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Oral history interview with Vincent Hartgen,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Vincent Andrew Hartgen on October 1, 1981 and November 28, 1984. The interview took place in Orono, ME, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. 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

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hello? Hello? [Audio break.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I would—haven't any idea what we're going to talk about.

ROBERT F. BROWN: October 1, 1981. Mr. Hartgen, I'd like to follow roughly an outline of significant or important things in your life, but not neglecting just to discuss the commonplace when that may shed light on why you later did things. For example, you were born in Reading, PA. Was your family one that was at all interested in the arts? How did you eventually—when would you say you first developed an interest in that direction?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I believe my first interest started when I was, I guess, in junior high school, and the—part of the school program there was to send its students to a Saturday morning painting and drawing class, conducted by the then director of the Reading Museum, Earl Poole, a man who was, a really—I think he was an ornithologist, but he was director of the museum, which incidentally belonged to this—the school system of the city of Reading, one of those unique things, a public school owning a museum. It still does. It's still operated in that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the—what kind of museum was the Reading Museum?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It's the—it is a kind of museum of art history and science—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —universal museum. So, think—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Rather small. In fact, it was then and is now a very lovely museum, very nicely designed, not large, but ample enough, I think to—at that time—to bring treasures to Orno—or to Reading, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —you mean temporarily? Or [cross talk].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. There were lots of changing exhibits. It owned, oh, I can hardly remember much about the collection. It had some Hudson River School paintings, Bierstadt and such, which inspired me, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were things that somehow had been given to the City of Reading?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I don't know that there was any one benefactor or any such thing, and then it had also a lot of little rooms, and broken rooms, made into wildlife, and views of Indian camps and this kind of thing—Alaskan Eskimo Indians and that kind of thing, a really very, uh, an instructional museum.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it a place you knew about even before you—before junior high? [Cross talk.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Oh, yes. I—my father had taken us all as children. We had gone there, though our family was never artistic, so-called. We did have—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it your father did?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: My father was a buyer of cutlery for a wholesale company, and my brothers—I had three brothers. None of them had any interest in art. I was the only one who came out a kind of oddball, in terms of being concerned with the arts. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were the arts, uh, considered positive at that time? A rather exceptional activity?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think they were. Yes. I think—I look back now. The art clubs, and the art groups,

in the junior high school, I think were a gathering of those kids of us who were a little bit different from the rest. We were not sports people. We were art people. We did the posters, and the stage settings, and such for the typical school programs, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and were—but you always had that interest. Did you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I always had it, and, for some reason, the man who was in charge of that program, um, Italo Di Francesco, who later became president of Kutztown State Teachers College, and, incidentally, also president of the National Art Education Association—Di Francesco. It was he who put me into the Saturday-morning drawing classes, and painting classes, and it was, I think, there that I really think that it was Earl Poole, and several other teachers. I forget their names.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Poole taught drawing?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Beg your pardon?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Poole, the man with ornithological training, taught drawing?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. He taught drawing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember how he went about it? [Cross talk.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Or, at least—well, no. Wait a minute. Did he teach—I don't know that he taught much drawing. He had people who, uh, younger people who did the teaching. He came around and was a kind of critic, but not so as to tear us apart, but to just make comments, and I suppose his job was to encourage us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember how they went about teaching you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Um. Yeah. We went out into the garden, all around this museum, and we would draw—there was a little bridge that went over a stream, in which there were ducks, and the kind of typical thing, and we did landscape—mostly landscape—painting and drawing. I recall, and it was, at first, one of those—you did what you could, the best you could, and I was pretty good, I mean, by comparison to other kids, and then the teacher came along and tried to improve one section of your drawing, and you watched him. My goodness, I remembered his name: Dornseif, a good Pennsylvania name—Ralph Dornseif, and he was a teacher from one of the schools in the Reading system. He was the one who actually came and did the criticism. Earl Poole kind of oversaw the whole thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Administered the program. [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Then later, Poole hired me, not for any money, but as a kind of volunteer, to help with prints in the print section of the museum, and it was really one of my first jobs in museum work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you—this was when you were in high school?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In high school. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was your job? To select, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, there—we were sorting prints, and I had to clean them, erase fingermarks, and, as I remember, I think we made—whether we made the mats or not, I can't recall. I think we put them into folders, separating them, and marking the name of the artist, and the—whatever information was at the edge of the etching, where they—the steel engraving. These were old things taken out of old manuscripts and books. Probably a lot of them very valuable now, as you and I know, where prints have become.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And, were they prints of the—were they put on display quite a bit, or were they even lent out to the public?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not—not that I know. They were archived. They were put into the typical print box, is where I first learned about print boxes, and they were—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're pretty enthusiastic about all this.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I loved it. I tried to tell my father and mother about it, and they couldn't understand that I was enthusiastic about prints, you know, just the graphics.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What were their interests, would you say—your parents'?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, um. I don't want to give the impression they weren't—they didn't like what was I doing. I think they were encouraging, both of them, but I lost my father very soon thereafter, and—so that—I mean, he had really never had an opportunity to know much about what I was going to do in the arts. I was a freshman in college when it happened, and—so, I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your mother encouraging?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I think so, but as mothers are, she knew nothing about it, and sometimes couldn't understand why I was interested in the kind of art. Even later in her life, she used to say that—she never told me, but she could never figure out why I was interested in modern art—that she couldn't understand anything about it. I would try to explain to her in her 70s, or 80s, but back to the museum. It was a wonderful experience, and I'm thinking about it now romantically, and by the way, I haven't thought about it in a long time. I really haven't, and it was ideal, I think, for me as a youngster to be exposed to this whole setting, stuffed birds and all. I think it was part of what stayed with me, and I used to go back and see Earl Poole, oh, years after. In fact, up 'til two or three years before he died, I would occasionally stop in and see him. He was director for great, great many years, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: As you look back, was that museum—the layout and the displays—were they quite good?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They tried to cover a great deal.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I think so. I think—I haven't been down—I went back about 10 years ago, maybe 10 or 12 years ago, and thought it looked a little cluttered and not too well kept, and that might be because I—because it's run by a school budget, which I'm sure isn't ample, or big, and my feeling is that they—their interest shifted, too. They didn't have many of the diorama display things, which I remembered. The cases were loaded solid with Indian artifacts, might—not well displayed at all, but I remember, in the meantime, I've seen museums all over this country and in Europe. So, I'm making a judgment, here, that may be a little unfair.

ROBERT F. BROWN: As students, would—you would be able to bring—they would bring things out of the cases, say, and—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, uh, that was one of the things I thought was very wonderful about Dr. Poole, that he bring—actually open the cases, and bring out a bowl, let's say, from a Southwest Indian, and set that up along with a stuffed owl, or some such thing. We did little still lifes in the wintertime, and that was—to me, that was—I kind of looked up to him as being very wonderful to—for a museum director to allow us to even touch them, you know, to be—to get that contact with them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was this—was this because you had a preconception of a museum as sort of a place to which most people can go?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That kind of a holy place. Yes. I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you ever been to another one, so you could compare them? Or—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh, by that time, yes. I had been to Philadelphia many times, and I had been—

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was very different there. Wasn't it?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Oh, yes, indeed, but I had been to other museums. The family had gone to New York, and so, one of our family trips was one time to the Museum of Natural History. Well, you see the contrast there. In the Museum of Natural History, everything is behind glass and carefully protected, where here at Reading, I could touch these things. I mean, I was allowed to actually—I mean, I remember the first thrill of touching Indian arrowheads, and things that Poole brought out from—so, that was, as I think of it romantically—it was a wonderful introduction to the art world, in a kind of roundabout way, in a way that a youngster of—what would you be? 13, 14, or so, at junior high, 14, 15, maybe, 12, 13. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Cross talk.] It sounds as though—it sounds as though you had—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, it was a very early—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —exceptionally great access directly to these. What about the paintings they had there? Did they, uh, affect you at all at that time, or were they—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: The Bierstadt did, and it's still there. It's a tremendous one, and I can remember in—it fills almost a wood wall of—and I can remember on the one pew in front of it, kind of like a church pew,

and just letting myself go into that great, marvelous mountain, these tremendous things—you know—which I still am thrilled when I see great, Bierstadt paintings, and the West. Oh, they—I'm a romantic. I'm sure [laughs.] I know that. There were—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about in high school itself, did they have an art curriculum, or what?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Fairly good program. Yes. Di Francesco was in the high school program, too. I think he's the one who was in charge of it, and I guess it was—well, it was—I suppose the way it is in a lot of schools, even now, a kind of elective course. You either chose it, or shop, or something else. I don't know, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sure. What was his approach? What did he teach you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He was quite an academician in my field. He really—he drummed hard on perspective, and, um, I don't remember much about composition, that phase, but he was—he was really a taskmaster on learning procedures, such as perspective, and such as careful drawing. I mean, I learned a lot about shading, and shadows, and he was a nut on shade and shadows, and this is something that came from his background. I don't remember. I think in Italy. I'm not positive. So, you would say that it was very classic, a very academic background, in high school, and I think it drove a lot of kids away. I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How about you? Did you like it, or was it tedious?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I, well—oh, I suppose—I guess I have to admit that maybe there were times I didn't like [laughs] some of the demands, but—but I stuck with it, and I had an older brother who was very interested in mechanical drawing, and felt watching him—he was in school too—and watching him at the drawing, and doing mechanical drawing, kind of inspired me to go along with my own freehand drawing. I never was much for mechanical drawing in those days. I did become, later, very interested in mechanical drawing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You saw the wonders he was able to perform in mechanical drawing.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Exactly. He—for instance, I don't know. I don't even remember where he took his courses, but he, one time, drew a—or copied—either copied a drawing, or copied from a photo, or—or something—one of the gothic cathedrals, in all its intricate detail, and this was done on the drawing board, you see, and I admired that, and I guess that kind of kept me from being too bored with the—but Di Francesco was really, very—he was a creative—I think, in the end, was a creative teacher. I learned. I found out later, when I went to the university, that he had given me a very solid background, very good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he encouraging? Could he be?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Always. Always, and had a lot of us kids, who were devotees. We almost idolized the guy. I'm serious about that, and did for years afterward. I corresponded with him for many years from this desk, and when he was president of the college there, and also president of the National Art Education Association, I had many, many connections with him—telephone way, and I always had that—kind of a love for the man, really.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his own work like at that time? Did you have a chance to see it?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh, I remember it, but I don't remember it as being very exciting, or very unusual. I don't think he practiced very much, and so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had the gift of, through practice—constant practice on your part—developing your facility.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He was very facile. He—I mean, he would come, and I remember that with just a few brush strokes, would make something just jump off the paper, you know, or off the canvas, and that impressed me about him, but I can—I honestly say I haven't—I never saw any of his own work, and I don't think he ever painted professionally, and I don't—and I've known a lot of people who knew him, and I don't think any of them have ever talked about him as a painter, or as an artist in his own right. He certainly was a wonderful person, though.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he was very encouraging of you. Did he indicate to you that you were exceptionally—you have a future as an artist?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't know that he did. I don't know that he—uh—[cross talk] yeah. I'm sure he must have encouraged me into applying to the university and attempting to enter the School of Fine Arts. Sure. I can't remember exactly, though. When I'm sure I must have, had him write a recommendation.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you thought you wanted to go to art school by the time you were ending your high

school.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Oh, yes. No question about it. I had done—I had focused on that, and I had taken more than the allowed amounts of art courses. I mean, I almost lived in the art, whatever that was—the studios—art studios. They weren't studios. Classrooms. In the last senior year, I don't think I did anything else but paint posters, and make signs, and draw pictures.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What, uh—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't think I kept any of those, by the way. I don't know that I have—I don't think I have any of them, and that's too bad. I have things from college, but not high school. In a way, it's too bad not to be with them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you were thinking of where to go to art school, what went through your head? What did you know about art school, and who did you talk with?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not very much. Not very much. I didn't know very much about art schools, and I had no preconceived ideas of what a school should be like, or—I had just read things about university art programs. Somehow, I don't know where or what gave me the idea that I should go for a degree. I don't know whether my father had inspired that in me, or not.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he interested in you boys having degrees?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Mm—I don't—I can't say that he was. I don't know. He himself had taught in a—years earlier, before I was born, he had taught in a religious school in Belmont, NC, a Benedictine school, and he had taught French—or, excuse me, um—he had taught Latin and Greek, I think, and also the literature. This is where he met my mother, who was not a southerner, but who was a northerner who went south with her family, and they met there, and he, uh—and they were married in 1904, I think, and came north. Why they came to—well, Reading was my father's home, but why my father was there in North Carolina, I don't know. I don't remember what that—but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —at one time he was a teacher.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: This is answering your question. I think down deep he probably was interested in our bettering ourselves, in—academically, and I—and I'm sure—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he had some academic training himself at that point [cross talk].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Indeed, he did. He went to the University of Pittsburgh—I think his training was—and where else did he go?

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was his training in particularly?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think it was classics. I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So, his later career as a buyer—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —had nothing to do with it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Nothing. It was a way—simply a way to a living.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was a way to living, and I suspect, as I look back now, and remember those very early days of my life that this was a thing he had done out of necessity—that there was no job available, and with four kids—four boys—but it was a good job, and he enjoyed it, and did very well, but he—except for helping us with our Latin and our literature and grammar courses, and so on—and math—he was a taskmaster, but, except for helping us there, there was no mention of colleges, and so on, that I know of. So, I can't honestly say that he was the one that said I should go to a university, and achieve a degree, or if Di Francesco, or somebody else along the way. I don't remember that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That evidently was a determining thing—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —rather than simply an art school, and is that possibly why you decided—that you went, and looked into the University of Pennsylvania?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you visit it? What did you—did you know anything of its reputation at that time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I knew—I knew nothing. I really—and I wouldn't have known how to judge one school against another. I had no training, no introduction to universities, and—to make choices, the way our students today, or high school kids visit all kinds of schools—we talk to them. I talk to a hundred high school kids—students—every year here to help them make their choices. I never had any of that that I ever even know of.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go down to the university, though?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I went once to visit Philadelphia, and walk the campus of the university and I remember I was so frightened, I mean, actually, literally, cold frightened at the austerity of the buildings, and the students, and the—it almost frightened me away from wanting to go a university, honestly.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It seemed what? Just, they seemed too—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They just seemed too formal, and too—they just seemed too beyond me. It seemed I shouldn't be there. It seemed like I wasn't worthy, or able, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did the students look wealthy, or more sophisticated than you? Of course, they were older than you—not much, but [cross talk]—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Well, they were—well, but they looked—they looked untouchable. They looked like something I didn't know, you see. Remember, I was from a poor family. My folks were not—none of us were wealthy. I had no contact with monied people. So, this was being thrown into a situation where, as you well know, the University of Pennsylvania, then and today, attracts students of a higher financial level, let's say, than the average.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative], and certainly then it did. I suppose.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And then it did, more than it does now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About—this was about when? In the early '30s, or so?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: This would be the early '30s. Yes. I entered in 1934 there, and, uh, I didn't have very much—I didn't have enough money. I worked in a hardware store. Between 1932 and '34, I wasn't able to go to school—wasn't even able to think.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you worked.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I worked in a hardware store—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in Reading.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In Reading, a job, which, by the way, my father got me, because of his connections to hardware kind of business, but not in his company. It was another store completely. Now, those two years were drudgery, in a way, because I was itching—I wanted to go to college, or to get into the professional life, or something, but now, as I look back, they were very valuable, because they gave me knowledge, and information about a world that every artist and every museum curator, and every museum director should have—and every, suppose, every university professor, in a way. [Laughs.] I remember when I first came here, and I was establishing—setting up the department, and building backgrounds for exhibitions, and so on. I used to call our business office, and I would say I want a gross two-and-a-half inch flathead woodscrew, number 10, and then [laughs] I would do this just sort of automatically, just asking for exactly what I wanted. I wanted six-penny box nails. I wanted 10-penny nails. You know, I wanted three-penny finishing nails. I wanted brads, not head nails. So, finally the business manager, one day, called me—this was way back—and he says, "Hartgen, how in God's name do you know exactly what you want?" He was amused by the fact that I always had the precise—well, here's an example. This is a typical example of how that life in the hardware store turned out to be very valuable. It is today. I don't mean just in ordering things. I mean in thinking things, in thinking through displays, how to construct something. I sat at coffee yesterday with the director of the Union Building, and within minutes, sketched out in isometric perspective a wall box, a design for a wall display box, which has glass in the front, and glass in the top. The glass slides down in the little runnels, and so on. All of this came so easily, and he was astonished, while we were having coffee, for me to design this case. He's going to have 24 of them made, and hardware is involved here, thinking of the way carpenters think, because you talk to carpenters. You talk to tinkerers. You talk to various people behind the counter at the store.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, though it was drudgery, you were—it was an intense time, too. Wasn't it? [Cross talk.] You were absorbing an awful lot.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It—it turned out to be—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And also, you mustn't have felt completely beleaguered, because many a young person, in those early Depression days, was having to do just that. Weren't they?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, God, it was terrible. It was terrible. The, um—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Reading was really hard hit.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Reading was very hard hit. The iron and steel mills nearby, and the coal. Yeah. I think I was—I earned 10 dollars a week, and I think the man had to raise my salary to \$12.50, because of a Roosevelt dictum that came, thereafter—soon thereafter. Yes. It was very hard hit, and there were a lot of people who were—went looking for work, and it was—and times were very, very severe.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there any social unrest, or—that you could tell? Any change in people's attitudes?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Hmm. There were strikes, quite a few, but there were strikes occurring for a long time thereafter, too. My brothers were involved. Two of my brothers were involved in very serious strikes of hosiery mills, who were—unions were then forming, and developing—and yes, but times were very, very bad, and I was glad to be working. I have to say that, but I was saving—very little, but [laughs] I remember when I went to the university. I wrote for the all the papers, filled out the forms, and sent in the fee. I think it was \$5 or \$10 registration fee. All of this I did almost without really understanding what I was doing, what I was getting into. I mean, I really hadn't much of an idea of what university life was like. I really didn't, and I have to admit, I probably wouldn't in my students' [laughs] classes. But I have to admit, I was really quite frightened. I wasn't at all like any one of these 115 students I just talked to here today, who were bold, and firm, and secure. They know exactly what it's all about. They're—they've got—they're solid in what they're desiring to do. I had none of that. I was just a frightened youngster. Believe me. And, I think a lot of other kids were in the 1930s.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was carrying you toward the university, then?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I have no idea.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's something you did—just go through the motions, and—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I went through the motions, and finally, uh, I got—I cleared \$50. This I remember. And I asked permission. I went to Philadelphia by train. I'm not sure I went by train. I may have even thumbed it. But I went there, and I asked permission to see the dean, and I told him I had \$50—"Could I register?" And he said, "Well, that doesn't cover the cost." I think \$300 was the tuition then, but he said, "We'll try to find work for you," and so on. And I got jobs, and he took me on that basis, and that was the beginning.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: 1934.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —name of the dean? What was—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Dean George S. Koyl—K-O-Y-L—who was a Beaux-Arts product—the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design—architecture—a Prix de Rome scholar in his earlier days. He was quite well along in those years—a lovely man, and I became—I came to like him very much, not to know him well, but I liked him. Um. Well, was that too detailed? I mean, I—that is—[Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, at the university, you met the dean, who arranged for you to have a job, but you still felt pretty alone, and I suppose you still came there, in the fall of '34, rather frightened.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Very frightened. As I said, I had no idea what that university life was like. I had no idea what an interior of a studio, where many people would gather to paint or draw. I had no idea what a university lecture was like, except the little contact of having read about it here and there, but you—we keep forgetting there was no TV then. And the things that now familiarize us with worlds we wouldn't normally be in, but it was hard work, that is, the working, to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you begin within the—did you have advisors, and people who discussed what you wanted to do?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I don't remember exactly who laid out the original program, but somebody dictated, if that's the word, exactly what courses I should—I had to take in order to earn a degree, and I guess I just assumed this is what everybody did, and I went along with it, and took the courses. The—



ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you begin with? Perhaps we could talk a little bit about the progression in the coursework.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. As I recall, the original classes—the first year—was very heavy on academics: English, history, social studies of some sort, psychology, and I believe I had only one or two art courses, per se, one in basic drawing, and, I think, one in basic design.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see. So, it wasn't [cross talk]—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, it really was a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The School of Fine Arts, then, didn't mean you were outside the general undergraduate curriculum.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No, no. We were in it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in it.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: You had to be. It was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were in that on top of that, or as part of the curriculum, only, was your art school.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. That was required, and it—as you progressed, the number of, quote, "art", end of quote, courses increased, and the academics decreased, so that in your senior year, you had no, quote, "required", end of quote, academic things to—unless you had failed them along the line, which I fortunately hadn't. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you take pretty well the academics?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I did. I was no great student. I—[laughs] I graduated with distinction, which I guess was pretty good at the University of Pennsylvania, but I didn't consider myself any kind of a great scholar or anything. And I did—I really became very excited about learning, and I had some very excellent people in other—in fields other than art, who gave me some feelings about things, which have stuck.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember what—who some of those people were, or what some of those things were?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, let me think, here. Yeah. There was one—a basic—way back—a basic course in English literature and composition under a man by the name of Harbison, and I liked him very, very much. He was—to me, he was very exciting. He was—he was a kind of person I had never had any contact with in my life, who could go for long passages of memory of masterpieces without looking at the book. You know, this kind of thing impressed me a great deal. It turned out that his brother, this Harbison—I don't remember his first name—but his brother, John Harbison, was an invited critic in architecture at the University of Pennsylvania.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, he was a prominent academic architect at that time.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Exactly. Indeed, he was, because he was a partner of Paul Cray—the great Paul Cray, and it was Cray and Harbison firm in Bangor. In fact, well, I came to know them very—quite well thereafter, and I came to know John Harbison fairly well, as a person.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In Philadelphia, you mean.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, not much as a student. I came to know him in another connection after I left school, and during that interim period, when I took a leave of absence, I came to know John Harbison then, in another connection. Um. I have, not often, but I have corresponded with him, up until some years ago, maybe five years ago. Is he still living? I don't know.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm not sure.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't know. But, I knew his son. His son happened to be in the same class I was in school. So, I came to know him, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Harbison you got to know when you were in Philadelphia, right?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yes. But it was his brother, who impressed me, as an English teacher. He was on the same University of Pennsylvania faculty. And another English professor, Dr. Cornelius—oh, Lord, I have—Cornelius Wygant, who was a scholar of, I believe, I think he came from New Hampshire, and I think he was an

English lit—or an American literature scholar. That I—but he inspired me. Now, you're bringing out names I had forgotten for quite a while.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. These were rather intense lectures, or was there—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Very good lecturers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a discussion much?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Very little. Very little. Very little. And if there had been, I'm sure I never entered it. I mean, I'm sure that I would never have opened my mouth. If I had violently disagreed with anything, I would not have aired it then. Today, yes. But not then [laughs]. Um. I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you live right there on the campus, and—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh. Yes. I had a little room within five minutes of the fine arts building. I was lucky to find a very small hole in the wall, where other students lived, and I don't remember the rent. It was dirt cheap, and I could afford that. Yeah. Um. But back—I'm thinking of another person, too—a basic course in music, which I think was the second year—I did in my second year—sophomore year. I'm not sure about that, but the man was Guy Mariner, who really I almost idolized. He was so beautiful. He was so wonderful. He was so eloquent. He was Australian, and he taught music so beautifully to big classes, but he had such a skill of—I can hear it now—of drifting his voice into playing the piano. Sometimes you hardly knew where the voice ended, and the piano began, that kind of wonderful showmanship. He later—some years later—ran the Sunday series of music appreciation courses for the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia, and they were tremendously popular. Thousands of people came, because he bewitched them the way he did me. I later, in my senior year—junior and senior year—no. In my senior year and my graduate year, I graded papers for him. He liked me so much, and I had done so well, and I was looking for a job, and one of the jobs I had, and I always had many, or several jobs—never one at a time—but one of the jobs I had was grading papers for him, and I would sit in his lectures, and then grade the prelims and the finals. I came to know him very well. Two years ago, I wrote to him. I became very nostalgic in thinking about him, and I wrote to Philadelphia, and got no answer, and for a long time. And then a letter came from Australia, in which he said he had gone stone deaf, and that he had lost all his love of music—well, he talked about—he could still hear music, but only in the inside. You know, I felt so sorry for him. He's a lovely man, Guy Mariner.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Although you might not have been the person who would speak up in class, you got close to Harbison, and to Mariner.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not with—well, I didn't get too close to either—neither of the Harbisons while I was a student. I became closer to Harbison in an out-of-school connection, because, if I may say—I have to throw this in here. Later on—well, you know, I'll have to drop back. My father was killed the—at Christmas time, of the year I entered school—that—1934.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did that occur?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In a car accident. He—my brother—my oldest brother had come down with cancer, and he was confined to a hospital in Philadelphia, and my father, and my mother, and my two brothers had come to Philadelphia. I was living in Philadelphia. I mean, I was there as a student. And they had come to Philadelphia to see my brother for Christmas Eve. And on—my mother stayed over with her sister, who lived in Philadelphia, and the rest of them went back to Reading by car, and on the way back, were struck by a car full of drunks, and my father was killed, and my two brothers very, very, very seriously injured, so that neither one of them even knew of my father's death until long after he was buried. The blow was so great, and my one brother was so ill—dying, actually. He died the following summer in the Philadelphia hospital. So, my mother needed somebody. So, here I had two brothers in the hospital in Reading, one brother in the hospital in Philadelphia, literally dying. They knew it. And my father dead—to be buried. There was nothing to do with it and so, it was a blow, but I took it, and I went home, and took a leave of absence until the following year, and there, again, the dean was important. He understood. It was through contact of this sort that I became very friendly with Dean Koyl. He was very, very considerate, and personally fond of me, I think. So, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you went home, you had to have employment there, too.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I went back to the hardware store. Fortunately, I could go back to it, and whether that man just took me in, I don't know, but I did. I worked there, and he—that man who owned the store had known my father. So, it might have been—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you find you had, at that time, considerable personal strength? That you—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I had to have—I had to—I—for at least six months—within six months, period, I was thrust from a position of not knowing anything about family life, or whatever, to the position of being the father of a family, because my brothers were still hurt so badly, and so I administered all—everything. I, actually—I became a man, in the real sense of the word, in that interim period, and I guess ever thereafter was much stronger than any of the others in my family—my remaining two brothers—because the one brother died the following summer. He was at the [inaudible] Institute, and was being treated with radium. In those days, they laid radium beams across his face and tried to do it, but it didn't work. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But by summer you were in the position that—your brother, then, died—but after that, you were ready to go back to school?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I'm not positive I went back that fall or not. I think I didn't. I think I didn't. I've lost track of years there now. I'm back in school in 1937, and I am a junior. So, I must have gone back in '36. I forget. In 1937, I was called into the dean's office one day, by this same Dean Koyl, and he said, "I have recommended you for something. I don't know what it will be, but I think you are my choice, from all the students here. I've been asked to recommend a student who will be"—um, I don't know how he said that—"who will be interviewed in competition with a student selected from Yale, one from Harvard, one from Princeton, one from Bryn Mawr, one from Smith," and he ran down all these schools that one person was to be chosen by an official of those institutions and sent to Washington to be interviewed to do something, and he said, "I don't—I can't tell you what it is, because I don't know, but I've been told that it would be a very challenging experience for a young art student," and he said, "I may be putting you into something you don't want, if you should be selected, but I'd like you to go," and he proceeded to draw money. I remember well. I had to go across to the treasurer and draw out money from the university to—for my train fare to Washington. And I went there, and was interviewed by a Lyla Mecline. Now, notice—or, maybe the name means something to you. Lyla Mecline was Art Critic of the Washington Evening Star for many, many, many years—many years—one of the great art critics of Washington scene.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the American Federation of the Arts.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: American Federation of Arts—she was a very leading light in that, and then also the American Association of University Women, that art program. Well, I went there, and sat in this room in Lyla Mecline's home—a private home—and here were other students. And I met them. This one's from Harvard. This one's from Yale, and so on. They were all about my age—two, or three women, and four, or five male students, each taken into the room to be interviewed privately. And so, Ms. Mecline, when it was my turn, I was petrified. I mean, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, weren't they, too? The others?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I'm sure. [They laugh.] I don't know. I just seemed to be the one that was most petrified.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And so, I said—I went—she asked me all kinds of strange questions. This was the interesting part of it. She was interested in my school work. She wanted to know how much art history I had finished at school so far, and how much did I know about—she asked me about some sculptors, and some painters, and I talked about them. And, then, at some point, she said, "If I ask you to—if I were to ask you to ship a work of art from, say, Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, or whatever, how will you go about shipping, and what would you do?" And I said, "Well, what kind of work of art, Ms. Mecline?" She said, "Well, let's just say it's a piece of sculpture, and if you have to move it." And I—of course, coming from the hardware store, this was nothing, you know. And so, I immediately proceeded to tell her I'd build a box, and how I would put an extra box inside a box if it were very valuable, and I would—she said, "How would you build the box? What would you use? What nails and screws, and so on?" And I told her, and all. And she just sat back and listened to all of this. And I thought, "What strange kind of stuff do I have to tell this woman?"—whom I knew was an art critic for the Washington Star. I knew that. And, um—but, anyhow, the interview was over. She said, "Well, you'll hear from me sometime." So, weeks went by. I went back to Philadelphia and told the dean that it was a funny interview, and that I knew no more about what it was supposed to be than he had been told, but he wanted to know. And I told him all of the things that happened, and then, so, weeks later, I mean weeks later, he called me into the office and said, "You have been chosen to be Traveling Curator for the Anna Hyatt Huntington Exhibition of Sculpture to be shown in 30 American museums. Hartgen," he said, "you are on your own." And, I mean, I was petrified, literally—I mean, the thought of this—and then I went to—I was told to go to see Ms. Mecline, then, to be officially informed about the whole thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know anything of Anna Hyatt Huntington's work?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I just knew—I mean, I probably ran out the door and went up to the library to

see what she—or, who she was, and found out she was the *Jeanne d'Arc* Anna Hyatt Huntington, and portrayer of animals, and so on. So, I [laughs]—I was just so beside myself, I didn't know. I mean, I almost wanted to say, "Look, I'm not at all interested in it," but I couldn't. And, he was—the dean was very proud of me. He said, "You know, we have beaten out other schools. We have you." [They laugh.] That kind of bravado thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you might have said, "Yes, but Dean, I'm supposed to go to school." What did he say about that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I know, and he said, "We'll grant you leave of absence for these two years."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Two years?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Two years. Two years. '39, '30—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You're already on your leave of absence?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. From '37 to '39 I took leave of absence. I was out two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And, uh—[laughs,] he said, "You'll learn far more about the art world." I don't [inaudible]—by this time, I had expressed interest in museumship. I mean, I had gone beyond the straight fine arts program, which incidentally on the Penn campus was really more—it was all architecture oriented. It—there was no fine arts, per se, program. You followed the architects. I took all the basic courses in architecture, by the way: Materials and Methods of Architecture, materials—Techniques of Architectural Design. I competed in the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design architectural competition in New York. I won, I don't know, a half-a-dozen awards from architectural drawings, interiors—interior designs, and so on. So, I was architecturally oriented. Do you see? But, then, one time or so, I had expressed interest in museumship, and I even had a job working in a museum, one of the part-time jobs, unwrapping mummies, or some awful—something like that. But—so, this was perfect, and the dean said, "You've got to do it. You're going to meet the museum directors all over the country. You're going to be given a responsible position. You're going to see all the great collections in the United States. You just must." And he said, "I know the people who are behind this are wealthy. You will not have to worry about finances, and so on," and that also frightened me—you know—the thought of this. Well, I went to Ms. Mecline, and she spelled it all out. And she told me that an exhibition had been put together, and that it was—she was working on it. She was representing Archer Milton Huntington and Anna Hyatt Huntington, husband and wife, and they were in New York, and that I was to go to New York, and meet them to become familiar with Mrs. Huntington and to become familiar with her work. I was to circulate 90 pieces of her sculpture. It was to fill one whole car—one complete railroad car—and was to travel first-class, Railway Express, and to be moved once a month into 30 different museums in the United States, and I was to do it alone. She said, "All I will do is make the contacts and keep track of you. You report to me, but you are to present this exhibit wherever you go." I mean—I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was she like—Ms. Mecline? Was she very crisp? It sounds as though.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: [Cross talk.] Oh, she was—yes, very terse, very sharp. A high-pitched voice, as I recall, a very small woman, gray-haired then, and very schoolteacher-ish. In a sense, she was going to lay out all these—tell me all these things in a very exact way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sort of pointing out her fingers.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. Kind of treating me as a youngster. And she pointed out that this was a tremendous responsibility, but she said, "I considered everything, and I think you're able to do it, and I—" She—I wasn't to be abandoned. Do you understand? She was working with me, and writing ahead, and kind of setting plans for the show to circulate, and she was giving me the context. The only thing I had to do was to do the—to work out the particular details, the actual arranging of the show. I can't tell you what agony I went through when I installed that exhibit in the California Palace of the Legion of Honor, and that was my second contact with that show. I picked it up in Pittsburgh, and we moved it to San Francisco, and that was my—my showing, and I-I had never set up an exhibit anywhere in my whole life, but I did, and I did it well. I know I did it well. I built the—it was made clear to me from the Huntingtons in New York that anything I wanted, within reason—it was available to me. They gave me an account number from which to operate. Mr. Huntington had allotted—I think he had allotted 100,000 dollars, but I'm not sure about that amount of money, but he had allotted that for this thing, and that I was to draw whatever—to list the expenses, and so on, against this thing—to let Ms. Mecline—but—to know what I needed. I built—I did all kinds of things that I felt were important to presenting the show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did the interview, by the way, in New York with the Huntingtons go? What were they

like?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was very formal. It was very formal, not that they weren't very charming people, and I met them several times, on less formal situations. When I installed the exhibit in—in, uh, Charleston, South Carolina, they came over from their summer—the winter place. They built Brookgreen Gardens, and they had their own home there, as you know, a Spanish kind of villa.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that first meeting with them was—what—they were very explicit about just what they wanted?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not too much so. No. I was kind of surprised when I came away that—uh—I was—I was so—I guess I was stunned by his importance, I—a: because he was so astronomically wealthy, and b: because I had looked up in the meantime to discover that he really was a very fine scholar. He was—uh—as you know, a Hispanic scholar, and established the Hispanic Museum in New York. So, this frightened me a little bit. So, I was—I was in awe of the man, though he didn't—he or she didn't do this deliberately. I just—I was so meek, myself, I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was she like the first time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, she was lovely. I-I loved her the first time. I thought she was—I couldn't believe that such a delicate thing—uh—she was so beautiful, really. Yeah. I can remember. Her skin was so, so white, and hair grey. And she was so frail looking. I just couldn't believe that this woman had made these tremendous monuments and memorials that I learned about in the meantime.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you think of her work, by the way?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I boned up—I boned up hard on the work, because, I mean, I knew she was the daughter of Alpheus Hyatt. So, I had to look up things about Alpheus Hyatt, you see, to discover what her background was in the world of—uh—of the—of the—the animal world, and the world of anthropology, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what—what did you think of her work at that time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I wasn't greatly impressed. I was—first of all—a little embarrassed to my colleagues at school when I told them what I was going to do, and they wanted to see what kind of work it was, because we were just breaking through being, quote, "modern," and Anna Hyatt Huntington sculptures aren't what you would call "modern," as you very well know. So, I was a little embarrassed to be responsible—responsible for promoting a show like this all over the United States, but I got over that. I-I became very proud of doing it, and I—and I got to like her things. I-I—there were many things in the—in the show, which I thought were good breakthroughs into good contemporary sculpture. By that, I mean she started out—her earlier things were very detailed and very close to people under whom she had studied—got some Borglum, and Henry Kitson, and—and such people. Uh. The later works—the works that were cast in aluminum—I guess the necessity of casting in aluminum caused her, or forced her, to become simpler in her—in her design approaches. So, the things were tending toward contemporary thinking, but she was an anatomist of the top order, and a scientist—a zoologist, one would say. So, no muscle, or no vein, ever went unindicated, and so it always a visual and representational all the way through.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now on this tour, say, for example, when you were on route to San Francisco, did you—had you meanwhile had a picture, or any idea of how big the showplace would be in San Francisco?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I-I learned that—and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: They sent you a map or a layout, or?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I forget his name, the director of the museum there at the time, whom I liked. Yeah. He sent—Lyla Mecline had him send me—and this was almost the routine along the way. She did a basic amount of the letter writing. They couldn't expect me—um—you know, a youngster from school to do the correspondence. So, she did the letter contacting, and then, it would kind of set the stage for me to get in there, and get working with local clubs, and societies to promote show, and get people to come to the museum, and that I learned to do rather quickly, and I became pretty good at publicity releases, and that kind of thing, which I do now with my left hand, without any trouble. You see, again, a job that in your past turns out to be a great value later on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But you had got—for example, you had got most of the museum in San Francisco. Were there any display things already made, ready, or did you have to start from scratch?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. They have—they had been—they had, as always, as all museums were given

a list of the sculptures—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

[END OF TRACK.]

Cassette one, side B.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —'81. [Audio break.] Well, this morning, we'll continue talking about that extraordinary tour you made—two years with Anna Hyatt Huntington's sculpture. You began—well, you went to Pittsburgh, picked it up, took it to San Francisco, and would—did it get a good deal of attention in San Francisco? Was there publicity?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I was very happy with the attendances in all places. In fact, I was surprised. I had—as I told you, I had no idea what to do with an exhibit, and I had no experience at all. I don't know what I expected, but I certainly didn't expect the kind of crowds which arrived at this exhibit everywhere we went. And, of course, the minute I learned what kind of people were interested in this type sculpture, then in succeeding cities, I personally would play up that publicity angle, for example, school systems, and particularly younger people, coming to see sculptures of lions, and tigers, and this kind of thing, because by nature—well, naturally, her work is appealing to naturalists, they're anatomically quite correct.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, before you would get to a city, you would, uh, or Ms. Mecline would send ahead publicity?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I would—no. I did that. She prepared the basic publicity, which I used from city to city, and I would contact the newspapers, and whatever exhibit announcements there were in various cities, and do the usual channels for promotion. Occasionally, I—a radio show, but not often, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you recall any of the stops that were extraordinary for one reason or another, or more memorable than others? You went to Los Angeles after San Francisco.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Los Angeles, and then San Diego.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were those interesting stops?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were very interesting places. I don't know at what point I learned or decided that it would be a marvelous exhibit for blind people to see—see with their hands. So, I followed this procedure from—I think from San Diego on in every city from that—for the rest of the two years. I arranged with the local blind association to bring as many blind people to the show as could come, and that turned out to be not only touching and worthwhile, in my opinion, but of course it made very good publicity. There wasn't a newspaper ever that didn't pick up the story and carry it, showing blind people feeling their way into the mouth of a big lion roaring, or petting an animal of some sort, and that was very successful in the South. The Delgado Museum in New Orleans came after San Diego, and then the show traveled northward to Memphis, St. Louis, and to Omaha to fill in that middle section of the country.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did you get much reaction from local art critics?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. In fact, it was almost always favorable, too. I was a little apprehensive at first that I would run into a lot of criticism from people, because the show was so representational, and, quote, not "modern."

ROBERT F. BROWN: Perhaps that was your own eastern bias.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Maybe, because—oh, particularly in the Midwest, it was very popular. The Joslyn Memorial in Omaha just loved it, and that's, of course, a beautiful museum, and the people there were just crazy about the sculptures. I recall, and I—as I remember I did a very fine showing there, too. It was a good, adaptable gallery. I found that out as I traveled all across the country. The—I got into the back rooms, the technical services of most museums, learned to work with the exhibit arranger and others, and it was—it really was amazing, the difference in efficiencies and skills of people in the back rooms. Now, of course, all these years later, every museum has a pretty well-trained crew of experts in museumship and preservation, and storage, and so on, but in my day, I really had my eyes open as to what museum—there were very few really well-equipped back rooms and storage rooms in museums, and work rooms. I was surprised. Big, big places, important galleries. And I did go to all—they were all major museums.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they—was your impression that many museums gave much attention to installations?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Very little. I think some of them were surprised and shocked when I would, for instance, send out and order some kind of drape material to go behind certain of the sculptures. Or something I

did in almost every city was to immediately contact the park service, if they had one, or some floral service and fill the gallery with palms and semi-tropic plants, because they went so well with the animal sculptures, and it was very easy to create clumps of plants, and place a tiger inside of that. I mean, this—I know this is dramatic, and maybe showmanship, but that's how to sell an exhibit, and this is how I have sold exhibits at the university here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You felt—with these, these were animal things, many were exotic animals.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were. Yes. They were, a great many of them. And so it was—but to answer your question, a number of museums were really, very surprised that I would go to this end to put on a show, to arrange it so that it was really a kind of a jungle in some places for people to come into. They just hadn't thought about displaying art in that way, and the Huntingtons, whom I—who saw the show later when I installed it in Charleston, SC—Mr. and Mrs. Huntington came over to see it, and I had done an especially effective show there, using a lot of greenery, and a lot of latticed wood, eight feet long, that I made screens in the back of groups of plants. They were just in ecstasy. Mrs. Huntington just couldn't believe that the sculptures were so well shown. It made me feel so good, and, I guess—well, I was sending them photos from every other installation. It would be interesting to find out where they are, by the way—if they are on file somewhere, or whether they've been thrown out. I never kept them, but a few, but you might look into that—see if they're available.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, in most cases, was your—was this exhibition considered a fairly important event for most of the museums?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was top billing in almost every place I went mainly because, I think, the name of Huntington, and, if I may say, I think that some of the directors of museums, all of whom I got to know, were using every device they could, a: to be nice to me, and b: to put on a beautiful show, and c: to get up to the Huntingtons, hoping that they would perhaps do something nice. They did do something nice. At the end of the show—at the end of the two-year period, we broke up the exhibit, and gave all of the sculpture to the people who had shown the exhibit the preceding two years. It was my last duty—was to see that they were crated by Budworth in New York, each separately, and each shipped to the city where I had made some kind of notes throughout the tour, which ones were kind of popular in this city or that, and that was how I tried to disperse them, finally.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And as far as you know, that worked out? They were all happy?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Everybody was happy. Not one was refused, and, um, I've been in museums since then, and I have seen the actual sculpture that I had moved around the country, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, you weren't too aware of that many museums before you went on the tour. You must have [cross talk]—can you think back, when you went on that tour, which ones stood out to you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I mean as museums now, not as display places for this show, but as museums?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, as museums, too. Yes.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I was very much impressed with—well, first of all, I was very much impressed with the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. I thought it was a beautiful piece of architecture. It came from the exposition ages, you know. And I, of course, loved its collection—wonderful things in there. They had a major exhibition of Goya. I remember that well. One of the major showings of Goya in this country, and they own quite a few Goya—I guess a whole set of the *Caprichos*, or Proverbs. Uh. So, I thought San Diego was an excellent museum. The, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get to meet—do you remember their directors and all? Did you get to talk with them quite a bit? Because you were a month at each place. Weren't you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I knew—yes, a month.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were you entertained, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In every place, very much so. In some instances, I would go ahead during the run of the show in one city, and would go ahead to spend a day or two in the next city to kind of get to know people, and let them be alerted to what was coming, which Mrs. Huntington had suggested, I think, at some point, and that helped a great deal. Yes. I—speaking of museum directors, Reginald Poland at San Diego was very good to me, and very helpful, and we became very good friends, mail friends—we wrote a great deal back and forth, even when he went to Atlanta, and up until the time he died. I was very fond of Reginald Poland.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was he like when you first met him?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Dashing. Very, very—I mean, I had never met anybody who was so efficient, so full of vigor and movement, and he had that place hopping, I mean, really moving. He—I liked his way of working. I learned a lot of tricks from him. Just bringing the show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: For example, do you remember?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I don't know. Things of—well, for example, I had never talked to any large groups of people. The Huntingtons, I guess, never expected I was supposed to lecture on the show. They never said that, but this came about in Pittsburgh, I think. Some groups came together, and I had to talk to them, and that kept happening. But in San Diego, Reginald Poland arranged for a Sunday afternoon talk out on the steps, or somewhere in that patio in—at Balboa Park or whatever, and literally forced me to give a lecture—a Sunday afternoon lecture, which I had never done in my life. I was petrified, and, you know, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did he want you to talk about?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: The exhibition, to plug the exhibit, and to talk about Mrs. Huntington, and, by the way, he was a good friend of the Huntingtons. He knew them personally, and he wanted me to bring a message from the Huntingtons, and so on. But I remember very well, I just could hardly bring myself to go out on that—it wasn't a big crowd, maybe 150 or so people, and he just finally—just—just literally grabbed me, almost, and threw me out into the crowd, and said, "Remember, you know more about Mrs. Huntington than anybody here. So, just talk about the things you know." And that helped.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What would you do? Would you try to point out the significance of her work?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, yes. Her—I learned, and later made up a kind of—several little typical speeches that would incorporate her—some the biography of her—it's an interesting biography when you look at the details. Her work in Paris, for example, in the studios, and, of course, in this country. And then—one thing I learned very early in the tour was that people were very interested in how they were made—how were sculptures made? How were these things—how do you do it? And, so, I would almost invariably, the minute I'd open any lecture to the—to public questions, one of the first questions would be "how do you make a sculpture in bronze?" "Does the woman—does Mrs. Huntington start out with a piece of bronze?" You know. This kind of thing. So, I'd have to go all the way back to the business of how they're conceived and executed either in clay or wax, and then to describe as simply as one can the procedure for casting in bronze. Well, this is not easy even now, I discover, for my students at university level. It takes kind of a little plugging to learn the procedure of casting a *cire perdue* lost-wax piece of sculpture, and end up with a hollow bronze work. That intrigued a lot of people, and at one point—I think it might have been Reginald Poland—I got a film from some—one of these instructional films, which I used for quite a while as a help for school students to show them the technique of bronze casting. I don't remember who the person was. Seems to me—no. I don't remember. But that graphically laid out the whole procedure of making piece molds, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Poland was, uh, exceptionally—exceptional in being so participatory, or did a number of the directors step right in and you almost became a colleague of theirs?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Um, I would say in most cases, the directors stepped in—in most cases, and as I said, tried to be especially helpful, because they knew that, after all—well, first of all, they were getting a tremendous exhibit free. We paid everything. Nobody had to give us five cents. I mean, I paid for all the publicity, all the mailing, all the postage, all the shipping, all the insurance. You name—I mean, everything was covered by the Huntington money. Now that's—that may not be so much today. There are museums who would—that would turn down the Huntington exhibition today, because they don't want to show that kind of thing, but I think in the day that I was traveling, I think every museum was just plain, damn glad to get that show, to get a good, big exhibit. I mean, 90 pieces of sculpture is a big show, and it would have cost any museum a fortune to put it together, and here we were, coming in with our own carload, and delivering, and putting it on the wall, and doing everything for them. So, you can see you why they would accept it, and did. And also, I think, down deep, that some of them felt that there was going to be something happen as a result of how nice they were to me and to the Huntingtons, and many of them, of course, wrote to the Huntingtons, and described my efficiency, or whatever—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were there lay committees—did you deal with them a bit, and the friends of, or whatever they're called—the trustees?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, that was standard procedure. That would be standard procedure, all of which, by the way—I still use these techniques in running the gallery here. Yes. Finding out whether they had an art league, or an art committee, uh, looking into the junior league groups and cities who would do the promotion, getting a chance if I could to either talk to, or have somebody talk to the chamber of commerce committee. I



really plugged every angle to—to drag people into the galleries, and there were times when the gallery would be well packed. Sunday afternoons, in many cases, we had felt that we were successful. Reginald Poland was one of the people who taught me, as I recall, a lot of techniques. He introduced me to, um—well, I was going to buy—I was going to rent plants or something, and Poland took me over to the zoological gardens, or the botanical gardens there in San Diego, and he talked them into their bringing in all the plants—their making a contribution, which gave them publicity. Do you see? And then the commissioner was very happy. Poland was like that, and I understand, though I never actually saw it in action in Atlanta—I understand that he was exactly like that in Atlanta, that he did a fabulous job there. As you know, he died—didn't he? On that flight of the Atlanta people, who—did he? Was he with that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I think so.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I'm not sure, but that was his group, and I was very fond of him. I liked him. I came to like him very much. I didn't see much of him after that. Only once or twice we met, but I always considered him an important person.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mention that, of the larger museums, St. Louis was about as large as you went to? That was one of the—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh, in terms of physical dimension?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. [Cross talk.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I would think as a single museum, yeah. Corcoran Gallery in Washington is a large place. Yale—fairly good size gallery.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who did you work with at the Corcoran? The director Minigorav, was he there? Or—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh. Minigorav was there, but there was—the man I worked with was John Conners, I think—John Conner, who was curator.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they quite a cooperative group there, or was that—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I think so. I—there was a problem there, somewhat, because I ran into Ms. Mecline promotion techniques as against mine. In fact, I did nothing of my own things there. I didn't want to. She did, naturally, a big story in the paper, and it was her friends, and, uh, a lot of the Corcoran show—I'm maybe embarrassed to say this now—but, it turned out to be a lot of tea parties, that kind of looking at the exhibit, in contrast to genuinely interested gangs of high school kids—students who I would always bring into the show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But since you were out of that aspect, in the Washington they couldn't very well do it.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In Washington they did something else. They couldn't very well do it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, at Yale, there was a case of a teaching museum.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yale was very good.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did the professional—the professors and all—work with you on that? How did that fit in?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't think they made any effort to coordinate it with their—that I remember—any of their teaching function. I don't recall any connection there, and I'm not sure, but it seems to me Bartlett Hayes was there, but I'm not positive. No. No. I beg your pardon. That's wrong. Bartlett Hayes was at Phillips in Anderburg, and I had exhibited there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Did it go there?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, the show went there as well?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh-huh.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And there, you probably fit right into—it was there for that—teaching.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, that was perfect. Absolutely, they just—they used it almost every day in their

own way, for their own courses and aesthetics, and design, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Much like Yale—simply slipped in and slipped out, as far as you remember.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. It came and went.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, Charleston, was that about the last stop?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. No. It, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But there you were on the Huntingtons' winter turf. Weren't you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yeah. Well, it was planned—the show was planned to move into the South in the winter times, and would generally drift north in the summer, and it was Savannah, GA, and Charleston were two very delightful places to exhibit—both places relatively poor. Uh. Savannah's exhibition was very, very effective, there. I can't quite remember what I did, but I remember it was effective, but those galleries were quite poor. The Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, was very poor, I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And there you wouldn't have had an art press to speak of. It would have been through the school system.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. Yeah. Through the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And ladies' groups.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —committees of—in the South—there were—committees of women working in museums were very important, and once I learned that, you work with them, and you gain a lot of ground, and get a lot of promotion. Some galleries had, I thought, well established, even then, docent services, and that was true also in the South, where if I could bring those people together, then they in turn could act to help, when there were crowds of school kids, and believe me, in many communities, the buses were just lined up outside the museum. I made the point. I'd go to the superintendent. I would go to ends to try to reach those people who could bring youngsters to the show, not because I was interested in crowds of people, but my job was to make the works of Mrs. Huntington well-known throughout the country, and this was the way I felt was the way to do it, attract young people.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, it was quite a contrast from your—it was much more rarefied in art school. Wasn't it? Where many of the students might have looked down their noses at this realistic work. So, you were ready to get back to the art school life in—what was that? 1939? Did this end in the summer, or so, of '39?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, no. There's an interesting tail piece to this whole story, and I don't want to go on about—but—and I didn't answer one of your questions. The show did not end in Charleston. That was the only the coming up toward the end. From that point, we came northward, and were shown in Virginia, at Charlottesville, and then at Corcoran in Washington, and then at the Pennsylvania Academy in Philadelphia, and then subsequently in—it went on from there to a whole New England circuit of Pittsfield, MA, at the Berkshire Museum, New Haven, Yale, Hartford—the Atheneum in Hartford, and I think that's coming near to the end—and subsequently to New York. It was finally—well, the Huntingtons were planning to send it abroad, and twice they talked to me and approached me on whether I'd be interested in taking it to—they—first talking about Mexico. Then they talked about Europe, and—but this was '39, remember. And things were really starting to rumble in Europe. So, they decided against it—Mrs. Hunt—Ms. Mecline wrote that they decided to end the circuit and they would then disperse the things from the Budworth people in New York.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it shown in New York at the very end?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. It was not shown. It was never shown in New York. I don't know why. Maybe it was because they had done—they had shown so many of her things some years before that—I really don't know. They had a big show of her work on the banks of the river some years before. I don't remember when.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you brought it back to New York, what? Mid-1939? Just before the war broke out?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh. Let's see. In—just in early summer, and then came this tail piece I'm talking about. The Huntingtons came to me, and—or I to them. I forget where. Anyhow, and they said, "We—you must have been counting on going to Europe with this exhibit. Well, the show is not going, but we would like to send you." So, they sent me to Europe, and I was to go for a year at their expense, and I laid out a little trip, and so on. [Cross talk.] But I got there, and of course it was—it became much too tense. By the end of that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did you go?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Where I could: England, and Scotland, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you covered a great deal of ground.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I tried to cover in about four months, I think, most of Central Europe: France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland. I didn't go into northern—into Scandinavian countries.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go mostly to museums?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Very much so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What sort of things were you particularly looking for?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, my Lord, just anything. I was looking for—I was looking for the real things, which I had seen only in repose before, and that first trip—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was it like to—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That was my first trip to Europe and it was my introduction to the great masterpieces.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was it like, say, going to Germany, to Dresden, or to Berlin, on the eve of war.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I beg your pardon. I didn't go to Germany. I didn't go to Germany then. No, I was planning to go, but things were getting—and I was in Holland, and thinking about going to Germany, and everybody advised against it. As it turned out, of course, Holland was the first place hit in the following—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have letters of introduction?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Everywhere. That was a very nice part of it, from—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —through the university?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —from Huntington. No, not from the university, from Archer Huntington, and his name was magic. In fact, he established a foreign—a bank account, so all I had to do was present the letter of credit. It was so easy—through a Spanish bank, because his connections were very strong into Spain, and whenever I needed money, or at period times—the way he set it up, I just was to go and draw money against this account that he set up, which was kind of wonderful. You know. I had never had that kind of treatment before in my life. And—well, I was going to say, and then—but I couldn't stay the whole year, because by the—was it by September? October—late August, things were very, very bad, and I was in Southern Europe at the time, in Rome, and then in Naples, and we were all advised by the government to register immediately, and be put on transportation back. And, uh, I resisted it as long as I could. I had return passage purchased on the Italian line, but I hadn't made the reservations, and I resisted it as long as I could, because I just wanted to hold out, and see as much, but it finally—it really was—I was staying in a little hotel—a little pension in Naples, and every morning the husband of the woman who ran the thing would come and sit at my table, and I'd have breakfast, and he would say, "Go home, please. Go home, please. Go home, please." I mean, it was—here, he was trying to advise that it really would be wise to get out. And so I finally did return, and I was on the first blackout—blackout ship—to cross the Atlantic, the Rex—the Italian Rex liner—we were escorted by submarines all the way through the Mediterranean, from Naples all the way to the Azores, at which time the—

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were Axis submarines—German or Italian?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Italian—Italian submarines. Then they left us at the Azores, and from that point on, we were blacked out all the way to New York. And of course when we arrived at New York, it was cause for a great deal of publicity—lots of newspaper publicity, and so on, people coming out in droves from Europe, and then, as you know, very soon thereafter that fall, things started to happen.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you then go back home to Reading, or what did you do at first?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh. I went back to Reading, and I went back to school that fall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you would have been what? About a junior at that time.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I was a junior then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And were you going to be a painter? Was that what you were beginning to concentrate on?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh. That's interesting. The whole program at Penn was quite unusual there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said it was heavily architectural.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was heavily architectural, even though I—it was very understood that I wanted fine arts training, and wanted to think in terms of painting, and so on, and museum work, but I was registered into all the architecture courses in the first year, along with all the architecture courses in the first years, along with your academics, and the nearest thing that the school could come to what I seemed to be looking for was its interior design program with the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design in New York competitions, in which all the Ivy League schools and others were competing in those days. So, I entered that program, and did very well. I learned a great deal of design. I learned a good deal of architecture, a lot about materials, and techniques and procedures, and so on. My teacher there was a man by the name of James Matheney, who was quite a renowned interior designer in Philadelphia, and who did work actually in the South for wealthy tobacco—Duke families and so on. So, I felt lucky to have him as my advisor.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you recall was his point of view? What was his approach to design?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Fairly classic. I mean, the whole orientation of the Penn program then was typically École des Beaux-Arts. It—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean that extended even to the ornament that they had to do.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I still have many of the projects I did, and they are so solidly classic, Renaissance, I mean, almost—it was rare that you—well, there were a few things that we did in, quote, "modern." Design a modern interior of a theater lobby, or a modern hotel. We did a hotel at one time—a modern —

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have a preference for one over the other—modern over the classical, or do you—at that time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't think I had preference. I think I was willing to take it, as I think most students were. There wasn't a resistance to classic things then, as now in schools. So, I think all of us accepted it as good, solid training, and I certainly—I never regretted, really. In fact, I've always been very happy that I had that very, very solid background, but I think it was my senior year. I went—had a long talk with the dean, and—this was Dean Koyle again—and he was in the process of working out a new degree program on the Penn campus in art—in fine arts. They did not have a degree in the fine arts. They had a degree in the fine arts, but they didn't have a program, and so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had had some basic drawing and painting?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Drawing, and painting, and sculpture. Oh, surely, yes. Yes, of course, but all architecture students got all those courses.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In 1940, or so, the dean was—you went to talk to him.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Right, and, uh, they—he set up—I was a kind of a pilot program in which they loaded me with a lot of painting courses and design courses in my senior year, and granted me the degree of bachelor of fine arts—as a [inaudible].

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was really compressing it then. Wasn't it? In one year?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, it was, but I liked it. It was good. I had very good teachers, by the way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What lay behind that? Before that year, you'd had your—in the fine arts, as opposed to architecture, had they started you out with basic drawing?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Your first year was basic drawing. You had—and your second year, second-level drawing, which was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was this from nature, or from cast, or?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It started out mostly from casts. It—and let's see. The first year—yes. You learned shades, and shadows, and light, and dark, and all these types of things. In your second year, you worked with anatomy. There were life classes, and also, we did outdoor landscape sketching in the cemeteries near the university. It was the only landscape nearby Penn campus. And then the second part of that drawing course blended into working with sepia, and monotonous of watercolor, and that was the blend into painting. You did not paint in the first two years. You weren't allowed to paint, except to render architectural drawings. That was the

only painting you did. So, the painting was kept until you had studied all your basic drawing, your perspective, your shades and shadows, composition, all that was wiped out in the first two years, and then you went into painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were those teachers in the first two years quite good?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Very good. Excellent. Excellent. I had the great distinction of taking first basic watercolor with the wonderful, then very old, George Walter Dawson, after whom there are Dawson prizes and awards, and so on, still given, I think, by the Philadelphia Watercolor Club.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. This was in your second year?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Phew. That—I can—this was probably my senior year. I'm not sure, but he wasn't there. He was very aged, and not well. So, his assistant, or I guess the person who followed him, was Paul Dunville. I don't know whether that name is familiar to you or not. He was quite a good painter, and draftsman. And drawing was—drawing and sculpture was handled by the very wonderful James House, who still lives, by the way, and who is—who was a master anatomist, and a taskmaster as far as training us students. I mean, he was a brute, but we loved him. We just loved him. His philosophy—I learned more about aesthetics and philosophy of art, and so on, from that man in the studio than I got from all my other classes in aesthetics and design, and whatever. And I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How would it come out in his studio class?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Sometimes very raw. Sometimes very crude.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you think of examples of how he got his idea across?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I—that's a hard—to think of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what in [cross talk]—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, yes. I can, but I—here's a good case. I was thinking of this some time ago. It came in my mind while I was lecturing on space and concept of space. I was talking to students about architecture, but while I was talking, I began to think of James House, and one time, his little talk to a group of us sitting around on the floor somewhere in the studio, wherever we were. He said he had traveled to the West that preceding summer, and that he had been thinking a lot about space, because, remember, he was a sculptor, and so he was very concerned about space, and he said—I don't know how the actual thing came about, but at the Grand Canyon, he decided that he needed to urinate. So, he walked off to one section of the Bright Angel Rim of the canyon, where people weren't, and he urinated out over the mile-deep canyon, and he said, "That is space. There is a concept." He says, "I stood there, and urinated, the sense of space and my relationship to space," and so on. You see what—this is the kind of instruction that came from that man in the studio. Quite often it was crude. Sometimes it was filled with invectives, and perhaps—I don't want to be unkind to him—sometimes maybe even porno or filth, but he got the point over. That kind of instruction, by the way, was very rare, if you're thinking back to the time. I'm talking about the 1930s.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was generally very dignified and gentlemanly.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: At the Penn campus, most of them even wore ties, and were very, very formal. So House, with whom I kept—have kept in contact, whom I owe a letter now—has been with me all these years. Interestingly enough, one of the people I hired here several years ago, a sculptor, whose work is currently being shown—Regina Kelly [ph]—is one of his prized students. So, here she comes a whole generation after me, still—and she idolized the man. She used to tell me when she was an instructor here that she literally idolized him. He was so wonderful. So, he was really in action for many, many years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he someone you got to know quite well during your student days?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yes. Very well.

ROBERT F. BROWN: After classes?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. After classes very well. They—by the way, sometime, when you're in the Whitney Museum, his sculpture of Lincoln is there. It's a wonderful work in wood. It's a Lincoln, very depressed, very crunched over, sad, and remorseful, and so, you would enjoy it, but to answer your other question—what was it? [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what was it—what other relations did you have with him at that time you got to know him?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I was, in my senior year, appointed to be a curator, because of my experience with this traveling show, and I came back with a lot of experience. I was appointed curator of the—what was called then the Art Division of the Cultural Olympics of the University of Pennsylvania. Now, the Cultural Olympics was a program of the arts, carried out throughout the states of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, I think. I'm not sure exactly of the—Virginia, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia—anyhow, money had been appropriated to run competitive programs in all the arts throughout the public schools—I think it was Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia—money, which was—and there was a director—whose name I forget now—a director who was in the College of Education, and who, with a battery of secretaries, carried on correspondence with art leaders in all of the arts all over these states, where local competitions were held. Plays were being judged. Art exhibits, music festivals, readings of poetry, and so on, in all these various divisions. The winners of which, in each of these units, would ultimately appear in Philadelphia at some grand thing which they called the Karyon—Greek Karyon thing in the municipal auditorium in Philadelphia—brought 5,000 people to see these—all of these kids from all of their states in the arts.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In school—to high school level.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In school. Yeah, and the judging—but the awards and the judging was all done on school levels: elementary, secondary, and so on. I had charge of displaying on the Penn campus the award winners in art, and my supervisor was James House. He was paid as a supplement to his salary, and I was working under one of the federal NYA—National Youth thing. Fifty cents an hour is what we got, and I hung the shows. Jim House would come in the late afternoon. We would meet there—4:30 or whatever in the afternoon—and he would lay the things on the gallery floor, and he would arrange them, and then I would put them up onto the wall, and did the physical job of—and then I had to sit there while the gallery was open, until, I don't know, seven, eight o'clock at night.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was—were you able—were you fairly flexible, or—? Was House?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. House was very shrewd. He started out, first of all, doing it all himself. He ended up letting me do it all. But I mean—and he would say, "You arrange this group. I'll work here." But he was a teacher by nature, and so, eventually, he just simply approved, more or less, what I did, or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, that furthered—gave you further experience at—if not much greater than the Hyatt Huntington, because I suppose it was terrific variety and quality.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, this was one of the very wonderful things. With the Huntington, I was always working with three-dimensional things, where he was terrific training in two-dimensional, because most of the art—there were some sculptures—but most of the things were paintings and drawings, and so, I learned there how to arrange exhibits, which incidentally I still use many of the principles that House taught me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And those—what were basically those principles?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, he had kind of—he had a phobia. I remember this well, and I don't forget it, because it comes to my mind often now as a curator. He always said, "Don't let the ends of the wall fall apart, or hang down"—was his expression, hang down—"Get strong pieces to build the ends of your gallery walls. You see. And start with these accent pieces." We would start shows—he would always start by laying aside, going through everything we had—by the way, these changed about every two weeks—these shows on the Penn campus.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean, all the winners were kept there, and you just rotated them?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. They came in groups, and then they were judged there again for the top award winners for the end of the season thing. So, we had an ongoing program, to which—a lot of people from the Penn campus came to see the shows. I mean, they were very excited about them. My own dean would come to every exhibit, because he just loved children's art, anyhow, and that was how I had another personal contact with my dean, but Jim House and I became very good friends. I mean, we drank together quite often. Quite often, we'd go out and have a beer or something afterward. Horn & Hardart Restaurant was right around the corner from where our gallery was, and it was—that was right off the campus. So, many a time we sat there for lunch or something, or a sandwich, and I became very close to Jim House.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You learned then hanging particularly from him.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And I learned hanging from him, and as I said, along with it, I learned a lot of other things that I use every day in my life, and—but he had—I was going to say he had a technique of going through these piles of stuff, and very quickly pulling out pieces that were exceptional. I mean, we had piles of things coming in from the schools, and then he would start with those, and he'd go around the gallery, and place those in the crucial spots, and he would build his shows from those accent pieces, and, by the way, that's

exactly the way I hang a show. I find myself do exactly that when I work on an exhibit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because if you can—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't do an exhibit on paper like a lot of museum curators do—work it all out. When the show comes in—phew—it goes out. I couldn't do that for a million dollars. I've got to see the things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You build on the strength of the best things.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I've got to feel them in the room, how they work in space, where do the—which are the accent pieces, and what—as he would say, pull the ends of the gallery up. Don't let that corner fall down, and things like that that I—they're just too numerous, and perhaps too subtle to say just what really did happen.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There were no guidelines otherwise?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. No. There really weren't—nothing else by that.

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Cassette two, side A.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —1981. [Audio break.] Well, we're continuing our interviews of Vincent Hartgen in Orono, Maine. This is Bob Brown, the interviewer. We were talking about your education at the University of Pennsylvania, and perhaps you could sort of rather summarize your degrees, your graduation, which was about 1942 or so. And, you took two degrees?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or you moved right from a bachelor's into a master's?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Bachelor's degree in fine arts in 1941, and a master's of fine arts degree in 1942.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what—did you specialize in anything differently for that master's degree?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I continued—I was one of the earliest people to obtain that particular kind of fine arts degree at the University of Pennsylvania, where—where the program, formally, had been mostly associated with architecture, and, uh, the dean allowed me to put together—to formulate a degree—a master's degree program that was not architectural, but was pure fine arts, and so, it was composed of—um—of, um, art history and aesthetic courses, several courses in architectural and interior design. I did—as a matter of fact, for my thesis, I designed a museum, a complete museum—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —based on, in part, perhaps, on those travels you had?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Based on—that was—right, that was why I did it. I wanted to pull some things together and come up with new ideas of gallery installation, and so on. And so, it was decided that I would research museums and the collections, techniques for exhibiting, and housing, and preserving, and then put all this together in a thesis, which was really a visual thesis in that it was—I don't know—some 20 or 30 large panels, plus a dissertation to back it up. But that was—it was very exciting. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Where did you draw upon your ideas, or what did you—except for the travels with the Anna Hyatt Huntington—were you aware of the, uh, say, the new National Gallery of Art going up at that time, things of that sort?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I was, and, of course, as you know, most architectural designs are published in architectural magazines. Remember, I had been to Europe and I had seen many marvelous designs in Holland and Germany—excuse me—in France, and in Italy.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Including new ones, or?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: New ones. Oh, yes. They had—let's see. The museum Boijmans had just been finished in Rotterdam, one of the most beautiful museums, which I have seen since, again, and still think it's one of the great museums of northern Europe—for installing, I'm talking, not collection as much as techniques of installation, and lighting, and so on. It was, I thought, a very successful degree program for me. I was very happy with it, and I was unique, in that they had never granted that particular kind of degree before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who—did the people you worked with—your teachers—have some impact on you at this stage, or were you pretty much on your own?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, you know, graduate programs are the case where you do go off on your own as possible. I was assigned an adviser, who was James Matheny, who himself was a fine architect, but also quite a painter himself, kind of not an engineering type of architect, but a designer more. And he lived in Philadelphia, and I saw—would see him—I would arrange, I think, to see him about once a week. I would sometimes see him at school, or go to his home on Pine Street. He lived in a—I think I mentioned before—a very beautiful—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had he transformed an old house?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. He had taken two old colonial houses and without destroying their facade along Pine Street, he removed the center walls, or part of the inner wall, and made the two houses into one large palace, actually. It was almost a reconstruction of the famous Davanzati Palace from Florence, even including a courtyard and fountain.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was Matheny himself a, uh, sort of a Beaux-Arts architect?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. He—well, he was. He had been a Beaux-Arts designer, and, of course, clung to all the classic things—Renaissance and other—but it was a very, very charming and very beautiful home.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were his ideas—as you developed a thesis for a museum design—were they pretty much in accord with yours, or—considering he had a much more conservative training.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I have a feeling I owe a great deal of my early contemporary ideas to him. I think even though he might have been considered classic in every sense of the word, he knew that, quote, "modern" art was here, and modern architecture was here, and encouraged me to think contemporary. I never—he never forced me to think classic design in any of my work, and my museum—the finished product—was indeed very contemporary, not at all classic.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And that consisted of large panels—sketch panels, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were—yes. There were large panels that—well, they maybe in this respect they may have followed the old Beaux-Arts scheme. The panels each contained—for instance, one panel would be the plan in one section and elevation, and another part, a cross section here and there. There were a number of panels that were various perspective views of both interior and exterior, and very heavily annotated, so that the thing actually when shown and judged by the degree committee was hung as an exhibit. It was an exhibit, and one walked from panel number one, to all the way along, and read the captions, and then you could back it up with your written material.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you remember your—the outline was? The layout, rather. And what, basically, did you think of for installation?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't remember too well. I remember that it had several large galleries for changing exhibits. One of the galleries had a kind of courtyard, with facilities for smaller prints or drawings around the courtyard, and one unique feature, which I have incidentally never seen put into action in any museum even yet was—I arranged one gallery with panels—wide panels, which were pivoted on pins, so that you could arrange an exhibit behind the walls while an exhibit was on the walls, and it—that the crucial time, overnight just simply revolve the panels, and put your new show into action. I thought it was a fabulous idea. I'm sure somebody might have done it in some form or another, but I've never seen it in a gallery. I had never seen it before, but it just made sense to me, that if you're running an art gallery, as I do now, you run into these problems of exhibit changes and you don't like your gallery to be standing blank during that change period, or block out the public from going into it. So, here would be a way that overnight, you could move from one major show to another. You could have a print show going today, and tomorrow it could open on a watercolor show in the same identical gallery. That was—that kind of thing. And I tried to work out—now I can remember something else—types of lighting for sculpture always bothered me, and most museums—in this country and Europe, I think sculpture, for the most part, is pretty badly lighted, in the artificial sense. So, I worked systems of various reflecting niches, and coves, and so on, to create—or to be able to create particular kinds of lighting at particular spots in the sculpture gallery.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What is your—what was your—or is your basic criticism with the way sculpture is lighted? It lacks—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I think most museum people today over-light their sculpture, and destroy the three-dimensional effect, which—the three-dimensional quality of sculpture, which is the most important thing for a sculptor. And I think some gallery directors, in their effort to be, let's say, to be evident to the public, will over-light and destroy very beautiful, subtle surfaces with sculpture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm. They get wiped out—sort of stage light.



VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They wipe it out—flatten them—they flatten them for the most part.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Then, in the '30s, or in this—the time of your master's project, it was under-lighting, by contrast?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I guess so. I guess I would say under-lighting was the problem then. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you tried to provide means by which the lighting could be tailored to the individual piece?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Where you could—by shifting—by simply shifting your focus of your light fixture onto the cove, or the curved wall, or the overhead cove, you could create the right kind of diffusion of light around your sculpture—or—see. Rather than necessarily drive a spotlight on the sculpture, do it by indirect lighting. Most sculpture can be better lighted by indirect light than by direct light. That we all know, and I even practice that now in my own gallery here. So, uh, you can see way back then, I was aware of the fact that something was wrong with sculpture and the lighting of it. There was a sculpture gallery, but I don't remember exactly what it seems—I think I had—it had a clerestory window. I know that. I mean, clerestory lighting in the upper section that could be controlled with louvers or panels, or something that controlled the light coming in that high window there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But not nearly to the—with the refinement that you saw in your plan?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. Well, you must always make plans for lighting with artificial light, because you can't depend on using natural light all the time, anyhow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the university museum the principle museum in Philadelphia that you looked at, or was it the Philadelphia Museum of Art?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: The Philadelphia Museum of Art was there. I made many trips there, and I didn't think very much of—that was really a big, classic construction as you—pseudo-classic, neo-classic thing, and that certainly didn't give me—I don't think—any inspiration whatsoever. No. If anything impressed me, it would probably have been the Dutch museums in, maybe, Belgium, but perhaps the Dutch museums more than anything, and the Dutch system of lighting, which incidentally I, in recent years, have seen is still very, very subtle, and very good, compared with a lot of our gallery lightings in this country.

ROBERT F. BROWN: At this time were you also painting, and doing other things?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I should go back and say that there were, along with art history and design courses—I deviated there for a minute on—the focus of the course was on that museum program, but I took—but I had courses in drawing, and design, and painting—well, painting, and drawing, not design—painting and drawing. Design was the architectural thing. And it was in that year I took courses in—one course in the history of China and Chinese art, given by Dr. Bode—B-O-D-E—a scholar of Chinese art from Swarthmore, who I understand was one of the—one of only a handful of artists—of, excuse me, of scholars in this country who knew the dialects of China and the East at that time in history, one of the few called to Washington right after Pearl Harbor, as I recall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm. So, that—was Chinese art a particular interest of yours?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. No. It was just [cross talk]. I didn't know much then, and don't now claim to know anything, or very much, about Oriental art.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your instruction just before you left Penn—in painting and drawing—was that quite good?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so. There was no effort to make a painter out of me. I had no even thoughts of becoming a painter, per se, then. Oh, I took one course at the Pennsylvania Academy, but that was a kind of—well, I—they had a kind of collaborative program there. One—no. I took several courses there. One course at the academy in drawing and one in painting. I'm not sure that was in the graduate year. The painting course, I think, was in the graduate year. And another—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you think you would become after—in '42, when you graduated?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I had no idea, except I thought I was—I would like to teach. I had—in my senior year I had married Frances, and she was the one who, more than anybody, I guess, encouraged me to—into thinking of teaching. I just, like a lot of other people in art school, you really don't know where your skill is going to be while you're in the process. So, I kind of let it drift along. Dr. Matheny, my advisor, also thought I would make a good teacher. He was aware of that, and encouraged me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Once you were married, did this affect your plans otherwise, too? I mean.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I don't think so. I think—uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had known each other for some time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: From our high school days, all the way back to high school. We were not sweethearts in high school days. In fact, never talked to each other that I know of, but only after we graduated that we became friendly, which was kind of nice, and she was off teaching in a little school in New York State—a place called Washingtonville, NY. I went there as bride and groom the summer of 1940, and occupied a very, very, very old house built in 1773, or [1777]4, and we had a lot of fun. It was way out in the country—a little farmhouse, and looking over the lower Catskills. It was a lovely place for a young, married couple to be, and I taught some classes there to kids that summer on a volunteer basis. I just gathered the town's children together to some community event and painted away myself that summer. But she's the one who really thought I should become a teacher, and it was in my senior year that I sent out—excuse me—my graduate year, that I sent out letters of application all over the country focusing mostly on universities, thinking that that's where I would want to go. I had never taken any education courses. So, I wouldn't have been qualified to go into the public schools, and I don't think I would have liked that anyhow.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And, what—did you get a response—something of a response from your letters?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, there was some, but, you see, we were coming up to war years. Everybody was tense about development. In fact, that was the common reply: "We're—we don't know where we're going. We're holding back on development of any programs," and so on. Some said that I should keep in touch—the usual thing. I had a very nice letter—a very wonderful letter from the president of this university, who then—was then Arthur Halk, who liked my letter, and said so, and said that there were no plans to develop anything at the University of Maine. They didn't have any art at the University of Maine. They had no art program, no art collection, and that I looked like the kind of person that they might be interested in, but unfortunately—and here came that—and it's whenever you saw that word "unfortunately", you knew what was going to follow—unfortunately there were no plans to do anything at this time, and some day he would be in touch with me, period. Well, Pearl Harbor came, as you know, in '41. All of us in the art school—I think every one of us, the following Monday or Tuesday morning, we all went down to Philadelphia, and all enlisted, every one of us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh—tremendous feeling of patriotism.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, it was a tremendous feeling, and furthermore, they had just announced—somebody had announced—told us—that they were activating, or going to put together a corps of engineers, and only art students, and engineering, and architectural students would be acceptable in it, but it was going to have to do with camouflage. So, we all—that sounded—you see. Most of us knew that we were ready for draft, anyhow. We had already carried draft cards. We had already been registered. So it made sense, and so, we all went. I remember it was quite an occasion. We had a grand drinking affair that night, you know. We had all signed up. But incidentally they never activated that until the following—it took over a year to activate it. This was in '41, and it wasn't called—we weren't called to active duty until the November of 1942. It took them that long to put the—to decide, I guess, to create the battalion. It was a battalion. It was an engineer camouflage corps, and it was a battalion corps. So, that gave me that year in between my graduation in '41, and right on the heels of that, I was granted a fellowship. I was awarded a fellowship to do a year of graduate work if I wanted to. And so, without anything immediate in mind, I did the graduate year, and it came out perfect, because that finished in June of the year, in which—'42—in which I went to military service in November. So, that short period of time—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had a few months there of—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —of adjusting and getting ready.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was your military service, then? Could you describe that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, yeah. It [laughs] was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were married now.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yeah. And the corps—the unit formed in Maryland at Ford Meade, and it, sure enough, it had only college graduates in the fields of engineering, and fine arts, and architecture. That's all they took. No work had been done on camouflage. No major work had been done. There were some efforts at camouflage by some engineers, but no research had been done, and we were told, as different units of this corps, that we would be experimenting with camouflage techniques. We would not likely see military action, but that our job would be to work with the corps of engineers in Fort Belvoir, VA, which is the seat of the engineering

corps—then was, and that we were to work with them, and we were to devise and test various techniques for camouflage, and this is why our skill as artists and so on was to be used. It was—in some ways it was fascinating. In other ways, it was frustrating, because, as you know, military requirements, and unfortunately some of the people who were our superiors were not college people, and also were not art people—had no taste, or whatever. And I hope I'm not being cruel to military life, but many of them were good, solid soldiers—regular Army people, and they were our colonels, and our captains, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think they had some resentment of you [cross talk]?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, they did, indeed. Oh, they did, indeed. Yes. They did, indeed. And, it bothered us. I mean, I remember one day, we were in a formation, this particular officer came forward and he said, "I have instructions to count off how many of you have a"—and he paused—"B.F.A., whatever the hell that is." Do you see? That attitude. And so: "step forward," and so we stepped forward. "Now, how many have an M.F.A., whatever the hell that is?" You know. And so, we—this attitude came down, and it was a little offensive at first, and so on, but we did do things. I should be honest and say that we, with their help as engineers, we were able to devise and work on all kinds of interesting variations on camouflage procedures.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you remember some of the projects that were particularly notable?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, for instance—well, the thing that you all see now, everybody sees soldiers and military trucks go by with these wiggly shapes of gray, and brown, and yellow, and so on, or it's typical now to see a GI with a helmet that has a screen on it—a net on it, and into that net are strips of burlap, of different colored grays, and greens, and so on. We're the ones who started this. I don't mean my own unit, but this camouflage group were the first one to test the colors, the sizes and shapes of designs. They had a contact with an Air Force, or a military airplane that would photograph our installations from the sky so as to see whether we could indeed conceal a two-and-a-half ton truck from an airplane flying 5000 feet in the sky. And so we would have to build shields of chicken wire, or fence wire, and span them on heavy cable, on top of which you would plant trees, and create images of all sorts, and then put the truck underneath to conceal it from above, and see how well it could be done. These were—this was the beginning of that kind of camouflage. It's now standard procedure in the Army.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They hadn't really got—at that time, they hadn't really done much.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. Everything was OD green, or gray, as you know, in military clothing and equipment up until that point. It was at that point that these other colors were introduced, and the striping, or the wiggling designs on the sides of trucks. To defuse or break up their hard edges, all these things were explored under the direction, I must admit, under the direction of these engineers—these military engineers, who, of course—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In time, then did you, the two sides, get to work together quite well?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I think they did. I didn't stay with the unit. It did go abroad, by the way. It went on D-Day. Believe it or not. It was part of the entrance Army.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It would have been to devise things in Europe, further refine them and so on?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They—the problem was—well, the plan was that the unit—the whole battalion of camouflours, as we were called, were to be broken up. The unit was to be broken into small units, and these small units assigned to infantry and artillery units in the field, and advise—to act as advisers in the—during the military actions. The unfortunate thing was that the war—the unfortunate. I should put it the other way. The fortunate thing for us, the war moved too quickly, and the unfortunate thing was the that engineers—the camouflours—never had much of a chance to put it into action, because there was none of this. They had been thinking, I guess, that World War II was going to be a dig-in war, the same as World War I, where very few trenches were dug, again, and very few installations of any permanence. So, there wasn't time to do some of the things that we had devised.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you devised things, though, that were very mobile? That could [cross talk] extremely quickly?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Well, that was part of it. For instance, one thing I remember very well was a mobile installation for concealing 105 Howitzer cannons. The first several times we did it, we blew the installation up the first time the cannons were fired. I mean, we didn't understand compressions or whatever, and you know what, a couple of 105 Howitzers can be an awful percussion, and, um—but, yeah. Those were—now those were mobile units, and they could be thrown up very quickly—a net, you see, with guide wires could go over the top of a cannon or a truck pretty quickly, and at least break up—the thing we had to teach, or we were supposed to teach the infantrymen: it doesn't have to be a beautiful thing. It doesn't have to be beautifully

built. Keep in mind that if you're creating a shadow from up above, and that sometimes all you've got to do is drag a few trees against a truck, throw something odd against the side of it, so that from the air it won't cast a shadow that will reveal what it is, and so the—or create a shadow. By the way, we did a lot of deceptive camouflage, too, where we built airplanes, and built trucks out of cardboard, so that they would be deceptive, in that their silhouette, or their shadow from the reconnaissance plane would lead the people to believe that that was trucks, when it really was nothing more than cardboard. The trucks would be off somewhere else, carefully concealed. That worked pretty well for a while, but there again, you're—the war moved too rapidly, actually, for it. It went—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what did you do? You didn't go abroad with the unit. Did it go elsewhere in the States, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I don't why. I suppose I wasn't physically able. I don't know. I did have trouble with arthritis in my feet, but I was getting along pretty well in it, but anyhow, I got pulled out of it, and got thrown into a headquarters unit in Baltimore, and that was for the remaining two-and-a-half years. So, I didn't—unfortunately, didn't go with the boys. And by the way, the whole unit, of 500 men in the battalion, went straight through without a single loss. I—at least that was the word I got sometime later.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you do in Baltimore? Anything related to that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Nothing at all. No, went right into a desk job. I was in a unit that was connected with—well, mostly recruiting, and selective service. For a while I was—I worked on the medical line of draftees coming through, and I learned a lot about how bad the physical condition of the typical American young man is, when I saw the people that came through there. And then, for another time, I worked in aviation cadet recruiting, which I kind of liked, in a way. I went out through, oh, mostly Maryland, but sometime into Virginia, with—usually travel with another person, who went to high schools, and gave lectures, and showed movies of the glammers of Air Force. You know, and so we recruited 17-year-olds, who signed up at 17 to be called active at 17 and a half, and that was aviation cadet recruiting. That was exciting, well, at least exciting in the sense that I met a lot of young boys, and gave tests, and so on. But I never had—no. I never had any use of my art at all. I even was able—I had quarters in Maryland, in Baltimore. For a while, I was quartered with another—[audio break]—in Philadelphia. She decided that she liked to come, since I was living in the city, in Baltimore, she'd like to come live with me. And so she came, and it was there that the children were born a year later. And—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did she enjoy her work? Was this part of a war effort that—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. She was—I thought it was very exciting. She, without any knowledge at all of meteorology, or as a matter of fact, no science background at all, she made application. She knew that I was going to go into service, and she said she felt she needed to do something that was important. She was then a floor walker, or a section manager, for Strawbridge & Clothier store in Philadelphia, and she decided that she ought to be doing something more appropriate for the war effort. Made application for a meteorologist, and took the test, and sure enough, qualified to be—to undergo training as a meteorologist to replace the male meteorologists who were going into the service, from all the weather stations in the United States—federal position. And she was the first woman to replace a male meteorologist in that capacity, and served as a weather, not predictor, so much as a weather recorder and worker at the airport in Philadelphia, which, of course, was closed, then, to any civilians. It was very tightly sealed, completely under military—because we were at war now. And it was very closed, very secret, and everything was done in code, of course. To keep weather predictions, and whatever, away from the enemy. On my leaves on weekends, I used to—I was allowed to go, because I was uniform. So, I would go out and go through a whole duty with her, and I thought it was very fascinating. She stayed with that until she decided to move to Baltimore. This is bringing you to Baltimore, and had herself transferred from the Philadelphia airport to the Baltimore airport, which wasn't quite as secure, as I remember, but when she looked into how far out from the city it was, and inconvenient, she decided not to take it. That ended her career as a meteorologist.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] So, were you mustered out in Baltimore?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I—yeah. That's right. In—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in '45?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In '45. In '45. Yes. In the summer of '45. I don't know exactly the date.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you any idea what you would be doing? Had you been—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Uh. Right then and there, or almost before that—oh, I should say, when—I want to go back and say—[audio break]—the question was?

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said—what—when you were getting ready, before you went out, you said there something else you wanted to bring up.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yes. When I was moved to Baltimore, and had the opportunity to live off barracks, as it were, out of camp, although we did have formations, military formations, I was allowed to live in an apartment, and therefore, with evenings somewhat free—not every evening—I was able to get back to painting. So, I did paint, and I actually have a one-man show, I guess, one could say, almost my first one-man show—I guess I'll say that. I never thought of it like that, but I have a feeling it is my first one-man show—in the lobby of a theater—of a live theater in Baltimore. The—what was it called? The Vagabond. The Vagabond Theater, and I had maybe 10 or 15 paintings that I showed as a soldier, and it—I needn't tell you, I'm sure, that the fact that I was in uniform, serving as a soldier, having an exhibit, helped the sales quite a bit. People bought, I suppose, with the idea of, well, helping the soldier. So, I sold pretty well, too. They weren't big.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they oil paintings?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were watercolor. They were drawings. I think several of them were pastels and drawings, and there were watercolor. A lot of them were made from sketches that I had made while out recruiting for these aviation cadets, because I—we had a car, and I had a driver, and so, I could sometimes sketch as going through the countryside of Maryland, and so on, and that appealed to Maryland people. So the two things worked out very well. I won an award. I sent one of those paintings. That was it. I sent one of those paintings to a national competition in Washington, in the National Gallery, called Soldier Art—Soldier Art Competition, and I won—I don't know. I won a prize, and was singled out. You had to come front and forward in the military unit, and all that kind of thing. The general puts a medal on you and all for a painting. I kind of felt a little embarrassed. [They laugh.] You know, I wouldn't have felt embarrassed with the camouflage unit, but this other unit I was with had nothing to do with art. I mean, they—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were an exceptional person there [laughs].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I was kind of a—I don't know what ever happened to that painting, but it was fun. Once, uh, somebody—I don't know who it was—in my unit—I think it may have been my captain in Baltimore, who encouraged me to—I guess it was after I had that show there. I guess he was trying to encourage me to become better known or something, and he suggested that I do a painting of—um—what was that? I don't know how it came about, but I ended up by doing a painting that represented my impressions of a Kabalevsky symphony, played by the National Symphony Orchestra in Baltimore, and who was the director? Hanz Kindler. Hanz Kindler was the director, and I went to the—I did go to concerts there in Baltimore. It was—we were available, and they kept—always gave soldiers passes. So, I went to a lot of concerts, and so, one of them, I did this painting, and it—oh, I know—it was the Army itself that wanted to get publicity. That was it. They encouraged me to present this painting to the symphony orchestra, which I did with cameras flashing, and all that kind of thing. So, the painting, I understand, is still in Washington. It's Kabalevsky's second symphony. Uh. I don't know it, but it was it was kind of fun. [Laughs.] So, I was getting fame. Do you see? As a lowly sergeant, which is what I was then—*click*.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, life wasn't all that bad, and your family—your wife was there, your children.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: [Cross talk.] No. It wasn't. It wasn't that bad. I—yeah. Of course, the children came along in 1942.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were twins, or?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: 1944. The children were born in '44. They were twins. Yes. They were born there in Baltimore, and, um—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you know, then, what you wanted to do afterward? Or was this [cross talk]—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: During that time, it began to look, you know, that war was going to come up pretty soon, and be ending, and, of course, the handwriting was on the wall, and so, most of us felt we better start making plans for the future, and now I, with wife and family, had to. So, I reactivated a lot of correspondence, letters back, and one of those letters went to Maine here, to the university president again. I wrote right back to President Halk, and reminded him that he had said that they were thinking about it. This was one of routine letters—the same kind of thing, and a letter came back saying that, indeed, yes. They would like very much like to consider me and that they were now ready to start a program at the university. "Would I meet with him?" I don't remember when I met with him, but "Would I meet with him in New York, and talk about it?" He wanted to interview me and talk about my—what I thought my plans would be to initiate an art program—an art department, and an art exhibit program, and develop a collection for a university. I mean, so exciting a possibility, you can't imagine. To be young, and to have been delayed those years. It was more than three years between your graduation and a chance to do something. How exciting it was to be faced with the proposition

that you might be chosen to create a whole university department. It really—I can't tell you. I went to New York, and met with Dr. Halk. That was in the summer after my release from the Army, and he hired me on the spot—hired me right on the spot. He said, "I want you." He said—after about two hours—oh, wait a minute. We met in New York. We had lunch in New York, and then it so happened he was going to a meeting in Washington, and I was going back to Philadelphia, where my mother was living—where we had now moved to from Baltimore, and so, I rode with him on the train from New York to Philadelphia.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He had a good chance to size you up then.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He did, and, on the way, he said, "You're the person I want." He said, "All you have to do now, you go up and see if you like us. You go up there to Orono, and you look it over, and if you think you like it, then you get in touch with the dean, and so on." So, in effect, although I was technically hired by Dean Murry, who was then the dean of the Arts College here—technically he did the hiring, but in effect Arthur Halk hired me in New York, and he and I have also mentioned this. I saw Arthur Halk just last summer in Camden. He's still living—very elderly, somewhat feeble now, and here, this old man, who came to the opening of my show in Farnsworth Museum in Rockland. He came up to me. He said, "Vincent, I wonder if you remember when we first met?" Just like that. Here's this 89-year-old man, or whatever he is, and because we had been dear friends, he—I know—he told me many, many times that he thought I was just the perfect person for the job.

[END OF TRACK.]

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VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —university club is where we went.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you were very pleased. It was flattering to you to be interviewed by the president of the university itself.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Exactly. I couldn't get over that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you got back to Philadelphia, what did Mrs. Hartgen think?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was—I think we both went into rapture, I'm sure. It was very important. It was very important.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you came up here, what was your impression? You made that visit Maine.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I was—my first—I had been in Maine before, never this far up in Maine. I had been in Ogunquit, Kennebunk, Portland, and so on, but I'd never be to the university. I was a little shocked at the general area. I thought Orono, Old Town, Bangor community was depressing. It was gray. It was not colorful. It was like a lot of New England—a lot of hard working people, and so on. So, that was a little bit of a shock.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was in fact it quite depressed in this area?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yes. Quite—

ROBERT F. BROWN: The war hadn't caused prosperity to any extent along here.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. No. No. But the campus looked exciting. It was about the size university or institution that I thought I would like to go into. I had other possibilities. I could have been twelfth man on a totem pole at, I think, University of Colorado. That job was open—instructorship. I could have—by the way, at the same time, I had, I think, four possibilities of jobs that—they weren't actually mine, but they were—I was close—runner-up. I could have been director of the Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC. They needed a director. They wanted a young director. I went down there for an interview.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did you think of that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I didn't like it. I knew the Mint Museum, because I had shown the Huntington exhibit there years before, but I didn't know the people. I went, and I didn't like them. I just didn't like them. I came away deciding that if they did offer it, I wouldn't take it. So, I never found out about that. And, I had another opportunity to design glassware for Steuben Glass in New York.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How'd that come up?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Just by sending out letters, as I had sent out letters before the war, and followed back up on design possibilities. I think Matheny—Professor Matheny—perhaps suggested that, because I had done several design projects, which involved small items, things like ceramic ware, and, for the Beaux-Arts

Institute of Design, I had won a prize for designing a dresser—a dressing set: a mirror, comb, and such things. This was years before. So, I think Matheny is the one who encouraged me to apply to Steuben, and I'm not sure that he didn't give me the name of the person. Nevertheless, I went there for an interview, and I guess I was a pretty good candidate. A man who was then president of Steuben, John Gates—G-A-T-E-S—Gates was the man who interviewed me. He was the president I think, and the money offered was quite different from the—anything else, too, but just the thought of family coming up in New York City even then didn't appeal to us. Frances and I both said let's not explore that very much.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You wanted a smaller community.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I want—we wanted a smaller community, and, um, Orono, for me, seemed about right. The university seemed right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your wife had not come up with you. [Cross talk.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. She hadn't seen it. No. And the housing was bad. That's one thing that disturbed me. They had no housing here. I canvassed the whole area. I stayed here about two or three days, first time here in this area, and I was very depressed about the housing. Oh, my, I almost turned Dr. Halk down, because I was so depressed about facilities for our family, and so on. Then it became known through the dean that housing was going to be moved from the Navy air—the Navy station installation at Brunswick, ME. They were going to tear down the barracks there and move some of them to the Orono campus to house students, GIs returning, because they, you know. All universities had to build up quickly to handle the influx of GIs coming back to school, and they were going to build a barracks, and some of the head barracks would be designated for faculty. So, that saved the day, and we came. We came, and Frances came. I made several trips up here that summer, but then we finally all came in the fall—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —of '45?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: '46. '46 we're talking—'46.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was a whole year when you were simply looking around, living in Philadelphia.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you came here with a broad mandate, and the support of the president, and what facilities?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: None. Zero. And I was told—it isn't that I didn't expect that—that this was all laid out. Dr. Halk said there won't be a lot of money. This is a poor state, but he felt that I could make do. Would I be willing? The challenge—the whole thing, it was a good challenge. I didn't like the fact that I didn't have more money, and carte blanche on a lot of things I wanted to do, but nevertheless, I liked it as a challenge. I—don't forget I had traveled those two years with the Huntington show. Even though I had money there, behind me, it was still a matter of making do with a lot of things on the spur of the moment. I had only a month in each city, and I had to work fast and rig up things, and do publicity, and so on. So, I was—the same kind of thing what I would be doing here. And it was. My classes were loaded with students. I had a tremendous amount my students my first couple of years. I was here 10 years alone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was in studio classes?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I had studio classes. I established right off the deck. I started out with art history, art appreciation courses, one course in architecture—in contemporary architecture—one course in basic drawing, and one course in basic painting. I handled them all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You handled what? About four or five courses?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, at least five. Yeah. But the second year was the real problem, because each one of those classes had to have a follow-up, and so it began to explode, and I was running around like crazy. The class schedule then had 10 hours per day, instead of the now eight, and we started at 7:30. Class one was at 7:30, and the last class—I remember very well—left out at quarter of six. That was a long day—a long day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were—had a class practically every period?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Almost. In between—blanks in between, when I started to think of an exhibit program. I was eager to get art here, because the place was so barren. It was—that was part of the depressing aspect that I didn't—I didn't find a God damn painting anywhere on the campus. No matter where I went, there wasn't anything up, and I couldn't believe this. Here, the university was almost one hundred years old without any art, and Dr. Halk, the dean, said that nobody'd ever done—had ever done anything, and that was it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Hmm, and despite the fact that there had been artists coming to the Maine coast in this era.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes, but they didn't come to the university.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. This was a removed thing. It started as an agricultural [cross talk].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. That's right. That's right. It was a very—still then—very much agricultural and tech oriented. It had started to develop a pretty good technology college.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it had nothing to do with the summer people that—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Made no effort to. I'm sure that it never made any effort to bring any art programs or things like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, how did you—let's take art history—how did you—I suppose they had no library. How did you make do on that? Did you try to buy basic survey books, and what about slides or photographs?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Slides there were none. I bought basic—what were called the basic sets then.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You found—found art museum sets? University sets?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I borrowed, at that time you could. You can't do it too much now, but you could—even before that—you could borrow some slides from the Museum of Modern Art, from the Metropolitan, if you were teacher, and allowed enough time. You could borrow them if you paid the insurance and postage. So, I did that in some cases. Luckily, the first year, I guess, I came to know a woman in Blue Hill, ME, a Natalie Pearson, who had been a traveler, and I made a point to meet her, because she had traveled, spent most of her life traveling the world. She was well along in years then, and I understood that she had a marvelous art collection. It turned out that it wasn't marvelous, but it was good. And so I went to Blue Hill and met her, and looked at her art in her home. Most of them were Barbizon paintings, and good—Daubigny, [inaudible], Ziem—imitations, Corot, and that thing. They were quite good. She also had been a bug with the camera. I don't—and so that she had a tremendous collection of three-and-a-quarter-by-four slides. Most of them were travelogue type of things, but at least they were of masterpieces, everything from the pyramids, to the Parthenon, to Notre Dame of Paris, and so on, and I ask her—I was bold enough to ask her at one point whether she would lend the slides to me. She said, "I'll do more than that. I'll give them to you." And so, I became heir almost instantly to something like three or four thousand slides, which was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that the first year?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think it was the first year. It may have been the second, but I'm—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because until then, what would you use? Just, uh, illustration?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Just carried in illustrations that I could.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you had large classes, you said.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I had big classes. I had to pass out a picture of the *Mona Lisa* and the kids would pass it around the room. I'm speaking figuratively, but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was their interest in art? What did you find initially?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think—well, if you're talking about the appreciation courses, I think the enthusiasm was very high, because many of the GIs had seen some things, and wanted to find out about them, and those were very exciting classes. I was on many occasions teaching almost a whole room of people, all of whom were older than I. They were older GIs coming back, and so on, and they were exciting. They wanted to know about these masterpieces, and the history of them, and who did them, because they had seen things in Europe and so on. So—but if you're talking studio, many of the students signed up for studio with the idea of helping them in their—whatever jobs—to be able to sketch, and to, you know, to be better carpenters and better engineers, and so on. So, I felt I was doing a good service there for many of them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These students were all very eager for their being over aged, having been delayed by the war. They took it very seriously?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did they have vocational goals in mind?



VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. For instance, last week I had lunch with Dr. and Mrs. Buzzwell—Arthur Buzzwell, who visited the campus, and whose collection of art we're now showing here on our campus. He came to campus here and we had lunch last week. He reminded me, not that I hadn't—that I didn't remember, but he reminded me that he was one of my GI students in 1946, when he was a horticulture major here at the university. He since became—he went on from here—got his degree here in horticulture, went on to the University of Alaska, was there for 20 years, and became Vice president, I think, and 10 years ago, became president of the University of Maine at Machias, and is now retired. So, here I am having lunch with a university president, who at one time had been in my basic drawing course, learning how to draw for horticulture purposes. Isn't that interesting? That—and he talked about how he remembered my criticisms very well, and remembered how it helped him as a horticulturist. A lot of my students—well, none of them intended to become artists. I don't think the idea of becoming an artist came into the mind of many of those students.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. It would be totally unfamiliar to most of them.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. They were purely interested in using art as an adjunct to their engineering and their other courses.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The students, then, compared with Penn, were very different. Weren't they?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said when you first went to Penn, there were many wealthy students.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Indeed, yes. That bothered me—bothered isn't the word. Yes. I was aware of the fact that I was coming from a very poor family, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: There was a narrower spectrum of student down there from here. Was there? Weren't these people from many different—or were they mostly from small towns?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Most of these were from small towns. Yes. And most of them were from Maine. We hadn't opened doors to out-of-state students then as we have done since, and encouraged out-of-state applicants. It was very rural, very local. In some ways, maybe that was good, because I came to know Maine people this way, the Maine personality. It fortunately was close in some ways to the—the rural people I knew in Pennsylvania.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How would characterize that personality, or some aspects of it?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Glamourless, I guess would be the first word that comes to mind. Maine people, then, and in a way are today—are reluctant to be showy, to be expressive. They're quiet. They're reticent. They hold back. They—I found that I had to work hard at getting them to accept the idea that nudes and so on were part of the art world, that, you know, these things were—after all, if you think about—remember Toynbee said that Maine is composed of a group of people north of Boston, eking out an existence while battling the elements. I think that's Toynbee's description of Maine—his total description of Maine. That's all that he enters in his history of Maine, and in a way that's true. These people have—they've been—they've battled. They're eking out an existence. That's still Maine. It is still Maine, except for the large communities in the cities, but it doesn't—you don't have to go very far out of any city in Maine to find people who are indeed eking out an existence, and surely battling the elements with their shacks and their houses that are just barely making it against the Maine winters. Now, this is—I say this all as a complement—or complementary, because this is a kind of student that I liked. I liked the kid who was really hard-pressed for a livelihood, and I don't think it's changed too much. I know, yes, of course, in 30 years you're going to see some change, and life is better for the average Maine citizen now. Certainly his take-home pay and his average are higher than they were then in proportion, and less people have to battle elements in the crude sense now, but it's still—basic personality is still there. Only last week, with some photographs—some nude photos in an art exhibit on campus, which is not unusual. Nudes always show up in photo shows. Here I have an exhibit of a young photographer in Portland, and I put it on display, and there are five or six nude photos. Sure enough the student newspaper makes references, and there's a—for two or three issues of the newspaper—banter back and forth about whether women should be shown without clothing, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. [Inaudible.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really a Puritanical thing, or is it now feminist as well?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Feminist this time.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Women demeaned as objects. [Cross talk.] But at one time it was Puritanical.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Exactly. But down deep—I think down deep, there's also this Puritan reserve. I think so, but that doesn't bother. It didn't then, and it doesn't now, and those were really exciting—

those early years of establishing the program, of creating new courses. I—just to be able to have been able to do it without—really without any restrictions—both the dean and the president were completely supportive. I never ran into a problem in resistance. I brought in things that—in exhibits—that, as I think of it now, must have been very, very shocking. I borrowed a big exhibit from Yale of the paintings of no other than Jacques Villon, for example, and you know how wild—and Marcel Duchamp, and Jacques Villon, and Duchamp-Villon were—Yale has a big collection, and I had come to know people at Yale when I was with the Huntington thing. So, I capitalized on this friendship, by the way. I still do in some cases. And that friendship, it goes way back. And I borrowed a big exhibit, and brought it up here, and I'm sure that it must have just shaken the foundations of this university, because it—they had never seen a show of cubism—this was cubism, pure out-and-out cubism. So, I—when I think that nobody resisted me. I brought these things in. I set up annual exhibit schedules that included a wide variety of different kinds of painting and sculpture, and so on, with very limited money—in some cases, practically none. [Audio break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now you described Orono as at the beginning depressed. You described, on the other hand, the—at least right after World War Two—these older, very eager students, and yet, although they may have seen a few things in combat in Europe, they really had no first-hand feeling or acquaintance with the art world. Wasn't that kind of almost a foreign body brought into Orono at that time? Or did you work at it at a very elementary level? How did it relate to these young people from Maine? Did you—at that time in the '40s—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think—yes. I think it was a shock to—for many of them—to be exposed to the exhibits I brought in. I did not start on elementary levels. I didn't think this was the way to go at it. My theory was that within the budget allowance, I should bring in the very best things I could, albeit I wasn't able to bring great masters from the Boston museum or major art collections, but I did ferret out artists who had reputation then, some who—many who were residents of Maine, or summer painters in Maine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But that was simply incidental—just more convenient to get those?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was more convenient to get them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It wasn't simply to illustrate Maine art—nothing like that.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not necessarily, although I did focus, and made a very definite attempt to focus on artists of Maine in later years—in fact, started, well, way back, to begin to put together a kind of roster of artists who lived and worked in Maine, who should be known to the university, and who should be promoted by the university. This was my theory, and I must say that I think I did a good job of that. I, over the years, have befriended practically every artist that walked this state in one way or another, and I did my very best to make them known and to help them, if help is the word, to make their work known, and in devious ways, sometimes, to acquire their work for the university collection, by talking somebody into buying something and giving it for a tax credit, or whatever—using all kinds of tricks, which is typical museum director's or curator's procedure anyhow. So, the students were—the university community—I think were generally very proud. I can say that I think, as I look back, that the faculty certainly were proud of the fact that I was building up an art program, and beginning to surround them with decent things, which they could use in reference in their classes, and then remember also, Bob, we were bringing more outside people into Maine in the post-war years than they had ever seen. The faculty was changing radically from all local people to a greater and greater percentage of faculty from out of the state who had come for the same reason I did. So, we were bringing in fresh ideas too—all of us—bringing that outer world into Orono, or, shall we say, into Maine, and it was natural that, I think, it would develop in that—like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Orono kind of—was the relation—or the communication, let's say, between, say, Orono and the rest of Maine very extensive then? You didn't have the fast highways back then, and things of that sort. So, was it, in fact, somewhat isolated even within the state?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It still is, in a sense. It was deliberately chosen as the site of the university because it was somewhat dead center of the state geographically, and incidentally also because it had the least arable, usable land in the state. It's—the university's located on a clay island, as you probably know, in the middle of the Penobscot River, and the legislators, when they were searching for a plot of ground under the Land Grant Act, weren't about to give up good farm land, or good forest land, to the university—to that education stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And so we became—the university is on the worst chunk of land, and it is remote, but in a way, I think with our—the way the campus reached out to the community, and the way I made an effort at the very beginning to penetrate the most remote areas—I made it—for instance, I almost did it religiously, to try to go to every major community in the state at least once to talk to them. I can honestly say that I have been in every community in this state, in very large and very small schools—have looked them over, have given them

the message, that there is an art program at the university, and that we were building something. This was in the early years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You would travel quite a bit at the time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I traveled so much that my dean reprimanded me one time for being away so much. He said that you really should just not do this to yourself—to be out to all hours of night and morning reaching these places.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How could you maintain that tremendous class load as well?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I always worked like that. I worked very hard when I was in school. I had, as you know, no need for a lot of sleep—never did. It was just natural to—to work at such a pace, and I liked it. That was the most important thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you would go out to the school, do you recall any experiences when you went to these communities throughout the state?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. In many—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is it particularly vivid?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It—well, in many instances I would find, first of all, some resistance on the part of some of the older people in more staid and stolid people. Sometimes even generally, by the way, tried to talk on modern art. I'd take slides and this projector, and sometimes even a portfolio of some interesting things, and force them to be interested in contemporary art and architecture, sometimes pointing out why the very school room in which we were was poorly designed, and people don't like this, as you know, and I think sometimes I-I got into arguments. I know I did, but I think on the whole, there was a feeling that I was important, that I was doing something worthwhile, and I must say that I believe I was accepted, for the most part, in a pleasant manner. I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this continued into the '40s, or through the '40s, or so, for several years?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: All the way—well, still continues. I still go out. I don't go out as much, because I don't think I need to now with other ways of reaching them, but, by the way, we also—oh, back to your other question about it being remote, we weren't as remote as you might think, because the school, having been an agricultural center in those days, and to some degree even today—but in those days in particular, had a very, very heavy and strong extension program through the farm-extension grange—the grange system, and granges in remote areas such as Maine don't always do just agricultural things. They have fairs. They have festivals and so on, and many of which—to many of which I could take exhibits, or have the farm extension people take some art things, and so, by that wheel, I was tiling along a kind of network of connections that had been made before I came by rural people, and that was helpful. In fact, for years I worked very closely with the farm extension and the farm extension cooperative programs, and I—even today, right now, of the 70 exhibits which I circulate—I circulate 70 exhibits right now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you began that very early—that program?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I started that back in the early '50s. But many of those 70 exhibits I circulate now are handled by farm extension people for me out there in the field—that they're the ones who will take them from one grange to another, and set the exhibits up over a month-long, or two-month-long period. Some I even assign for as much as a six-month period, and I just write it off, and let the exhibit stay with them, and they can do with it what they want.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But to begin, these were the items that you bought for the university.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No buying—all—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —things were given to the university then?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Not then. Loaned by artists. I campaigned every artist I knew and begged them to let me have sketches, drawings, little designs, and things that would represent original art, which they were willing to sign and let me circulate as representative of their work, and you should see. I have—I acquired on a loan basis hundreds of artworks, which I now arrange and use in different ways. I send them back, sometimes, to the artist, and ask them if they'll send me some new things, which they willingly do, and which I take care of, and mat up, and frame, and prepare.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Had you devised some—any kind of crating or anything for the—let's say—from the

extension service to haul these things around?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. The first thing I did was measure a typical car automobile trunks, and decided that there were limits there that I could not exceed. Even behind the front seat of a sedan, and also the general amount of space allotted for cars—for—in the trunk. That gave me my dimensions for which the box should be, and then following it backward, it gave me the dimension my matted or framed things should be, and that also gave me the dimension of the things I would ask the artists for. I would say to them, "You needn't send me anything that's bigger than 18x22 inches, because that's about the largest I can handle." So, it worked itself out, and all the exhibits are now in those boxes. They're easy to handle. They're in such a way that a person can pick them up. Some of them would need two people to do it better, but most of them are such that a teacher could send little Johnny down to the post office to get it, if we sent it by mail, he could either bring it up on a wagon or something, but it would be—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then did you worry much—you couldn't worry a whole lot about security. Could you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I didn't. And I don't.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The artists had to accept that.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right, and I told them that. I said I would put a basic insurance on them. I would—I could get some insurance from my insurance company, but very likely it would do no good to try to make a claim if something were lost, and things have been lost. Things have been completely lost. I have—still looking for several exhibits that just disappeared into thin air some years ago—the whole exhibit. Well, artists understood. A couple of years ago, a whole exhibit was lost because the school burned down while it was on display. So, the exhibit was totally lost—burned. And on a number of occasions, exhibits have been damaged by leaking roofs, or breaking steam pipes, or—by the way, very rarely by children—very rarely by the students. The vandalism is minimal. Maybe of all the things I have, let's say, there would be—there are 70 exhibits, and the average exhibit has 15 items in it. Some run more than that. We're talking almost 1000 works of art. I'll bet if I have three or four that are vandalized when I come to review them all next summer. I'll be lucky to find only that many. That shows you that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, what is the effect in general on the students, and on the adults, who see these things? I'm sure you can't generalize, but you must get some reaction in [cross talk] and—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I have tons of letters to—I don't have, but I have received so many, many, many wonderful letters with people expressing their appreciation for the shows, what it brought to them. It was more important in the '50s than it has been in the '60s and now '70s, because we now have a network of good educational television type of things, which reach people with good art shows, and so on. So, the need for traveling exhibits such as I have is diminishing, as is true all over the country. Sure.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And television does not provide original art, unless you're talking about drama, or—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. Well, but it provides at least a contact with art, which these people didn't have before. No. I'm not saying that there's ever any substitute for the original thing. I agree on that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were things, um, sent along for the teachers? Information—at least information about the artists?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Every exhibit is a complete unit in itself, in that everything is labeled. There—if it's a variety of artists, there is a biography on each of the artists to tell who they are and where they're working in the state, you know, what kind of work they do. There's always a title card, and almost always a descriptive unit part of that card, not a study a guide, but it's so that if the teacher puts the whole show up on the wall, it can be read as well as looked at. It's, in other words, it's a visual instruction thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And it's addressed to the children or to adults who aren't sophisticated enough.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Only a few of the exhibits are specifically addressed to young people. I generally just write it as you would see material written in a newspaper or a magazine.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you use just fairly straightforward language? You don't use the lingo of art criticism?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Oh, no. Oh, no. No. No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And the labels are more descriptive than—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. The labels will always tell not only the title, but the medium, which I think is very important, as well as the author, of course. I always think it's important that we keep promoting the fact

that this is an oil painting against this, which is a watercolor, against this, which is casing, against that, which is an etching, and that, which is a lithograph, so that the student automatically learns—or begins to learn—the differentiation. But, I'm also very conscious—and have always been—about the students throughout Maine's schools learning the names of Maine artists. It's a provincial thing, but I think it's very important that the youngsters know who their very famous artists are, living and working in this state. Now, wherever I know that an exhibit is going to a community, where an artist is living, and if I know that his work is in that show, I quite often either call him or drop him a note and say, "Could you find it possible to manage for the teacher to go over there and talk about the exhibit with your work in it?" Most of them respond immediately to do it, of course, because they—it gives them a little chance to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you find that this is—the students associate, then—if you say—you think where these people live in Maine, and stress that fact, that the rural people—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —become proud of their art, which they didn't before.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were ashamed of them, or ignorant of them?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so. I discovered—that was one of the things that bothered me a great deal about—about—not necessarily Maine people—about people. When I first went out around the state, to discover how really little the people knew about their own artists, about their own great artists. I stood in front of the alumni association in Lewiston—150—200 alumni of this university, and I asked that group—this is early in 1950. I remember it very well. I said, "I want you to raise your hand, those of you, who have ever heard of Marsden Hartley." There were three hands that went up, and I said to them, "Did you realize that this artist was born in this city? One of the greatest artists in American art, who has just died a few years ago with grand exhibits at the—in the museums in New York, whose paintings sell for 30—40—\$50,000, and here you are. You don't even know his name." And they were embarrassed, so much so that the following week, a check for \$150 came to me from that association, saying, "Is it possible to buy something of Marsden Hartley's?" And I had indicated that his lithographs were still available. I bought a lithograph with their money and had it framed. It's in the collection. They wanted to be—and it says, "Purchased by the Southern Penobscot County Alumni Association." They're so proud of it. You see. [They laugh.] Lewiston, where Marsden Hartley was born. I'll bet you, you could walk down the street today in Lewiston, ME, stop every second or third person, and you would probably be amazed how few of them have ever heard of Marsden Hartley, one of the greatest in artists in America—we have known.

[END OF TRACK.]

Cassette three, side A.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The interview with Vincent Hartgen in Orono, ME. I'm Robert Brown, the interviewer, and this is November 28, 1984. I thought this time we'd begin by having you discuss some of the more important exhibitions that you put together, particularly here at the University of Maine, and things you—where there's been innovation, or where there's been some kind of rather important result.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. The—it didn't take me long after I came to Maine, to—in 1946—to realize that very few people, if anybody, had done anything about modern art, I mean, really contemporary art, in this state, at least this part of the state. And so a friend of mine at Yale University was able to put together one of the, I think, most shocking exhibits of the time on this campus. It was—I borrowed almost everything Yale had at the time on Cubism, a whole series of kinetic paintings by Jacques Villon, if you remember, and Marcel Duchamp, and Duchamp-Villon, and such people who belong in that now very big collection at Yale, but then it was just growing, and I was lucky to borrow—to be able to borrow them, and believe me, it was a shock for Maine people.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they hostile or just amazed? Or—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were just amazed, I think—just surprised. I think that once I was able to run some little seminars in connection with the show, I was able to demonstrate what Cubism really was, and it wasn't as wild and crazy, and unusual as a lot of people thought, or even today think—that Cubism does make sense, you know. You really can talk about dimensions, and it's particularly good if you take some of Jacques Villon's things where they're showing motion—kinetic motion from different angles, and once it's pointed out, it's very obvious from that point on. It's surprising people are—but anyhow, they were shocked about it, Bob, and it opened a door. I think people were then a little more receptive to it. I consider—I don't know whether that was in maybe '48 or '49, or something like that, but from that point on, I really never had any resistance to what we would call abstract or non-objective art, or even large shows where we presented Abstract Expressionism, and so on. It was surprising. I won't say that people always liked them, but the modern came through pretty—much, much easier, I guess. I should say much easier, for me, than I thought—than I expected. Later shows—well, as we mentioned before, I always had this strong feeling that the people of New England, and particularly Maine, didn't know their own artists very well. Maybe they knew them by name, or heard about them in newspapers, and there weren't too many newspaper articles being written in the late '40s and '50s about art.

There were no art critics around, or whatever. So, one of my big targets on campus was to assemble almost annually a major artists of Maine exhibit. And, this would be done by invitation, but I would—I wasn't too strict about just who would be in it. I would put together what I thought was an interesting and representative show. In other words, I didn't hold to rigid rules and regulations, which would frighten some of the younger artists away, and show only the traditional ones, the Marins and the Hartleys, and such people who were well known. I—and they always could show, but mostly young—particularly young people who needed to be presented as part of the Maine scene. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you find out about these artists? Was it difficult tracking some of them down?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. Well, of course, I think I mentioned before, I made it a point to talk to as many public groups as I could in those first several years, and almost every time you go out and give a talk in a remote place, somebody after the talk will come up and say, "Do you know so-and-so, who is an artist down the street, or lives off in the woods?" And then this would lead to another one, and before you know it, I amounted a good inventory of artists, people who were working, many of whom have never shown publicly. So, I never would have got their names from, say, national shows, or any other major shows, but—and one would lead to another, and some—there were not too many clusters of artists in Maine, living in towns, as there are now, Bob. There are maybe five or six clusters of artists in the State of Maine now, who—once you know one, they'll introduce you to all the rest of them. So, it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —so, they were more dispersed then.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: They were more dispersed. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were most of them people who had come to the state?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I would say the biggest percentage are artists who came—some who came here because they really wanted to get away from the city, and some who came to start a new way of a life, another existence. They certainly didn't come here with the idea of selling their art—most of them. Although, I must take credit for helping a lot of them, get market. I would arrange to show their sketches and their smaller paintings, and sculptures at annual Christmas shows on the campus, and encourage—with terrific publicity—encourage the students to build their own—to begin their collections, and you'd be surprised how many artists—how many people I hear from today, 40 years later, who started their collection, and who now have very fine collections in their homes, and who remember buying their first Harris Stumps sculpture, or their first William Yure wood carving, or their first little sketch by some artist, whom I—like Bill Fawn, for example, somebody now very important. So, this was dealing with the main artists in group shows, first of all, to act in the way a university should act, to be a kind of center for this sort of activity in the state, and show what each artist was doing that year, and then also to kind of make some of their things available to the public. Then, also, I would—after I came to know them fairly well, and knew the characters of many of these artists, it was relatively easy over the years, each year, to present several exhibits of selected groups, so that I would take five painters who seemed to be a nice group, or sometimes it would be three women, and two men, or two sculptors, and three painters, or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, the selection process in those cases was much greater than it had been when you just had your general invitational?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. On the—once I had seen the work, and became familiar with certain people, and also noticed whether or not they were popular on campus and they were good for teaching functions, and you must not forget that a university art gallery is primarily a teaching device, and I had a dean then who was proud of the fact that this is what we thought our art gallery was supposed to do—and our collection. Time and time again he would say publicly, and I would say publicly, that we don't intend to run any museum competition here. We're not trying to outdo the Boston Public Museum, or the Metropolitan, or whatever. We're teaching. This is a teaching device, and I would like to feel that it continues that way.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And as you said, you'd hold seminars or discussions during the run of—uh—of an exhibition.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Always. Always, and these would almost always be informal—I mean, not—well, occasionally it would be a scheduled lecture by an artist, or something, but more often than not, they would be an invitation from some of the artists in the show, if I could find them and get them to come, to just sit and talk with the students about what they were doing, why they were doing it, and help in that way. And the artists, all of them, were very cooperative in that respect.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you find fairly soon some of your students intending to go on and be artists themselves?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I can—I could point to quite a few over the years who—I don't know if many

of them are making a living as practicing artists, but then, what artist is? Or how many artists are there today making a living? But, yes. A lot of them are—became very artistic in their own way, and continued working in fields that are related to it, such as, say, printing and layout, or TV advertising, and things which today use artistic skills. Some are professional artists, but not too many. No. But then, I guess that's another thing. I never thought that the job of our art department was to make artists, necessarily. That—maybe that attitude has changed in some schools, but I've always felt that the exposure to the arts was exactly the same as exposing a typical university student to literature, or to history, or to philosophy, that this was part of rounding out the individual. If he should happen to choose art as a field, or whatever—as a matter of fact—though I will—I'm proud to say that a number of my students have told me that I have led them into listening to more music and becoming interested in music than the visual arts, because I've always used music, and discussed music, which I know pretty well, and that kind of aroused some students to become interested in music, rather than visual—so, I never really thought that we were trying to make artists out of our art students, and I think that may be a little old. It may be a little old fashioned idea now at universities, where we're so concerned with technical training, and job preparation, but in my day, that wasn't as important.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were—these exhibitions were held in the Carnegie Hall, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, well, there were five—yeah. They started in Carnegie Hall, originally. Well, no. They originally started in Stevens Hall, which—there was—Carnegie Hall was then a library on the campus, and then when the new library was finished, the art collection, and promote—program went into Carnegie Hall. Carnegie Hall always had the major exhibits through the years, and I suspect, still does. And then I acquired gallery spaces in other parts of the campus. I wheedled my way into a space in the Union Building, which I thought was a key spot. I've got two galleries there, actually, both of which are studios, one as you enter the auditorium, and the other in a hallway, which we call the Photo Salon, where I traditionally show a photo show every month—and then one day, one of the presidents—I forget which president of the university it was. He and I were talking, and he said the president's building, Alumni Hall, was such a drab place to come into. It was dark, and dank, and so on. It was an old building, fairly old. And so, I came up with the idea of hanging panels there, and getting some light fixtures and putting on exhibits every month, and he loved that, and it's been going on ever since. It's still now a gallery that changes every—almost every month.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, at the beginning you didn't have a very big collection here to work with. Did you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you were borrowing all of these—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I was borrowing all over the place. Yes. And I didn't find that too difficult, Bob. The artists were willing to lend, first of all. They were willing to lend in order to have a place to show—to the university. Many of them—once they had been accepted here and appreciated—many of them were eager to leave a piece or to present a piece to the university. It didn't take much selling on my part to convince them that this would be a proper thing to do, that the state institution should have an example of their art, and many of them really came for it right away, and were very generous. Some artists who had come from Maine, who happened to have been wealthy—so they not only gave their own work, but things from their own collection, and this is exactly how the art collection began and grew. I never had to do much selling of the idea of giving. I know some curators across the country who constantly have to preach the value of giving art in order to get a tax deduction, or something. I never had to do much of that, because the artists were willing to—and the collectors, and 90 percent of the—no doubt about it—90 percent of the collection as it stands today, is gift from either the actual painter or the collector, or somebody who had something, and wanted to give it to us.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who were some of the artists that you can recall—particularly important to have shown here, or—for one reason or another are memorable?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And—in this connection? You mean with connection with developing the collection, and so on?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, and with exhibitions, too. I mean, one led to the other, I think.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I—of course, I made it a point at the very outset to be sure to show those who were recognized, and who were probably nationally known—artists like John Marin came here every summer when I first came here, and I befriended him almost immediately, and John exhibited in any show whenever I was willing—putting an exhibit together. People like, of course, Waldo Peirce, whose exhibit just opened on campus—Waldo was eager always to exhibit here on campus. Carl Sprinchorn, who was relatively unknown outside the art circles—Sprinchorn had shown in the armory show way back in the earlier part of the century, and had come to Maine as a kind of recluse, and lived here, and I became a friend of his in the '50s—the early '50s. And, he would show in all of our—or, in many exhibits that he wanted. Artists like William Thorne who was very renowned throughout many collections throughout the country, or Stephen Etnier. Henry Strater—we

were talking about him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they mostly quite easy to work with, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh. As individuals?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What was Sprinchorn like then?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, Sprinchorn was very easy to work with. He was a very gentle—a very quiet kind of recessive type of person, and very delicate physically, physically quite delicate, almost John Marin, as a matter of fact. Marin was somewhat the same, although Marin was a little more crotchety, a little bit fussier, but there was a difference there. Marin had a very powerful dealer in New York, and had very strict regulations regarding what he did with his art, where Sprinchorn was free of dealer and could do as he pleased. So, that makes a difference sometimes, whether they can lend whatever they want, and that kind of stuff.

ROBERT F. BROWN: When you first came was Marin one of the bigger names in modern—in modernism?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Marin was the big name in modern art when I came here. You see. We're talking in 1946.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Not merely in Maine, but countrywide.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: But countrywide, and Hartley—Marsden Hartley had just died the year before. So, I never met him, but the big Whitney Show of Hartley had been held—a memorial exhibit had been held, and I'll admit that not many people read about, or knew about, Marsden Hartley, but as far as the art world was concerned, he was—his name was already embedded in ranks of the best of modern art. Going back a little bit, of course, the name Homer was well known, because he had worked in Maine too, and then other artists of that last generation too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And could you show that—did you have a Homer exhibition too?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I never had a Homer show. No. I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mainly had contemporary work?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: But—yeah. These I'm talking about here were contemporary, mostly living people, but I did include Homer in a number of exhibits that we've had. Whenever I did shows that were of a nature that involved artists of the past, then I would—if I could afford it—would borrow from some places—have a Homer brought in, or shipped in or something. The only thing we ever had in our collection were wood engravings by Winslow Homer, and some etchings we owned—we didn't own then, but we now own, I guess, five or six of his major etchings that have come as gifts, but the university did not own, and does not own a Winslow Homer painting even today, but other artists who were national in the news then were fairly easy to get. We're talking in an age now when galleries in New York, and Chicago, and Philadelphia, and Boston were very easy to deal with, and I'm saying that by way of comparison with the present time, when they are not, generally. That—a letter directed to a gallery in New York, saying if you were planning such and such an exhibit on the campus—very likely would bring a reply. It would say, "We would be happy to work with you on this. We will do everything we can. We will even bring the paintings up ourselves, if need be." You see? Such a thing is impossible today, or almost impossible, and I know toward the end of my career as curator, putting together a show that involved borrowing things from museums or galleries, because a real big, head aching problem. It's—everybody has the regulations and the insurance rates are so high, the expressage rates are prohibitive, and I'm sorry to have to say that I do not find—and did not find—in the last, say—we'll say from 1970 to 1980—I did not find cooperation from art dealers in this respect. Their reply might very well have been: "Well, we'd like very much to lend something from New York to your gallery, but this would mean that that painting would be out of the art market for a two-month period, and would you be willing to pay a rental fee or some such thing, of \$500," or some such figure, which of course immediately ruled it out, as far as my budget was concerned. Is this what you're getting at there?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Uh. This shows, then—this kind of work is what stands out, I mean, this work at the university. Are there any particular one-man shows that I could—uh—you stay—or you should steer away, mainly, from one-man shows?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. No. I didn't. No. I would hold one-man shows. I'm just talking about the group things. No. When I felt, or when people with whom I consulted—I didn't have a formal committee in the early days, but I did later on—people who would help guide choosing, but, uh, no. I found it valuable to put one-man shows—one person, or two people, or two artists together. I would probably—I would be—I guess I could say that almost every major artist I sponsored in my Artists of Maine Gallery at one or time or another had a one-man



show, because I felt that was a kind of goal to go for, and that would give them a chance to bring their friends on campus, to have an opening, a reception, and for them to present themselves in a show like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you had about one show a month in each of those three [cross talk.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: One show. We had average of—for years, and years, and years, for thirty-some years, I averaged about 45 to 50 shows a year. There would be almost—not every month—one show in each of the galleries, because sometimes you'd run an exhibit from the middle of one month until the middle of the next, or—

ROBERT F. BROWN: They'd bump—overlap. Sure.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Or that I didn't want to change them all at one time, but yes. It would be up to as many—well, in fact, several years, it was up to 65 exhibits in the year, and I each month tried very hard to see that the shows covered the various media. So, in one gallery, if I were featuring sculpture, I would try to show oils in another gallery, and watercolors in another, or etchings in another, or photographs—we always showed one photo show every single month, so that I exhibited every major photographer in the United States here, from Ansel Adams, or I should start with Berenice Abbott—Berenice Abbott whom I showed in two big one-man—one-person shows—Ansel Adams, all the way down to local photographers who were using a little brownie.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were very unusual. Weren't you? In such extensive showing of photography?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. And I was cited for it. A number of occasions photographers would be amazed that I was showing—wanting an exhibit of some such artists way up here in Maine that I put on one-man exhibits.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did people think this was pretty remote? I mean, you said, "Way up here in Maine."

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, they do. Yes. They do. They do now, and they did then. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—did you get down to New York quite a lot? Sort of see what was going on, or?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Once or twice a year I would make it to Boston, and/or New York, and walk the galleries. Remember, I was a painter. I am a painter myself. So, it was almost obligatory that I get to see my own dealer in New York once a year, too, if for no other reason just to see who he was, and say hello, and so on. So, that was the opportunity that presented it, and I could then attend an opening, or whatever, and I'd walk the galleries and the museums, and make notes. So, this—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your chief work with the exhibitions you did here in state. Didn't you? I mean, you—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Yeah. I kept fairly local. I suppose you could say I was provincial and colloquial in the kind of shows I sponsored over the years. That may be something people could criticize me for, that I didn't bring much from the outside in, but that was only because of dollar limitation, really, more than anything, but it was also because I felt that I really had an obligation to the people of Maine, who pay for the university, for their artists to be known, and to be shown. Yeah. So, the artist of Maine became a kind of symbol, and I continued that all the way through my career. In addition, as I've mentioned before—I put on the road exhibits—traveling exhibits of work by the same artists, who also would lend me work for their traveling shows. Now, there, I didn't want heavy, framed oil paintings. I wanted sketches, watercolor, and chalk, and crayon, and so on, that were easily mountable, and coverable with acetate, and easily shippable from one school to another. One time I had 100 exhibits, each composed of 24 works—each show composed of 24, or 15, or 18, or 20, 24 works—100 exhibits of artists of Maine and photographers of Maine, and so on, traveling the State of Maine at one time, moving—each one moved every single month from one school to another. The logistics of that alone are pretty staggering, if you think about it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah, because you had to keep your master records up here.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: We kept the record here. Once the exhibit left here in the fall, the school was responsible. The only cost to the school was to be responsible to get it to the next place, and we gave them the schedule—the itinerary—and we planned it so that they wouldn't have a long distance. Sometimes they could take it by car from—let's say—from Bangor to Old Town, which is only 15 miles, or something like that. See? And move it from there to Lincoln, another 20 miles, and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did—the impact of these traveling shows, was it—it was considerable. Wasn't it? Or practically immeasurable, I suppose, too.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. President Livy [ph]—I can quote him—president Livy, that time the president of the university, said that he really knew of no better device that—that promoted the university than

our little traveling shows, that he used to see all over the state wherever he went. He'd see these little exhibits going on in corridors in libraries, and teachers' classrooms, and so on. It was a wonderful idea. It worked well, and incidentally we couldn't satisfy all the demands from teachers. When we—in late summer, we'd send out the notices of what exhibits were available, and ask the schoolteachers, and principals, and superintendents to schedule exhibits. The—within a few days, the mail would be stacked with requests. We'd have to limit them. Where a teacher might ask for three exhibits a year at three different times, or three different exhibits, we could say, "Well, we are sorry. We can give you only one or two, because we just don't have the—enough." Isn't that interesting? It was a wonderful idea.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Did you write explanatory texts or anything? Or did you keep that kind of thing to—you know?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Just a little bit—just told the—something about the group of the shows of—well, if I had—sometimes you had to write a little bit more than others, but every artwork, each piece, had a biography of the artist. It told where he was born, where he worked, and where he was trained, and a few selected things about his awards, and then where he lived, which was important, because always in my promotion, I would advise the local teacher to get in touch with local artist if he was in—happened to be in that show coming to her in January, or February—whatever. In many cases, the artists would go to the school and talk about the show. You see? That made—in other words, it's an early version of the Art in the Schools Program that's now sponsored by the art commissions, not only in this state, but other states throughout the country. That's—did I tell you enough about those exhibits?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. But they're much more extensive than the art in the schools. In a way they were smaller, done on a low budget, I suppose. Weren't they?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, you mean than the present program?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was much less elaborate.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: There was no—well, as I said there was no cost to the school in the first place. So, that went away.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were much more—[cross talk]—fewer, flexible. You couldn't—because you could put them together yourself, but what—by then did you have an assistant, or so, and—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I had an assistant. Yeah. One assistant—one technician who did it. Yeah. And he could work on those. We would—we took all summer with several students—student workers, whom I hired in the summer. It took all summer to refurbish them, to clean them up, to re-mat them, and put new hangers on them, and whatever else, but—and if the exhibits—well, to keep them fresh, also, every year I would write the artists who had loaned things, and ask them to send in new things to refresh their offerings. So, we would—we could keep the exhibits alive that way. Now, they weren't all—I should make this clear too—they weren't all exhibits of artists of Maine, per se. They would be exhibits of—well, I know that at one time I guess I had five or six exhibits of drawings of Maine, so that I would take all drawings and put them—make a drawings show, so that a teacher, who was, say, in school discussing drawing, would be able to show her pupils what ink, crayon, chalk, pastel, conté, and I would try for the variety of media in one show. There would be—I always had, oh, at least 10, maybe sometimes 15 or more, exhibits that were concerned with the coast of Maine, or the inland of Maine, or the industry of Maine. In other words, they were topical, but still using, remember, still using the Maine artists—the same basic group. By the way, there were 70 artists who contributed to the program, who loaned their work.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In 30 odd years that you—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: All together they were my general roster—my roster of artists, who were always contributing year after year—lending, I should say, because they were getting things—we'd always get them back to them after the show.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You had little problem with security, or harm—physical harm?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't think—I think I can honestly say—I can remember only about three instances when we had to make a settlement with the artist, and I believe in all cases the settlement was thrown out. The artist said, "Forget it." Two exhibits that I know of were burned completely in fires—schools burned over a weekend. It's funny, schools often do burn over a weekend.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, we lost two exhibits by fire. One slipped off a truck, either an express truck or a delivery truck, and fell into a pool of water, or stream somewhere, and all the works were ruined in that show, but most of the art—all of the artists took it in stride. I mean, they were very happy to do it, because after all they'd get publicity.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Do you think that was somewhat of a hangover from the '30s when the artists were [cross talk]?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Sure. Of course, it was.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you—did you gradually have a change, however, as we get near the present?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Less of a willingness, and also less of an ability on the part of the artist to lend me things. Too many of them are tied up with cooperatives and dealer requirements. Too—not too much, but a greater—now, a greater sense of return for your work. So, that it began to happen that artists began to ask that I put exorbitant insurance on their things, and I say, "I'm sorry. I can't insure this drawing for \$300 if it's going to go traveling all over the State of Maine in the middle of the winter, and be moved by—practically by dog sled from one place to another." Do you see? Incidentally, speaking of dog sled, I have actually—I wish I had a spoken record of this, but one day, a little—I think—did I ever tell you that story of the little sisters who came—nuns who came to the art gallery? Well, they came during the summer, and they wanted to know: did I have the exhibit schedule worked out for the fall? And I said, "No. We are working on it," and so I showed her what I had, and what was going to become available, and then I asked them where they came from, and they told me they came from the—way up in the St. John River Valley, way up the Canadian border, and apparently they taught in a religious school—a little parochial country school, and they were in two schools—different schools. They were here on the campus getting their—doing their work toward their degree in the summertime, but while they were looking at this material that I had shown them about some new exhibits I was planning, I heard—they started to giggle, or one of them started to giggle, and I couldn't help but go over and say, "Is there something funny that I have done here?" "No. No. No." They said, "No. No, Mr. Hartgen. We were just laughing because we were remembering last year, something that happened with one of your exhibits." And I said, "Well, can you tell me?" And they said, "Yes. We'll tell you." It seem that one of the shows was scheduled to go from one school where the one sister taught to the other school where the other one taught, and they were within, I don't know, not too great a distance, and it had snowed heavily at the time the exhibit was supposed to be moved, and so the one sister, with some students—youngsters in school—put the exhibit on a sled, and they pushed it through the snow, and up over hills, and so on, and I thought, "What a picture this could be! An art exhibit traveling in the middle of the dead of winter, with sisters pushing the sled from one school to the other." That was—and they giggled about it, because they too knew how funny they must have looked, pushing the sled with the exhibit—[laughs]—almost, as once, somebody might say it's a *Life Magazine* cover. Isn't it, when you think of it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, this is one of your big successes—was this [cross talk]?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I took great pleasure out of it. I loved doing it. Yes. Of course, there could be headaches, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you find the time to do your own painting, and other work, with a family?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, most of that would be done on weekends, and, you know, you find time. You find time at night.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The university was backing you—in their attitude at least.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. There was no—the—my dean, then, was apprehensive, and I sure didn't—most of what went into it was really pickup stuff that we could find around—the cardboard and so on. I minimized the cost of these things. In fact, it wasn't that expensive, really, in terms of dollars. In was expensive in time. We built all our own boxes, and by the way, the size of the exhibits was determined by a study I made of trunks of cars. I mean, I—in setting up the idea originally, I wondered how big I should make these exhibits? How big could they be and still be mobile enough to be moved from one place to another? So, I measured a lot of cars, and came up with a figure that gave me the maximum that the shows could be, and so, the typical artwork was mounted to—the all-over dimension of the artwork was 24x30 inches if it were watercolor or drawing, and 30x40 inches if it were something larger than that, and those were my maximums.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, a pretty ample size.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. You take an exhibit of 15 or 20 items, 24x30, you do a very good coverage of a corridor or a library in a typical school. You see? And they were all equipped with little hangers so

that all we had to do was put tacks in the wall—wires if they would—it's easy to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, this—this activity for you was sort of populism on your part? Whereas the exhibits you put here at the university were you as a teacher. Weren't they?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Right. Right. It—in fact, it's working—it finally came, and I used to think about this, and then saw that it began to realize the way I knew it would. I began to have students in my classes who had seen the exhibits when they were children, and that was the ultimate, when it finally came 360 degrees, shall we say, that I realized that that's what I wanted in the end, and I hope, though I understand the exhibits are—the program's cut down somewhat now—I hope that it does continue, really. There—I did try on several occasions to get grants to do it, but never seemed to—well, the reply I got on one of the grants—grant seeking—the reply I received from the committee was that if this were a new program—not in action, it would be approved immediately, but since it had been going on for the last 20 years, or 15 years, they couldn't refund it. What a stupid—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's often—they want to be—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —yeah—innovative, new. Had I asked for it back in 1946 or '47, I would have got it, except there weren't programs then. We didn't have arts councils and commissions in those days. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did most of the best known or, let's say—the artists with the biggest national reputations who came to Maine, did they cooperate too? Would they send [cross talk]?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, the bigger they were the less—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would someone like Wyeth, who was demanding big figures—[cross talk].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Wyeth never did. I never—though we had Wyeth in our Artist of Maine Gallery many times.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He has exhibits here.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He exhibited here, but he—and I could understand. Wyeth was very tightly bound by the galleries, and so on, and so I invited him, but he never responded, but that didn't bother me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It'd have been like a Bill King-Bush, on the other hand—[cross talk].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Oh, heavens. Yes. Bill King-Bush, and Bill Thorne—all these. Oh, yes. Every one of them—Avett Meder [ph], who you know now. Of course, I even have the list I could make available to you. Somewhere I'll find it. Okay.

[END OF TRACK.]

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ROBERT F. BROWN: —traveling shows try for work that would show medium—that would show—they weren't merely slight sketches, but were there others that were finished that would show the children, and the people, the public, the range of the medium—the characteristics of it?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. The goal was, of course, to hope that teachers would use these as good examples of drawing, or chalk, or crayon, or pastel, if they happened to use the exhibits in the art rooms, but also, I felt they should be credible examples of the mediums in which they were done. So, I did choose pretty carefully there, and I think the artists—they understood. I think most of the artists knew how they were going to be used, and also how they would look with other artists in the same show, because, remember, it wasn't only schools. I should point out, too, it wasn't only schools that borrowed these exhibits—churches, PTA groups, to show for adult groups, and hospitals—every hospital in the State of Maine had our exhibits. The Eastern Maine General Hospital went so far so as to schedule several of our exhibits every single month, and they built their own tracks on the wall, so they could slip the things into the track to hold them permanently to the wall during that one-month period. So, I mean, and they adjusted those tracks to our dimensions. So, it—artists knew, you see? They'd see their works in public places, as well as in schools, and so they knew that they were, in a way, being competitive. So, I saw that the quality of things they would send me would—was rising, too, as we went along.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Certainly gratifying. Did you go out occasionally and give talks to groups in conjunction with the shows?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Not as much in conjunction with the show as talks to groups and other

things. Oh, yes. I did make it a point, at least, to follow the exhibits around. But I—oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The talks you gave were, what, more general, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, it would all depend what—whatever the teacher or the person wanted. Probably the most popular thing I would do was actually paint a picture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I was going to say a demonstration.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: A demonstration, and that I loved to do, and that students loved to see—all levels up through high school. They loved to see a picture take shape right there in front of them, and that was the most popular thing. Clubs, or study groups, teacher's clubs, or men's clubs and so on—Kiwanis and Lion's and so on, would—the chambers of commerce would quite often ask for subjects more like understanding modern art, or art in the community, how to—what to do. I mean, I talk to the Bangor Chamber of Commerce 10 times in my career, almost, not every year, but almost, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would they follow through, or just?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I would have to vary what I would say one year, and usually I was critical of what they didn't do, and challenging them to—one of my favorite themes was to challenge them to own art. They expect the artist to buy their banking services, to buy their bicycles, but when did they think that they should buy from the artist? This was my theme that I constantly hammered away, and I made a lot of progress about it. I made a lot of enemies too, I should say. For a long time, I griped about the school systems, and I became notorious. I could show you lots of clippings where I was, [laughs] you know, they pointed out that I really told the schools what they weren't doing. Good heavens, it's still—the arts are still very badly handled in the state of Maine, and I would go to a school, and many schools in the state would have gymnasiums that were twice the size of the school, and they didn't even have a piano in the school, let alone an art exhibit, or a place for an art room, or an art lab, and no art in their programs, of course, and these art programs came and went, some of them, not only because of me, or whatever—but, yeah. That was part of what I had to do as a teacher. Here we are in this century, and here, in a university town at Orono—a town of 10,000 people—a university of 10,000 students, faculty some 1,500 or more people, and there isn't even an art school in the—art room in the school—no art program in this Orono town. There you are.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the problem moneywise?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, there were only—oh, no. There were only five—all through my years—there were only five cities in this state—and Maine is a big state—there were only five cities that had an art program from the first grade through high school—only five in this whole state, and I don't know how many now. There are probably only about six or seven now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, that was one area where you made no progress—on the school curriculum.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Very little, very little. I hammered away. I knew a lot of superintendents. I knew a lot of principals. I know a lot of influential people and begged them to do it, but you—you're bucking something here in the United States—I don't know about the United States, but you're bucking something in society that you don't just bring about by making a speech. The kind of enthusiasm which is generated for most of the sports activities, and I like sports fine. But just think of the kind of enthusiasms that are generated here. Right here in the town of Orono, our sports arena, right on this campus, our sports arena—our, what do you call it? Our ice hockey rink has children going to it at four a.m.! They are scheduled at four o'clock in the morning until midnight! If I—they don't even have an art program, as I said, in the city. I mean, I have parents from this street who have come to me to talk to me about it. They have to get up and take their kids up there at four o'clock in the morning, because the team—their school team is practicing. That's the only practice time they can get.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It certainly shows very vividly what their priorities are.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: You bet your life. And when the basketball season is going on, classes are practically canceled in the most of the schools around here. I say "practically". They *are* in some cases canceled, and when they're not canceled, they're—the school is in such a shambles because of all the preparations for the basketball game that night that you might just as well not have school, and I have this from absolute authority—Mrs. H. taught for 15 years in a public school here, and so she knows—messages from the principal's office that would say outright, "We're in this period now of sports, and so on," and whatever.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And therefore we have to adjust everything else, too. I mean—well, that's the downside. When you went further—when you served on the Maine State Commission on the Arts and Humanities—what was that? From 1965–70. Did you go audit that? Speaking of trying to improve the situation of the state, and you had another forum—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Oh, could I back just a little bit to the exhibits on the campus before we do this? Then I can—I just want to be sure to mention that I tried to do other things that I felt were valuable in the exhibit program, and I couldn't possibly tell you or list all the shows, but it would be this type of exhibit: *Contemporary Churches*. As you know, some of my background is architecture. So, I always had a strong feeling for contemporary architecture. So, every year or two, I would put at least one good, big exhibit concerned with architecture. Now, that was very new, because most people, even my colleagues—my faculty colleagues—were surprised to see the Art Department showing exhibits of architecture. They always thought art meant paintings, you know. So, it became a kind of annual thing for some architectural show. One year I did—in fact, I did it twice, maybe 15 years apart, but I did a big study of contemporary churches in New England—wrote to all the architects, everywhere, and had them send in their drawings, their photographs, their specifications, and so on. I gave them each a 4x8 panel in the gallery, which they could let me arrange any way they wanted to show their church—their choice contemporary church. I did the same thing with schools. In fact, I did it twice with contemporary schools—an exhibit called *Contemporary Schools USA*, where I studied the finest schools all over the United States, and oh, it was a very successful thing to do.

ROBERT F. BROWN: The reactions you got? The number of people came to see it?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, it would bring droves of people. I mean—literally, we had big openings, such as last night, and we'd get another audience in those cases, but the church's shows, of course, all the ministers, priests, rabbis, and so on came, because we were showing it. In fact, I—there were only—it was one of the last major shows I did before I retired, was *Contemporary Churches in Maine*, and it was very successful. It showed people that a church doesn't necessarily have to look like a little New England cruciform church, that it could be round. It could be octagonal. It could be a box. It could be double boxes, one on top of the other, twisted, and so on, and there are lots of such churches in Maine, and good architecture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you had begun those shows back in the '50s. Didn't you? You had—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In the '50s. In fact, the first ones I did—yeah. I did another exhibit called *Contemporary—no, Modern—no, Materials in Modern Architecture*, and here, instead of showing the buildings, or anything, I just went out to show what materials were available, because the post-war years, the early '50s, there was a tremendous lot of building going on, and I noticed a lot of my people were interested in what new light fixtures were available, what new plumbing fixtures, what new building boards. So, I had an exhibit that was really, like—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —design, industrial design.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Industrial design, or like on these—now, they have big fairs where they show—the industrialists come in, the corporations and so on. Every major corporation that I wrote to responded with tremendous responses. A firm in Massachusetts, a granite firm, I wrote to them for something to do with stone—brought their whole section of a wall in granite in their own truck. It weighed something like 3[000]-4,000 pounds, and installed it in the middle of the gallery to show a new ashlar design for granite—the name of the firm in Massachusetts wanted to show that. Lighting—the gallery was all filled with modern lighting, different kinds of things, and—but, you see, that's not art, and yet it is art. See? Several years I ran exhibits called—well, one year I put together a show called *Boxes, Sacks, and Bags*, and in this case, this was a big one. I would—I will never do a thing like that in my life, but I wrote to every major department store in the United States—I mean this—and asked them for a representative example of their packaging for an exhibit. The gallery was jammed with materials. We had hat boxes from—I had hat boxes from California, from Florida, from—you name it. All kinds of bags, boxes, with their logos. You see? Burlap bags for onions and potatoes from Idaho and Oregon, and so on. Bags and packages for crayfish from New Orleans—you never saw such a variety of incredibly well-designed objects for—to go on to [inaudible]. One designer in New York, to whom I wrote, said, yes, he would enter the exhibit if I would give him—no. He would enter the exhibit, but he demanded central location, because, for that, he would design five boxes for us specifically, and he did. I gave him a central spot in the middle of the floor, a 4x4 space in which he could put his 5 boxes, and he did, and they were all boxes with curves, no square corners, all curved edges—you know. You see them now occasionally. Those boxes were around for—*Boxes, Sacks, and Bags* was the title of it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you do catalogues for some of these, or [cross talk]?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Oh, all of them—there are catalogues—not extensive. Sometimes there's no more than listing the firms. Well, I had to always list the firms, because they wanted credit. Yes. They're all on file at the university. Another one that was very successful was *Cooking Utensils—Modern Cooking Utensils*, and the same thing. Can you imagine what an art gallery filled with cooking utensils looked like? Beautiful. There were things in there—these copper drums this big, all the way down to the smallest little teapots, and so on. China. I did two or three exhibits over the years on china. One, I used—it was called *100 Place Settings*. That was the title—*100 Place Settings*. And, I brought here 100 different place settings of the dinner plate, the butter,

and the cup, and saucers, is all I asked for. That's all I asked. So, 100—everything from Limoges to Royal Doulton to Wedgwood, to you name it—every major brand that you could name, and they each—I allowed the company to choose—some of them let me choose, by sending in a booklet, saying, "Pick the one you want and we'll send you that pattern," because all the companies have, you know, dozens of patterns. I set them all up, and that was one of the prettiest shows. I should show you some—well, the photos are up there, I hope, of those exhibits.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was the expense of some of these not that great, even though you have to ship all that—those things back?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In almost every case—in almost every case, the company would say, "Be our guest." In the case of the modern architecture materials, just as an example, they said, "Throw them away or give them away." I had light fixtures to give away—give away! In the case of the dinnerware, some of the companies asked for it to be returned. Many of them said, "Use it any way you want in your—keep it in your design studio," in this university, or throw them away. No. No expense. Nothing. Many of them just simply said, "Return them at our expense." That's all. They were—after all it was good publicity for them. I mean, they got their—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Can you think of any—at least—any university gallery had half as—or even a fifth as active an exhibition program as you did?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, no. I think—I don't know. I never worried about university galleries.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I don't think so, but you had a—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I know of—I'll put it another way: I know many that aren't as active. Yeah. They're just sleeping. They're sleeping. Well, it all stems from the idea that we said at the outset, that my theory was that the gallery should be instructive, and to be instructive you have to attract people in. First of all, students, college students, aren't likely to go to an art gallery any more than other people. So, you have to do things that are exciting and different, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and needing—you need change.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And change. Change is important. That was what I learned very early. Well, I knew that from my—even before I came to the university here, that it had to be different. It had to be something that kept alive, you know. One of the major criticisms that students would make of a lot of art galleries is they just never change. So, they never go back. One of the big problems that, up until recent years, all our major country—museums in the country had to face. It used to be—people would say, "Oh, well, I went to the Metropolitan once." And that was all. Now, as you know well enough, you attract them in there for any new idea that you can.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. On the other hand, they don't change from their own cellars and racks very much, as you were—you could eventually. You have to bring things in all the time.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. Well, it's a problem here, and if anybody wanted to consider the—a similar, such active program in a remote area, you have to consider the fact that we're not within easy access to some sources of things. So—and, also, even for traveling art shows, we're way out of the itineraries. Do you see? To come here, it has to make the trip from Boston way up and then back down again. It isn't as if you're going from Boston to Pittsburgh to Cincinnati, which is a nice run. Do you follow me? And so, I couldn't qualify, even on traveling shows, that I felt I had to have here, or should have here. We couldn't qualify because they just wouldn't send us the exhibits this far. And, then, I suspect there was that fear that they might get lost in a snow storm up here, which is ridiculous, but I'm sure people did. [They laugh.] Oh, Lord. Well, anyhow, I guess I've said not nearly enough for those of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what about the important programs, and some of the important exhibitions? That's what we're talking about.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: The exhibits were very important, and of course, now, relating the collection to the exhibits, as the collection the grew—as it is now, it has, I don't know, something—about 4,500 some objects in it now. As the collection grew, it was possible to start drawing from the collection to make up special exhibits, and we've done that, and that's been going on. In fact, one of the handsomest exhibits ever done was right after I left the school, the *Landscape in Maine* that David Evans put together. I guess you saw that catalogue on that. He did—he with his students did a beautiful job of things from our collection. I think they borrowed a few things from off campus, but only a couple to fill in the blank spots.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In the collection did you try to work for various areas—a particular strength? Was art in Maine your main strength?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I think it—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or, did the collection simply grow.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think it just grew. I can't claim to have focused on any particular school, or period, or type of work. I—well, mainly, I guess, because I wasn't able to, and secondly, I didn't think a university should. I just didn't think—I still don't think—except if it's a major, large institution that can afford to do it, and do it well. I don't happen to agree on that kind of collection in colleges even today. A man offered me—a doctor in Boston, whom I knew well, offered me two cups, made—hammered out by Paul Revere, and I turned him down, and in turning him down, I wrote him a letter to the effect—I knew him well enough, I could. I personally wrote him a letter, and I said, "It was very wrong for these two cups to be stuck away in Orono, ME. Even though they were treasures, and worth a great deal of money, and very valuable, it was wrong for them to be here. They should be where there are other such things that scholars can work with them and use them." And, you know what? He thanked me—you wouldn't believe—and then immediately sent me the complete set of the [inaudible]—the whole set of etchings, as a gift, just like that—*clap*. He knew that we could use those. But was I right? I have had, over the years, through people like Herb Chase, who had a number of—in New York, from Chase Gallery—Herb was quite often, in selling estates, would come upon something that was good quality, and he would ship it over our way, for tax reasons, and so on, and we would get it at the university here. On numerous occasions, he offered something that I felt belonged in another museum or someplace. I would turn it down. I at first found it difficult. Do you understand? But after time, I think he began to see that I was really was right—that in making this donation, it should go someplace where there are—it belongs, rather than just bury it some remote section, because it has value.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, you felt you didn't—you wanted to avoid, then, just a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and cover the whole waterfront. You wanted to build on—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I wanted to avoid—yeah. And also the feeling that certain things just should not be separated from their proper locations, in my opinion. There are art collections of silver and pewter in New England—beautiful collections, as you well know, and this is where scholars go to study these things. One object, or so, of that kind, can mean very little all by itself, and it's not likely to grow into a big collection because of that one item. So, put it where it belongs. That's my opinion.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Of course, you did have other things that were sort of nodes to which others would be attracted.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, if I felt that it was something that was a: valuable as a teaching device, and b: would stimulate further gifts, which often happened. Of course, yeah, but we don't have any great Renaissance masterpieces. We have no Leonardo da Vinci drawings, and so on. You see?

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you could acquire at least European—some drawings or prints as you could?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I suppose I could have. Well, I don't know that I turned down too many vastly valuable—well, some occasions I did turn down one very valuable thing, but that was for a different reason, that—yeah. I turned down a very valuable Italian Renaissance—I'm trying to think what it—Pontormo, I think—Pontormo.

ROBERT F. BROWN: A drawing?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No, a painting, through Chase, but a: it was in bad need of very expensive restoration, you know, and I—before turning it down, however, I went and spoke to the dean, and, shall I say, got his permission, or backup in—it was worth \$200,000 or something like that—at least the evaluation was, and, um, that's a different reason there—a totally different reason. We just didn't want to be burdened with something that was beyond our pocketbook. You'd spend \$50,000 maybe trying to have that thing restored. Then what would you do with it? Because I have no controlled temperature gallery. It was a very precious little thing. There were no galleries on campus where humidity or the temperature are controlled. You see? You start thinking about the responsibility when you accept something like that, and that also went into the case of the Paul Revere mugs too. What would I have done with them? Built a little box somewhere? You see? And what would they—they'd be only something that somebody would gawk at, and that's all—where they really belong somewhere else, but—now, that may not be the right philosophy for the typical curator. I have a feeling that most museums reach out and grab anything that they can get ahold of. I don't know. Sometimes I think that's true when I visit museums, and look at the sparsity [ph] of their collection in certain areas, and things. Here in the Art Institute of Chicago, for example, you have one whole wing, or two or three rooms that kind of represents a wing, devoted to nothing but a private collection—I forget the name of the collector—you probably know it—Wasserman or something like that—of these little glass paperweights. There are 10,000 of them in that room, if there are two. They're all there. What good would any one of them be if they came to the University of Maine in Orono? That's my point, and I just saw those a couple weeks ago, and I said, God, that's wonderful, you know.



The scholar can come here. He can see the whole history of paperweights from all the way back to—you know. The collection started with somebody who made it a point to buy the antique ones. Now the modern ones are being added to it. It would be a crime for somebody to put one of those in Orono, ME, just because it's worth a lot of money—is my point. Have you seen that room? Have you ever?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, I think Waterman, or Wasserman, or something like this. Now, back to the commission. Our commission in the State of Maine started with Governor Reed—John Reed.

ROBERT F. BROWN: About when was that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: You just told me the dates.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, '65—you were on from '65-'70.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: All right. Then it must have been in the middle of the '60s—before that—three years or so or two years before that. John Reed—Governor Reed—decided that there needed to be some kind of clearing house for information about the arts in the State of Maine. So, he and his advisors picked leaders, you know, in each of the art forms in different parts of the state—invited us all, I being one of them to represent the university, and there was a man, representative, from the Theater Department, who came from the university. We represented theater, and speech, art—and he invited us to breakfast to talk this over at the state house in Augusta, and we did. We all went, and he told us that he would like to feel that somehow Maine had spearheaded—would spearhead—an idea that would have a kind of council of the arts—a place where he would establish an office and with minimum funding, information about the arts could be cleared through this place. Newsletters could go out and keep everybody informed and so on.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What do you supposed impelled him—Governor Reed?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I'm told that—this may not be the real reason—I'm told that he went to some kind of fair way down east—Machias or even beyond that—at the same day that—and this happened to be an art fair or a fair of quilts, or some such thing—the same day that he was supposed to be at one in Portland, and the both of them occurred on the same day—big openings for two, I'll say, quilts, or whatever. It may have been something else, but it was something the governor should have been at both. And he said, "This shouldn't happen. There should be a place where so-and-so can know that so-and-so is going on here and there." Now, I am told that he may have given that as one of the reasons at the time we first met. I don't remember. It was so long ago, but nevertheless, we met every single month, or every two months—sometimes we'd skip—for breakfast, only three or four hours at the most. He made a little talk. We would talk with each other. There was a chairman appointed—I forget his name—who kept the communication going. We brought in information that we felt should be shared. It was put into a little newspaper—a little newsletter form, and that was it. Two years later, the federal government passes the act. All of us stood up in a line, and were sworn in instantly as commissioners. Do you see? So that we were, literally, we were almost the first people in the country to have this kind of commission, that was already in place when the idea of the commission came up. We were called the Maine Art Council—is what we were called, and that—the formative—the council I thought was interesting. I enjoyed serving on it. I found it taxing, because I was, at that time was very busy with a lot of things at the university, and so I couldn't give myself to work on that with the same energy that I was trying to put in on the campus here. I had just—we just expanded the department. It was in '65. I had just hired two new people. One person left. Two new people were hired, and it was the third one scheduled to come the following year. It was a period of pressure. So, I honestly don't feel that I did all for the commission, that I would like to have done, but the commission itself was very interesting. It gave me insight into a lot problems in connection with the arts that I hadn't heard about before, and that I know now.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were some of these ones that might have—that could have affected you here? Some of these problems?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, I guess you could say—yeah. I think so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But the council or commission became a device for overcoming some of these problems, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. Well, once it was funded. The only unfortunate part about it was—I don't know the exact figures here—but the legislature did not follow through on its commitment, or what should have been its commitment, and so, we were made—I'll just say this. This is not the actual thing. But where we were made \$25,000 available if we would match it on state money, the legislature would vote \$10[000], and so we constantly were not funded to the level that we should have been, because the legislature had not been weaned—properly promoted. Now, they are. They've been very generous. Since my time on the commission, the

commission has done very well with the legislature and with the federal government, and, I don't know. It's a very sizable amount of money now from each state, as you well know. Now, what did it do? It, well, in the case of art in the school, or the artists in the schools, or actors, and writers, and things like this, it generated a tremendous program, particularly valuable in a state like Maine—much more in Maine, than in, say, Massachusetts, or New York, or Pennsylvania, where you have closer opportunity to meet—to get things. So, here in Maine, it is—I think the commission does a great service by making storytellers, or poets, or banjo players, or quintets available into these very remote sections, where they never heard of such things. So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: This state, ever since you've been here, you mention—you use the word "remote" occasionally. Is your impression that a great deal of it is rather out of contact, or has been?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. It still is. It still is. You are sitting right here at this room exactly halfway up the state of Maine, from its southernmost border to the northernmost tip. There are 180 miles of woods starting right outside this town. Do you—you probably didn't realize that. You can—actually, once you've passed through Old Town, which is a few miles from here, you're in wilderness, and you will drive if you take one or two of the roads to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to the north of Maine.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: To the north. If you drive, you will drive through woods, and woods, and woods, and you will see shack after shack after shack, and here and there, a house, period, until Canada. You—if you glance off at one point, you might get into Lincoln, which is a small community, but it's in a paper mill. If you branch off another place, you might run into Millinocket, which is an oasis of industry somewhere up there, but aside from that, it is wilderness. So, it's not the people's fault. It's the geography [laughs]. Well, put it the other way, one or the other. So, it is remote. Yeah, it is remote, and I guess I thought it like that, never with the idea of degrading or diminishing the importance of all this. This is what the job was. I certainly don't think I would have needed to run an art program for artists of Maine in a lot of states the way I had to do it here. I'm sure of that. And, I don't think that the commissions spend their money in the same way. I think certainly the New York State Commission must spend its money in a totally different manner, from the manner in which our commissioners now sit down and dole out the money for dance, for theater, for visual arts, and so on. I found it—the commission—serving on the commission—instructive, if that's—very informative for me, also because the commission members changed during that five-year period I was on. The members changed. Their periods would run out, or whatever. I found that I better understood the variety of personalities of people who are responsible for the arts in Maine, but in the earlier days there really wasn't enough money coming from the legislature to use. I don't know how many years we went in Maine without using the full amount of money that we could have, should we have matched it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But now, they've educated the legislature?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so. I don't know if they—I guess we get the full amount. I'm not sure about that, but I know that now there's—well, of course it's a struggle for the commission people. Every year they have the problem of going before the committees, as they do, but I don't think it's nearly as hard, because people understand now. Trying to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your opinion, has the commission—some of its programs—have they had some lasting impact?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yeah. I can—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You think so?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I believe so.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have any thoughts on your exhibitions and perhaps in the end did—they showed people—the children grew up with them, but—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Well, I can't believe that helping to sponsor a local high school that's putting on a Shakespeare—Macbeth, or some such thing—I can't believe, Bob, that that doesn't help somewhere along the line, in the end. It may not have its immediate effect on the community. Is that what you mean?

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Cassette four, side A.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —begin talking now on this tape about exhibitions you have had, in particular, ones that you feel were milestones—benchmarks for you, or at least ones upon which you can make some general

comments. You had, well, an exhibition—one of the first, I guess, was when you were still in the Army in World War II, a soldier art exhibition. And then the exhibition—first one-man show was in Baltimore. How did that come about it? It was Vagabond Theater. Was that a stage theater, which had a gallery space, or—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. Yes. And it came about because, as a soldier, I was stationed in Baltimore, for a period of time, in the headquarters unit in downtown Baltimore, and I became involved with a theater group through a friend of mine, helping to do scenery—was what I did for the theater group—and then when the group found out that I was able to paint, or was painting. Though I was in the military, I had my evenings free. So I was offered an opportunity to show some paintings in a gallery. It actually was a foyer gallery, leading into the museum—into the theater, the Vagabond Theater, and that was technically my first exhibit, outside of school, where I had shown before. And, it was kind of fun. It was—as I look back on it now, I don't know that I probably wouldn't like any of the paintings that were in it. I would hardly know where they are if I had the to try to track them down.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were these oils?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. These were pastels and watercolor combination. No. There were no oils in there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what—what were the subjects? Were they—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And the subjects were, well, rural scenes mostly of Maryland, because partly what I was doing at the time for the headquarters was traveling through Maryland and Virginia on aviation cadet recruiting. I was assigned to do that for a period of time. Since I don't drive, I always had a driver, and I could sit there and sketch while driving, which is what I still do. I sit in the train, or whatever, and sketch while moving. So, I'd make sketches out in the countryside, and I've always been a landscape, more or less, or have been inspired, more or less, by landscape. There were people in them, more people actually than I have ever done in painting since—people doing things, farm, rural scenes. It was—I can see that exhibit now, and I know it was rather puny, but at least it was my first show, anyhow. [Laughs.] At least it's something. That's a benchmark. Yes. I sold—I actually even sold some out of it. I don't know whether people bought because I was a soldier. They had an opening, you know, these cocktail party openings. Here's a soldier. One thing that did—oh, wait a minute. I just remembered now. I went to—oh, my goodness, I forgot that. I went to a concert in Washington—Hans Kindler. Hans Kindler was the director of the National Symphony Orchestra at the time, and they were presenting—they presented a program that included a symphony by Kabalevsky. I can't spell it. And, I was very much impressed by it, by the symphony. So, one of the paintings that I had done, that was in the show, was of one of the movements in that in symphony, and somebody in the Army had the bright idea that if this is a painting by a soldier, of something done with the National Gallery, it ought to have publicity. So help me, I did not promote this, because I was not about to try to promote what I was doing in the Army those days, and so, there was a picture taken of me presenting this painting to the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington. I'm told it still hangs there. I don't know. [They laugh.] That stimulated the interest in the Vagabond show. I guess I should say that, and so several people bought. That's what reminded me of it. If I would—I never intended to sell the things, but we could use the money in those days.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have critical reviews? I mean, were they coming in—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. There were. Yes, there were. There was a little weekly magazine in Baltimore. It had a very quaint title. I'll just guess that it's called something like *People, Places, and Things*. Do you hear some noise? *People, Places, and Things*. I think that was the title. I'm not sure, and the reviewer liked the show very much. He made some nice comments—no great artistic—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were encouraged to go on. So, when did—you were out of the service, and then did you go to the New York area, or what? We've gone over this a bit, but—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. No. Well, eventually I—after service, I came to Maine, here, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: In '46, right?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. In '46.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you had a show in New York with George Bené.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: George Bené. It was my first major show. Actually, really, it was my first major exhibit. I had a lot of smaller exhibits in between that first one in Vagabond and George Bené, but George Bené—he saw a painting of mine in a national show. I think it was Audubon or American Watercolor, and got in touch with me, and said he'd like to look at more of my work, and I sent some things to him, and he scheduled a show at least a year in advance. And I did very well. I thought I put together a very good representative exhibit at that

time. He titled it something like, *The Land and Sea of Maine*, and I may have a catalogue. I have a catalogue somewhere. I'll see that you get it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he quite a good painter?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yeah. George Bené was a very excellent painter. He was Hungarian, and he was European trained. He was a print dealer, actually—mostly, this is where his forte was, and he had a gallery in the days when 57th Street was the center of all the art galleries—the commercial galleries. In the years in between, they drifted on up Manhattan. Now, they're coming back down again, and there are still some galleries being established in the same area, but where his gallery was, there is now a large—or a skyscraper right—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—did you stick with him at all?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I stuck with him for a number of years. Yes. All the way down to, oh, sometime in the '60s when I had my exhibit with Chase, my first gallery show with—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was George Bené like?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: George Bené was a—and I'm sure you'll find references to him as nothing more as a print connoisseur. He knew, uh, where and how to ferret out excellent prints—17th and 18th century prints, mostly French, from Europe, and he brought them over here, and he published a monthly catalogue. He was—in those days, Bob, he was very popular among the people who were print buyers, or print collectors, and he published a monthly catalogue of things that he would find on his trips to Europe. Why—I don't know why he liked my work. He liked me, I guess. And, I liked him. I liked his wife. She was an excellent painter, a kind of an Impressionist. In a way he was part painter too, but he didn't practice it as much as his wife. They seemed to like young people. I mean, they seemed to take—the other gallery, Stable at the time, and I—oh, it would be hard for me now to remember them. I could probably bring up some of their names. Alfred Crimi—C-R-I-M-I. Does that ring a bell? Uh, and somebody—Cousimano. We would appear. He would show us individually about every year, and then he had group showings. But George Bené was not at all like the typical dealer—and I don't want to dwell on that too much, but he was not out there grabbing every nickel, or scheming every device for every way he could work the artist. He was a kind of more of a—he was really more of a sponsor than he was a dealer. Frankly, I don't think he needed to be making a living. I think he had enough. I don't know this, and I may be wrong. But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But with his print business he did [inaudible]—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, yeah, but he did—he liked—he seemed to like young people, and he didn't necessarily go after Old Masters in paint shows, in his gallery shows, and, um, yes. I liked him very much. He never came to Maine. He seemed to be fascinated with the fact that I lived way up here. It seemed to him a much greater distance from—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Uh-huh. No. And then it really it is [laughs].

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. And he would—whenever I went to New York, and we'd talk, he'd just—he couldn't believe I had made that trek all the way down. Then, for years, starting even before that, I began having exhibits here at my home. As a professor, and so on, I wanted to have an occasion once or twice a year for—to bring the students here, and also my faculty friends, and I thought it would be nice to have the house and studio and so on, and show paintings that I had done, kind of almost to prove to the administration that I was working. You know. You have to do creating. You know the old stuff: perish or write, or whatever they—so, I had—for the first couple years—I had paintings around the house, around the studio, and we started talking, whatever. Then it occurred to me to put them outside. So, for years and years, and I ran an annual studio terrace exhibit out in the woods, all through the woods, all through them, way out, as far as you could see. I set up easels like this—borrowed easels, set them up, nailed and screwed them into the ground, and hit them down with tins and so on, put them in frames like this, and so on, and put them out in the woods. It brought thousands of people. It was—we would jam the highway with cars. Nobody had seen art exhibits like this before. [Phone rings.] And George Bené—it'll end up with Bené.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Excuse me. Yeah. Uh-huh.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: At the same time I was having these annual exhibits wherein I showed paintings out in the garden—out in the woods, and it did really bring a great many people, though my students especially I think wanted to see what their professor was doing, and the faculty too. It became a—all my artists, who were within traveling distance, came—all my personal friend artists too. And that helped me in that way. But anyhow, every year I would send the catalogue of the show to Bené, so he would have it in his folder for promotional information in the gallery, and one day, when I was in New York, in the gallery, George came out of the back room and he put he put his hands on my shoulders, and said—looked me square in the eye—he was a big man,

very tall man. He looked me square in the eye and says, "Hartgen, tell me again. You put paintings in the woods?" And I said, "Yes." "In the woods?" He kept saying, "In the woods?" Like that. [They laugh.] And I said, "Yes." "Hartgen, you God damned fool." [They laugh.] I never forgot that because—and you know, it—I made it a point, really did thereafter, to send him as many pictures as I could, because he just couldn't—somehow it never seemed to get into his—that he could comprehend that you could show landscape work, or landscape, in landscape, but he didn't realize that after all, you're detached from the landscape by quite a frame. Your subject matter isn't the same. You could deliberately avoid that. If it even comes near to it in color, we can hang it to the shelf.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He just couldn't get it through his head, that Hartgen had this annual exhibit of paintings of trees and landscape, in the landscape.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But for you—you found it was extremely effective.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, it was very effective, extremely so, because I know my property. I know the sunlight. I knew exactly what the light was like at the hours that I had the show. It was all, usually, in the afternoon. So, I would be very aware of which paintings would go where to get the best effect, and incidentally, I would sell, too, very well—quite well—to good collectors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Have you kept that up until recent years?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Up until a few years ago. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah. [Laughs.] Everybody still wants me to do it. I don't go through a summer—this summer alone, I'll bet at least a half-a-dozen people showed up here at the house, people who were travelers coming into to Maine, wanting to know if I was going to have my lawn show this year. They called it a lawn show. But I don't know if I could be ready for it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, that's been—was a fairly steady way of exhibiting, but not your conventional way.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No, but you see one thing, it did some wonderful things for me. It forced me each year to focus, even though I had—would have exhibits throughout the year somewhere else—a one-man or a group, but it always forced me to be prepared for presentation, which by definition had to be different from the previous year, because people kept coming back. And so, it was—it really laid a heavy hand on how I'd have to get ready for it, and how'd I'd have to work. Sometimes I'd have to borrow things, which I had sold and let go in the year, to bring back for the show, but I didn't want to do that, because there's a little risk in putting paintings out in the middle of the woods, as you very well know—rain being one problem.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you strove, then, to do something different from year to year? I mean, what you put down and how you expressed yourself—as you look back, did you change a little bit so that—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I don't think I tried to be different. I just wanted to have a set of new paintings. That's all. No. I don't think I tried to run—[cross talk]—no. That was all, just to show people where I was, where—at what point I had come to at that stage in—no. But it was good for me too, because I could put them all up and be my own critic, which we don't have enough time, ever, to be that critical of ourselves, and, if you're active painter, as I was in those years, works were coming in and out of crates all day—all year long—being in national shows, and so on. I didn't really take time very often to look at six of my things at one time, or eight, or 10. I would hang 45 or 50 paintings here in this show. So, I could see pretty well where I was going. It gave me a kind of measure. It was a good idea, but as I said, Mr. Bené could not—he died. He died—what, I don't know—somewhere in the '60s, and his wife continued the print show, at least the print business, in Brimfield, MA—no, Connecticut, Brimfield, CN. Is it?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, there's a Brimfield, MA, near Springfield.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, that may be it then. Yeah. That may be it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How early did you go into some of these continuing national shows, like the American Watercolor Society?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: All the way back.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you have to become a member, or how was that like, actually?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, no. They were all juried shows. They still are. Yes. I was in one of the very earliest of Audubon. I don't know when I first started, but I guess I'd been in Audubon almost every year since—not their beginning, because they go back. But, anyhow, if you pass jury in most of these national shows—in Audubon, I know this is true, and also American Watercolor Society—if you pass—if you exhibit—pass their jury,

and exhibit three years within a period of five years, or something like that, you're then eligible to apply for membership. Do you understand? And, then a membership committee looks at your work and determines whether or not you're eligible. That's how—and that's how I became a member. In other words, you're voted to membership by a membership committee, and I won—I won an award in Audubon's Fifth Annual. So, you see, I had been in it for five years, and I won—

ROBERT F. BROWN: When was that? In the '50s?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Fifty. 1950. I think 1950.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now the Audubon, and the—this was a group that you thought was important to show with?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Oh, yes. I liked Audubon. I mean, just the nature of what they promoted about their show, that they would not be—belong to any one style, that they would—they welcomed artists of various, broad—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you found that to be the case?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. But, uh—I'm sorry.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What are—in 1950, then, the exhibits that you considered important that same year when you got your award at the Audubon? At the University of Scranton—a one-man show there—how did that come about?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think that one was by invitation, somebody who was—we're going way back here now—but I think to be able to tell exactly how each show comes about, I don't know that I can do that, but in that case, I think the connection there is the fact that—see, remember, I'm from Reading, and it seems to me—I'm not positive about this, but it seems to me that there was an article in the Reading newspapers about my award-winning painting, or something, in New York. I don't know. Somebody in Scranton wrote. That's usually how it happens, and I said—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Evidently this was—at the time—a fairly important exhibition for you.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. It was. As a matter of fact, now I remember what I did. I made up an exhibit there. There were 15 pieces in it. It was held in the month of February of 1950, and I planned—then I sought out places I could show in other parts of the country, and that exhibit went to San Francisco State College, came back to Bryn Mawr Art Center in Bryn Mawr, PA, and then went—or the other way around. It went back to the College of the Pacific in Stockton, CA, so that it—the same show, moved it around. Once I had it put together. Remember, I had to pack the thing, crate it, and I—it occurred to me that once these 15 paintings went out of Orono, ME, I'm not going to just have them come back here. So, I made an effort to have them shown in other places. So, I wrote letters all over the place, and these are the ones that I could work. So, I made a circuit out of my own exhibit. That was in that year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did these have some impact? Did you get some feedback from this show—these shows? Evidently, something—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Apparently I did, because other shows keep coming on after that. I mean, they—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Very regularly, and in 1953 you showed in Bermuda.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In Bermuda.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was the reason for that?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That was hair raising. Well, somebody stopped by here one summer, a—that I remember quite well—I guess a salesman, or a company representative for some perfume company from England—for some reason stopped by here at the studio and looked at my paintings, and then asked me if I would be interested in showing in Bermuda, and I never had planned to get that involved in out-of-the-way places, but within some months after that, correspondence came from a gallery there. I don't think it's in existence anymore, but it was in a place called Hamilton. It was called Aureal [ph] Sands—Aureal—I don't know what that means—Aureal Sands. Anyhow, they—and so I agreed to send them—they wanted to know if I would send them an exhibit of paintings, and I said I would. I didn't think I could frame them. I would send them in mats—in heavy mats with plywood as a backing to them, and the mat would keep them firm that way, and it was all agreed that I would, and so I made up the exhibit, and then I found out, when I got in touch with the express company, that it really wasn't as easy as that. You didn't just take an exhibit and ship it out of the country.

So the express people—the American—the Railway Express people told me to get in touch with a lawyer here in town, whom I happened to know, and I went to see him, and he looked into it, and he said, "Oh, yes." He found out that I needed—oh, I don't know. I needed a seller's license. That was what is was called, a seller's license to exhibit paintings that were for sale abroad, and to get that, I had to hire a lawyer in Washington to present my application before a board. To this—this is incredible, I mean, and this was—each of these times anybody picked a paper it cost me another \$25 or \$50, as you very well know, and I finally got the seller's license—a number—a seller's license. [Audio break.] And—I don't want to make this long, but anyhow the—I shipped it. I got the seller's license, and I shipped the things, and I heard nothing for about two weeks. I thought it must be time for them to arrive there, or something, and I don't remember the exact details, but finally a letter came from the New York Port—[audio break]—artists can have certain experiences. I'm sure.

But the message for the port authority in New York was that they were holding a shipment of mine to Bermuda pending such, and such, and such forms, and whatever. It turned out that I had to hire somebody to release the paintings from the New York port to the ship, or something, and this took a long time. I never went through any such torture in all my life. It—they finally got there. Listen to this. They finally got there. The exhibit was held. There were a couple of little insignificant reviews—nothing of importance. Three of the paintings were sold, one to a Lord and Lady so-and-so in England—London, England, and the other two to a hotel in Bermuda. They wanted both of them in their lobby, and then they told me that they were shipping back the paintings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: These were watercolors, weren't they?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: These are watercolors. These are watercolors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Large ones?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: This size—matted up to about that size, heavy board in the back, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That size is what? What was that size?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That size, I beg your pardon, is 25x36.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, a very good size.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: A very good size, and they—finally the shipment came back after months, I mean months, soaking, soaking, soaking wet—box drenched, box just absolutely—it just reeked water when the express man delivered it to the house here, but he delivered it also with a message that I was not allowed to open it until the customs officials came to inspect it, you know. They had to see. Apparently, the problem was that there were—it was three less coming back than went out, and they—I had to account for that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] So, that was—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: About four of them were ruined completely—totally ruined. They must have been in the hull of the ship, and got some—those I know I pitched. The others were partly ruined—the mats were badly soaked, but I could save them.

ROBERT F. BROWN: This was a memorable incident, but not one that [cross talk]. [Laughs.]

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: It was a lesson I learned. Yes. I learned there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, the other exhibit in—if you'd like, I'll ask about many of these that we've—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Sure. It doesn't matter, of course.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. The '56 show at the—in New Jersey at Fairleigh Dickinson College, was this—?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That was—well, it was interesting because, I—here, in a way, was happening what I like to have happen about my own work, and how I promoted other artists. Now I was being promoted. The president of Fairleigh Dickinson College summered in Maine, and he saw the exhibit of mine somewhere else in Maine that preceding summer, and wanted to know if I would have a one-person show in his gallery, and it turned out to be—well, I was supposed to go down and give a talk. I don't know now why I didn't go, but I didn't. But, it turned out to be a very instructional and valuable exhibition for the students, and I mean, I liked that. I count that as important in—for other reasons—for that reason too, and nothing else. It was a good—a nice exhibit.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What—did—were your paintings like at that time? Were they leaning toward the abstract, or were they—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. They were getting—they were—as you look back, or as I look back, I can easily see how each step was proceeding to a greater simplification of forms and things, and less visual, less attention given to factual details, and, yeah. You could say, becoming more abstract, actually.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Were they based mainly on nature?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Always.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Always. Always. That's been a [Audio break.] So, we'll continue this discussion of these—the shows—and your styles becoming more abstract in the late '50s. In '59, you mentioned—you indicated a show that had some significance at the Doll and Richards Gallery in Boston. That was, of course, quite—one of its last years I know. But, how did that—how is that show standout?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That was—that stands out because I was—I liked the idea of that exhibit, because I was sponsored there by the Science and Arts Foundation of Boston, and the occasion—and to be sponsored, the whole exhibit, all the expenses and everything else, were paid for by this foundation through a doctor—through a Dr. Freddy Humburger, who himself is a painter, and about whom—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And a collector?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: And a collector. Yes. And, I've known Freddy—knew Freddy for years, and Freddy always would go to my exhibits here in Maine in the summer, and so, he presented my name I guess to the society, and they agreed to sponsor that show in Doll and Richards, and it was a nice place to show. It was old fashioned, as you well know, and—but—kind of the front part was the old prints, very old prints, and the gallery was in the back section. So, I think it was a little bit of a shock to some of the regular clientele of the place. It was only an 18th century, 19th century prints there, but it was very—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Back then?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you get a response from that show?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I had some nice—very nice reviews. They were not raves, but they were—I have copies of those. Yes. They were good reviews in the local paper. Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And in '63, the Roten—R-O-T-E-N—Gallery in Baltimore, I know they—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, that was—they were print dealers. They were print dealers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. And you had things with them?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Always had prints. I had things with them, and I showed there because they—it was getting back to Baltimore, and having repeats of people who had seen my show many years before.

[END OF TRACK.]

This is cassette five, side A.

ROBERT F. BROWN: November 28, 1984. [Audio break.] About the Roten Gallery in Baltimore—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. That's right. Ferdinand Roten, and they were many years—up until a few years ago when Mr. Roten died—were one of the leading importers of prints, graphics, so on, from Europe, I guess, one of the great promoters of German Expressionism printmaking—Barlach, Käthe Kollwitz, Nolde, Pechstein, and such people, and I knew them well having dealt with them, but it was very nice to be shown in their gallery. They—back in Baltimore, because of the response it got from people, from my old friends who had supported me years ago, you know. It was good to have a return to—I don't think I had any reviews. At least, I don't think I have any that—I was thinking about that not too long ago. So, I can't report.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, were these again entirely watercolors, or were they—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. These are still watercolors. Remember, I'm a watercolor painter. I rarely have—oh, yes. After school—after leaving university, I rarely did anything without watercolors. The only time I ever really would touch, for years on end, oil, would be in art classes with the students.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is that simply to show them the technique?



VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. That's all. That's all. I'd maybe do a demonstration, or, you know, a quick watercolor—or an oil demonstration, or to talk about the technique, or to actually show them with that—that was my only exposure to oils through these years, and I should say that I didn't enjoy that, because aquarelle, or watercolor painting as I practice it, is a very delicate medium. It is not—

ROBERT F. BROWN: I almost wanted to ask. It puts a great deal of demand on you—of demands on you.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. It calls for the whole thinking process of—painting in aquarelle is opposite, almost, from that of oil, that you can't rely on development from one stage to another by over-painting, and by change, and scraping, and repainting, as one can develop a painting in oil, that—and also, the procedures from light to dark, the thinking is totally different. In oil, if you want to, you can reverse your thinking, and go from—you can start with dark and move toward lights without much of an adjustment, but in aquarelle, you have to perceive in advance, and be very firm in your mind exactly which things you're going to do in what order, and what cannot be reversed once you've done them. There's no way of going back if you've overplayed your value, for example, in watercolor. In oil, it's very easy to either paint it out or scrape it off, and do it again. In watercolor, you pitch it, and start over at the very beginning, not at that part, but at the very beginning, because you've already stained your paper. You've already made an impression that cannot be reversed, and so when I would have to work with students with oil, sometimes, well, I would not go near the studio here for a day or two, just to keep away from it, because it's really heavy-handed, in oil, as applied, as compared with watercolor, which is very light.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What was there in watercolors that appealed to you, that compelled you to stick with this demanding, delicate medium?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I don't believe you'll—I have a feeling you won't believe this, but I believe it's true. Simply because way back in school they used to tell us that the most difficult medium was watercolor painting, and I—these people in the art class and the professors used to say, "And we challenge you"—that kind of thing—"come in here with something in watercolor." I really think so. I really do. Now, I don't say that it's the only medium, it's the only way you can get results. Good heavens, because there's great, marvelous, incredibly beautiful paintings in oil, I mean, they all—but it's a totally different manner of thinking. It would be—surely, it's exactly the same as comparing a violin with a bass drum, let's say, or with a trombone. Let's put it that way. Maybe a mellophone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You said that you have to think out ahead of time all the technical challenges. What else? The rest comes out sort of unconsciously? I mean, at least what you do put down, the forms? You have worked—you often worked from sketches beforehand, sometimes.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Oh, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you don't directly put those onto your final watercolor. Do you? You leave them behind, or you paint—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: No. I don't carry any—even any marks onto the paper, because I don't want to—to make the paper that impure to mark it with anything but the aquarelle. Even a pencil mark, to me, is graphite, and that's a bad material with reference to the colors, but getting back to your other point, that you have your form in mind, or you've evolved your composition, which is your form of design, and so on. Then through a series of smaller sketches, you solve problems by studying them—by making studies. You solve the procedures—the procedural problems, so that when you come to do them on the finished sheet, you don't have to solve it. It's already—you've already gone through the mechanics and the procedures for doing it. Thus, the piles of things, as you'll find any watercolorist's studio, piles of things like this, which are tests—are efforts to go through—to go through the study of what's going to happen here, so that you don't face that problem when you meet it. Now, it's not always speed. A lot of people confuse the issue by thinking of watercolor as being fast. It is a fast medium if you want it to be. It's—in fact, it is the most lightening of all mediums, really, if you want to gain effects quickly, but that isn't why you have to go through all this preparatory planning and thinking, and studying. It's so that you do not have to, at any point, that you're not forced to go back from where you've gone.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Because you can't really.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: You can't. You can't go back. And, once you've destroyed the crystal white of the paper. By that I mean the very sparkle of the tooth of the paper. Paper has tooth. The word "tooth", meaning those tiny, little pebble-like things that stick up, the little grains down between them. Now, once any wash of color has gone over a surface, it diminishes the sparkling edge of those teeth. If you want your watercolor to sparkle, you can go over it in such a way, that you will deposit dark, or deep, or intense tones, but still keep those little white sparkles that give you effervescence. There's no watercolorist who doesn't know—doesn't think about effervescence, the sense of the scintillating lightness, and when you lose it, it's dull, and once it's dull, there is no way of reversing that. That the sort of thing. It's hard. I never really had to put so much maybe in

words in that way, but you'll—you can see it in a well-accomplished watercolor, as against one that the artist considers a failure, or that he says is overworked—overworking is the thing you avoid in watercolor painting. You can't overwork an oil, really. I guess you could, but technically you can't overwork it, because you're always dealing with a viscous thickness that is in itself the effect that you want—the finished product. You're not depending on the canvas showing through.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That's just the surface to hold it up.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. It's what we call the support. The canvas is the support, but one must not confuse—when I say there's a big difference with the idea of speed. So many people have the feeling that oil is a slow medium and watercolor is a fast medium. That is—that has nothing to do with it. It may take me just as long or longer to go through my procedure to arrive at a result as it would if I were doing it in oil, or whatever. Certainly the slowest of all mediums, it would be egg tempera, but there you're dominated by the necessity to let layer after layer dry before you proceed to other layers. That slows it down as a medium of painting, and then, too, in watercolor, in some things I do, I will allow the paper to dry at certain stages. Then, I'll reverse the whole framework, and soak the paper from the reverse side, to let water come through the paper. Do you follow me? To the surface. When it has come to the surface at such a degree of wetness, then I can proceed to do what I want to do. Now, that calls for a lot of control. Do you see? But, again, it isn't a matter of being fast about it, or slow. It's either way. It can be a slow or a fast medium.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How—are many of these preparations—are these things that you taught yourself, or are they—you just knew or you developed them as you strived to achieve a certain effect?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, you're told a lot of these things.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Some of these things you're told in school. I guess.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: You're told—of course, yes. Just as a pianist is told how to achieve certain effects.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But many of them have evolved as you have tried to—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Right. They come as a result of your own sensitivity and delicacy, and I'm a prima donna enough to think of it as being almost sensual in a physical way. There are so many things about it that I discover, every once in a while, that I'm wondering why I'm—something isn't working right, and then I'll discover that maybe the surface on which I'm working is tilted an eighth of an inch or something. It gets to be almost that ridiculous. The—here in the studio some years ago, right—in fact, right after I built the studio, I had a slate floor in the working area. I put it down myself, and I know how much I prized that slate floor, but I soon discovered that it was—my feet got cold, especially in the cold wintertime. Slate is cold. It's a cold medium if you're on it any length of time, and so, I laid a carpet—got a piece of carpeting from the house, which had some binding material in the back of it. It gave me some air cushion, and I put that carpet on there and started to paint, and for the next three or four days, everything I touched, I ruined. It was only after I realized I had raised my body up quarter of an inch above my working table for the thing I was doing there. Now, that sounds absolutely ridiculous, but I happened to know that it's true. All I had to do was put a piece of quarter-inch working board on top of my table, and it made it—that's what still there as a matter of fact. If you told that to a man in the street, I think he'd say that's being plain, downright arty. I don't care what people think. I mean, but it's not—I think it is that delicate a medium. By the way—excuse me—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, the forms you put in are translations from your sketches, and your sketches—you'd go out in nature, but you seem to like geometric configurations a good deal?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Maybe I do. I think—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But in your work, at least, this is mostly, fairly recent work. Isn't it? Or is this quite a range?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. Well, yeah, maybe most—a year or two here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: There's a real extraction from forms that on the smaller scale of a sketch are sometimes rather readable as a shoreline, or rocks, and so forth. It is sort of a very swirling mass of light and dark. So, it's almost these things come—those things sketched come alive. Is that anything, or mean anything?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. They are—yeah. The sketch is used in many ways, but for—but I think most of us think of it as an experience, and that is the focus on the object and passing into yourself by way of your crayon, and so on, so that it becomes—it's a sensation that has been recorded somewhere to be recalled at some later date, along with other sketches. And, here's the secret of the thing, that the more sketches, the more impressions I can take of a thing, the better able I am to synthesize that into one painting. I don't do a portrait of any part of landscape. I don't sit outdoors with my paints, and so on, and paint a tree, or this tree,

and, in relationship to that tree, but what I'll do—I may sketch them exactly as they are, and—but having seen them in various relationships to each other, then come back and put them all together, and become more of a synthesis of the whole thing than it is of just a scene, or one particular scene. Did you ever here that store told about Waldo Peirce, by the way, in reference to his painting of Monhegan Island?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I'm not sure.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: He won a prize—won an award somewhere. It was in Massachusetts, in Boston, I think, and he is supposed—now, I don't know all the details here, but he's supposed to have won an award at one of the Boston annual shows—a painting of Monhegan Island off the coast, and he was standing near that painting some point after the awards were granted, and a woman is supposed to have up to him and have said to him, "Mr. Peirce, I have spent every summer of my life, since I was child, on Monhegan Island, and I don't recognize where that is." And Waldo Peirce is supposed to have drawn himself up to his full six-foot-two-inches, and hundred and—or 210 pounds—and said, "Madam, it's the whole God damned island." And, in a way, that story, if it's true or not, Waldo and I could talk this easily, and we did—this kind of thing. When we thought in terms of things that were—this synthesizing. Now, it's true, Waldo painted a lot of particular things, of children, and so on, but when you think about it, in many ways, Waldo's world was a world of experiences that he fed into this, that were hidden things, like that hidden horse in the painting the other night that we were looking at. Do you remember? Things that are there that make for the whole of it. Take it out if you have something less than what you had, and the same is, in my case, I can't point to any particular thing—yeah, some things may be strong enough in their reference to be Bar Harbor as against a wheat field. Sure, but I'm not thinking of tree covered with snow, I don't—yeah, it's a tree covered with snow, but it's not a particular tree. It's a whole lot of trees, and it's a whole lot snow. [Laughs.] By the way, that stuff is finished.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But what you said about this, are you making reference, some slight reference—you're looking at sketches of such subjects, or sometimes it's simply in the memory and you decide how much of it—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I bring the sketches back. I quite often lay them around—if I'm thinking in a certain vein—put them on the floor, is a good place to do it, and look at a whole lot of them to somehow kind of feel the essences of all of them, and then, very often, I'll just put them all in one pile, and put them all—and start right into painting. If I perceive that in trying to accomplish a certain effect—let's say fog, or snow, or the etheric effect of stars, or clouds, or skies, or something—if I anticipate that I'm going to have a problem, then I might make a little sketch, or several such little sketches, to see how—if I've got my technique in order before I start using the brush to do it. The only other thing I've got to worry about, as I tell the students, learn which of your colors should not go with which ones, how they will mix with each other, how they will fight each other, and you're in business. I mean, there you are. Certain colors, as you know, chemically will not mix. I'm not thinking, now, aesthetically or optically mixing, but certain colors will not mix. They just will not gel in watercolor. Oil, you rarely have that problem. There's not much. You can go fairly freely in oil, except for a few of the blues and greens, without running into chemical problems—too many chemical—but in watercolor you can create very bad problems, not only at the moment you do it, but later on, 10, 15, 25 years from now. I

ROBERT F. BROWN: They'll be unstable.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's right. That's right. Yeah. See, if you take—well, a good example, and one that's always taken, I think, as an example—if you take rose madder, for example, and cover it with viridian green, and work those two together, and you get a beautiful, almost black. It'll come out. This is a red and green producing the ultimate black—but 25 years from now that turns gold. It iridesces. It gets a kind of goldish sheen over it, and in fact, if you look at some of the Old Masters—you can see sometimes in the Old Masters that the colors are not what they were originally. You can tell this by the way they have iridesced, I guess is what you would call it. Beyond that there's nothing more to worry about. Yeah, that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you see in your work a similarity, a distinct thread running through it over a number of years?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so. I don't know if you could say this with every single, identical painting, but I think generally, through everything I've done, is an energy that I have always felt that there's nothing worse than a painting, or an artwork for that matter, which doesn't seem to want to move or vibrate, or to do something, that isn't—that doesn't have a reason for being, I guess is the answer, that it has a force within it, some kind of force within it that I try to find. I have said it many times, and I—people have quoted me one way or another. Maybe they don't understand what I'm saying, but I try to think of nature, in my case, nature as being a source of energies, which I am to interpret, and look around. I mean, every one of them is an effort to move, even when they're—look at the placidity of a fog like this, which by the way is a failure. I mean, the painting I'm calling a failure, but I mean, I'll start all over at the beginning again, but even this, the fog itself is a force in this painting—foggy and misty, and whatever else it is. It will eventually—when I do it again—will have that energy, but it will also—there's what we're talking about. It lost its effervescence in the upper section. Do

you see how dull and lifeless it is?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Matte. Dull.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. That's right. That I won't allow. No matter how dark it goes, I won't allow it to become dull, or as you just said, matte, is the word. So, we'll do it again, or something similar to it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But it's—there's—as you said, it's an energy. It's this lack of completion. There's something still pushing or moving.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: In action, and moving. Yes. I think that—you asked for what underlies, I think that if I had to say that, I think that's what it is. It's a force of some sort. That doesn't mean that that's the only way to paint [laughs] or the only—other artists can do—can look it totally differently.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What you're doing—don't you think as an individual—I mean, you're going to be very distinctive from all other people if you work toward your end. Do you feel you've been—you've been a teacher. You've seen many, many paintings. But you've still been able to hold with your force?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. I think I have, but I—that's a difficult one, and the students, over the years we would talk about it at great length. It's something that I find not easy to explain or to talk about, the development of style, of your own style. You—almost every student at some point would come up—would ask for an appointment and want to sit down and talk about—well, "Mr. Hartgen, do you think I'm developing a style? Or whose style should—do you think I should lean toward? Should I study Di Chirico? Should I study Salvador Dali? Should I—who should I go to?" I mean, this is their question, and it's hard to answer, because I'm not sure that I was inspired by some particular people. I used to say, "Just let your style evolve, as long as you know it's something that you're comfortable with, and feel that your making what is an honest statement, that your own style will come out," but it—that isn't always true, because there are many times when you begin to look like somebody else, and you say, "I didn't intend it, but I am." So, now there are times when artists are deliberately—allow themselves to be deliberately part of a school, or an -ism of one sort or another, where they do look alike. Good heavens, we have lots of cases in history where the master and the pupils—[laughs]—I can hardly tell sometimes who's who. That was a deliberate intention on their part—to develop a style like the master, like, you take Sir Anthony van Dyck and Rubens as a typical example for a period of time, until Van Dyck went out on his own, and eventually cut himself free from the umbilical cord, and got Rubens out of his system, in a way, but there are many, many paintings in those early years of Van Dyck that—I mean, scholars still fight about them, whether they're Van Dyck or Rubens—no way you can tell. And, of course, in our time, with so many, dare I say, novices who want to make it quickly—make it, become successful quickly, how they will deliberately emulate Picasso, or Matisse, or any master. I mean, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, what about the tendency very recently to stridently strike out on something new and novel, which I gather, then, is taken out by the dealers and the collectors?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I agree that this is the healthiest part of modern—modern painting, myself, or, of contemporary art, really.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Sometimes they're faulted though—I mean, just doing it for the sake of being novel.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That's all right. Those people will disappear. They won't be a force for the future to reckon with anyhow. The real—the charlatan, and there are plenty of them—in the galleries in New York, and Chicago, and so on, are filled with charlatans, and I mean by that true people who are fakes—charlatans. I get disgusted when I visit galleries. I'm not talking about museums so much, now, as commercial galleries, where they're trying to promote people, and I mean, I'm sure more than 50 percent of them couldn't care less whether they have a style of their own, but they care more about whether they sell or not, whether they're able to do something that's going to attract the public and make a buck. I don't worry about them, and I don't think society needs to worry about them. They will disappear into history, because they will not last. That's all. If they last at all, it'll only be in the category of, in the school of, or somewhat like so-and-so, whoever it happens to be. But Mr. Bené, going back to him, George Bené used to say he would see 10, 20 Picassos every day that people would drag in—every young artist coming in wanting to get a dealer, open up their portfolio and start showing him Picassos.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, that's the usual thing in history has been trying to take off. You've been able to preserve—perhaps your, I think, slight, relevant isolation here has been good, then, for you.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. On the contrary I think it's—well, in that respect, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In terms of the evolution of your style.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. But, I don't think it's because of the absence of my contact with it. It's the distance that makes it easier for me to see. I am not in the woods—talking about New York woods, or Chicago. I am looking at that whole thing. If I were in it, I would—my chances of coming out as an individual would be less likely. I think that. Maybe then being in a remote—Bill King-Bush, by the way, had the same feeling with, almost—I heard him talk to students in almost exactly the same way, that he liked it when he was in Maine, because he had that sense that he was here looking back at all the rest of it, you see. I remember very well him saying something almost exactly like that. Bill was very thoughtful about such things, and he liked his isolation on the island and away from it—that's why he came here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But your dealer—the other dealer you had after Bené was Herb Chase—Herbert Chase, from New York.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Herbert Chase needs to be mentioned, in that he was a very good dealer. I liked him because he never made demands on me. I, he was not George Bené, by any means. He was not an artist—a. He was a very good promoter. He knew art. He knew his way around in the art world, but he was—his skill really was in dealing with people and with clients and with artists, and so on. This is where he was successful, and it was so—in a way, I've had the two kinds of dealers in my life, those who are artistic, and, one—now, I don't want to diminish Herb Chase in that sense.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was reasonably congenial of your relationship.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yeah. Oh, goodness, yes. We were—yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, your being—your outlook of New York—did this open up—well, of course, you had one with Bené, but does having a New York gallery for you, has it been a very major thing in your career, or no?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think it helped in some ways. I had—I was there. For a while I was in the West Side Gallery in New York, and then went to Chase, so that we were—I think the experiences have been very valuable. I'm not sure that it really is as important as a lot of young artists, even today, think it is. I just had somebody here in the studio, a young student, not more than two weeks ago—very good young painter, and he was feeling so depressed, because he'd walked the streets of Boston—I don't know how many days or weeks—and he just got nothing, nowhere. Nobody was interested, and it kind of depressed him, and here's a good painter—a really good painter, and I tried to tell him, "This doesn't mean you're rejected because the dealers turned you down." You know, and, he had the feeling that because he didn't make it to the dealers that he's not going to make it. I said, "Look. Just go paint. You'll find outlets. I know you need the money, and all that kind of thing, but why sell yourself to a dealer who doesn't care anything about your work just for the sake of selling it?" You know? I'm not sure—I've had no desire, since Herb Chase went out of business and has retired, I've had no feeling or no desire to have a dealer, per se. Maybe that's because I don't feel great pressure to make a name, or to become known, or to earn a few extra dollars, which in the early days, believe me, was very good—to sell a painting or two to at least cover the cost of materials.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But now you can afford to stockpile a bit. Can't you?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Well, it's not necessarily stockpiled, but there are not many here. There are not many paintings here. No, but to get rid of them some way or another. Throw them away, as well as paint them away.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You wanted to talk a little bit about a couple of these traveling set ups. One was the *American Federation of the Arts Traveling Exhibition* in 1964–6.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh well, those—they're good to be into. In fact, I guess I've been in a number that probably aren't even listed in different places, but people like American Watercolor Society, or the American Federation of Arts, or whatever, pull together occasionally groups of artists, and then shift them around from school to school, or gallery to gallery, and I think this is particularly good, and if I had my advice to give to young artists, it would be there that I think they should try to achieve their recognition rather than putting all their hopes on a dealer in New York, or in Chicago. Most of these exhibits go—well, they go for several years, some of them, and you're exposed to people—to wide audiences in different parts of the country, and it's surprising how many cards, or little notes from people you get—people who go to galleries and see a group show like this and they see something they like, they write a little note to the artist. This is good for your ego, if nothing else. The artists—the embassy program in which I've actually been involved two or three times in that the state department chooses paintings from artists. They usually do it in New York, by the way, or either galleries in New York, Chicago, Pittsburgh, and so on, and they put these together. They assemble these, and then disperse them throughout the embassies throughout the world, and from time to time change them from one to another. This is an excellent thing. The only one thing about it that I don't like is that it does keep the painting out of your studio for sometimes several years at a time, and for young people who need to sell, they can't eat the publicity that they're getting because their painting is hanging in the embassy in Paris, even though people are enjoying it

there, and liking it. A lot of young artists need to have more than publicity. I don't happen to, but a lot of them do, and so, I think that's something that they should—but I like the idea that the state department does do this—has done it. Only one awkward thing happened with me, and with connection with that. The last time the embassy sent one of my paintings to the embassy in Canada. [Laughs.] I didn't go to the opening. I was invited. It was a formal affair, and the prime minister was there and everything else, but I am told that one or two minutes before the actual door was opened, somebody noticed that my painting was hung upside down, and quickly turned it around. It appears in the catalogue upside down. It appears upside down. [Laughs.] I wrote a letter at that time—what's his name? Curtis—former Governor Curtis—Governor of the state of Maine—was then, or he still is. Isn't he? Is he ambassador to Canada now?

ROBERT F. BROWN: I don't know.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think he is, but I wrote a letter when I heard about it, and made it a big joke out of it, and he joked back. It was kind of funny. I told him that I—when I was young, and we were always trying to be unusual. One of the goals we used to think was one to achieve, if you were unusual enough to be hung up upside down in the exhibit, you really had made it. You know, that kind of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] You achieved that.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: So, here I was, making it in the embassy of Canada, but it is upside down in the catalogue. [Laughs.] That whole thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I expect this exhibition at the Metropolitan in 1967 was important for you—the *200 Years of Watercolors*.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: That was very—it was a very important one, because I'm not sure, but I think there were only about 45 or 50 living artists in that. The rest of them were all the way back to the earliest of—Catlin, and some of those western illustrators and painters. Yes. I was chosen there. I don't know how. That came out of the Chase Gallery, by the way. So somebody, in walking the galleries in New York spotted it, and you know, they picked me for that, and yes. That was quite an honor. It was a marvelous show. It really—it covered the whole field of watercolor painting in America—all the way from things that looked exactly like Constable and Turner, and other British painters, all the way down to, of course, the Marins, and so on, of our time. It was a very, very marvelous show—good catalogue too, by the way. I'll try to dig it up for you some day.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about the—you've mentioned also an exhibition called *Landscape 1* at the DeCordova Museum in suburban Boston, 1970.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yeah. That was one of a series of exhibits—New England exhibits—that the museum, they invited different combinations of artists who were landscape painters of New England, different combinations in different years, and I think I hit it, if I'm not mistaken, two years or something like that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Are you glad to be out of your teaching, and so forth, now, so that you can throw yourself full-time into what we've been talking about for the last hour or two?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I think so. I think there are times when I really do miss the stimulation of working with the student in solving his problems, but I have to admit that sometimes that wasn't pleasant when you went through it—not always, but—because I loved teaching. I really did. I loved teaching, but it did drain a lot of energy there that might have gone into painting. It was a little hard the first six months or so to organize working time, and also working speed. I guess that's maybe more of the way to say it, that all my life—at least all my mature life, whatever painting I did was really done somewhat under pressure, under time pressure—that I would come in here in the studio on Saturday morning, and ask Frances not to—please not let anybody bother me, you know, all day, if possible, even the next day. Then I would really focus and go into it—dig into it, and work furiously. Suddenly, to have—

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ROBERT F. BROWN: Suddenly, you—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Where once, you worked and you knew your limits of time, then suddenly, to have almost an endless amount of time to do the same thing, can make a—did make a radical difference in the way I was—what I was doing. And, I found that the first things in those first maybe six months, were overworked, were heavy. They lacked the dash and the movement, the spirit that I like to think is what I get or go for. And I became aware of that. I destroyed a lot of work in that early—in that period there. Now, I've got it somewhat organized that I don't use all the time for the same thing—the same painting—that I've done a lot more drawing,

for example, in ink and chalk, just to keep away from having too much time to do the things that I shouldn't spend—are you following?

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

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: I also, there for a while—not so much now—but there for a while, I actually regimented myself to, on some days, not to paint at all, but to build frames, or make a crate, or do nothing, something that had nothing to do with the actual business of painting, you see? And I think that's how I solved the problem. It was like—it was almost like the routines that one has to go through when they quit smoking. You know, you have to change the pattern of when you do certain things, change the pattern of smoking, which I went through, and know very well, that it was those patterns that I discovered. It was the pattern—the time of smoking that was as hard to get rid of as the cigarette itself, or the pipe itself. Once that was accomplished, it was no problem for me. After 40 years of smoking, it should have been a great problem, but it wasn't really.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, you look for a fairly—you seem pretty cheerful—pretty optimistic—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: —about the art, or you mean?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your prospects. Well, you know. Your prospects, and the future—[cross talk]—your work.

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Oh, yes. I do. I don't—I have visions of doing much more exciting things than I'm getting done. [Laughs.] But that's probably always the way it has been, and maybe should be for most artists. Maybe we should always feel that we're going to get there tomorrow. Tomorrow is the day you're going to really do that terrific thing. Well, that's kind of Pollyannaish, but it really is. It's true, in a way. I'm quite happy with things as they have been moving along in the recent year. In looking back, there are many things I wish hadn't done, I mean, many subjects I wish hadn't tried, and many paintings that I wish I hadn't sold, or whatever, that I am not happy with. But then I'm no different from other people. I would dare compare myself with George Bernard Shaw, but didn't he say he wished he could buy back every single bit of the writing that he had done up 'til a certain point in his life? If he could only possibly remove them all—he said something—from all the library shelves of the world. Do you recall that? And how about Carl Orff, the great German composer who disclaimed everything prior to 19—what was it? 1940. No. 1960 or something like that. Absolutely said it does not even belong to him. He said, "Absolutely"—he said, "I had nothing to do with it."

ROBERT F. BROWN: You don't—do you think—do you have those inclinations very often, or is that—

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Times when I do. Yeah. Times when I do, yeah. If I have some—I've kept, not as religiously maybe as I should have, but I've kept some things from here and there, along the way. In other words, I can jump back through history at 10, 15 years at a time, and every now and then, but not often—but occasionally I'll open up that print box, and look at them, and they frighten me—to think that I thought that they were all right. I thought they were good. I can remember thinking they were good, just as we all can remember that that theme we wrote in college was a terrific piece of literature, only to read it a year after, or so. You just couldn't believe that that's what you wrote. It's didn't change. You did. Well, you said that—the case of Waldo Pierce in connection about changing. Yeah. So, I don't know. I—there's no end to the forces of the nature with which I'm concerned. There's no end to them, but as long as I can find energies and powers, and the movements in violent things, as well as quiet things, that leaves the whole gamut of nature open to me, and not many people have that opportunity. They're stuck with a very narrow world to look upon. I don't—it isn't for me.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Is nature something you're quite aware of looking at much of the time?

VINCENT ANDREW HARTGEN: Yes. I never get up to go to the bathroom at night—three, four o'clock, whatever it is—that I don't stand in front of the window and look out into the night. And here it's a night. It's a black night, but there are forms there. I never, never miss the chance. I mean, I—it's just—it's a thing to do. It's part of what I do. I thought—when you think of nature, and how many faces it has, how many angles, and variations, and subtle nuances, it's absolutely incredible. Isn't it? Ice—the crackle of ice, just the sound of ice breaking. The usual wind through grass. Well—

[END OF INTERVIEW.]