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Oral history interview with Emlen Etting,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Emlen Etting on October 12, 1988. The interview was conducted at Emlen Etting's studio in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania by Marina Pacini for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

MARINA PACINI: This is Marina Pacini interviewing Emlen Etting for the Archives of American Art at Mr. Etting's studio at 1921 Manning Street, Philadelphia, on October 12th, 1988. Can you tell me when and where you were born?

EMLLEN ETTING: I was born in Marion outside Philadelphia, which was in those days outside in the real country. Now it's practically absorbed by the City.

MARINA PACINI: And your birth date?

EMLLEN ETTING: August 24th, 1905.

MARINA PACINI: Can you tell me a little bit about your mother and father, your family circumstances? What did your father do?

EMLLEN ETTING: My father died when I was about two, so I really hardly knew, but he was a broker. And my mother was, didn't do anything; women didn't have jobs much in those days, as you may have heard. So she didn't do anything, she was more social.

MARINA PACINI: Was anybody in your family interested in art? Were there any artists, or collectors, or amateur artists?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes, on my mother's side there were. They were interested in art...I don't think the kind of art we think of now - very realistic paintings of landscapes and things like that - but they weren't interested in the way people are now. And, oh, what is the expression...in investments, they weren't interested in investments. They just got what they liked.

MARINA PACINI: So then your mother's family's homes, the family homes had art in them, and this would have been your first exposure to...

EMLLEN ETTING: Unfortunately, not things we would think of now as great things, anyway, but they did have the pictures all over the walls.

MARINA PACINI: When did you start your interest in art, in becoming an artist yourself? Did you start drawing at a very early age?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes, I started as a child. After my father died, my mother took me to Europe and at that point I began to draw, began to make drawings all the time in the rooms we were in and I decided then, quite early, that I wanted to be an artist. But it was conflict with writing and theater too, which interested me passionately. But as I look back on it, it's pretty clear that my one real interest, the only one, was art, painting. Painting, drawing and illustration.

MARINA PACINI: How old were you when you went to Europe with your mother?

EMLLEN ETTING: I was about five I suppose.

MARINA PACINI: How long did you stay there?

EMLLEN ETTING: For quite a while. I went to school in Switzerland.

MARINA PACINI: Did you travel a great deal? Did your mother take you to museums?

EMLLEN ETTING: To what?

MARINA PACINI: To museums - were you looking at art?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, not that much, because I was a bit young for that, actually. But I used to draw at home.

MARINA PACINI: Did the schools you attended teach any art? Were you taking art classes at all?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, it was regular schools in Europe, which are much more general education, cultural education than we have here and so art would always come into it in Europe in the education.

MARINA PACINI: What would you describe as your first formal art education?

EMLLEN ETTING: First form?

MARINA PACINI: Formal art education. I mean, other than these classes in what I guess would be comparable to American high school. Did you ever take any classes outside of school while you were in high school?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, I took classes after I went to Harvard, was when I started. I went to Harvard because I was interested in a drama course, which was later switched to Yale. However, I went through with my entrance at Harvard. I disagreed with the way they taught it, by color charts and very realistic drawings, and so I decided that I had signed up for it, I'll go through with it, but I would work on my own and so I enrolled for classes in the Boston colleges where I could draw on my own without markings of any sort.

MARINA PACINI: So what you're saying is that the art education at Harvard was too conservative?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, it was conservative and very restricted. I forget who the man was who did the color charts.

MARINA PACINI: In your manuscript, "A Studio in Paris," you mention two gentlemen: Arthur Pope and Professor Edgell?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Who were your instructors...

EMLLEN ETTING: I don't remember much of that, I guess.

MARINA PACINI: So then you were taking art classes outside of Harvard during the time you were at school.

EMLLEN ETTING: I wasn't taking class; I was taking, following classes without instruction. The ones at Harvard I had to and I used to get very poor marks on them, which annoyed me no end because I thought they were quite good drawings. But then I started branching out and I, my wife Gloria, and her sisters ran the Denishawn School in Boston of dance.

MARINA PACINI: Could you please spell that?

EMLLEN ETTING: Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn made into one name: Denishawn. I used to go there and draw the figure in motion, of course. And then I started doing book jacket covers.

MARINA PACINI: How did that come about?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, I thought, what should I do to presumably show that I could earn some money through my art, so that I took up book jackets. And I used to get folders and folios and go around New York in my spare time and get orders so that I felt I could possibly earn my living through my work.

MARINA PACINI: When was this that you were doing this with the book jackets? Was this while you were still at school in Harvard or was this later?

EMLLEN ETTING: At Harvard, yes.

MARINA PACINI: So it started early. Did you have any success selling any book jacket designs at that point?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes, I have folders of them, the few that I kept.

MARINA PACINI: Why did you decide to go to school in the States rather than staying in Europe? Was there anything in particular that brought you back?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, my aunt who was paying for my education at Harvard that that at that early age it was a most important influence in my life, and she thought that after all, I was an American citizen and I should concentrate on this country more, and she suggested we come back. And that was the beginning of the First World War. So it was rather a hectic moment, as I had to come back in an empty ship that had brought troops over.

MARINA PACINI: So you would have been about 15 when you came back, no you would have been about 10?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, it would be after, yes, it would be after...the war was, ended in '18, so...

MARINA PACINI: You were coming back after the war or before the war?

EMLLEN ETTING: During the war.

MARINA PACINI: Where did you go? Did you move back to Philadelphia when you came back to the United States during the war?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Where did you go to school then?

EMLLEN ETTING: I went to some school on the Main Line. I forget what it was called.

MARINA PACINI: Was it St. George School?

EMLLEN ETTING: I went to St. George's School, yes. I went briefly at Haverford and then St. George's School and graduated from that and went to Harvard.

MARINA PACINI: And you were at Harvard from 1924 till 1928, roughly?

EMLLEN ETTING: I graduated in '28 with a BS degree in French literature because, as I explained to you before, I didn't like the markings at Harvard at all, so I decided to concentrate on French literature, which I never regretted. I was delighted that I had, so I got a BS through that. And then, after that, after graduating, I decided to go to Europe and went to study with Andre Lhote. L-h-o-t-e, it's spelled. Most people spell it with an apostrophe and there's no such thing. It's L-h-o-t-e, Andre.

MARINA PACINI: Before we jump to Europe, let me ask you a couple more questions. By any chance, do you remember having seen in Philadelphia, either one of the two big exhibitions in the '20s at the Academy, either the Representative Masters in 1920, or the Barnes collection, when it was displayed at the Academy in 1923?

EMLLEN ETTING: I didn't see the Barnes collection till much later - that was a special story.

MARINA PACINI: Well, how aware were you of modern art? Were you, before you arrived in Europe in 1928?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, I was aware of it because I loved art as symbol and service. Speaking, like in literature, the words are important and in painting the pictures are important. And I became increasingly aware of their importance to me, that everything visual made a great impact: other people's work and other people's behavior and the other arts, theater and music.

MARINA PACINI: Did you have access to any collections perhaps when you were in...

EMLLEN ETTING: When I came back to Philadelphia, when I came back to supposedly get the American influences, I was totally aware of what was going on: the Armory show, and other artists' work that I knew, got to know, like Adolphe Borie.

MARINA PACINI: How did you come to meet Adolphe Borie?

EMLLEN ETTING: Family friends. The Tysons were great friends of mine, Carroll Tyson of my mother's. They introduced me to Adolphe Borie as I recall.

MARINA PACINI: So then you would have been already well acquainted with some of the more important collections in Philadelphia before you went.

EMLLEN ETTING: Oh, yes. Oh, I'd been to everybody's houses so that, Tyson collection, [R. Sturgis] Ingersoll...

MARINA PACINI: The [Sam and Vera] White collection?

EMLLEN ETTING: The White's, yes, I went to all their houses. The [P.A.B] Weidner collection.

MARINA PACINI: In your manuscript you mention that it was Adolphe Borie who suggested that you study with Andre Lhote.

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes it was. There were two main teachers in Paris at that period. One was Andre Lhote and the other was Hofmann. What's his first name...

MARINA PACINI: Hans.

EMLLEN ETTING: Hans Hofmann. Personally, I'm glad I went to Lhote because I got a classical training which I would not have got from Hoffman.

MARINA PACINI: Had Adolphe Borie been friendly with Andre Lhote, was that how he happened to...

EMLLEN ETTING: No, I don't think he knew him, but he was interested in what young people were thinking and doing and he had been a great deal in Europe and had heard about Lhote's school as many people had.

MARINA PACINI: But it never occurred to you to attend one of the Philadelphia art schools of which there are so many?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, it seemed that since I had the opportunity it was much better to get an outside influence, the same way I chose my college. I chose Boston, Harvard, because it was further away from home. I saw no reason to be provincial as a child.

MARINA PACINI: Now, there were, interestingly enough, an awful lot of Philadelphia artists who traveled to Paris, well for years, but during this particular time, or shortly before you arrived. For example, George Biddle was in Paris from 1923 to '26, and Leon Kelly was there from '24 to '30.

EMLLEN ETTING: I knew them both.

MARINA PACINI: Did you know them in Paris or did you know them before you left?

EMLLEN ETTING: I knew them when I came back to Philadelphia.

MARINA PACINI: Okay, so they weren't part of your decision?

EMLLEN ETTING: No.

MARINA PACINI: Well, Leon Kelly would still have been in Paris, so he couldn't have been telling you to go to Paris. You've already answered my next question.

EMLLEN ETTING: There were no other artists in Philadelphia that I knew that went to Lhote's. Those were apparently the only two. I wasn't aware that George Biddle had been there, actually.

MARINA PACINI: I don't know that he specifically studied with Lhote; I just think he was in Paris. The only, the one I found a listing of who was supposed to have studied with Lhote was Benton Spruance, who was supposed to have been there in 1930.

EMLLEN ETTING: I have no recollection of that either. I got to be great friends with Benton Spruance and I have some of his work in my house, but I don't remember any connection with Andre Lhote.

MARINA PACINI: Ok, well, let's now start talking about your schooling with Lhote. You said that one of the things that you really enjoyed about your study with him was your classical training. Well, how different was it from the training you were receiving, that you were unhappy with at Harvard?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, it was very influenced by Cubism actually, because Lhote was one of the cubists and his teaching - classical - was based on cubist methods.

MARINA PACINI: When you're saying classical, that Lhote was a classical teacher, you're not necessarily referring to French Academic classicism. I mean, where you be drawing casts and things like that.

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, not only just drawing, but composition and color. Everything came into it.

MARINA PACINI: Can you describe what the classes at Lhote's school were like: were they very structured: was it Monday color, Tuesday composition, or was it much more free form? How did it work?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, it worked. Lhote would decide himself what he wanted emphasized and what he was interested in at the moment. He was one of the best art critics in Paris of his day and his criticisms are fascinating. I have several of his books here. But the principle of teaching was very different than what we would refer to in those days as classic, which meant just like drawing like Ingres. In the book [the manuscript "A Studio in Paris"] I showed a drawing of Lhote when I was doing, working on a portrait of Ingres and he showed how you could break it down into an abstract pattern. And, in that way, he broke up the figure and the landscape in the cubist methods. That's where the cubists came as a great influence, as everybody knows, on art. One of the greatest influences.

MARINA PACINI: So then the classes were more free form. It wasn't like every semester he broke it down into

particular types of things.

EMLÉN ETTING: No, it was fluid. People came and went in the classes. You know, sometimes people came and somebody would be very annoyed at something he destroyed, something they'd done on a canvas, and they were horrified and would never come back. It was in America, I was fascinated when I came back. It was done more like, to please the student; you'd say something was good and never touch it. But Lhote would barge right in and the students, the whole class, would follow round behind, and he would take one easel, one painting at a time, and whatever he was emphasizing that day, he would rub it in, and how! Much to the, sometimes, students' annoyance. The reason I'm telling you this is to explain why it was so fluid. There was no point in having a method of teaching composition one day, and one day color was that you got different people and you didn't follow through with it. And with his method you eventually got all the different facets if you stayed long enough. I stayed about two or three years. And one of the people who was there with me was Henri Cartier Bresson, and he didn't like the method so much and so he left and went into photography with the results we all know, international, top photographer. But, he'd been there.

MARINA PACINI: Did Lhote come every day? It wasn't the kind of thing where he'd come in once a week to give criticism?

EMLÉN ETTING: He came in once a week. He didn't come in every day at all. He had a manager, a young Russian who ran the school and attended to the business matters and finances and got the materials for the still lifes, or the arrangements, and engaged the models, because we worked entirely from models.

MARINA PACINI: So you'd be doing figures, you'd be working from live models, and you would have still life. Did you ever do landscape?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, summer classes, we went down and the faithful followed him down in a little town called Mirmande in the south of France, where we worked from landscape and still life and figure.

MARINA PACINI: You said you stayed for two and a half years. What was the average length of time that a student stayed? Were you a good example? Did many students stay for such an extended period of time?

EMLÉN ETTING: Oh yes, there were some that were absolutely hipped on Lhote, and there was one American lady whose name I've unfortunately forgotten now, she spent her entire years there, worshipped him practically, was fascinated.

MARINA PACINI: This took place, the classes were, in the morning?

EMLÉN ETTING: I think there were some in the afternoon, but I took the morning classes with Lhote. And then, in the afternoon we'd have lunch with a group of students, and in the afternoon I'd go to La Grande Chaumiere, which was a very nice academy where you didn't have to get any criticism at all. I figured that Lhote was enough for one day, his methods, and I'd work on my own in the afternoon. And it was fascinating because we'd do a model, have a dressed figure and then afterwards undress her and did it in the nude, or vice versa. Which made you very more sensitive to the human figure than if you just drew it from a plaster cast.

MARINA PACINI: So your studies at the Grande Chaumiere -- pretty much you went down there on your own and what you were paying for was to have access to the model and the work space.

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: To get back to Lhote, did he try to encourage his students to work in a particular style, or was he very free and you were allowed to work in your own style?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, you were allowed to work in your own style. He was very free about that. It's funny that there were very few people who show his interests, his methods.

MARINA PACINI: Did the class ever put on exhibitions?

EMLÉN ETTING: No, not that I recall, not while I was there. We had every once a season or two; we had a dance that we got together with the students and sort of show our work. The studios were hung with paintings by Lhote, large sketches for paintings, and then once a year or so, we'd get together and have a dance, put our own work up.

MARINA PACINI: That would be really for the students to see, it wasn't like open to the public, and the public was not invited in to look at...

EMLÉN ETTING: On, no. It was a private matter.

MARINA PACINI: Were you encouraged to go see the exhibitions that were up throughout Paris?

EMLÉN ETTING: We followed with passionate interest everything that went on, people's exhibitions. When I think of the list of, I list in my book the artists who were painting in those days. It was fascinating. We watched all their work develop: Matisse, and lesser known ones.

MARINA PACINI: It wasn't that you went as a class together to look at these exhibitions, you just knew...

EMLÉN ETTING: No, we all went in different sympathetic groups. All his students were of all nationalities: Turks, French, and Americans.

MARINA PACINI: Did there seem to be any sort of similarity in terms of what their educational backgrounds were or did people come there who had years of schooling as well as people who had never had any schooling? Was it a real mishmash of backgrounds?

EMLÉN ETTING: It was quite a total mixture, yes. Anybody who wanted to come, could pay the tuition, was only too welcomed.

MARINA PACINI: Did you learn anything from the other students? I mean, if Lhote was only in there one day a week...

EMLÉN ETTING: Oh, yes, we used to spend days arguing on methods and whether we agreed with Lhote or not. Everything was terribly, passionately, passionate interest to us.

MARINA PACINI: Can you remember who some of your fellow students were, not necessarily Americans or Philadelphians, just any of them?

EMLÉN ETTING: There's one whose name I can't think now who lived in Princeton who worked with light methods, who became a great friend of mine, though he preceded me. He experimented with light, light patterns, and all this is terrible, I seem so vague about this, it seems so long ago. He lived in Princeton, examples of abstract color that was done by light, prisms, and all that.

MARINA PACINI: I'm sorry I can't help you. Do you want to talk about the summer school that Lhote had at Mirmande? What was that like: was it organized any differently from the school in Paris?

EMLÉN ETTING: It was like a big family. We all ate together and we were billeted out in little village rooms here and there. And we'd eat our meals together, and chickens would eat the scraps at our feet as we ate.

MARINA PACINI: How long would you go for?

EMLÉN ETTING: I went for two summers.

MARINA PACINI: Two weeks, six weeks?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, yes, about two months.

MARINA PACINI: How did that work? Did you all get up and disperse every day and go your separate directions or did you go together as a group and he would be working...

EMLÉN ETTING: Both. We could go entirely alone, to vegetable fields or work in a class together. It didn't matter as long as we were totally preoccupied with the work at hand.

MARINA PACINI: Was he working as well on his work while you were all down there, or was he there exclusively?

EMLÉN ETTING: No, he wasn't.

MARINA PACINI: Did you ever get invited to see his studio or him at work?

EMLÉN ETTING: Oh yes, he received his students one day a week, and we went up there and discussed things with him. Madame Lhote greeted us very kindly. She had an antique store on the Boulevard Gaspard [?] which was nearby. She was very affable, a very nice, kind woman.

[Tape one, side two]

MARINA PACINI: Now you said that Madame Lhote had a gallery?

EMLÉN ETTING: She had a shop and sold antiques nearby. And during the war, Lhote had to, to avoid, escape the Germans, he used to sleep in a different apartment so the Gestapo wouldn't get him out of bed and put him into

jail as they did with many people.

MARINA PACINI: So you would be invited back to the studio and you could see the work he was doing and hopefully learn from his example.

EMLÉN ETTING: Well it was all very friendly talk centering on modern art, contemporary art.

MARINA PACINI: Did you feel that Lhote exerted any sort of influence on your work?

EMLÉN ETTING: Definitely. [interruption]

He shows in New York, there's a dealer who shows him from time to time now in New York. I can't remember his name, a French dealer.

MARINA PACINI: Do you want to talk about how your artwork developed during this period while you were studying there? What kind of subjects were you treating before you started studying there? Were you doing still lifes, abstract, were you doing...?

EMLÉN ETTING: I was doing realistic work because I still was a student and I was figuring that I went there to get a background. And so, I concentrated on anything that was classical.

MARINA PACINI: During the period of time that you were there, did you start to, did your work start to become more abstract? Was there a change or did you continue to work in a realistic...

EMLÉN ETTING: I always had a penchant for abstract, and some things were abstract on the side that were influenced, but I'd always been more interested in the figure as well, include the figure in the painting.

MARINA PACINI: What about your color - was there any sort of change in your color as a result of your studies there?

EMLÉN ETTING: Color? Well, yes. Because I'd learned to simplify colors, because he taught us a great deal, Lhote, about colors, the saturation of color, the influence of colors, the placement and composition by color.

MARINA PACINI: Was there any other experience in your years in Paris that you felt was influential in terms of how it impacted your art? Were there any other artists' work that you saw on exhibit or that you got to know personally that had an influence on your art?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, they all had an influence. All the ones, I listed some in my book, I've now forgotten, but we all followed every time Matisse had a new show, or any other artist. We all went and discussed it and whether we like it or not or how and what he had proved, and we followed everybody. So many artists that are now I've forgotten now, say Survage was one whose work I liked a great deal and he sort of vanished out of the picture.

MARINA PACINI: Any other major ones that you can think of? In the circles you traveled in, I'm now thinking of your social life, did you tend to associate with other Philadelphians who were in Paris or were you...

EMLÉN ETTING: I associated with New Yorkers: Louis Reynal and his sister were from New York, they studied with him and we used to go around together a lot. But I don't remember any from Philadelphia, not in Paris at that time. Except people that I knew socially that came over.

MARINA PACINI: What about who some of your other friends were? Were they other artists, not necessarily from the United States, any French artists, were there any particular people that you associated with during your years over there?

EMLÉN ETTING: I can't think; it's too awful. I used to exhibit at the outdoor shows in the spring with all the other students. We all had separate units on the Boulevard Spire which was the main thoroughfare through Montparnasse. And, every spring they would (a lot like at the Art Alliance except it was done much more seriously and more efficaciously) exhibit pictures in Rittenhouse Square, but in Paris lots of boulevards [were] assigned to us, and we exhibited there and exchanged ideas with our fellow students.

MARINA PACINI: Now that you've brought this up, you had an exhibition while you were in Paris, a one-man exhibition. Do you want to talk about how that came about, I think Jeanne Castel.

EMLÉN ETTING: Jeanne Castel who was the wife of Picasso's dealer, what's his name, Rosenberg?

MARINA PACINI: Kahnweiler?

EMLÉN ETTING: No, he was an agent of his too, but in those days he had a gallery in the Rue de la Boisse who [unintelligible] was influence going on there. There was Dali, there was Picasso, Braque, you know everything

they did was discussed and shown.

MARINA PACINI: How did you come to meet Jeanne Castel?

EMLÉN ETTING: I took my, a folder of my work, around from gallery to gallery the way artists do in New York. Of course, now they do it more with transparencies as well. It's easier to get the effect. But anyway, like all art fields, you have to get a folder together of your work and see what you can work out from that. So that's how I got with Jeanne Castel.

MARINA PACINI: Was this your first exhibition?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Was this the one in 1930, or was this in 1931?

EMLÉN ETTING: I'll have to look it up in my own notes.

MARINA PACINI: The reason I'm asking you this...

EMLÉN ETTING: I had a show in Philadelphia.

MARINA PACINI: Right, that was, here, I've got it, the first exhibit was in 1930 at the Edward Side Gallery and the one in Paris was in 1931. What was the response to the exhibition? Did you get reviewed?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes. The reviewers were, at least some of them, in what you photographed.

MARINA PACINI: On the microfilm. Was the response good?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, people seemed to be quite annoyed at the type of stuff, which was not what they'd expected.

MARINA PACINI: Why, what had they expected?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, deformation of the figure. For instance, a nude was deformed, exaggerated lines, which made them somewhat more abstract and in result people found that very offensive and that any abstract touch was considered very far out.

MARINA PACINI: Did you sell any works from the exhibition?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, I sold a few. Like all exhibitions.

MARINA PACINI: Do you by any chance have any idea who it was that purchased works from that first exhibition?

EMLÉN ETTING: Why, I can't remember. There was one purchased one; I did a portrait of Mary Carter who was a Philadelphia girl, a great beauty, and her mother bought it. It was done with a palette knife, a good deal of it, a modern technique for Philadelphia, and to my horror, years later, I asked her where the painting was and she said, "My mother didn't think it was flattering enough and touched it up."

MARINA PACINI: So it was a portrait of Mary Carter.

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Oh geez [laughs] I looked through the manuscript of "A Studio in Paris" and a couple of the names that jumped out at me were Alexander Calder...

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, we were great friends in Paris.

MARINA PACINI: Now, did you meet him through school or...

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, we all meet as artists, you know. You go to the same bars and streets and same parties. It was all very intimate and friendly, the world, the art world of Paris in those days. It was very stimulating.

MARINA PACINI: Did you go seem him in his studio?

EMLÉN ETTING: Who?

MARINA PACINI: Calder.

EMLEN ETTING: We went in everybody's studios. Max Ernst I knew quite well. And Sandy and his wife. She, I'd known her before, she used to act with me in French plays in Harvard.

MARINA PACINI: What about Seldon Rodman? How did you come to know him?

EMLEN ETTING: I knew him, I've forgotten, though. He was writing for a magazine Lincoln Kerstein set up, The Hound and Horn, I think, and I met Lincoln Kerstein, Seldon Rodman through him. William Hale was another one.

MARINA PACINI: Who was Lincoln Hale?

EMLEN ETTING: I think it was William Hale. Yes, he was one of the editors at that magazine too.

MARINA PACINI: Then you didn't know Seldon Rodman before you went to Europe? You met him over there?

EMLEN ETTING: No. He wrote an article on my—somebody—London Studio asked him to write an article on me which Seldon Rodman did, and then when he showed it to us—the editor who became one of my best friends was Brian Holme who was then editor of the London Studio. That's what he wanted, Seldon Rodman to write an article on my work for that, and Seldon accepted. Then when we got the magazine article it was so unfriendly, so unflattering that we decided we might as well get somebody else to write it, there was no point...The beginning was very flattering and then he went to town and eventually he got furious because he thought I married socially and I should have stuck to more revolutionary methods. I have his books here, dedication to that effect if I can find it.

MARINA PACINI: Did you remain friends with him after this incident, then?

EMLEN ETTING: Yes, I said, that's perfectly alright, I wasn't the one who objected, it was Brian Holme, the editor of the magazine, who said there was no point in publishing a derogatory article, we didn't think, in it, so he wouldn't use it so we got somebody else to do it.

MARINA PACINI: Do you remember who that was?

EMLEN ETTING: It was a woman, a girl called Mary Rupert, who lives in Wilmington. He later published several things of mine in the magazine.

MARINA PACINI: Did you travel anywhere else in Europe while you were over there?

EMLEN ETTING: Yes, I went to Spain, Mallorca, Germany, and Italy, of course.

MARINA PACINI: Now, were these trips where you would go and look at museums and art, or were they more purely recreational?

EMLEN ETTING: Oh, no, there would be looking at galleries and churches and any artistic sightseeing.

MARINA PACINI: Is there anything you remember that particularly struck you?

EMLEN ETTING: That's quite a loaded question, isn't it? [laughs]

MARINA PACINI: Anything you felt that had an impact on your art. Obviously you would see many things that you would like, but something that really changed how you were looking at something.

EMLEN ETTING: Picasso and the cubist influence, of course, was a major influence on all of us.

MARINA PACINI: In 1930 you left Paris, briefly, to take a trip back to Philadelphia, and you had an exhibition at the Edward Side Gallery. How did this come about; how did you get to meet Edward Side?

EMLEN ETTING: The same method as I met with anyone: take a folder of your work. Edward Side didn't know much about art. He suddenly decided he was going to have a gallery and he did. I showed him my folder and he liked the idea, I suppose he was mildly shocked by them, but he decided to take a risk on it and did give me a show.

MARINA PACINI: Do you remember why you went to see him? I mean, did you see a whole lot of people and it just happened...

EMLEN ETTING: There were practically no galleries in Philadelphia in those days. I mean, about four or five, maybe.

MARINA PACINI: That was going to be my next question. Can you remember what the names were of some of the other ones that were?

EMLEN ETTING: No, I can't.

MARINA PACINI: Well, I've got a few, but we'll come back to that a little later. How successful was the Philadelphia show? Did you sell anything from that?

EMLEN ETTING: Well, my friends came in. My mother was very popular and so I got to know a lot of people my own age and older that had collected pictures.

MARINA PACINI: Do you remember if you sold anything from that exhibition?

EMLEN ETTING: Yes, I sold a few at very modest prices.

MARINA PACINI: Well, now let's come back to Philadelphia after your period in Europe. Why did you decide to come back to Philadelphia as opposed to moving to New York or someplace else?

EMLEN ETTING: My family wanted me to come back. My aunt was paying for the tuitions, and the big influence: Americans had gone abroad, what shall we call, the "lost generation", and I felt I didn't want to be in the later edition of the "lost generation"; I wanted to be more American, and I guess I was influenced by my aunt in that, among other people, and so I came back. I often think I made a great mistake and that I should have stayed since I was much more sympathetic to what was going on there in those days than at home.

MARINA PACINI: What was it like when you came back to Philadelphia; what did you do with yourself? Did you continue your studies anyplace?

EMLEN ETTING: I became friends with other artists of the, in Philadelphia. Franklin Watkins was my best friend, Ben Spruance was another one, Hobson Pittman, and ah...oh, all of them. Quite a few.

MARINA PACINI: Did you support yourself through your art at that time or did you have to find some other employment?

EMLEN ETTING: I forget when I started teaching. That was around about then.

MARINA PACINI: Where did you teach?

EMLEN ETTING: I went to classes and I taught. I had a studio in the Fuller Building, as it was then called, on 18th Street, and I ran my own classes there. And then I went and studied for a while as a friendly gesture with [Franklin] Watkins and Arthur Carles who had classes together and they were a great influence upon me.

MARINA PACINI: You say that you studied with them as a friendly gesture. Did you feel at that point that you had had enough study and didn't need any further study?

EMLEN ETTING: I was so imbued with Lhote's methods that I didn't want to get involved with theirs particularly. Their method of teaching was not what I admired as I admired it in Lhote. In Lhote it was a fierce pattern of following classical work and treating the students as students and I found that in America the teaching was more the method of psychoanalysis. They'd say do a little bit more on that corner of your picture and do this. They never did as Lhote did, just destroy it deliberately and repaint it. They babied you along quite a bit. I found that method quite obnoxious.

MARINA PACINI: Did you get any exhibitions; did you try to get yourself a gallery when you first came back?

EMLEN ETTING: It was very difficult to get a gallery when you come back because I only knew practically no people at that point in Philadelphia and there was no art impetus, very few galleries as I just said.

MARINA PACINI: I can give you the names of a few galleries and if you can tell me anything about them, why don't you do so. What about the Warwick Gallery; do you know anything about it?

EMLEN ETTING: The Warwick Gallery was what the Edward Side Gallery turned into (the Warwick Gallery because it was in the Warwick Hotel).

MARINA PACINI: But it was no longer run by Edward Side?

EMLEN ETTING: No.

MARINA PACINI: Do you know who ran it?

EMLEN ETTING: I should, but I don't remember.

MARINA PACINI: What kind of art did they handle: was it Philadelphia artists, European art, or new art?

EMLLEN ETTING: That who had?

MARINA PACINI: Warwick had.

EMLLEN ETTING: Very inferior things.

MARINA PACINI: Was it living artists?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: How about the Mellon gallery?

EMLLEN ETTING: That was run by a Russian who became a great friend of mine too and was my first agent in Philadelphia. His name was Boyer. What was his first name? He ran the Mellon Gallery on 18th Street.

MARINA PACINI: Didn't he also have a gallery called the Boyer Gallery and wasn't he also, didn't he also have a hand in the Gimbel gallery?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes, but he became, let's see, the Boyer Gallery became, no the Mellon Gallery became the Boyer Gallery, I believe. And he had that Russian artist, was one of his "stable" as they call them, of artists, Arshile Gorky. And I was in that group.

MARINA PACINI: So then you were part of his stable.

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes. In those notes, all those things are, if I had them in front of me, I could open up and find...all the...

MARINA PACINI: Do you want to get some of those scrapbooks?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, but I don't think, who would be interested in this, the way we're doing this?

MARINA PACINI: There's almost no information on any of these Philadelphia galleries so any information that you can give us about who was involved with them...

EMLLEN ETTING: George Biddle was another who was involved with the Boyer Gallery.

MARINA PACINI: Do you know what Boyer's background was? If Boyer had any art training?

EMLLEN ETTING: He was very erratic, Russian. And I got on with him very well. The only thing I didn't get on with him was financially because he never paid me for sales. And I said to him, listen, I don't necessarily expect you to pay up right away, but at least give me something on the sales. You should pay a little bit by the month. And he kept saying, oh, I think I'll do that and of course he never did.

MARINA PACINI: Did you ever get paid by him for the work he sold?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well I did in the beginning but then less and less. And in the end, George Biddle and I got hold of his, George Biddle's brother, who was Attorney General of the United States...

MARINA PACINI: Jimmy, James Biddle?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, he was Attorney General of the United States in Washington...Anyway, that was the end of my lovely friendship with Boyer because it was a lawsuit and Francis Biddle, that's it, did the lawsuit for George Biddle and me together and we got a series of them, and I have one in the house still. The paintings of Elshemius we got, because he was another one of his stable.

MARINA PACINI: So you got the work of other artists instead of monetary...

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Do you know if he paid anybody? Were you two the only two who weren't getting paid or was he doing this to everybody?

EMLLEN ETTING: He was doing it to everybody which is unfortunate because he had good taste and a good gallery and we all liked him.

MARINA PACINI: Was the problem that nobody was buying the work or was it he was just a terrible businessman?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, people were buying the work.

MARINA PACINI: Then he was just a terrible businessman or a crook.

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, not a crook. It was he was always staving off, didn't want anything unpleasant, difficult. But then he eventually, he opened the gallery in New York, you see.

MARINA PACINI: So after he finished in Philadelphia he moved to New York?

EMLÉN ETTING: He kept both going as long as he could get the artists, and then the artists pulled out and so then he was left with no artists, because they wouldn't, rightly so. But in the meantime he worked in the Gimbel Gallery, it's true.

MARINA PACINI: Was the Gimbel Gallery part of the Gimbel department store?

EMLÉN ETTING: The Gimbel Gallery was arranged by Franklin Watkins' wife who was a Gimbel.

MARINA PACINI: But was it in the department store the same way that Wanamaker's had an art gallery?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, it was in a department store at Gimbel's. There's an exhibition of a catalogue I have there with a list of the patrons and the artists, and there's another one of the Gimbel Gallery of my, of the people that are in a gallery in New York, my later [work], that's when I moved to New York and got into the Midtown Gallery.

MARINA PACINI: When did your association with Midtown start?

EMLÉN ETTING: These things are all in my publicity notes.

MARINA PACINI: Well, according to this then, the first one that I see listed on here with the Midtown Gallery is 1940. So, well, were all of these galleries: Boyer, Mellon and Gimbel, also representing predominantly Philadelphia artists or were there also...

EMLÉN ETTING: Philadelphia and New York.

MARINA PACINI: And they were dealing with living artists, contemporary artists?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: So then, you were selling works out of these exhibits but you were never getting paid by Boyer. You had a school, didn't you?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: How did that all come about? Was this also out of your studio?

EMLÉN ETTING: No, I had a studio in town. My studio was then in the country. But I had a studio in town just for the classes.

MARINA PACINI: And how often did you teach?

EMLÉN ETTING: I was there every day but I actually taught, like Lhote did, once a week.

MARINA PACINI: And the students were in there working all week long but you only came in one a week to do criticism.

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: How many students did you have?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well it varied. Sometimes there'd be quite a few and sometimes there wouldn't. There were very few people who wanted to study modern methods in Philadelphia.

MARINA PACINI: And you were competing. There were still a lot of art schools operating.

EMLÉN ETTING: Well there was the Academy of Fine Arts, there was... I taught at several of them. I taught at Tyler.

MARINA PACINI: The [Philadelphia] Museum School.

EMLÉN ETTING: The Museum School and the one that was then called the School of Industrial Arts, which is now the University of the Arts.

MARINA PACINI: And Fleisher, well, the Graphic Sketch Club.

EMLen ETTING: No, I never taught at Fleisher.

Tape 2, Side 1

MARINA PACINI: We were talking at the end of the last tape about your school. So, the number of students you actually had at any given time fluctuated a great deal.

EMLen ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: What was the maximum number of students you would have had at one time.

EMLen ETTING: Very few, actually. I would have ordinarily six.

MARINA PACINI: How long did the school survive?

EMLen ETTING: Several years.

MARINA PACINI: Why did you decide to close it?

EMLen ETTING: That all came about around 1960 because I did better by teaching outside at a regular school where there were students and a regular salary. So then I closed my own school. But what I was going to get across (was it around 1960?) the change came. As I recall it was around 1960, that the New York School completely changed. The Whitney Museum annual shows were very interesting and had smaller canvases and then around 1960 all the teaching and all the methods changed. Abstract art came in, revolutionized the work of artists in America, and my method of teaching classical principals was absolutely out. There was no point in going on with it, I felt, because there was nothing that I could teach them. From there on, the way it is today, people glue stuff on a canvas, attach things with an electric wire, use different techniques of supposedly making pictorial affects which are falling apart nowadays, restoration sections of museums apparently were horrified at the bad techniques that students use. Any old thing went – goes still. The canvases are flaking off, falling apart, and they are gigantic. Artists decided that they were that important that they should have canvases 30 feet high.

MARINA PACINI: Now is this the 1960s or the 1940s with the rise of the abstract expressionists that you decided to shut the school.

EMLen ETTING: Around the 1940s right, but it was 1960 that I began to withdraw from it.

MARINA PACINI: So then you did continue your school until the 1960s.

EMLen ETTING: No, I forget when I closed that.

MARINA PACINI: I saw a post card for the school from about '38 or '39 but that doesn't mean the school...I know that it was in existence at that point in time.

EMLen ETTING: I don't recall. I'd have to look that up.

MARINA PACINI: That's okay. Did you teach in a method similar to what Lhote had taught you?

EMLen ETTING: I taught my own adap[ta]tion of it. But those were, and it was all based on, upon what we have been calling classic drawing. The breaking up into cubist elements, and into deformations and all that was very important.

MARINA PACINI: We already have discussed the Philadelphia galleries, into the '30s; we didn't go any further than that. What about, I believe Robert Carlen started in the late thirties, his gallery.

EMLen ETTING: He had a very nice gallery on the same street. I think he still lives on it. It's on 15th Street...

MARINA PACINI: 16th Street.

EMLen ETTING: And he was very enthusiastic, but very temperamental also, and he was very hard to deal with. All the galleries were impossible to deal with. I shouldn't mention that. [Laughs]

MARINA PACINI: I don't think anybody is going to be surprised. I'm sure that there are still gallery owners who are considered difficult to deal with. Well, did you feel there was any change in the 1940s, '50s, or '60s? At what point did you feel that there were—at any point—did you feel that there were a lot of galleries that were supporting the artists and that the Philadelphia scene was supportive of...

EMLen ETTING: Well, the Philadelphia scene was very much attached to the New York scene.

MARINA PACINI: Meaning that you feel that they supported the New York artists better than they, more effectively than they supported the Philadelphia artists?

EMLen ETTING: Oh yes, you did much better in New York. Sell for higher prices and better and more interest. Philadelphia has always been a musical, on the whole, town, though now there are a few very advanced collectors in Philadelphia. On the whole, it's very apathetic compared to New York.

MARINA PACINI: So you're not suggesting then that it was the New York artists came to Philadelphia and sold well. You're suggesting the artists did well by moving to New York and establishing themselves within New York.

EMLen ETTING: Oh yes, definitely.

MARINA PACINI: There were all these important collections of modern art in Philadelphia: the Whites, the Tysons, Earl Horter, but these collections all seem to focus on European art rather than Philadelphia artists...

EMLen ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Can you think of, were there any collectors that supported Philadelphia artists from the thirties forward to today?

EMLen ETTING: Watkins was the most important of that period. There were very few artists too in those days in Philadelphia listed as such, whereas now, there are in the thousands. Everybody that's taken a paintbrush up is an artist instantly in Philadelphia, or anywhere else for that matter, Chicago or elsewhere. In Philadelphia there were, prior to that when I first came back, there was Watkins, and Henry McCarter, Benton Spruance, George Biddle...who had connections of Philadelphia although he didn't live here. He lived up the Hudson. His wife was a Belgian sculptress.

MARINA PACINI: It seemed like all these Philadelphia artists that you mentioned, who were considered the better ones of their generation, all had to support themselves through teaching.

EMLen ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Were there any galleries extant that were able to sell any of their works at any point in time?

EMLen ETTING: Well they sold some, not much.

MARINA PACINI: The only other one that I've been able to find much more than -that I've even heard of is the Dubin Gallery. Did you have any dealings with Hank Dubin?

EMLen ETTING: Dubin? I can't even; it doesn't ring any bells in my memory.

MARINA PACINI: One thing I've told about him is that he was a policeman and that in the 1950s he started and gallery and he represented Philadelphia artists. He was over on, I think it was 13th Street, over near the Historical Society.

EMLen ETTING: It means nothing to me.

MARINA PACINI: Okay. Let's talk about some of the institutions in town. What about the Pennsylvania Academy [of the Fine Arts]? Did you ever have any sort of interaction with the Academy either as a teacher or did you exhibit in the annuals?

EMLen ETTING: No, the people who ran the Academy in those days were great friends of mine, John Frederick Lewis, among others, and they have Etting miniatures in the Academy collection. But I wrote a letter to Frazer, who was then manager of it, when I had been teaching at the Museum [the Philadelphia Museum of Art] the one that is now the University of the Arts, that was then the School of Industrial art, since I was teaching in those places, and I wrote and asked Mr. Frazer, I've forgotten his first name...

MARINA PACINI: Joseph.

EMLen ETTING: He was director of the school, and if they wanted me to teach there, and he wrote back and said that they definitely didn't. They were very adamant that they didn't want anybody from Philadelphia who had studied elsewhere to be teaching there.

MARINA PACINI: That's interesting. I'd never heard that story before. Did you have trouble getting your work accepted in the Academy shows?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, I didn't, I was in several catalogues that they ran in those days, they are in my, as you can see them there. I used to be invited for those.

MARINA PACINI: You were certainly qualified enough to exhibit there; you just weren't qualified to teach there. What about the Philadelphia Museum of Art? Did you have any sort of relationship with the museum itself as distinct from the school?

EMLLEN ETTING: I taught at the museum because I was requested to do so by the man who was then running the School of Industrial Art. His name was Benson, Emanuel Benson, and he asked me to teach at the museum which I hesitated for a while because, what did they call it, the "Menopause School of Art."

MARINA PACINI: So it was not well respected in the thirties?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, it was sort of rich old ladies. Anyway, I taught there for some years. And then Benson, what happened, me moved away, he got a girlfriend and moved to Long Island, and so that was the end of him as the director of that school. I forget what it was called then, the School of Industrial Art, or...

MARINA PACINI: It was the Pennsylvania Museum and School of Industrial Art, I think in '38 it became the Philadelphia Museum and School of Industrial Art, and it becomes the Philadelphia College of Art either in the late '50s or '60s.

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, I first taught there as a student, as a protégé of Watkins.

MARINA PACINI: Now would that have been as early as the 1930s or was that later that you started teaching there?

EMLLEN ETTING: later thirties.

MARINA PACINI: But it seems from what I can tell, that a lot of the Philadelphia artists, respected Philadelphia artists, taught at the museum school and frequently they would teach both at the museum school and the Academy. So you're saying that despite the fact that there were good people on the faculty at the museum, that the students tended to be less serious art students than those attending the Academy?

EMLLEN ETTING: That they were what kind of students?

MARINA PACINI: Less serious, not really having the intentions...

EMLLEN ETTING: You mean the ones at the museum, oh, definitely.

MARINA PACINI: Franklin Watkins, Hobson Pittman, Morris Blackburn all taught over at the...

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Were you friendly or intimate with Carl Zigrosser.

EMLLEN ETTING: Oh yes, we all were. He ran the Print Department. And he made a collection of all the artists, his friends, posters and painted posters for their shows, which I think the museum has.

MARINA PACINI: Did he give, organize exhibitions for all the Philadelphia artists up there in the print department through the museum?

EMLLEN ETTING: He gave all kinds of exhibitions that he got up, and I suppose he must have, I can't recall exactly.

MARINA PACINI: So he was very supportive then.

EMLLEN ETTING: Oh yes, and great friends of all the artists.

MARINA PACINI: I understand that there was quite a circle of artists throughout this whole period who all associated.

EMLLEN ETTING: But everyone doesn't do prints.

MARINA PACINI: Right.

EMLLEN ETTING: Blackburn was a great friend of his, Morris Blackburn.

MARINA PACINI: What about the Art Alliance, were you ever involved with the Art Alliance?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, I was more involved in the old days with the Art Alliance, yes, because they somehow worked out their finances so they had a very nice monthly bulletin and they had more interesting exhibitions from New York. But in the last twenty years it's been plagued with a lack of finances and so anybody who's run it has been at loose ends, tearing their hair out to get enough money to keep it going even. And that restaurant has been sort of a problem as well. It wasn't supposed to have a restaurant. Originally, it was, what was the name of the woman who started it...

MARINA PACINI: Stephenson, Wetherill.

EMLLEN ETTING: Christine Wetherill.

M: From what I've heard, the restaurant is one of the, they can't do away with the restaurant because it seems to be one of the only things that brings money into the institution. They've had a very tough time with it.

EMLLEN ETTING: They've just reorganized it. I haven't gone there since they have, just a few weeks ago. And I hear it's not too good.

MARINA PACINI: So you did have some exhibits there or were included...

EMLLEN ETTING: Oh yes, I had several exhibits there, one-man shows and movies. They asked me to be on the board of it several times and I said I will not be on the board until you get rid of these committees because they are too unwieldy. You waste too much time arguing.

MARINA PACINI: Well, let's talk about some of the people that you've been involved with in Philadelphia, for example Henry McIlhenny who I know you were friends with for very many years. Where did you meet Mr. McIlhenny?

EMLLEN ETTING: Met him when he lived with his mother in Germantown, up the Wissahickon Drive, what do you call that section there—he had a large house. I met him there when he was teaching. He gave a course, I think at the university. He was a graduate of the school in Boston, the famous Arthur Sachs, and he came back to live in Philadelphia, and I knew him, met him socially then and we instantly became great friends. And then I got married and Gloria also got friendly and we stayed that way for the rest of his life. Took trips with him even.

MARINA PACINI: I saw a clipping of an article that you wrote of a trip you took with him to visit some monks—I can't remember if it was in Greece.

EMLLEN ETTING: Athos. I wrote an article on that, illustrated. Did you see it?

MARINA PACINI: Yes I did. From what I read about Mr. McIlhenny he was friends with Joseph Pulitzer while he was at school. Now you painted a portrait of Joseph Pulitzer and his wife, didn't you?

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes.

MARINA PACINI: Did you meet him through Mr. McIlhenny?

EMLLEN ETTING: Well, I met him, actually not, because he married a Philadelphia girl I knew, Lulu, what was her name...You must think I'm gaga, I can't remember these names. Anyway, she was a Philadelphia girl and it was while he was married to her that he commissioned me to do the portrait and then she later tragically died of cancer. And then he married someone else who was an assistant, worked in a museum in St. Louis, and then the picture was removed from the dining room into the cellar since he had a new wife.

MARINA PACINI: Where's the picture now?

EMLLEN ETTING: Or maybe the attic, I don't know which, but anyway, I borrowed it when I had a one-man show at the museum out here, Oh, Allentown, so it was shown here recently.

MARINA PACINI: Did you know Mary Curran?

EMLLEN ETTING: O, Mary Curran, yes.

MARINA PACINI: She was involved with the Public Works Project.

EMLLEN ETTING: Yes, I liked her. She was very active, she was very dedicated to her work.

MARINA PACINI: I understand she had a gallery, the New Students League. Did you ever exhibit there?

EMLLEN ETTING: No, I didn't exhibit there because she was so hipped on doing things for starving artists and I felt as I wasn't starving I didn't, shouldn't rate her group, although I was friendly with her I didn't show with her.

MARINA PACINI: How did you get involved with the Midtown Gallery in New York? Was this the same thing where you just took photographs around?

EMLen ETTING: Yes, did the rounds.

MARINA PACINI: You are still involved with them?

EMLen ETTING: Well, I'm involved with them, except that it was run by Allan Gruskin and his wife Mary, and he died and then Mary took over the gallery and ran it up till two years ago. And then she decided to retire and she sold it to John Payson who sold that big van Gogh because his sister was Whitney. And so, Mary Gruskin still works there actually, but I'm involved with them and I'm involved locally with Jeffrey Fuller.

MARINA PACINI: How often did you get exhibitions in New York through Midtown—was it every other year or every five years...

EMLen ETTING: Well, every five is more like it, yes.

MARINA PACINI: Did you tend to sell works from the exhibitions on a regular basis?

EMLen ETTING: Some more than others. My most successful show was the show called the "Road to Paris" which traced the liberation of France and the bombings in London. I went through all those. I was a French announcer during the war.

MARINA PACINI: In fact you gave the journal that describes your trip to the Archives, it's in the Archives collection.

EMLen ETTING: Well, I didn't give it I...

MARINA PACINI: I thought it was a donation. I thought it was given to the Archives in the 1960s, I mean this was years ago.

EMLen ETTING: I don't recall all that.

Tape off/on

EMLen ETTING: Philip Boyer, the name of the gallery.

MARINA PACINI: Philip Boyer, okay. So the exhibition that you sold the most work from was the "Road to Paris."

EMLen ETTING: Yes, those pictures painted of the story of the air raids of London and the liberation of France, and Paris in particular. I did a recording of all that with Orson Welles which was published and printed, the records that is. But I don't know that I gave, because I hadn't written the book then, I don't think. Juliana Force then comes into the picture because she was a great influence. I met her through a letter from a Philadelphian who married one of the Whitney girls, Barkley Henry his name was, and he gave me a letter to Juliana Force and we became great friends. And she was very helpful to me when I was struggling in New York.

MARINA PACINI: Was she at all involved, I mean did she point you in the direction of the Midtown Galleries.

EMLen ETTING: No, she had nothing to do with the galleries, she had to do with all the galleries.

MARINA PACINI: Right, but I mean did she recommend that you approach Midtown Galleries.

EMLen ETTING: No.

MARINA PACINI: We've mentioned your wife several times in the interview. Do you want to tell how you met your wife and when you got married, and discuss the work you did together?

EMLen ETTING: Well, I met her because she and her brothers moved to America about the same time I came back. So we'd been brought up in Europe and that made, gave us a rapport, and then her two older brothers were about my age and we went to St Georges School and we met there. And then they became dancers, the girls, and ran the Denishawn School in Boston, and so I was interested from the dancing point of view, in drawing studying the ballet and all that. And that's how we came together.

MARINA PACINI: But it was quite a bit later that you were married.

EMLen ETTING: Yes. We were married in '38.

MARINA PACINI: Do you want to talk about the work the two of you did together?

EMLÉN ETTING: Let's see, the work we did together...

MARINA PACINI: You did joint projects where she would write an article and you would illustrate it.

EMLÉN ETTING: Oh well, yes, those, that was shortly after we were married. Henry Sell was then the editor of "Town & Country" and a great friend of hers and commissioned her to write these various articles. One was on Japan, two were on the fashion openings—one in London, one in Italy, and one in Paris—and I covered them all with covers of the magazines at the same time. The Japanese one was very fascinating to do.

MARINA PACINI: Did you do any other projects together beyond these projects for "Town & Country."

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, actually we didn't. We did a few lectures, things as Mr. and Mrs., but on the whole we argued too much on it...

MARINA PACINI: Your wife is also a photographer. When did she become interested in photography?

EMLÉN ETTING: When we first got married. She had her own dark room and she became interested in that and then it branched out into lecturing with it, so that now she's a full-fledged lecturer all with her own slides.

MARINA PACINI: What does she lecture on?

EMLÉN ETTING: She lectured on travel a great deal, and she's lectured on personalities.

MARINA PACINI: Now would these be people that the two of you would have known socially, for example?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, artistically more than socially.

MARINA PACINI: For example, I mean can you give me a name of one or two people that she would have lectured on?

EMLÉN ETTING: She lectured on Henry Mcllhenny, and she gave a fiftieth wedding anniversary, she just, we gave a demonstration/lecture on things we'd worked on together.

MARINA PACINI: I talked briefly to you about the development of your style when we were discussing your years in Paris. In between Paris and today, a nice long span of time, was there any sort of change or development in your art?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, there was a development because I became more adept, I imagine.

MARINA PACINI: You moved into periods, though, where your work became abstract and then back into the figural, didn't you?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, I always did some abstract because I got that from Lhote. And I worked in various styles, which always confuses people, because the idea now is firmly established that an artist is supposed to struggle in the beginning but he's supposed to definitively find his own style. And I've never felt that I would have to be stuck to sticking to one particular style. I didn't see why, I didn't have to since I wasn't making a living desperately from it. But that has always upset people no end because they didn't realize that I did it out of complete sincerity and not out of lack of knowledge of what I was doing. I have always been mentioned by critics in a derogatory sense of having not found myself, my final style, but I don't see why that is a barometer of an artist's qualifications, so that I have always been totally independent and that is why I have painted in so many so-called styles. But on the other hand, if you isolate some of the pictures you can't say that that was a copy of so and so, and that was imitating or influenced by so and so, because they are original in themselves.

Tape 2, side 2

MARINA PACINI: Have you worked in different media, have you made prints...

EMLÉN ETTING: No I haven't because I've always liked the fact that works of art were unique and it's never tempted me, not much anyway, to do prints and things. Maybe I should have, but I didn't.

MARINA PACINI: I notice that you seem to have been fascinated with the sea. You seem to have done many works of sailors, and when you chose to...

EMLÉN ETTING: I did the sailors at the same time as I was doing ballet dancers, because I was working with the Denishawn dancers, my wife's family: her sister, rather, two sisters who ran it, and that gave me the idea of

motion of the movement of the figure, the human figure in motion. And then Newport was very near. That was where I'd been at school, and that was a big naval base and in those days there were thousands of sailors all over the place. That's why I did all that whole work that I did in that period between the wars, because they are so colorful in their stance and their motion, and their uniforms emphasize that. That's why I did those two subjects so much on them because they were things that were important to me at that time. Dancing was, the girls were in it, and the sailors because they were in Newport.

MARINA PACINI: Have there been any other subjects that you've handled...

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, I've done still-life of course, and portraits quite a lot.

MARINA PACINI: Have the portraits been commissioned portraits or have you just decided you were interested in someone and wanted to paint them?

EMLÉN ETTING: Both, except with the disastrous one I told you about with Mary Carter.

MARINA PACINI: Well, let's get into some of the other areas you have experimented in. You did a translation of Paul Valéry's *Le Cimetière Marin*. Now, how did that come about?

EMLÉN ETTING: I admired Valéry's work very much and was fascinated with his poems and I thought I'd translate one of them and I picked that one because it was one of the best ones. It takes place in a cemetery in the south of France near Marseilles, and it's a meditation on philosophical thoughts on life and death over his, Valéry's, mother's tomb, grave, which is why it's graveyard by the sea. And I wrote Valéry and he approved of my translation and he wrote in the book, the, have you ever seen it...

MARINA PACINI: I saw in the manuscript that you mentioned that he sent you a copy that he had inscribed.

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, yes, there's no point in my showing you that. And then I translated, I illustrated, *Kafka Amerika*. Then I did a book on the ballet, the dancers, which goes with what I was telling you about the sailors and the dancers which I did almost side by side.

MARINA PACINI: So you did sort of take advantage of your B.S. in French Literature.

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, definitely.

MARINA PACINI: The other area that you experimented with is film. Now how did it come about that you got interested in making films?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, because I was working in Paris during Cocteau's reign there, experimentation, and he experimented in films, and Fernand Léger did a film called *Entr'acte*, I think it was called. And I became interested in it because of what was going on around me in Paris at the time was so stimulating, and the films excited me. Dali was doing one, two in fact, and Cocteau did *The Blood of the Poet*. And I thought, how interesting it would be if we used the film in a different method. So far it had been used like a novel to tell a story, or else as a documentary and there was nothing else in between, and I wanted to use the film as a poetic medium, to do a poem like T.S. Eliot's poems, and do it entirely visually and that's how I came about to do my film I called *Poem 8* and as far as I know it was the first film that experimented in that as a poetic medium.

MARINA PACINI: Did you meet any of these filmmakers while you were in Europe? Did you meet Léger or did you meet Cocteau?

EMLÉN ETTING: No, I didn't actually. I organized shows of their works. I was the first one to show *The Blood of the Poet* because Julian Levy brought it over and he had a gallery and was a friend of mine and I asked him over for the weekend and we showed it in my garage before he had even showed it.

MARINA PACINI: Do you want to talk a little bit about your first movie, *Oramunde*...

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, that one was more inspired by Pélissier and Melisande but that was worked out by a dancing figure that was tied up again with my dancing series. But the local dancer in that was Mary Binney Montgomery, who had her own dance studio in Philadelphia in those days. She's now Mrs. Wheeler, years later, but...

MARINA PACINI: Which movie was Juliana Force in, was that *Laureate*? There's that wonderful still of her with the...

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, that was done in a poem called *Laureate*, which I've practically never shown and I want to try and get a tape of it and transfer it before it falls apart, to what do you call it, cassette.

MARINA PACINI: Video cassette.

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes. And Poem 8 I'm going to try and get that arranged, too.

MARINA PACINI: Then in 1939 all of a sudden you stopped making films. What happened, you just...

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, the films became so much more exciting that my little experiments were pitiful compared to the films of now, it's all out. It isn't that they do poems yet, but they do the experimentation that has brought the most fantastic results. I go to the movies now and am absolutely bowled [over] with amazement with the marvels that they do in films. I think it is the great art of today.

MARINA PACINI: Have there been any other similar projects that you've ever taken up? You've done this writing, and the films...

EMLÉN ETTING: What I've done with the films, a more recent one called Face Values, that was done to show how frequently it can be that an art of a face can be more realistic than the real one. I mean an artistic creation of a mask can be more exciting than the actual face itself, frequently.

MARINA PACINI: When did you make that one?

EMLÉN ETTING: That's quite recent, oh well, recently. It was shown all over, at the Art Alliance too. There was another one I made, Make Love Not War, which showed the horrors of Vietnam. It was some veteran telling, in a very relentless, horrible voice, all the horrors of it and then the pictures of what was going on in the United States at the same time, very glamorous parties and things, the byplay of the two, the sound and the picture. But other projects, I've always wanted to work with the ballet, but in my day I couldn't because you had to be a member of the union. It was very complicated and difficult to get. So I've done sets for Mary Montgomery, the one that was in my film. Bretheren was the title of it. But I organized a great many showing of films. Some at the Moore College of Art, the Art Alliance...

MARINA PACINI: Were you involved at all with the films over at the Young Men's/Women's Hebrew Association? I understand they were showing avant-garde films in the 1960s, the Arts Council over at the YMHA/YWHA at Broad and Pine?

EMLÉN ETTING: Don't seem to recall all that.

MARINA PACINI: They did a small exhibition of your work, in 1959 I think it was, but, I believe in the sixties they started showing some avant-garde films. Well, it's okay if you don't remember. At this point I've now asked you all the questions on my list and I guess my final question is: Is there anything you want to say to sum up the interview? Has there been some other major event or influence that I haven't specifically asked you about or some final statement you'd like to make?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, the only final statement I'd like to make is that I do feel my only contribution was the fact that I did paint throughout my career in different styles, but as I say it would be hard to say that they'd been painted by somebody else, by imitation of someone else. I think I digested my sources of inspiration, [they] were sufficiently digested to be individual, and I would have liked to have sometime a show of all my things, because there are some of the abstract ones at the end that I did that have never really been shown. That's one for instance.

MARINA PACINI: Well, Jeffrey Full has been exhibiting your work recently. Is he not showing your newer things?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well, he's been more interested in my early work, because he felt at the time it was more saleable since there were fewer artists of that period who were doing that kind of work.

MARINA PACINI: Has he been proved correct; have the earlier works been selling well?

EMLÉN ETTING: Yes, better than he did with the abstract, pure abstract ones, but he's taken the long view on it and he's my favorite agent of the two at the moment now.

MARINA PACINI: Well, it's nice to have somebody in Philadelphia who is close by too.

EMLÉN ETTING: He's branching out so much and he's a live wire and a very constructive one.

MARINA PACINI: Is there anything else you'd like to say?

EMLÉN ETTING: Well I'll think of it when you've gone, of course. [laughs]

END OF INTERVIEW

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