kind of encouragement and inspiration being here in Provincetown. I just read his article in the *New York Times* there. He's talking about the light. These are intangible things, I think, every artist is affected by when they come to Provincetown. They don't have to paint a literal landscape of the harbor or the dunes, which is more easily accepted by general public. [00:22:03] But some way, somehow, the ambience of this place does get into the blood stream of a creative person.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What about outsiders coming to review shows and all? Wouldn't you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Fine.—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —do more and more of that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think that should be encouraged. Yeah. You know, it's—well, for instance, if you studied our history and you talk about the—if you're talking about the—if you're representing say the CNE School, well you're not going to put Antonello da Messina in there or a Venetian painting. You talk about the CNE School, the people who painted and absorbed that landscape in their work. Or the Fontainebleau School or the Hudson River School.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right, and you're saying there's a Provincetown school?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: There is a Provincetown school. It's not a school set up with any rigid boundaries.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, but it's a place that that—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Exactly. And that's what I thought this show would do, this Painter's Place [ph], and maybe it has done—I haven't seen the show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you wouldn't have objected if it was, say, a Motherwell affected by his coming here was on the cover?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Even a Motherwell as obtuse as that would be would've been more to the point than using a Charles Hanson. My God, McKain, Malako, Dickinson, my God, who's—who's created—Moffett, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: By the way, the hit of the show was our discovery JV.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really? Huh.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The crucifix that we hold at the museum, a big picture, that was the hit of the show. Now, that was a modern painting done in primitive style, and yet, he represents Provincetown painting because he developed here, and he lived here most of his life.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you feel yourself as a real Provincetowner at this point, don't you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you find it—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's my home—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and in your work, the themes, the subjects, the—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No question about it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —come of it? [00:24:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you feel, getting back to your own work, that you're—you say, now, the best things are ahead of you? Do you feel—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I feel that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that momentum that you haven't felt for years?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I feel a clearing in the woods, you know? I feel that I'm beginning to separate my multiplicity of thoughts into more of generalized areas, and I know what I want to do now. I know what I'm going to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you say it in that show, or what channel seem to predominate, would you say?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think I have—my greatest love is for the figure, utilizing the figure, and that's what I want to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are these large-scale things like this one of the three fishermen that you're working on, are these likely to be predominant in the future? This—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I guess—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —is very monumental.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —in the near future, yeah, and I think what I'll probably begin to do is to abstract them more and more. To get more of a flat patterning is what I'm after eventually and but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean you've come to love the painted surface for its own sake?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I—let's see—it goes—it comes and goes with me. It's hard for me to say. The three-dimensional form is so ingrained in me that I bring it constantly to my palette, to my work every day whenever I paint. And it's a question of what—there's a quote—there's a quote of Karl Knaths' that I love in his book about—he makes a comparison to the spokes of a wheel. Like, you can see all the spokes, but it's the space between the spokes that are interesting. I remember that, and I keep that in my mind. [00:26:00] See, the fishermen are obvious, and the gear and all the things that are around me every day are obvious, but it's the space in between that that I'm interested in. If I can show—if I can give the feeling, the atmosphere in my painting that there's a boat behind a wharf or behind a building and just with something of it showing and make it sense that there's a boat behind there then that permeated the feeling in my canvas that I'm after. It's that intangible. I think that only comes about after you've been in a place for a while and you absorbed it properly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So in your work, there's—I don't know if you want to call it tension but both three-dimensional and then this space and this sort of a space—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right, yeah, there's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —kind of—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —no question about it. No question about it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —composition?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So that in this study of—your study stage as far as painting, the—say the light blue area to the left where there's a figure sketched in, but say it isn't sketched in. That light blue space in the upper left-hand corner will be as important an element in the end as the molded forms of the men?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Exactly, yeah. Again, I think there is a relation with my background, and the things I've been exposed to coming to the forefront here more clearly than ever before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What? Like the space, what would that stem from? Your knowledge of composition—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Composition, yeah, [Piero] della Francesca and, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And the economy of means?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And Moffett, I've learned a lot from Moffett. Moffett has been—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is Moffett—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —an eye-opener—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —someone whom—who struck you years ago, or is it fairly recent since you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and your wife have been working with the paintings even—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think that the real—I always loved him as a man. [00:28:01] You couldn't help but not like him. He was such a fine person. But I had no idea that he had such a mind of stuff that he had done many, many years ago. It came as an incredible shock to me to be involved in this collection through the family and through Josephine's work. See, we got to know Ross because he was on that committee with Josephine in saving the Province Lands, creating the national park. But even then, the intimacy that we had with him, we had no knowledge of what his art background was. He was such a shy, quiet man. And then he got very ill, and he withdrew from the scene a little bit. And when we started the Provincetown Group Gallery, it created an incentive for him to start painting again, and he had that last spurt, that last burst of energy that—and painted some of his great paintings like that one there of Provincetown that was done a year before he died. One of his great paintings, I think. I think it sums up the time pretty well. [Laughs.] But then when we got into his studio, I helped him move from his old studio to his house when he built his little studio back in his house. It was then that I saw what he had, and I couldn't believe it, and Josephine came down, and she was stunned. And then she started encouraging to continue his autobiography, continue his writing because he had a great style of writing, and he was the only one who had documented the history of art in Provincetown as you know from art in the streets. He did carry—he went backwards at Josephine's insistence when he was dying and did complete part of his autobiography. Unfortunately, he never finished it and so Josephine to finish the biography part. But I learned an awful lot living with his paintings as we did, and I think he's one of our great American painters. [00:30:06]

ROBERT F. BROWN: He's a classic example of a man who never projected himself and so it's—he is very little known.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. It's ironic because when he was my age, he was well—he was well known. He was known all over the country. When he was my age, he was already a member of the jury at the Carnegie International, and he had prestigious reputation. And then he retired and went into sort of an inward period, didn't show too much, stopped showing in New York, and again, I tie it in with this—lack of a gallery. Frank Rehn died, and when Frank Rehn died, he closed all of his interest in New York and withdrew to Provincetown. And then, in a way, he felt that he was responsible for the Art Association and gave up a lot of his own time, you know? But he was a man that was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're coming out of a similar period of 20-odd years.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Exactly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Giving up yourself a great deal?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you talk about a show in New York and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I did.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —gallery track record?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, that's what I'm doing now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You probably have to be in New York would be the—it's the largest showcase.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: There's no question about it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You have in mind certain dealers you'd like ultimately to show your work?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, I—I always dreamed that I would be in a gallery like, uh, something like what Dickinson showed like the Graham or someplace like that. I don't care. It doesn't matter. As long—I'm having a show with a couple that own a tiny—well, it's not a tiny gallery. It's a big gallery, but it's in—certainly not in the money area. It's down in the Bond E, but I like these people so much, and they're so honest that I'm very excited about showing there. [00:32:00] It reminds me of the same enthusiasm that the Sun Gallery kids had when they started the Sun Gallery here in Provincetown, same kind of people. I'm—I'd like to show with people who are excited about helping and showing the work rather than prestigious. I'm not interested prestigious galleries at all. In fact, I think they're very damaging in certain areas. But I'm very satisfied and looking forward to this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where there'll be—let's say you do well in this, there'll be then some pressure for you to start—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's where you separate—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —turning out, right?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —the men from the boys, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, but I think my age is enough so that I don't think I'm going to be that much influenced.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, you're not going to be compromised by that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No. And that's—maybe back in my mind I had this that maybe I didn't have the strength to resist whatever compromise I would've had to make had I been more successful younger. I think everything works out for the best. I remember one time when I was talking to Dickinson. It was right at—when he had his Venice Biennale honor, you know having a room at the Venice Biennale. He was already aging and hadn't painted for a number of years. And I said, "Oh, Dick, what a wonderful tribute to you to be awarded this privilege of showing at the Venice Biennale." He looked at me, and he said, "Yes, Sal. Too bad, it was all done years ago. All the work was done years ago," you know? When he needed it, he didn't have it. When he wanted it, the encouragement, he never got it. These paintings were all—the ones that they were honoring, he had done when he was a young man, 30s and 40s. So I feel very good about what's going to happen. [00:34:02] I'm—I feel very privileged that I've known some really fine painters.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And now, it's your time, isn't it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, it's interesting. It's like I think the actors and actresses. They wait for the big name to fall over and then they move up. It's a question of timing I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. You have more windows, people know your work more, it may affect somewhat your relation to Provincetown, right?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh, sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your fellow artists—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Never know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —pretty well?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Sure. I think we're all like compost for the human facilitation that the big men, they finally achieve something and then they die and then the middlemen come up and take their place and then they become compost for the younger people, and I think that's the way it should be. I mean, you can almost tie this in with the art preservation. I had a discussion with someone a while ago, and I think there are two ways of looking at this idea of preserving things. That is good in a sense. But in a sense, maybe it's better if things finally die to make room for new things, to make room for new standards and new, uh, achievements. And if something is altered so much so just for the sake of keeping it and saying that it's done by so-and-so, but it's not—nothing of it is left of the original end then I don't see any sense of keeping it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, well that dilutes.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: You know what I mean? And that's happened—that's happening a lot in the preservation field as you know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you're not that. You're a new wave in a sense. You're going to be preserved. [00:36:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I feel I've still got a lot of kicking left. I feel very good.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This is the second interview with Salvatore Del Deo in Provincetown, November 3, 1977.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, we've got assembled today a range of your paintings from quite early ones to ones you're still working on now. Why don't you point to one of the earliest, and we could discuss that to begin?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Okay, Bob, I'll start by pointing to that mother and child painting I got there. From that, you can guess what my influences were, but the thing that I think was behind that was my desire that I've always had for large painting, mural painting. I've always been interested in painting large surfaces. That painting was inspired by the birth of my child, my first child, my daughter. Not that—I mean it was the idea of the birth that interested me not the fact that she turned out to be a girl rather than a boy. What I try to show in that, this picture is that the—is the woman comes out as a very powerful figure as women had been depicted through the history of art in many, many times. She represents the protection for the newborn, and she holds the child in her hand, and the hand is sort of centrally located so that it corresponds in a sense to the where the child came from. [00:38:12] And the child has that same kind of—oh, I don't know that the word would be but assurance that you'll find in many of the fourteenth-century Italian masters. The child is generally depicted as being playful and abstract—distracted from the main theme of the composition. In other words, it does what it wants knowing that the mother is always going to be there to take care of it, you see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see, yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And the child points to the breast as the feeding instrument for growth—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And yet, the child is standing, is it—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The child stands—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —I suppose it could be self-sufficient or awkward—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Just about—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —there's the potential, I mean—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But it's—it's still being held up by the mother's arm, which is a very powerful arm, a big arm.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why are these—the colors? The baby is very livid, pinkish colors. The mother is in the—it looks [inaudible] perhaps the lavenders, grays, mauve colors?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I don't know why I did that, but I guess it was just a mood thing. And I didn't want—I didn't want the mother to—I mean it dominates the—you know it dominates the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It would be somewhat—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It would be—it would make it even more dominating if I had—then I would have had to get into naturalistic things, and I was trying to avoid that at this period in my life.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, I didn't want to make it a realistic rendering of a figure in space. I was more interested in the concept of the mother and the child rather than a woman with a baby in space. [00:40:02] And this relates more to my ideas about wall painting. If I ever had the opportunity, I would like to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —do some—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you said it relates to your idea of wall painting, in a sense this large size, what other respects?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, also, that it's—it's sort of—it's three-dimensional, and yet, it has a two-dimensionality about it. It does—doesn't flow back in space like impressionist painting does and, oh, like the [inaudible] school painters do. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, large parts of this could be looked at just to be abstract, I think.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is that a fact of your painting in the late '50s?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. This was a new thing for me. I think it was brought about by the, um, predominance of the abstract expressionist movement at the time. I never did wholly buy the abstract expressions. However, I did and was attracted to the sense of freedom that it brought the painting, and I thought of it in terms of breaking away from the rigidity that I had previously concerned, you know—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were much more concerned with composition than—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah,

ROBERT F. BROWN: —previously and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, composition in a sense that it related to three-dimensional form and space. In other words, not violating any of the principles that have been handed down in the history of painting from one painting generation to the next. Until, well, really Cezanne really started it when he tipped the picture plane up deliberately, and that, sort of, got the ball rolling for the Cubists and whatever has happened since then. I don't know if it's for better or for worse, but it's happened, and it's made the idea of painting a more exciting one and with more limitless responsibilities. [00:42:04]

ROBERT F. BROWN: This time you were also exploring the effect just through the painted surface, weren't you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In fact, things were more on the surface.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Exactly right. That's why I say it's more two-dimensional, and I wish I had a really early, more three-dimensional one. But, as you can see, looking at these various canvases that I keep going back and forth. I mean, I don't stay in one groove. I never have.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, is it—what is it—more or less the next one chronologically here.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, from that, we'd have to go chronologically to, uh, I think that study of trees. Again, that's not what you would call a naturalistic rendering of a—of a forest scene.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No, it's merely a suggestion of that, and it's also got the—everything—there's not much perception of depth and volume—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, yes, that's right. Right. I bring it up forward close to the picture plane and with no real intrusion into the landscape perspective-wise.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you recall anything that was possibly even—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I'll try—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —unconsciously influencing you at that time, the time you were doing this?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That might have been, uh, the time that I became very friendly with Karl Knaths. If you look at it, the color, it sort of reminds you of it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean the boldness of the color?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, the—again, it's not what I call plein air painting. When I use that term, I'm thinking in terms of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure, impressionist, yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Impression, yeah, right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Knaths an indirect influence on you, or did you discuss Auerbach, with him or—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: We talked a lot about painting and art history. I used to see him practically every day for many, many years, and he had broadened my vision about things. [00:44:08]

ROBERT F. BROWN: In what way, would you say?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, he made—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In what ways?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —me more aware of, uh—certainly more aware of—the one thing he'd always harp on when he looked at my work was my continual going back to the three-dimensional aspects of painting. He thought he had me for a while where I was going to stay at [ph] like the two-dimensional ideas of painting, but I would always lapse back. He'd look at my paintings and find inconsistencies in them. And it's kind of funny because many years later, and he was very, very set on this. I mean, this was—he taught for many years, and I'm sure this is a thing he drove into his students too was to have that consistency in your painting, and I noticed a lot of other fine painters when I heard them talk about painting, they talk about this consistency.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was virtue of it? Did he ever tell you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, they would've made of a cohesive surface. But ironically, one of the things that I remember many years later going back to a retrospective show that we gave for Karl at the Art Association—I think it was in the early '70s. It was a very fine show, very big, and the thing that struck me like a bolt was the inconsistency. [They laugh.] For example, there was a painting, yeah, I think he called it *Mending Troll*, *Mending*, uh, *Mending Nets* or something like that with a very abstract fisherman portrayed in the foreground with his typical calligraphy that was only Karl's, you know, the shorthand sort of thing he did, outlined always with a black or blue line with gorgeous color. [00:46:02] He would suggest all these other things. Well, in this painting I'm thinking of, I think it's in the Albright museum, the Knox-Albright. And looked at the distance, the space between the shack and the sky, and the wharf, and suddenly, it struck me that like a bolt that here was a magnificent piece of atmospheric painting right in the middle of this total two-dimensional painting, you know? And then I looked at other paintings. He had a solo [inaudible] boat against the water, against the sky, and again, I saw a very strong feeling of atmosphere portrayed there. So that even amongst the best—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Although he preached one thing, he seemed to have been—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And that's—I think that's human nature too. I know that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, at this period, were you painting a great deal in the late '50s and—?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yes, I was. I was painting quite a bit. Yeah, I was painting every day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you would be—by—this early in your career, you were exhibiting at least here at the Art Association?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I never exhibited much all through my life. The only place I would exhibit would be in Provincetown at the Art Association and at the—uh. Yeah, at that time, just the Art Association. I had a very brief experience in Boston that never amounted to much with the Nexus Gallery, but there were a lot of promises made, but I never did get any one-man show I was promised. But that's—well, it was about the only place I ever exhibited. I had—oh, many years ago, I had a show that in Gettysburg College when I came back from Italy. When—this was when I first married, but that didn't amount to much. It was just a local, local scene—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you were painting, as you discussed, you wanted to paint? You really had a compulsion of depth at this time?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah. Well, painting is always—it's always been the main—the main interest in my life. [00:48:03]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, from this, uh—these compositions, which are—even if they're not consistently two-dimensional, are predominantly so. Where do you move next from here?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, after going from that picture, um, I think that one up on the wall there of the silhouette of the town?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: You know that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That is much more blurred but forms, isn't it? It seems to me, it had much more sense of depth than these earlier ones.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right. In there, I think you get the feeling of—oh, I think it's sort of like Turner-esque in a way where the forms are underneath the silhouette and then hidden by the silhouette. And the overriding interest there was the blazing sunset that blurs everything out, and a reminder of what Cezanne said in one of his letters. He said he wasn't so sure that things in intense sunlight appeared black against the burning light. From that studio that I had at the time, which is in the middle of the town up on a hill up on a hill, I could see the whole town. It did appear that everything was in silhouette, and the sky was all ablaze in color. And that really, what determined my that painting that picture. Again, I would set aside things that I knew to be the proper way to start a picture or to work on a picture simply because I'd be carried away by the emotional scene in front of me of the sunset.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, why did you decide not to do the preliminary—not to do it here before you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I decided not to approach it cautiously but to throw caution to the wind, and just hit it very, very violently and—and emotionally. [00:50:00] And this, I think, is one of the things that I could characterize in my work, and it may be one of my critical weaknesses is that I—like when it's about a model in front of me and I see a passage in the model that's very beautiful, like a combination of one color against another. Well, one passage, the way the light hits it against another. I get very excited, and I have a tendency to just hit it, attack it on the canvass with an abandonment that later on I regret because I either piled up the paint too much and then I can't rework it. Or I'd throw away some of my, uh, my ability to draw better than it would appear on that particular canvas. In other words, you lose—you gain some skills and you lose others as Josephine always says.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, but sometimes it must be for the best, isn't it? Doesn't—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, it depends on what comes out because you can—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. I mean there can be a feeling of—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I—I'm very pleased with that picture and I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —immediate response—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it—I think it does have the—it does convey the thing that I was most interested in when I saw that scene. And,, again, that's something else that Karl said that someone asked him what is he—how does he paint from nature. He says, well, he always—he never starts the canvas unless he's been in—unless he was inspired by something that he saw or experienced. Then he takes that to the studio, and he distills it and reorganizes it in his bag of tricks or whatever he called it. And then what comes up, and if the final result is far away from the original impulse or impression that he had before he started again was, if it's too far afield from it then he considers it a failure. But if it does still convey no matter how he did it that feeling that he got when he first saw that scene or when he first felt that—the emotional feeling about something then he feels that he had succeeded. [00:52:11] I feel very much the same way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's why my work looks so—people say, "Well, there's no consistency in your work." Well, there's no consistency from one day to the next, is there?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-mm [negative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I mean days are all different.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you express your response to different things in different ways because you responded differently.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Like if you can picture it like a graph where you've got lines going up and down like this, well these are the different days. And underneath that, there's a line that's like this steady that this zigzag line intersects. Well, that steady line is my training, my academic training that I never have released, I never have abandoned. And the zigzag lines are my emotional response to the day's painting. That's about as best that I could describe it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this—the one here, this view of town looking down a kind of silhouette, looking into a sunset has an—or it has the quality of immediate sketch that someone—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It does but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —does.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it wasn't an immediate sketch. I worked a long time on that because that was a continuing scene. From that studio window, I could see the sunset every night—every day in the evening, and this thing—that light would permeate the whole studio and it—and I did a series of those. There's another one up here—excuse me—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Let me turn this—

[Audio Break.]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: So a painter is influenced intellectually, emotionally, and geographically.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. This place has meant a lot to you, hasn't it? I mean the town and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The town has been—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It seems to have developed that.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh yeah. Well, the town is—you know, when you think that I came here when I was 17 years of age, and I—from that very first day, I think I've said before, I felt that this was my home. [00:54:10] I had some kind of emotional feeling about it, and I knew that I was going to be living there the rest of my life. I put that to the test over the years when I was in the service and when I traveled, always looking for a place that would attract me a bit more than this place has and had. And I haven't found a place yet that has the same kind of attraction for me. I'm always amazed that even now, I've been here 30 years, and I walk through town, and I discovered a new little alley or a new street or a new combination of houses with the light hitting it that's entirely new and exciting for me. The other day, I was up at Governor Prence area in Truro overlooking the town for that landscape.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It's one of these little beach cottages—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: And, yeah, that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in North Truro.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —very pedestrian landscape to most but seen from that elevation with that kind of light on it, it suddenly becomes an entirely different thing. And I can see why guys like Hopper and, uh, people like that, you know Dickinson, he's taking a Cape Cod cottage and done something with it, Niles Spencer many years ago.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure, but Hopper is most notably—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —done these very plains—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, unfortunately, he got here before I did. [Laughs.] But it's so—it's so apparent as you drive through the landscape here in the Lower Cape that you see these incredible things, these landscapes, these objects with the light and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: At this low angle as you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The low angle—[coughs] excuse me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You've also—I don't know whether you think [inaudible] daily of you're thinking of—you've mentioned several times precedents like Cezanne or Knaths or Moffett or Dickinson. [00:56:10] Is this—has this been something that you've always been very aware of, or it's just simply when you're trying to think where your ideas may have come from?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, there haven't been too many people that I've really looked up to. There's been maybe less than half a dozen in my lifetime. As a matter of fact, all through my art school experience, I was always fighting and—and being a problem child to my instructors. Right? There wasn't anybody in the school, the schools that I went to, the early school that I really looked up to as a painter. I did have one excellent teacher who talked about the history of art, and I always think of him—I think he should be recorded—it's Harold

F. Lindegreen who was, at the time, the director of the school at Vesper George.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now, you've mentioned him.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, uh, but, by and large, you're not thinking in terms of historical precedent or anything of the sort or—it encouraged you later then, right?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I think it happens afterwards. I mean I'm not—I'm not the type of guy that jumps on the bandwagon. As a matter of fact, my bandwagons are always the ones that have been already been through the fair [laughs] so to speak. I come to something slowly. I'm attracted to a certain painting but I—it's not the school of painting that I'm interested in. It's the painting, a particular painting at a particular time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then—but you won't be influenced by that or use that unless you're at that stage in your own work?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your own work sort of following its own momentum through the years?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. I think you—I think you've put it right there. [00:58:01] I mean I don't say to myself in my head, Well, I'm interested in figure painting, therefore, I'll look for figure painters. I don't do that. No, I paint and then I come across something that attracts me in another painter, and I—and I study that, and I look at it and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, after you—the studio you're at here, what is the next phase in your—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well then, I guess you'd have to say that this abstracted scene of the boat with the trap shed in the back and the derelict boat on the beach. Again, that's very abstract for me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you moved to much more defined forms here though. I mean not defined but harder, cleaner separation between color areas.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. No—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they're much brighter colors than in this area. Well, the sunset is rather—to me a rather muted colors as parts of it.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These are more secondary—nearly secondary colors and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, you know, the reason for that, Bob, is that this painting here was started outdoors and then finished in the studio. And when you work away from the—from the subject, you have a tendency—I have a tendency to either make things darker or lighter or change the color of them completely to suit my patterning, to suit my composition. And you'll see that the overriding thing in this painting is the composition. Now, when I was out—when I started this painting outdoors, the contrast between the derelict boat on the beach and the boat in the foreground was not as great as it is now. I took liberties there because I wanted to experiment with trying to combine two-dimensionality and three-dimensional painting together. [01:00:01] I've done this quite a few times, not very successfully I must say. But I'm intrigued with the idea, and there's no book that says that you can't, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that the—the upper left here was a more muted tone, a more three-dimensional whereas—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the lower half and then the right-hand third of this is more of a pattern—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It is—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —a much brighter color.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —it's abstract. It's a brighter color, and it's—again, there's an inkling of nature there, sort of a subtle hint of shadow and—but on the whole, it's more abstract and more just flat pattern. [Clears throat.] Excuse me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, it doesn't seem to show the kind of emotionalism that I saw in the sunset paintings, those—that series.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, like I say—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you in a more cool, analytical phase in that one?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I couldn't say for sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When was this done—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —that must have been about 1960 maybe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And where do you move from there, to what type of things?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think this nude here with the stripes on it, which sort of stands not alone. I've got a big painting up at the house that I did at the same time, not as good as this. But at this point, I started to draw from a figure again after, uh, many years absence from it and started to paint figure. This was done from a drawing, and I was intrigued with the idea of the effects of a Venetian blind on the figure. It's kind of funny because I painted this—it must have been 1959-1960. And I think this has become an interest of more recent painters of the hard-edge, real-life paintings, figure painters? [01:02:06]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I forgot. I saw one just the other day in a book, and it reminded me of this. Though there was a—but it was much more realistically done than this. I mean this is not what I'd call hard edge.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you know, real—this is—it's a suggested form—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: No, see the sculptural shape? Again, I never—I never lose sight of that. My interest in sculpture comes out in a picture like this.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this is a fairly volumetric—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Pardon?

ROBERT F. BROWN: —effect, isn't it? At the same time, it's also a composition I mean—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, you'll notice that the figure sort of repeats the squares of the canvas. You see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: So that you got one big box of the figure on a bigger box of the outside of the frame of the canvas. That's deliberate. You see, that's composition, and it—it takes into account the space given—the limitations of space given.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Well, another thing that was more striking to me was the fact that the shadows and highlights from the Venetian blind on the background are one thing. But as those shadows go across her head, they seem to be just bands of color. You know, they seem to really preserve the quality of being a—of a rather representational quality of a shadow from a Venetian blind. And—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, then, you're absolutely right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —is that intentional do you suppose or—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I don't remember.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —that certainly seems to be the effect.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's a good point. See, since I did this from a drawing, I didn't have the object in front of me to be sure that it was accurately rendered—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or maybe you weren't interested either.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: At that point, I wasn't—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because once you had paint, I mean it's a very different medium. [01:04:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. I was most interested in the composition that this—the box-like figure with no protrusions in it. You'll notice like the—that isn't the way nature is, the thigh and the leg coming together. You would be able to see through if it was realistically rendered. Well, I sacrificed that truth to gain another truth, and that was the—the monumentality of the figure in that given space, and I think it works pretty well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I kind of like that one. I wish I could be as successful at some of the others as I have in that one.

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ROBERT F. BROWN: Now the, uh, the series of those, the figure study, which is very simple and but very—does—you just did very much what you wanted to do, you were pleased with it. Was this fairly a large group of things that you turned to? Was this about the same time you were also doing the views of Provincetown, were you doing more of—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: This was a little later on. I have large canvas up the house. I don't know if you've seen it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It is similar?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, it has some of that same feeling as this has.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But during this study of the figure, why do you go to the figure? Why do you—?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I can't really answer that. I'm just attracted to it. You know, I just—I've always—there's nothing more beautiful than the human figure and nothing more difficult because it can be—it can be interpreted in so many different ways. The figure has been around for a long, long time, and I think it will stay around for many more years to come, thank God. But the abstract expressionist tried to negate the figure. Many of them did, but even in that period, there were painters who held on, like Sawyer, Dickinson. And they kept—regardless of what the trend was, they kept doing what they wanted to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There's never been the single form that you've been—the only form you've been working at though, is it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh no, it's not the only—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Because we discussed like the first time, you've also sometimes worked not with particular forms in mind anyway. You worked in a fairly abstract conception, haven't you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, and I think if someone were to say, "Why is it that painters today have this interplay of this changing of their objectives in the paintings?" [00:02:07] Well, I haven't thought of it until now, but years ago when a young painter was developing, his influences were immediate. In other words, what was around him then, it was the only way that this painting would be affected. First of all, many of them had—did not have the means to travel. And secondly, if they did travel, they traveled very limitedly, and they didn't have what we have today, and I don't know if it's a—I'm not saying it's good or bad. But the fact remains that a painter today could be a painting in the Salk Center in the Midwest or in Provincetown, and he has the entire vocabulary of painting at his fingertips through the medium of books and prints and all kinds of communicative ways. So that he's accosted every day by a new expression, a new way of painting, a new attitude about the figure, a new attitude about the landscape. And to be able to ignore it is a gift or a—or a strength that I don't have and I don't know if many people do have it. But you just can't—you just can't say, "Well, I'm not going to be influenced by this or that." I think what finally comes up will speak for itself, and if it has any value, it will remain. If it doesn't, it's just going to go by the bars [ph] but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: If you sense that does, don't you? You feel—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: At times, I think I do something that has something in it, but that doesn't bother me either. I mean that doesn't concern me. All I want to do is paint, and I'll let future historians figure that out, you know? [00:04:02] I don't have time for that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: From after the—from the early '60s, what do you—what sort of things did you move into this that you know exactly—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, that big one there, that triple portrait—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This portrait, yeah.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —triple portrait—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm intrigued by that. Yes.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very highly structured background.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —that's sort of like—it's a portrait of my background, and the left side is the Greek classical, which represents the thing that I was first attracted to art. That represents that part of it and then the —there's a head of me in the mirror that's sort of silhouetted and that's—that harks back to my training with Hawthorne and Hensche. I mean Hensche—via Hensche from Hawthorne, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What? Meaning working in silhouette or—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Hawthorne always spoke about the silhouette where he placed the model against the sun and obliterated the features, and Hensche has carried that on, and that's part of my early training. And then on the right, there's a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Figure turned away.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's my back. And that looks into an impressionist landscape sort of you know, in sunlight—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What's the hat to go on? It's like a—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That hat there is just a studio prop.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Something I was—I liked, I picked up at a junkshop one time. It's an old trolley car, and I've used it over and over again. I just had to—the desire to do the thing. It's kind of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then the mannequin though—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The mannequin—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —all right.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —is—again, the mannequin represents the scribe, the scribe. The mannequin is in the process of recording something, all these things and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And yet, it simply a mannequin.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's simply a mannequin and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Does that mean that the recording is really not taking place?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, that's something that I've used in—and that concept I've used in a number of other paintings. [00:06:02] I have one painting that I used a mannequin. I called it *The Poet Speaks* because the mannequin doesn't speak at all, and it's indicating in the right. It's got an open book in its left. It'll be in my show. And it's like a mockery really, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Why do you do that?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I don't know. Like there's something in me that does that every now and then. I'm not what you'd call a social, conscious painter. But every now and then, I find myself doing something where I'm trying to represent something that is not apparent. It has a hidden, literary meaning behind it. Generally, I don't do that, but every now and then, that does creep into my work I must say.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you're trying to maybe indicate the hopelessness of communicating or at least by writing by showing a mannequin being the scribe?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Not in that picture as much as the other one I was speaking of.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, where the poet really can't speak. It doesn't—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Now, I've got a triptych that I'm working on that has this as a main theme, communication, and I've never showed you that, but I don't want to show it till I finish it. I hope to finish it by the next time you come.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, now, in the center of this is the large almost half of your total.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right, that's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I mean it's more a conventional self-portrait—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, that's—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —where you're looking over a shoulder—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —studio sort of thing, you know looking in the mirror—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And how did you conceive of yourself in that? Because you're way up—your head is almost up at the top of the frame so you—one is looking up at you.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, that just happens to be that way because the canvas was kind of narrow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it was just an accident?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It's just accidental that—see, I—[laughs]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, it had nothing to do with your conception of yourself—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Oh God, I hope not, no. Unfortunately, I don't. I've been criticized for not thinking of myself in better terms than I do sometimes. [00:08:02] I denigrate myself a lot unfortunately and my work especially. That's what's kept me from exhibiting. No, that was truly an accident. I didn't mean that I was higher than the other things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But at this time, this is very carefully worked out compositionally, isn't it—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with regards to—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —given the space—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —shapes [cross talk]—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, you've got a very narrow canvas there, and I've got—you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is this characteristic in the mid-'60s? You were very conscious of carefully composing, do you think?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I've always been conscious of composition even as a young student. Very early, I was aware of composition, and I don't think this is singled out in any—any different than any other canvas. I hope that my canvas would show a sense of order and composition. Now, that big round that I'm doing, I call that order.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, this is a—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: That's a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —female figure—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —female figure with a bunch of instruments, and on the east—on the left side are indications of dying greenery indicating fall. And on the other side are all the instruments and the music that are associated with the form. Like after the work has been done and you have the music and the time to relax and enjoy it. And so I haven't finished that yet.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, here at the end, the figure is the vehicle for expression.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: The figure again is the dominant vehicle of expression, and I think it is the thing that I'm

most interested in.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But this is the reason why these others that we're able to still look at are quite recent too. [00:10:00] This one here of a view from the little beach cottages in North Truro.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Right, that's recent.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's more of a detached then though. It's not as expressionistic or as expressive—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. That's—no, it isn't. It's more controlled, and I guess as you get older, you—they say that you're supposed to be more in control of yourself. And maybe I am finally coming into this—controlling my painting emotions.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yet the colors are—seem to be distillations of sort of the most—or the richest colors in the near vegetation in the rowing gullies in the distance and then the very deep sort of slate gray of the sea.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, these are not my drawings. These are the drawings of the—oh, my God. I mean this time of the year, as you know, the Cape is—puts on a look of unique coloring that I find very appealing to me where you get this gorgeous reds and browns in the lowland. And the pine trees pick up all the reflected light so that you think you're painting green pine trees, it turns out that it's got orange in it and browns and reds. And then the manufactured things, the houses, they are pretty static with the light, but the light is splashing over them, and they have no control over that light. And like you said, the slate blue sky—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The sky that is—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —water and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and the water are very simplified though, right—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They're simplified, right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —by comparison with the foliage where you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, let me just say that this painting—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —reflected color—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —is not finished yet. I intend to work on it quite a bit more. But the basics are there. The different shades between the horizon and the sky and the upper part would probably not be that drastic when I get done with it. [00:12:07]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And, yeah, it's very powerful the way it is. There are these three horizontal dams at the top in the top half.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. Well, that again—you see, that's another interest of mine, and one of the reasons why I'm attracted to the Cape, to the Lower Cape so much, to Provincetown is this predominance in the landscape of the long, horizontal line with those. Now, you'll see in these landscapes—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These are three very horizontal—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: They are very horizontal, and I look for those long horizontals, and I find them very appealing in painting. This one here is probably the most recent. You'll see just very indistinctly the three round globes on that distant shore that's Truro. I call those the three sisters. I've used them over and over again in my painting. Those are the radar domes, and when the light hits those, incredible the way they look. You know they just—I don't know. Just the light—the light in Provincetown has to be unique in the world. I think it's been said before by other people as well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you're very—when you painted these—when they're finished, they're very particularized then certainly about this particular place. Whereas when I look at this view from the motel looking down on the beach cottages with the slate gray sea, the cloud layer, and the very intense blue at the top, which is not finished, it seems that it is more generalized. It isn't necessarily this place. It has a—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —it has an appeal just in the abstract as paint.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I think that's something that the painter is always concerned about from the

general to the particular and from the particular to the general. [00:14:09] I don't know when that occurs, but it happens in the process of creation. For instance, Hopper in his paintings, he takes a particular and makes it a general in a sense. In another sense, the light in his paintings has to be on Cape Cod so that becomes particular again. But the anonymous quality of a house that he paints could be anywhere, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

SALVATORE DEL DEO: But then when he gets to the light like some of those landscapes he did, you know, in Gloucester, they have a different light than the landscapes he did here. And the ones he did many years ago, I forgot where they were, outside of New York, Nyack, I guess, someplace around there, they're different. But again, the general to the particular, it's that in and out that happens a lot with a painter. Like when you're painting a figure, I'm always in conflict. You know, if you look at the figure in front of you and you paint it and you make it a portrait of that figure, well that becomes the limitation of that painting because you painted that particular person and it looks like it and you're satisfied with that. Now, another painter will paint that figure you painted generalized so that it becomes a figure. And I'm not saying which is better or which will live longer, but it's interesting how you could interpret that thing in so many different ways.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. When you're on working, there's always a mix of it too, isn't there?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: There seems to be, yeah. There seems to be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As you—do you foresee in the future you're going to move to a greater simplification and generalization? [00:16:04]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: As I said before, it seems that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're waiting for—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —I'm waiting for the distillation process to occur. I see—I foresee that possibly in a few years—well, nature almost told you to do that because as you get older, I'm not—not that I'm old. I feel very young and capable of working many hours. But I'm talking about 20 years from now, and I'll be in my 60s. Nature doesn't demand or doesn't allow you to have the kind of particularness, the particular exactness that is required of realistic painting. And nature would say to—says to you that Well now, you must do—you must interpret it in a different way because your technical prowesses are diminishing, but your philosophical attitude about your work should be increasing. Therefore, I would say that my work in the future will be more abstracted all time, more bigger shapes, less shapes, and less of a range in color, working always with a restricted range in color. And not that I put myself in the class of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, for sure you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —Titian. As he got older, his paintings became more simplified all the time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And you look forward to that? You see—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —it happening already?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I'm glad because like someone said once, when you're young, you see too much. And as you get older and you see less, that process not so much visual as it is mental. And I think—well, what, the things of Matisse that we like today, the ones I like are simplifications of something that he, at one time, would've elaborated on in a greater degree. [00:18:08] And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How about size? Is that going to change do you think? These three horizontals are rather small.

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, those are small. The—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is that—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —just happened to be ends of canvases, you know?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see, but when you have, what canvas supplies you need and all, you tend to work very large, don't you?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I like to work large, but I find myself contrasting it with very small pictures too. When I work larger, I sometimes go to a very small painting afterwards and vice versa.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I wonder why. Do you have any idea?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: I have no idea. Some of my best paintings, according to my friends and people that I respect, have been some of my little ones, my tiniest ones. And, yet, I feel that some of my big canvases that looked labored and I've worked on them hard have some validity. And it—I'm thinking of a good friend Mr. Dickinson, who also did very tiny pictures and then did some very large ones. And there are those who feel that the smaller ones are better than the large ones. I don't share that. I think they are—they're magnificent, those—some of those little landscapes. However, I have the great deal of admiration for his large canvases as well. But they are definitely labored and more studied, and, you know, you can see them. But the little ones are just joys. They're just—and you call them premiere [inaudible]. You'd go out and do it in one day, and they have that spontaneity. You can't deny that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. It isn't that—you were talking about moving to a very simplification. Isn't it therefore possible to do big canvases with less—in a less labored manner? [00:20:00]

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, when I say move into simplification, it doesn't mean in size because you can do that—that can be applied to a small canvas as well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it can be applied to very large ones, can it?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: It also can be applied to a large one. And it would—it would bring me where I'd like to be, closer to the wall painting again, which I feel deserves and needs large spaces, not involved in the intricacies of detail.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So by preference, you really would like to work on a large scale, you think?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah, I would. I would very much. Right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You think a painting should be large enough that it's—that's a good part of your field of vision at a given point when you're looking at it rather than something you have to focus down on?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, that's a good question. I think it depends on the particular painting you're talking about.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But I mean for you to paint in the future. I mean you—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, I just—I don't know how. I mean, I can't answer that. I don't know what I'm going to be doing. I think a lot of it will depend on my health. If I stay healthy as I am, I'll probably paint bigger paintings. But if something should happen to me then I'd be restricted.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, for years now, even sort of splitting your life more or less year—not year round but at least in the warm summer season between the business and painting. Are you looking for the time when you'd be whole-day painting?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, this is—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: —the thing that I've always wanted, and that's coming. It's coming around now because my children are old enough to assume responsibility more than they ever had before. Last summer was—well, it started the summer before last when I began to paint in the summer times as well, and it's continued last summer, and I'm hoping next summer to even do more. [00:22:00] Yeah, that's why I feel so optimistic because I feel like I'm—not only from my—I can't blame just the workload in the summertime. You've got to remember that all these houses that you see on this property were built by me. And so I've been sort of homesteading up here, and that's taken a lot of my time too. I just didn't have the means to go out and hire somebody than I used to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it's very important that you stay here in Provincetown, [inaudible]?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Well, it's important for me to stay here, and I sacrificed. I could have taken the other road, which would have meant teaching in some art school like all my contemporaries have done—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or have gone down to the metropolis, right, to New York and—

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Yeah. But even those fellas that I knew have had to resort to teaching or other jobs. There's no way of getting around unless you have an independent income.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or with this simply limited increase in your painting time, that is painting here in the last two summers, have you sensed an increased momentum?

SALVATORE DEL DEO: Absolutely. I feel like I've been reborn. I'm just very, very optimistic about my future, and I feel very confident that I'm going to be doing some good things. I'm—physically, I feel first rate. And as long as my health is good and my views are good, I mean I feel that I've got my stuff—my best stuff ahead of me. I'm just right raring to go. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

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[END OF INTERVIEW.]