



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

**Oral history interview with Federico Castellon,
1971 April 7-14**

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Transcript

Interview

PC: PAUL CUMMINGS

FC: FREDERICO CASTELLON

PC: It's Paul Cummings talking to Frederico Castellon, seventh of April, 1971 at your house in Brooklyn Heights, right?

FC: No, it's not my house.

PC: It's not your house?

FC: We did have one, but

PC: Oh, you just moved in here though, recently.

FC: Yeah, and we're only here temporarily, as you know. We got this big of an apartment just to see what I had to get rid of before I moved to Europe.

PC: Well, why don't we try and start from the beginning and go chronologically. That I think would be good. You were born in Spain.

FC: On the Isle, that's between Gautahena and Gaunte.

PC: Just want to see how my audio is doing here. What kind of family do you come from, a large family of brothers and sisters?

FC: Seven children, and my mother and father, of course. All nine of us came to this country but in two sections. There were the Moroccan Wars . . . were going on in Africa and my two oldest brothers were coming of military age and my father decided we'd better protect them somehow. He had been over here on a selling trip because he had a small leather factory in Spain and the only country that he knew well was America. So, as he felt he had to send his children away, he sent them here. The wars didn't end and so two more children, two more brothers, were about to be sent over. I was the fifth out of five brothers and two sisters. And he decided, "The hell with this, we're going to lose the family piecemeal. Let's all go." So we all came over.

PC: What years were they, about?

FC: Well, I got here in 1921 and I imagine my two older brothers got here about two years before that.

PC: Well, 1921, you were still very young.

FC: Yeah, seven. I was born in 1914.

PC: So that -- Where did you come -- to New York?

FC: New York City, yeah. We ended up in Brooklyn and stayed in Brooklyn and here I am, back in Brooklyn again.

PC: A sort of big circle.

FC: Yeah.

PC: So, well Do you have very many memories of growing up in Spain for the first seven years?

FC: Yeah. Of course they get a little warped as all memories of children do. When I went back to Spain to see the great plaza where the enormous cathedral was at one end of it, I discovered the plaza was only about one hundred feet in diameter and the cathedral was a local village church, that's all. But we did live for at least a year or two in Barcelona, during 1918, 1919. There were anarchist riots, and I have fairly clear memories of bombings and what not. At one time, two of my brothers and I were going to the movies, were supposed to have been at the movies, and my mother was tearing her hair out and crying, yelling and what not. It turned out the movie we were supposed to be at was bombed and a lot of people were killed and hurt. But we didn't go to the movies, I guess we used the money for buying something and she thought we were dead and here we were alive and we got beaten up for it.

PC: You survived by disobeying. Well, was there . . . did you have some school there?

FC: The school that I went to was a village school, you know. I didn't study anything and those village schools were so enormously disciplined, I sat like the little red school house in America, the one room affair. The very young kids, which included me, sat around the edges of the room with our arms crossed. And if you were a very good boy, they'd give you the schmaltzy religious card which they'd stick in your crossed arms at your chest. That was for our class being good and that was the extent of my Spanish schooling. There wasn't any schooling.

PC: So, education really started when you came here.

FC: Yeah, and I was put into the 1-A and held there because the teacher spoke no Spanish so I was held there for a year and one half until I picked up a little English and then they let me move on.

PC: Well, how was it coming to a new language in a new country, you know?

FC: Not good. I very often attribute my becoming an artist to being a very fine kid and that children are sensitive has hell. Also, they're the worst little bastards in the world and my life was miserable as I remember it as a child here in this country, because I was always known as the little Spanish kid and nobody . . . the implication wasn't pleasant. I was always told that in a manner of rejection and I remember being in the house, oh, for days on end without daring to move out of it, you know, without even going to school, and limiting myself to drawing because I couldn't write. I had no other activities and my mother yelling at me, get out, get some air, play, do something! So I'd go out in the street and just hang around and watch the other kids play for ten minutes and back in the house and drawing again. It seemed the only activity that I could pursue and save my sanity, somehow.

PC: Well, you started drawing at a very young age, then?

FC: Oh, yeah, yeah. I had even gotten several prizes when I was in grammar school, but that I think probably was also due to that bitterness of being a foreign kid again, I don't know. I was determined, "God, they're going to be sorry they treated me this way."

PC: What part of Brooklyn did you live in then?

FC: Way out in Flatbush. Besides being . . . having a leather factory, my father also had vineyards and here he couldn't buy a leather factory. Everything was too big and he went around looking for farms in New York because New York was the extent of his experience and we went up and down Long Island on Sundays, looking at farm properties that he might have been interested in. But they were growing potatoes and products that he had no experience with and it's unfortunate, if he had bought two hundred acres of Long Island, we would have been millionaires today.

PC: Right, right.

FC: But instead, we moved out to what was then considered the country, way out in Flatbush, which was fairly wild. A few blocks from our house we had what we called "the woods." As a young man, well, I remember the blacksmith even, it goes that far back. But he eventually invested in restaurants, because my two older brothers when they came here had started working in a restaurant because they didn't know any English either and, like all foreigners, they ended up doing manual labor when they don't know a language. And they saw that Mr. Childs was pretty close to a millionaire, if not a millionaire, and they told my father, that's what to put your money into. So he put his money into the restaurant business and in two years they had a big auction sale. He was just barely able to buy the house for the family and we ended up in Flatbush.

PC: So, were you . . . ? How long did you live there then?

FC: Well, it seems like forever, you know, when you're a kid the length of time in growing is such an extended period. When you don't know anything, every new experience becomes so wild that your life as a young person seems limitless. It went on forever and it seems that I lived in Flatbush easily equal and double the period since I got out of the Army in '45, that was 25 years ago, which means that I was living as a child in Flatbush for fifty years. It's crazy! But actually I lived there seventeen years because seventeen years later I was off in Spain on a fellowship from the Spanish Republic and eleven years was the extent of my living there. But, you know, it's the nucleus of growth, it's the extreme concentration on art and the loving it as much as I did, and first contacts.

PC: What do you think -- but were your family interested Did you have books and pictures and things like that?

FC: Well, my . . . all my brothers but one had had musical education when they were in Europe, and the one slightly older than I, we were both too young to be sent to study music there and my father and my mother, they didn't know, they were totally out of their element. They didn't know how a family should function in this country so I think we functioned by supplying our barest necessities of roof and eating. That's what they were mostly concerned with and any other functions became so outlandishly foreign to them that they couldn't pursue anything. So I had nothing in the way of musical education. One brother, my oldest brother, used to sketch a lot or fun, never seriously, just for fun, for pleasure and that used to impress me as a kid and probably when I insisted on staying home I did it in imitation of him, I don't know. I remember he had bought himself a box of pastels and to me this was the greatest thing in the world. My God, imagine having a box of pastels! He never offered them to me. I stayed on with pencil and pen, that's all until I was able to get my first materials in school. Then I started drawing. In school I was fortunate as hell in having very sensitive teachers who encouraged me enormously, left me alone when I wanted to be left alone to do the work I wanted to do.

PC: Which schools did you go to?

FC: Erasmus Hall is actually where I got my best encouragement. This gal Virginia Murphy ran the department and she brought in the first modern art I'd ever seen in my life. Up until that, it was all Italian Renaissance and to suddenly see Cézannes and Picassos and everything . . . ! This was back in the late twenties and it was such a great revelation to me. She later became head of the art departments of the New York City school system and I know that she was encouraging enough to, you know, have helped and even before getting out of high school having a gallery and everything because Weyhe Gallery was my gallery in 1933, before I graduated high school. Also, Diego Rivera, I had been introduced to about the same time and he's the one that insisted -- and it was just crazy -- this boy has to study art now. Because I was going to get any kind of a job in 1933 which was the Depression, anything to feed myself. And Rivera was the one that started writing letters to the Spanish government.

PC: How did you meet him?

FC: Through a mutual friend. He had come to New York to do the murals at Radio City and there was a friend of my family who had another friend in a Mexican organization and they knew He knew my family and knew that I was very, very excited about art and everything and he's the one that arranged my meeting with Rivera and Rivera was very kind, extremely kind, and asked to see my work. Ordinarily, you know a little snooty nose comes up to him, loss of reputation, you know, "Oh God, am I involved in this?" But he was very kind, he was very anxious to see my work and asked me to bring it around, which I did. And he said, "Leave it here for a few days, I really want to study it." Which I did. And several days later I went back to pick it up and Rivera said, "Well, I'm keeping these six." And today I wonder. At that time I was very happy. "He loves it enough to keep six; isn't that wonderful!" He said, "I want you to bring the rest up to the Weyhe Gallery. I've spoken to Carl Zigrosser about you and he's expecting to see you." So I brought them up and Carl Zigrosser liked them and he kept them there and that became my gallery.

PC: That was really quick, wasn't it?

FC: Yes. Also Rivera was part of a wonderful disillusion because, you know, I always thought as a young kid that a man, an artist, of great genius, the whole world was going to be knocking at doors and they're all going to be following in his footsteps with autograph albums and everything. And once I walked -- he was staying over at the Hotel Brevoort on Fifth Avenue, lower Fifth Avenue, and we walked all the way up to Radio City on Fifth Avenue. So it's a long walk, you know, and Rivera at that time had had his pictures in the paper and everything and I thought, gee, I'm walking along next to this great artist and I'm sure that everybody's so jealous of me. Nobody looked at me, here's Miss America I'm walking with, nobody cares. So I began waking up, you know.

PC: Well, that was good enough in a way, to find out early

FC: [That they don't be the guy], you accept As a matter of fact, you begin to accept success as a very intimate thing so that in the end you realize success is not in the eyes of your public, success is in your own eyes. If you're not happy with what you're doing, then you're not successful, or if you don't have the illusion that you might be in the next painting.

PC: Well, did you read? Were you interested in literature or anything as a child?

FC: Oh, yeah, I used to write a lot of poetry, I was a Romantic.

PC: What kind of things were you interested in?

FC: In books? Gee, I guess they were almost all either on the . . . no it's earlier than Romantic because I seemed to favor the Elizabethans, although I would go in for Spencer's Faerie Queene and Chaucer and all those It went back . . . I think the thing that gave it romance was age and I think most of my life I've kind of balked at relating to a country or a period in my work. I don't want to become associated with the fact that I'm living this year. I want it more or less timeless and so that, if I've got anything to say, I don't say it in a story sense but it belongs to all, all periods. It's not that I don't, you know For me, I find it best and it's not that I condemn anything other than that. Hell, I love Bonnard and he's a real schmaltzy bourgeois, I think is the word, in pictures, but he's a great painter.

PC: Well, what . . . ? You mentioned art classes in school and things. When was that and what was it about?

FC: They're of very little importance. It was one . . . we had one class a day -- Major Art it was called -- but it consisted of only a forty-five minute period each day and, at the beginning, at the very beginning, I was very interested in even what they called Minor Art. The very first term in high school, we became part We made an art club run by this fellow Otto Nightell who, strangely enough, I met many years later, many, many years later. My same first year high school teacher, I met at Jose de Creeft's studio. I was there one day and this student of de Creeft's came in with an old sculpture -- it turned out to be my old teacher and here I was a professional friend of I was so embarrassed because you don't know how to act. Here's my old teacher, who's now almost my student by contrast because we're both friends. I never went to an art school. I was going to try for a scholarship at the Art Students League and this stuff was also held up by Rivera. He wanted to hold it. It was too late for entry anyhow but when I brought it up to Carl Zigrosser and I sort of told him the story, Mr. Diego Rivera kept them too long. "No, I can't send it up to the Art Students League for the scholarship. What do you want a scholarship for?" "Well," I said, "I feel I should go to an art school." "Oh, for heaven's sake, what makes you think you should go to an art school? Oh, forget it." So, what could I do? I couldn't do anything anyway; it was too late.

PC: Well, that's fascinating that you were, what, about 19 or 20?

FC: 18 at that time.

PC: So you've known Zigrosser forever.

FC: Well, as a matter of fact, I wrote to him a short time ago, oh, a couple of months ago, and told him what my present plans are, to move to Europe. And he answered back saying that he had almost suffered a shock to learn this, not so much the fact that I was leaving, that he could accept, or he prefers that I'm not going to France with any illusions because dealers there aren't any better than they are in America. And he said the shock was due more to the shock that he realized having been in Philadelphia and sticking his nose to the grindstone so much that we hadn't seen too much of each other in the last several years, because Carl, I think at least all through my early years, was my guardian angel. He's the one that, when things weren't too good economically or something, at least sympathized. And I knew that if I had somebody who believed in me, sympathizing and egging me on, that, you know, the fight isn't lost, because otherwise you begin to feel, oh, my God, what the hell is the sense of fighting because of my ego? At least somebody believes in me; it's better to fight for two of us, then. And he was very good, other than Carl Zigrosser, probably the one man that I owe a lot of my recent work to is this French artist, Marcel Salinas, who's nothing really, no reputation. He's a great copyist; he's doing a lot of Picassos now.

PC: Oh, really.

FC: Yeah, Harry Abrams is publishing a portfolio of Picasso lithographs and Picasso insisted that, since he's never had these copied for him, the title page, I think it's 27 or 28 lithographs, or 27 or 28 Picasso lithographs by Marcel Salinas, he insisted that it go on the title page.

PC: Marvelous.

FC: You know, and not only does Picasso like the results but before Marcel was finished, he said, "I've got another big portfolio for you." He's got fifty now that Marcel has to do. But back in '64, I knew that there was something extremely disquieting about my work, and I knew it's not pleasant, sometimes inclined to be a little morbid. And if anybody, you know, anybody's brought that up, I agreed. I didn't try to defend it because . . . by saying, but it's me. I agreed, it's very morbid. And I made an effort to not make it flippant but at least lighten it a bit. I was in Paris, that's when I made this decision in my painting. I don't care, because one individual you can satisfy a little better but when you put out print editions, there are too many individuals in that lot, why don't I make it a little less unpleasant. And I tried with different subject matter and I thought I was succeeding. But too well, the thing began to repel me and

PC: For what reasons?

FC: Well, because I felt, I admire pleasant things, like I said before about Bonnard. I do admire these things and I don't see anything aesthetically wrong with them, so if my things are very morbid or unpleasant, why do I have to be morbid and unpleasant. I do have more pleasant thoughts. Well, I'll see if I can't put those down in my work. And I began making this effort to make my work more palatable but I wasn't having any fun with the work. I would get up in the morning and look at this beautiful blue sky and think, God, why do I have to go to work; why do I have to go to work? And ordinarily I would look forward to it because it's a great escape from everything for me. But in this case I wasn't escaping, I was escaping myself and trying to comply with, you know, external wishes.

PC: What kinds of things did you do to lighten it up?

FC: Well, I thought I was being flippant and this one time when Marcel Salinas came over, I was, they were pulling my . . . I had already done about five prints and they were pulling one of the very big ones of mine called "The Family of Man" and he came over and said, "Gee, that's a beautiful print of yours." I said, "Marcel, please, not a word." He said, "Oh, it's a beauty." "Marcel, please, for heaven's sakes, I don't want to hear about it." And then he realized by the sternness in which I said it that I meant it, he felt, "Gee, I have to impress Castellon with this. It is not an empty little flattery bit, you know. I really mean it." So he began telling me, you know, "There's something beautifully disquieting about your work. When I look at it, I get a sense of personality. I can sense a person who feels certain things, who has a view of life that is totally his own and individual." And he said, "There, you have feelings about life which are very profound and everything." Then I felt, for Christ's sake, he's describing everything that I thought I was getting away from. What is this? So he was right, he was describing what I thought I'd ditched and I decided, well, hell, if I can't make it come out, I might as well join it. So from then on, I began doing what it was in me to do and I loved every moment of it. I looked forward to my work; I wanted to do more and more and more and more and I said, the hell with the public, you know. And most of the time it doesn't know its ass from its elbow. So if they like it, they like it. If they don't, they don't. What am I going to do? So I think I owe that to Marcel, the confirmation of what I am and what I want to do. I was afraid of what I was.

PC: When did that happen again?

FC: 1963.

PC: In Paris. Who did you print with there, generally?

PC: Desjoubert, the lithographs I do at Desjoubert, the etching plates Usually what I do is paint here during the night, I mean paint during the day, work on my etching at night, unless I get suddenly a great excitement about a certain etching. Then I do some during the daytime, but ordinarily the painting is in the day, plates a night and by the time I'm off to Paris to do my lithographs, about once a year, I've finished enough plates to bring with me and leave those at Lacourier or Crommelyuck and in the meantime I'm doing my lithographs at Desjoubert, but I can't afford to do them here. The prices are so high.

PC: Yeah, it's expensive.

FC: It's crazy.

PC: Let's go back to our chronology here. We've got We've covered a lot of territory here all of a sudden.

FC: I know. I felt that since I did want to say that as a . . . you know, one of great, great aids to me in my art work in recent times, Marcel almost measured up, because I had no more Carl Ziggrosser after he went to

PC: Philadelphia.

FC: Not only that, but when you get to be a certain age, you shouldn't have to depend on things of that sort.

PC: Well, I'm curious. At home did you speak Spanish all the time, or did you learn English, or how did . . . ?

FC: No, my mother or father never did learn English. We always spoke Spanish, and I got over my accent purely by accident. I was in high school and there was a very talented kid in the class, Sammy Sherman, who used to do imitations of some of the teachers, and beautifully. And one day I walked into class and he was doing a take-off on somebody and I joined the ring of his admirers and when I felt I should laugh, I laughed. And a couple of people in front of me heard me laugh, turned around and began to snicker and I realized he was doing a take-off on me and my Spanish accent. So I used to close myself up in my room and read aloud and listen and correct it and I eventually got rid of it. I don't know why, because a lot of my friends with accents I think profit by it. If they speak to a class or publicly at any time, everybody keeps a very sharp ear open to see if they can't trip them up somehow, try listening hard.

PC: Well, did you have a lot of friends during high school days, students that you knew?

FC: Yeah. Well, you know, a few neighborhood friends, that always happens. But once it was easy to travel by bus, subway, trolley car, whatever, the neighborhood friends took a back seat. And then you look for somebody whose interests are a little more in common and my neighborhood wasn't interested in art or literature.

PC: But did you go to museums or anything?

FC: Oh, yeah, from early . . . from grammar school on, I have gone to museums and while I was still going to high school I used to go to the Brooklyn Museum Had these croaky classes Saturday morning where they had a model. You came up there with your pad and chalk, rather charcoal, they

handed out rye bread for erasers, which you ate half of, and we drew there. The friends that I developed in the neighborhood, rather not in the neighborhood but traveled to see them, were really high school friends. It was after I was in high school and found people with similar interests that I really developed some of these friends I still have. They're very close friends and it turned out that almost all of them were Jewish friends and from that time on I only feel at home in a neighborhood or a section or a block which has Jewish people on it. I feel there is a community of spirit there.

PC: How did that develop, do you think?

FC: I don't know. I have a feeling that, like the arts and literature and everything else, they've been made sensitive by being slighted all their life, all their past history. People that suffer outrageous slight usually become extremely sensitive. Probably I, as a foreign kid, was very sensitive to the slight; there were incidences as a child. For instance, I'd ring a neighbor's door. They were some kids that I played with once in a while and the mother or the father would answer the door and I could hear their son inside playing with a couple of other kids and I'd say, "Is Johnny in?" "No, Johnny's not home." And I could tell that they just didn't want me around their Johnny because I was a goddamned little foreign kid with his miserable accent, and they thought, ahh, he doesn't talk like us. They didn't want me around. I was very sensitive to that and I have an idea that when you suffer you develop a soul and a soul is necessary to the arts and I think the Jews have gotten into the arts as strongly as they did because they suffered so long.

PC: Well, did you have any intention to go on to school after high school or did you have to go to work?

FC: My greatest intention was to go to art school and then to get a job. Also because it wasn't easy, my father was just a wage earner. Thank God he never lost his job in that period but counting The pay scale of everybody had been reduced to nothing almost. And there were several things. Like I used to work at Sunshine Biscuits during the summer while in high school. I was what is known as an oven man. I even had to forge my birth certificate in order to get the job because you had to be 18 and I wasn't 18. First year I had it I was 15, no 16 and 17. Two years I worked in the hot summer days, taking these huge tins out of the oven and placing them on a belt that could bring them down to one of the lower floors where the gals would scrape all the crackers off the pan and what not. But there was this enormous open hearth and we'd be sweating bullets. We got five minutes rest every hour. My five minutes I'd make a bee-line for that open window, no air conditioning in that period, and breathe in some cold summer air.

PC: Well it was only 85

FC: And one day some guy came over and said, "Hey, like the boss has been watching you, you'd better keep busy." "What do you mean? It's my five minute-rest period." "Don't stand doing nothing on your five-minute rest period. Run downstairs, get yourself some Coke and crackers. Do anything, but don't stand at the window. He's eyeing you." Jesus Christ, I have to work twice as hard on my five-minute rest period, the hell with it, so I stayed at the window. And I fully expected Oh, wait a while, what am I talking about? I did go on working because the first exhibition I had was at Raymond and Raymond Gallery and it was a show of murals and watercolors of stuff and I was delivering -- what is -- meat for a butcher and the butcher wanted me -- the opening of the exhibition was going to be on a Saturday. Well, Saturday was a very important day for the delivery and I told the butcher, "I'm sorry I can't come in next Saturday." "Don't come in at all!" And I tried to explain, "But, my God, I'm opening an exhibition. This is very important. You have no idea." "The errand boy is trying to get a day off. If you don't come in next Saturday, don't come in at all." What

could I do? I took off the next Saturday but, thank goodness, I had colossal sales, one hundred and thirty dollars, at my opening. You know, at that rate I could live on five dollars a week. I could live

PC: A long time.

FC: A year I could live on that.

PC: How did you get an exhibition with them? How did that happen?

FC: It's weird. I did a series of panels, mural panels for the Erasmus Hall, my old high school, and they had been buying a lot of reproductions for the school. At that time they had a bona fide gallery on Madison Avenue, besides being in the reproduction business. And they suggested we exhibit the murals and filled it up a little with small pictures which were my own, which I did, and of course the small pictures got me the hundred and thirty dollars. But I did want to eat and after getting out of high school, I had to A couple of brothers were out of work and two brothers were working. My father was working, so there were three of them maintaining the whole family and also, by that time, we had already gotten the three houses. My father ran three houses. It seems we grew older, we needed more space for all the children and he could no longer pile them, you know, three in a bedroom. And the . . . you know, the three in a bedroom was the limit. So we had to graduate to more houses and, instead of selling, he rented them out. And when the depression came, one house I remember we were still paying . . . still owed more on the mortgage than the similar houses were selling for across the street or whatever. We'd be something like about 15 hundred on the mortgage and they were selling for 9 hundred across the street, exactly the same house. So, of course, my father said, "The hell with it; why go on paying this." And the bank came around and said, "Well, please don't. We'll give you a year's grace; you don't have to pay the mortgage or anything, and we'll drop your mortgage down \$2,000." Banks didn't want to go into the real estate business, even though forced to, and be stuck with all these houses. But my father said, "Absolutely not, that's stupid. Unless you come down \$6,000 and even then I could get the house across the street, so there's no big deal about it." So we eventually narrowed it down to one house again, the first house, all squeezed into the smallest one and it wasn't easy. We had to work while we did this, so when the Spanish government came around and gave me the fellowship, it was a great thing.

PC: How did that come about? I mean . . . ?

FC: Well, I told you Rivera began writing letters. He wrote to Fernando Rodriguez who later became, during the revolution, became Spanish Ambassador to Washington. He was the Minister of Education and eventually the ball started rolling and the thing was very much in the wind and it was granted. However, since I hadn't been in Spain in so many years, I had to spend some months in Spain before I went on to Paris, even though the government realized that for visual arts Paris was far more important. If it had been a literature thing, I guess we would have been in a hell of a mess because I would have been English-oriented and I never felt Well, you know Spanish writers write in Spain. I couldn't write there.

PC: What was it like? That was what, 193-?

FC: '34.

PC: '33, '34. What was it like for you?

FC: I found it extremely exciting. Spain had, you know, been a part of ancient history for so long it, even in that period, they talked about the Pyrenees as being more impregnable than the China

Wall. They thought it was aesthetically In every way the culture was so totally different and all of a sudden the Republic came in and there was this enormous excitement. Spain was being projected into the twentieth century almost immediately. But, of course, the Republic came in in '31, the very depths of the Depression. It couldn't have a good time, I mean, an easy time of it. It would have a hell of a history as it turned out, so that nobody can complain that the Republic was a failure and therefore what happened eventually occurred only because the Republic was a failure. It wasn't a failure, the whole world was a failure. The Republic was doing a little better because they were building the great university city out on the outskirts of Madrid. In the depths of the Depression they had invited all the German refugee intellectuals into Spain. They were doing great things when I was there. Almost every week found another intellectual magazine on the newsstands and I used to buy every one of them. In that period, if you found an intellectual magazine, you were damned lucky so you bought them all. And it was very exciting. The cafés were loaded; they had these cafés, [DeGadufen], which meant "of Gadfest," where intellectuals would gather and they'd have a little string orchestra off the side and

PC: Well, was it, you know, you were about twenty at that time when you went back?

FC: No, nineteen.

PC: Nineteen, yeah. Was it very different from how you remembered it as a child? Or . . . ? It was a quite different place you were at?

FC: Ah, I didn't go back to Madrid, so I don't know. I mean to Barcelona, so I don't know what Barcelona was like. But Madrid was totally different from what I remembered and Paris had all the great excitement of pre-war Paris, you know. The memories of You could see on occasion Braque or Picasso at a cafe and not being ogled by everybody, but just sitting there with a couple of friends. It was very, very exciting because you were living in the period and the land of the Titans at that time, and there was greatness but an unpretentious greatness because it . . . greatness hadn't been spoiled or commercialized to such a degree and that greatness was something that only sensitive people to that sort of thing would accept. They hadn't been made household words, whoever knew that these people were good knew it because he knew, not because he was told.

FC: Constantly by the local newspapers. Well, how much time did you spend in Spain before you went to France?

PC: About four months. I went just long enough to make a show; I had to.

PC: And then you were in France for how long?

FC: About two and one half years.

PC: Oh, two and a half years. But all the time on this fellowship?

FC: Yeah. It was a four-year fellowship but the revolution broke it up. Actually the It wasn't that, because of the revolution. While I was in Europe I lost it. I came back to this country to buy my freedom from military service because That's a weird story. I was almost sent off to Spanish Morocco for being a draft dodger and it wasn't my fault at all.

PC: I mean in what way?

FC: Well, the thing was my native city knew that I was living in New York. They had no idea of my getting a fellowship and living in Paris or anything so they sent a draft notice to New York and here

in New York it kind of looked around for me and looked around for me, and looked around for me. And finally they found out that I was, and where I was living in Paris. So the notice was forwarded on to Paris and I got the notice in Paris saying appear at the military barracks of Almeria the end of September 1935, or say, September 30th or whatever -- and, hell, this was the end of October, you know, I got this thing -- or else you're . . . there are penalties or what not. So I ran off to the Spanish Consul to make them give my explanations and it was closed, it was a holiday. It wasn't Sunday but a holiday. And I thought, oh, my God, I'm really going to get into hot water. So that night I took the train to Madrid to explain the whole thing and I appeared at the military barracks of Madrid with the notice and I told the office in charge there that I was living in Paris on a fellowship, that I had just received the letter, and I hadn't been given any time to make explanations or anything. He said, "Fine, write out a letter and have it notarized as a kind of an affidavit and we'll accept it," which I did the following day. And they proceeded to give me a physical examination and then finally, after the physical examination, the bastards said, "You're getting into the Army anyhow." I mean they disregarded the explanation. But I was willing to play along with it because it would have meant only six months and I'd be back on my fellowship again. So I played along with it and then finally, when we were all through and he was more or less checking me into the Army, he said, "Now you'll have to . . . we'll have to send this to your native city of Almeria and you'll have to wait in Madrid and in about two days we'll have a boat for you to take you for service." And as soon as he said, "We're putting you on a boat for your military service," I knew what he meant. You see, in Spain if you're a normal draftee, you do your military service in continental Spain. If you're a felon, a draft dodger, or any kind of a scum, bing, off to Spanish Morocco for a year, not for six months any more. So I realized in spite of the fact that it's not my fault, he hasn't listened to me at all. I'm being treated as a draft dodger. What the hell was the affidavit for? So I thought very fast and I said, "Well, look, I thought I would use up my fellowship before I was put into uniform, but if this is going to be the case, I'd like to say goodbye to my family in Almeria." He said, "You're going to Almeria to say goodbye?" I said, "It will only take a couple of days, the train there, I'll say goodbye to everybody, have dinner with them and everything, stay over night and come back the following day." He said, "Ah, you report to the barracks in Almeria; they're right on the coast and, you know, you can take the boat to Morocco." So I tore up all my papers and I thought, thank God, that's out of the way. I ran off to the Gasta d'Lafoe where I was staying which was a French residence for French writers and artists and what not, and gathered all my luggage and that night I took the train for France and my heart was in my mouth because, in that period, every ten miles some policeman was coming through and asking for papers, to look at your passport and stuff, where ordinarily they bothered only Spaniards and if, you know, if your passport showed that you were 21, let's see your military papers. You either had to be in service or you were excused from service but you had to show something, like a draft card here. And if I'm stopped, oh God. It must have been the cut of my American clothes or something, but I was saved for the moment. However, if the train had stopped in Nedune, we would be involved in the Spanish customs people, passport people, and everything and I'd be stuck there. However, the train went on to Hendye, across the border. Then it'd be the French police. So now it's only the French that concerned me. I thought, oh God, please let's go on to Hendye. You never knew where the train would start, but this time it stopped at Hendye. Ah, thank God! And then off to Paris and I spent some months in Paris. They . . . It's weird now, the Ministry of State's cultural relations department that gave me my fellowship was perfectly aware of all this trouble of mine but it couldn't step in to help me because it would mean, you know, interfering with another department and everything. So they were very much in sympathy with what had happened and they were the ones that said, "Now look, some time this spring you'd better run home. If you're living in America they can draft you or make it uncomfortable. However, if you're that far away, they're willing to accept two hundred and fifty dollars and you purchase your way out of military service. So you paid two hundred and fifty dollars, buy your freedom from military service and, next September, you come back to Paris and spend the next year, year and one half on your

fellowship." So it was all arranged and I came back to America, I guess it was around May, 1936. But in July, boom, Spain exploded and there was no fellowship, no nothing. I didn't expect there would be.

PC: That's fantastic.

FC: But, also, the horrible thing was that a couple of months later the revolution started in Spanish Morocco, where Franco was stationed. The Republic always knew that, since he had been very close friend of Primo de Rivera, the fascist, that, in order to protect the Republic as much as possible, they had to get him out of the way and they sent him off to Morocco so that he'd present less of a danger to the republic. And that had exactly the opposite result, because he was away from the prying eyes of the Republic.

PC: And he had time to put things together.

FC: Ah. He maneuvered with Mussolini and everything else and nobody knew about it. If he'd been left in Spain at least they would have known what the hell he was doing and could have prevented it all. But, since the war started down in Spanish Morocco, I'm sure that, within a couple of weeks, I would have been shot as an enemy of Franco. This is where it all began.

PC: Well, did you have a Spanish passport still at this point?

FC: Yeah. I was a Spanish citizen at that time; I didn't get my American citizenship until 1943. That was partially because I had to live here five years consecutively and I was still in Spain, and secondly, I was still smarting enormously from what I thought was a treacherous trick against the Republic, with a non-intervention treaty and what not. It was trying to limit the scope of the war to only Spain, which proved to be the stupidest move we or any allies ever did because, if it had come out in the open with Germany involved earlier, they wouldn't have had such a tough time. Every week, every month that Germany got was better for Germany, not for us. And by saying, well, keep Spain in trouble for Spain only, we helped Germany; it wasn't a wise move.

PC: Well, have you been interested in politics or, you know, particularly, or not?

FC: I think politics Not from any political party sense, because I've been interested in politics only from the kind of the humanistic standpoint, only as they affect people.

PC: So there is no real particular activity involving politics, just humanist interest.

FC: Yeah, I have . . . I feel whatever politics I get involved in I take a moral or ethical viewpoint, I think. I'm sure nobody purposely said, I want to be immoral about this, but certain things in politics I've been very strong on Having been a foreigner in this country for so long, nationalisms of all sorts have irritated the life out of me. And flags as a symbol of nationalisms I've been down on. You know, with all this hang-up that's going on today about the American flag, the whole thing is so asinine. It doesn't mean anything. I've always felt, you know, well, whose quotation is it? Patriotism is the last resort of a scoundrel. I felt so much that other people should have come out with similar statements. Like Stevenson, when he was being prodded by McCarthy quite a bit, said some people like to measure their patriotism by their hatred of others, or even the Pope at the U.N. spoke against patriotism as one of the sinful prides of man. I think patriotism as a last resort is when you've got nothing to love or no reason to love something you fall back on patriotism.

PC: Because everybody goes rah, rah, rah.

FC: I can love this country for as many things as it has, but I don't love this country for this country's sake. That irritates me and I think that came about only because I can feel it as a person who never quite belonged. All through my early childhood, I was very, very unmistakably told that off and on, and even in later years. You know, at one time I couldn't leave this country after becoming naturalized for more than three years without losing my citizenship. So that, on the one hand I was told that I was an American citizen, but on the other I was told I wasn't quite.

PC: There was a limit.

FC: Yeah. I was always sensitive to people's limitations of nationalism, and of course that involves me in political thinking and anything that separates one man from another I felt is always hideous. So that when they talk about state's rights or, you know, cutting say Nigeria up into two countries and things like Biafra, I was very much against it when it was so popular to be for it. And even the very fact that the Biafrans were being fed from planes going off from Portuguese Africa and South Africa, I thought, now how can you be pro-Biafran when these two are the only ones in Africa who are assisting them. There's something drastically wrong and then I realized the Biafrans had been the scoundrels before independence and now they were afraid, here I've been knifing you in the back all during the past, now you're going to knife me. And I was telling all my friends at that time, no, Nigeria can't afford to do anything because the spotlight is on her. You'll see, they're starving now but what do you think of any nation that lets its children starve to death and you see all these adults walking around in T.V. newsreels with perfect physiques. Come on. So, but there I began becoming anti-Biafran because, again, it split it up into two countries. In Spain, when I was there, I raved and ranted about the provincialism of Spain, you know. Catalan doesn't speak to the Basques, the Basques to the Galatians, the Galatians to the Castillians and all the way down the line. Nobody speaks to anybody. It's crazy.

PC: And nothing happens.

FC: It's like religions I've been against for that reason too, another element of ridiculous pride.

PC: Well, but coming from Spain you must have had a Catholic background?

PC: Well, it was sort of . . . This is what everybody would like to think. No, there isn't that much Catholicism in Spain. It's a Catholic country, but I think Ferdinand and Isabella, all the so-called public relations in Catholicism was spared. Then my father said he never remembered going to church; my mother asked that she be cremated before she died; that ex-communicated her. I was never baptized so I was really never a Catholic. No, as a matter of fact, Spain, like France, had a hell of a lot of free masonry and free masonry in France and Spain was anti-Catholic, unlike free masonry here. That's why Franco forbade it because he knew that it was very, very strong. Among intellectuals there's hardly anything but free-masonry in Spain. It's not practiced anymore but it's still there.

PC: Well, I think that's the end of the reel. [END OF TAPE SIDE ONE]

PC: Side two. Let's go back to, well, you came back here at the end . . . from Paris in France the end of the mid- . . . ?

FC: No, in the spring, '36.

PC: In the spring of '36 it was still Depression time and everything?

FC: Oh, for many years after that.

PC: Yeah. Well, what did you do after that, when you came back? Did you have jobs and work?

FC: As I told you earlier, I had Weyhe Gallery and I went on painting, and I had an exhibition, as a matter of fact, I think it was the end of '36. And that was my second show at Weyhe and it turned out to be highly successful. My God, for that period it was over a thousand dollars that I made on it.

PC: That's fantastic.

FC: For that period, I thought it was an extremely successful show. My family was relieved to know that I had made it and made it rich. And all my brothers were there. They tried to discourage my going into art by telling me, "Look, we're not going to carry you all our lives. You'd better get yourself a job; we were working like men when we were twelve." And did everything to discourage my becoming an artist.

PC: Was there any family encouragement along the line?

FC: My mother encouraged it immensely; she had always wanted to go in the theater when she was young.

PC: Oh, really.

FC: Yeah. And I think she got a big kick out of my going into art at all, having somebody in the family not doing back-breaking work. But another brother was an accountant and another one owned restaurants. He wasn't doing back-breaking work.

PC: Well, you know, that's interesting that at that time you had an exhibition that was as successful as that.

FC: Well, I think it was.

PC: That was a lot of money.

FC: Even though it was a lot of money, I think it was something like fourteen hundred dollars that it made, which you know, for that period, plus the fact that I was a complete unknown, it was quite a bit.

PC: What was that, prints, drawings, paintings?

FC: No prints. I didn't do my first print until about 1937 and by that time I was already with Weyhe many years. Harry Sternberg, who was a member of the gallery, saw my work and he was stunned. I used to spend as much as three days on a drawing, very complicated, very tight and everything. And he was stunned that I would spend so much time drawing and told Carl Zigrosser one day, "This is stupid, why doesn't he do prints? At least with a print you can put out an edition. With a drawing you've got one drawing, three days of work. What the heck can you sell it for?" He's the one that asked Zigrosser to have me come down to the League and have me do lithographs and my first reaction was, "My God, after all these years I'm going back to school!" Then

PC: Yeah, back to the

FC: I said, "No, that's silly. It's only for the lithographs." So I went down, I did my first litho, but in a dry brush technique, using dry brush, which wasn't totally successful. At that time I was doing a lot of dry brush and India ink drawings and Bill Barnet was Sternberg's monitor and printer. Will printed it

for me and I don't think I did my next print for at least another or a year and a half. The experience wasn't the happiest. But the second one, thank God, made up for it.

PC: Well, how did the second one come about? Since there's such a time . . . ?

FC: Carl Zigrosser is very devoted to prints and I guess he didn't want to accept the fact that I felt my first one was a failure.

PC: So he kept pushing a little bit.

FC: Yeah, he pushed and I think he also wanted to use me on this program called "The American Artist Group Prints." So we did the first one to see, I guess, for his satisfaction, how it would come out and it turned out to be one of my best prints so far. It was "Rendezvous in the Landscape," a woman on a donkey, another peasant, Alameda landscape. And, even for that period, it was phenomenal because the edition sold out in about three, four months and the final prints sold at forty-five dollars. It came out at twelve and went to forty-five in the middle of the Depression and Carl Zigrosser called up, as it was selling so damned fast, he called up George Miller to see if he still had the stones, but he had removed the image so the edition was closed and he couldn't print any more than the fifty, and that was all.

PC: Well, did that get you very involved from that point on?

FC: Yeah. From that point on I enjoyed printmaking and a lot of it is also because, you know, up until that point, as we said, it was a fabulous sale for an exhibition in that period with the prices being what they were. It meant selling a lot of work to make that much money, considering my gallery also got a commission on top of that amount and with printmaking I was able to keep something of me, because we like to be snobbish about the public and its tastelessness and everything else, but, Christ, over a period of years, you look at your painting and you realize they've all walked off with the best, you've only got the things that can't sell anyhow, so tastelessness or not, they always buy the better work.

PC: It's interesting because I looked There's that marvelous book, Picasso's Picasso and I think the same thing is true even with him, you know.

FC: Right. There are no great masterpieces around in that studio.

PC: They all seem to have gotten away.

FC: So you're left with a flotsam and it was pretty nice to be able to save a copy of every print so that you can look back over five years' work and say, gee, five years were justified, I did do some work. But if you look over your painting, you think, my God, why do I even bother to paint? All the good ones are gone.

PC: Well, you really didn't have any teachers or instructors along the line that were important to you, did you, as far as art goes?

FC: No, not in art work, really. As I say, even in high school, in my early years, they tried teaching me and in my later years of high school, probably the last two, they just let me work and left me to myself. And all they did was encourage me or say, "There is a wonderful exhibition at such and such a place." I used to haunt the galleries. At that time, the big galleries were Rosenberg, Valentin, Marie Harriman, Pierre Matisse and, I guess, the Downtown Gallery on Thirteenth Street and ACA on Eighth Street and they were the galleries, And, thank God, Weyhe Gallery, my own gallery, had a

wealth of everything and always so easily available so that I'd go up there Saturdays and take out whole boxes.

PC: Yeah. Well, were there any particular artists whose work you were particularly interested in in those days, either old masters or contemporaries?

FC: Strangely enough, as I said earlier, I began finding out about the modern masters in the middle of my high school career. The old masters My great god, and seemed so then, was Michelangelo. And, I don't know, in recent years I find that as a personality he had this complex of painting demi-gods like Picasso, it kind of again timeless thing. Most of the time I'm attracted enormously to mystics, also Blake was one of my great favorites. So I bridged again a slight gap, Blake to me was almost an extension of the Renaissance.

PC: Oh, really?

FC: Yeah.

PC: In what way?

FC: In that period Because there was almost a mysticism about his work that -- say El Greco. El Greco is the sensitive mystic, like Blake, the sensitive mystic. Michelangelo's the titanic mystic. He dealt in gods and El Greco and Blake in demi-gods. He was more . . . they were more the personal people but spiritually they attracted me. Picasso, as I say, became almost the Michelangelo and people like Rodin became the Blake and the El Greco on the more intimate mysticism. Later on, I think the great moving thing was my revisiting Spain and awakening all sort of strange things that came up, like finding I had a soul, because these memories became real all of a sudden where I had seen them, thought of them as dreams, never really seeing them as dreams but thought of them. All of a sudden I saw that I was moving in a dream because it was an act and I was real and it appealed to me. And my early days, my Surrealism was mostly, I felt, a kind of poetic mysticism. Ah, pure irrationality, and it was really a part of my work. I always meant it as a kind of poetic mysticism.

PC: But you weren't really involved with the idea of the Surrealism, and the . . . ?

FC: No, I wasn't. I was called a Surrealist without ever thinking that I was.

PC: Did you know any of them in Paris? Did you meet any . . . ?

FC: Yeah. I knew Bednal, Cravel I met a couple of times. Vallentinville I met several times, Dali I only met once and in a very fleeting way. But at that period of my living in Paris, in the beginning my French was dismal, I couldn't get to know the French too well. I never became an official part of the group, I never liked belonging to anything. Even in this country I remember in the Depression people who were sounding out politically and finding that, because of my extreme dedication to the Revolution, felt that, oh, you should be a Communist, after all, you agree on so many parts, but I also disagree on so many others and it's only in the area of agreement that people try to suck you in, somehow, and I always liked being an individual somehow.

PC: Well, you were never in a Federal Art Project, or anything like that?

FC: No, I couldn't be because I was a foreigner. The closest I came to it was to be asked to demonstrate lithography at the New York World's Fair in 1939. I only turned thumbs down when they told me I would get a pass to demonstrate only, and I thought I'd be able to use the pass to see the Fair. Oh, nuts.

PC: Get to work, yeah.

FC: Yeah, and you get a pass to work for free, you know, not to look at anything. That's no fun, so I decided the hell with it.

PC: Well, what about . . . ? Well, you showed quite consistently with Weyhe, didn't you? I mean, every couple of years or so there was

FC: Yeah. Sometimes it'd be once a year, rarely once every two years, usually about once every year.

PC: Every year almost, yeah. How long was Zigrosser there?

FC: He was there until about 1940, I think, and I was with them seven years, from '33 to '40. Well, I was with Weyhe a little longer than that, I think 'til the beginning of '42, the end of '41. I had stayed on for only a slight period after Zigrosser left because at the time he left I was up in Yaddo, Saratoga and Zigrosser wrote to me to tell me goodbye, he was going to the Philadelphia Museum. Mr. Weyhe decided not to carry on any work on consignment and by the time I came back to New York from Yaddo, I was the only living artist in the gallery.

PC: Really? Oh dear.

FC: And the Ohganza was still part of the gallery, though he had died and it was very uncomfortable.

PC: It must have been strange.

FC: And Louis Lowenthal at AAA began a slight seduction period. I didn't need much to be seduced. They gave me a couple of commissions for, I don't know, fifteen hundred dollars a piece or something, and, God, in 1941 that was very welcome. So, after doing a kind of design for their kind of sticker where the mailing address went on, I did the drawing for it, of an artist making landscape and the landscape area was where the address went and the name of the people, and they said, "You know, Frederico, because of your drawing on our packages, people keep inquiring about certain things of yours and something in particular." He was able to sell a few things in particular and I'd bring in things. He'd sell them and he finally said, "Look, everybody thinks you're with us. It's very uncomfortable. Why don't you bring it all?" Well, he was selling and Weyhe was not. What was I to do? So of course, I brought it all over, which is bad, once he had it all, he didn't sell.

PC: Really? That's terrible.

FC: I think he was going all-out to seduce me and that that was it.

PC: That's incredible!

FC: That's not the worst of it. Several years later when business turned very good, and I had just gotten out of uniform, I had gone, you know, to visit the galleries and everything and I stepped into Weyhe's freshly out of uniform and he began telling me the cock-and-bull story about, you know, "There were two people that I wanted to keep with me. Adolph Dehn and you, and I wanted to build a gallery around you. Why don't you come back and I'm sure that we can do something around the two of you," and everything. And he knew God damned well it wasn't true, I mean, why tell me this?

PC: He's a very curious fellow. I've only known him for a few years but he seems so to me.

FC: He's a very strange guy with strange moods. Sometimes they're very good and sometimes they're very bad and it's very hard to pinpoint him, because you never know.

PC: But he's been there, he's been there forever, it seems.

FC: He's not young.

PC: Oh my no, he's in his eighties. He has a daughter, right?

FC: A beautiful gal, I wish she had the It's more than imagination, because for his period he was really terrific. He was the one that, like Marie Harriman and Pierre Matisse, had a lot of Picassos and all the avant-garde of Europe and everything, but Weyhe was bringing over all the German Expressionists. I understand he used to go to, well, that I know that he'd spend three months every year in Europe buying but he'd visit Matisse and Matisse had one wall of, kind of a shelf where, as he'd finish an edition, he'd put it there, the next one, the next one, the next one, running down the shelf and as he sold and one or two people, galleries, would ask certain names of things and he would pick out, this one, this one, this one, and send it off to them. Weyhe finally would come on his yearly visit and kind of thumb through every edition just to see about how many things of each he had and he'd say, "Well, I'll give you x amount of dollars for the whole lot," and Matisse would say, "Take it." And Weyhe would come with a boatload of Matisses plus all the other work and, since he'd end up with so damned much work, they all got a standard thirty or thirty-five dollar price on it, it didn't matter what. "Stripped Pantaloons" sold at sixteen thousand lately and that was the thirty or thirty-five dollars.

PC: Yeah, yeah.

FC: Well, even the Gauguins he was selling at ten dollars apiece, the Brittany lithographs of Gauguin. Crazy, absolutely crazy!

PC: Yeah. It's an extraordinary place he used to have there.

FC: Some of the people, I guess, could have been treated a hell of a lot nicer. He likes to take credit for Alexander Calder, having discovered him. Actually Zigrosser fought to keep Calder in the Gallery and fought and fought and fought. Weyhe finally got rid of him and he went immediately with Pierre Matisse. I think at that period, the John Flanagan's Weyhe complained that he would have like to have bought more but the building was old and couldn't stand the weight of all that sculpture.

PC: That's a new one. I've never heard that one till now.

FC: Not only that, Weyhe himself knows that he has two warehouses where he keeps most of his stuff and that his building is insignificant. We never saw that big Gaston Lachaise, you know, the "Floating Woman," in the Gallery; it was always in the storage warehouse until it sold.

PC: But you did rather well there, considering.

FC: Yeah, and I was very happy, very, very happy. And recently I spoke to . . . wrote to Zigrosser and complained about how he had spoiled me for all subsequent Weyhes, that most dealers are such opportunists and so cold and so self-concerned with their own financial success that Because, God, I don't know, the higher your prices go, the worse you're treated and it should be the reverse. It's that people then see they can make a lot of profit and, in their anxiety to make profit, they begin treating you like an item or a product with a price instead of a human being. And I always think, my God, doesn't the day come when they can treat you like a person?

PC: It's always the accounts. Well, let's see now, World War II came along and you went into the Army. Was that a choice or draft?

FC: The worse thing I was drafted but, in spite of protest from the Corps of Engineers and everything, I was supposed to be an artist correspondent stationed in Cairo and making drawings of Montgomery's fight against Rommel in the desert. There was the War Department Advisory Committee with a lot of artists and I was supposed to be part of it. First, there's a civilian I was accepted as a civilian, had signed a contract and everything, and suddenly the draft board wasn't listening to letters from the Corps of Engineers, the office of the chief, general, what the heck was his . . . Rebowl, I think it was. The Chief of Engineers sent letters to my draft board asking that I be deferred so that I can go on my job as an artist correspondent and my draft board refused to listen. I was the only one in the damned group that had these letters who was turned down. I was, everybody was stunned, including the Secretary of the Draft Board. I said, "What happened? This is crazy. You saw my letter; I'm going into the middle of the fighting. I'm not trying to get out of it, you know. What's going to happen if I get into the Army now, or if I do" She knew I'd been turned down. "I'm going to sit on a chair somewhere and do nothing, you know." She said, "Well, you didn't do it the right way. Everybody comes around and complains and complains weeks in advance. You waited too long." I said, "I had to wait until the Office of the Chief of Engineers wrote the letter. I just received it." She said, "Well, you should have asked for these letters before." I wasn't reclassified before. Any way, I was turned down. So I was going to go on the same It finally turned out, on the same assignment as a soldier artist. Jack Levine was a soldier artist on the Ascension Island in the Atlantic Ocean, just wasting away there because what happened was that, according to the contracts we signed, we were not supposed to do portraits because they knew that, as artists we get to head of operations and the local chief, general, or colonel, or whatever, wants his picture done and we'd be subject to everybody's whim. So, under the contract, no portraits. George Biddle went and did Mark Clark, Eisenhower, everybody's portrait, and he was one of the big cheeses on the program and he came back to this country and the connection of Mark Clark and Eisenhower and everybody plus the fact that he was Francis Biddle's brother and Francis Biddle was like burying the Congress at the time. So this made it so newsy, let's publish an article. So Look Magazine published an article giving the whole run-down of the organization, how we were doing it for the Army Archives and everything, or the War Archives or something. Anyway, the Congress thought, what the hell are we doing, running a war or a museum? They got very upset by it and they said, "The hell with it. We're going to cross up these God damned civilians." You know, they were only making three thousand dollars a year and devoting not only all their time to this art work but even going to danger spots. I know of one guy who went and landed on a South Sea island, you know, on the beachhead and spent three days in a fox hole. He said at the end of the first day, his sketch pads and water colors were all floating around in the water because, you know, the ocean water had come in and risen in the foxhole. He said, "In three days you couldn't tell me from the water colors." And this is a big deal at three thousand dollars a year! So, suddenly Congress thought, the hell with this. We're not going to run this kind of a war, and they decided to break it apart. Well, even Eisenhower sent a representative to kind of back our program up and say that, you know, it's worthwhile that we have artists of reputation and everything and it's going to be a great thing for the government in its archives and everything to point to with pride to the future. But they said the hell with it. So what happened, because of the civilians on the program, they broke it up. Now the civilian contracts that the Army held were immediately picked up by Colliers and other magazines and, of course, they were deferred again because they were correspondents and didn't have to go into the Army. And not only that, but they got cushier salaries, they were treated better, everything. All the artist soldiers like me and Jack and some others, we ended up on garbage details, because there was no longer an organization that we were a part of. So we had to float around and find ourselves a little something and that was the beginning of my Army career. I ended up in engineer

publications. Then I got . . . because I had tech sergeant rank, I had to drill troops once a week, in spite of the fact that I worked, my actual work was art work. And eventually the North African veterans were coming back to us and all in limited service. They had a broken arm or a shot-up hip or something, and I had to drill these guys and I had never done anything but sit at a desk and draw.

PC: Oh dear.

FC: And then you had to be tough as a drill sergeant. "O.K. men, I told you I don't want to see nothing but asses and elbows. You're going to police . . . Pick up that butt." How the hell can you tell this to a guy who's been out there fighting in the desert? So I had it and I tried to get into a model-making outfit that was going down to the South Pacific but, because engineer publications had priority, they turned it down. Finally OSS, that my wife worked in, was asked if they knew anybody who would be willing to go overseas on assignment and she knew that I wanted to get overseas badly, so she said, "Yeah, my husband." And she told me about it and I came and joined and she went to Ceylon and I went to China and we both ended up in OSS.

PC: Where did you meet her?

FC: In New York. I was . . . I guess, in 1939 I had just come back from Triuna which were three little islands that Yaddo owned on Lake George. She had seen the studio that I shared with two friends, Charlie Solano, who is a sculptor now, also exhibits at Weyhe and another one, Jerry Charm, who became an art director at an advertising agency. And she had gone to a party in the neighborhood and, as a matter of fact, I think it was Bill Baziot's studio on East Tenth Street, that eventually became Genius Row, when and moved into it. Anyway, there was a whole group of us there at that period. She was in the studio, saw my paintings and she, being kind of romantic about the whole thing, thought I'd be one of these skinny emaciated poetic types and she was curious to meet me. So, once we were having a party and this friend who shared the studio with me said, "Gee, I know a wonderful girl you'll like, Castellano. You've got to meet her." And I protested at first, nobody makes dates for me. But he showed me a photograph of her and I said, "Well, this kind of a date I don't mind." That's how we met. I had just come back from about two months of swimming in lake George, not complaining and everything. She didn't meet her poetic little shrinking daisy of a guy.

PC: How did you get to Yaddo?

FC: That, gee, how did I? All I remember was that I got a letter. They have a very secret organization that makes all the arrangements, I think, I don't know how the hell it was engineered, but it was very welcomed. I got a letter from Elizabeth Ames telling me that I'd been recommended to spend six weeks up there. Would I like it and what would I expect to do up there in that period? I was up there for six weeks and it seemed the six weeks were kind of a trial period, to see if you work out fairly well, you are productive, you are making use of the facilities and you're not getting in anybody's way. Because you know how creative people can be, ye gads.

PC: Well, did they have that same system where you had dinner together every night and . . . ?

FC: Yeah, and you take your pail out at lunch time and, if you want to have lunch with somebody, you make, you know, an appointment at dinner at night, "How's about having lunch together tomorrow?" "Fine." "At my studio or your studio? Well, let's meet over at the lake, or over at the rose garden or something. Fabulous." Then you'd very often get a group of three or four that way. Ordinarily you discuss each other or aesthetics. If there's a problem in the house, it may be each other and I kind of melted into the system fairly well. I found that I could work very easily. Some people were appalled at the heavy, rich, ornate, Victorianism that was there. You know, they

maintained they couldn't work at all, they had to leave.

PC: Well, did you go into Saratoga very much?

FC: Yeah, I was

PC: It was very wild in those days, wasn't it?

FC: Yes, yes. Carmine Street was wide open. I guess I was about 25 that period or 24, but I think Elizabeth Ames thought that I was so young, I was being spoiled.

PC: Oh, she does that.

FC: I know. She's a remarkable gal, she's really remarkable. She has Maybe it's her deafness that gives her an enormous insight into who's really doing things and who is not, but it was amazing the way the wrong people got the notice they deserved. I mean people who shouldn't have been there in the first place got their notes in the lunch pail saying, "I understand you're not working too well and that you're anxious to leave. If you let me know what train you're taking next Wednesday, I will have Mr. Shannon pick your things up." Next Wednesday! I didn't know I was leaving and suddenly But she's amazing the way she lives. There was only one person that I know fought with her and she was wrecking everybody's life. But the night before she was supposed to leave she made it a point of slipping down the grand staircase, breaking her hip and being confined to bed for next month and a half.

PC: What a way to do it!

FC: The hard way, she wasn't doing it the easy way before that. It was weird.

PC: It's all very strange, a lot of people have gone there. They drift in and drift out.

FC: However, she does have a lot of champions. At one time there was some nasty son of a bitch, I forget who it was. He was trying to get Elizabeth Ames kicked out and claimed that she had allowed some Communist to take over Yaddo and I forget who they mentioned as the brains behind the whole thing. Oh my God, what a vicious thing to be doing. And John Cheever and Eleanor Clark and some other people who were definitely beyond reproach on the Communist angle got up this committee and we sent, you know, letters to the, what would you call it, board of directors or something, of the institution saying that the whole thing seemed to be a vicious backbiting, ambitious, selfish scheme on the part of some people, we didn't mention who. And only lately these letters came out of storage and I found a note from Elizabeth Ames thanking me very much, and I thought now, what the hell did I do that she'd be thanking, sending me a thank-you note? It suddenly struck me! Oh, of course, all the people that backed her, championed her cause. The accusations were dropped and she probably got a list of all the people who sent letters and she was thanking them all.

PC: Saratoga's always been an extraordinary place, I think less so as time goes on.

FC: Yeah, it's inevitable that less so than in a place it was a growing In that period it was kind of an oasis, economic oasis, you know, when you're living in the depths of the Depression here in New York and you wanted to absolve yourself of this enormous economic pressure

PC: Go up to the country.

FC: The six weeks were only to try you out. Most people brought guests up there and stayed the entire summer and it was a great bonanza and there weren't that many geniuses around. Somehow in two years, you could run the whole gamut of American genius, while today, you barely touch the surface. If you ask any museum today, we've got five thousand geniuses.

PC: Got a whole index drawer full.

FC: I've become so insensitive to the whole idea of the name "genius." I've always told my classes "Don't be ridiculous!" when they say, "Well, don't you think he's a genius?" I say, "Well, what do you call a genius!" By now I've limited my description of a genius to someone who or by whose existence the whole nature of his area has changed. In other words, Picasso's a great genius, he's a genius become without Picasso we wouldn't have had Kadinsky and a lot of things. If he hadn't existed maybe these would have come about but it's conjecture, you can't tell. But we know they did come about because of his existence and they say, "Well, who else?" Well, Rembrandt, because up until Rembrandt the mean and the ugly was never beautiful. Rembrandt made the mean and the ugly beautiful. The others before him had people in peasant costume, and I think he's a genius. "Well, who else?" I say, "Now you've got me, I don't know." Maybe Mr. Lasco or something, I don't know, because I used to begin by saying, "I know about eight geniuses in the art." There's a whole lot of names that I mention, too.

PC: Have you been back to Yaddo since then or not?

FC: Yeah, not as a guest of Yaddo, I was a guest for Thanksgiving dinner. We went and stayed with Katharine Anne Porter for about six months. She had bought a farm out in Balston Spa, which is near Saratoga and at one time we were going to take over her place because she was coming to New York to write a series of plays. But when the series of plays was dropped she said, "Come out anyway, I've got a car and I don't know how to drive it and I'm sixteen miles from town. I'm totally isolated, I need somebody." So we went out there, that was many years ago. She's living in Washington now. I saw her lately. She still looks wonderful, walks with a cane, a little labored, but she's still very clear.

FC: Well, going back to our chronology again, we keep wandering away from it

FC: I know. Well, everything has footnotes, unfortunately.

PC: Well, that's what gives it the qualities. After you came out of the Army, what . . . you started teaching at Columbia at one point, but what led you to that or . . . ?

FC: Well, there was a three-year period Now, Columbia's a weird thing because that brings me back chronologically to my high school period and I told you about Virginia Murphy having been one of my great sympathetic angels at the beginning. She was a very good friend of Edwin Zeigfield who was the Chairman of the Department at Teacher's College at Columbia and I don't know but she may have spoken to him about that time, about having me come and teach. So he called me up one day and asked me if I'd come and take over a summer course. I didn't take very kindly to We had lunch and I told him that I didn't know that I could and the heat is so abominable that, if it's all right, I would teach without a jacket and he got a little unhappy and he said, "Oh, but wait awhile, nobody knows that you're a teacher," because I was fairly young at that period too, that was 1948 that I began teaching, it may have been '47 when he was talking to me about it, so I would have been in my thirties. For a postgraduate school I could be a student. And he said, "You can take your jacket off once you get in the class." "Well, you don't understand, I don't put a jacket on at all." He said, "Oh, well." That's when he said, "Nobody will recognize you anyhow." I said, "But neither a tie,

no tie either." He said "O.K.," so I began teaching. And I enjoyed it. I never worked so hard in my life because I think the ceiling was 35 students and they had gotten 39 students. It was my first real teaching, and when I got all the class cards, all the students . . . I was the only one in the class without a degree.

PC: What did you teach?

FC: I never worked so hard in my life and I guess the students were aware of it because at the very end I got a gift, a pen and pencil set or some such thing, and I was known as a temporary teacher because either you had to have a full program or you're a temporary teacher. So for fourteen years I was a temporary teacher at Columbia.

PC: My goodness, that's a long temporary.

FC: A long time.

PC: Well, do you like teaching, though?

FC: I enjoy it, yeah. I really do. And everybody that teaches knows that the biggest thrill is to suddenly see somebody awaken under your spell. It's a great thing. I enjoy it.

PC: But you've taught at Pratt and Queens and all sorts of places.

FC: Queens unfortunately was only one semester because I didn't realize I had signed a contract. They got me down for one afternoon a week and I'm willing to teach up to two half days a week, but that's all, and at Queens it was one afternoon a week. Friedenson, who was acting head of the department at that time, I had lunch with many times. I'd arrive before my class, had an early lunch, and go on to my class. And he began talking to me about my duties for the following year, including being given x amount of dollars to start a collection for the college. What I was going to do was have a series of exhibitions with the absolute insistence that when I select the graphic art collection, because they couldn't afford painting, that out of every one-man show we'd definitely buy four prints, whoever it was, for the collection because we'd select him only because he was good enough for the collection. Therefore we had to insure we ended up with it and this seemed to please me because at least I knew that I would be helping the graphic field. Some of the artists would be assisted by this and everything. But then other duties kept coming into it and I thought, how the hell do I do all this on the basis of one afternoon a week? And I finally asked Friedenson about it. He said that, "You signed a contract with us for full-time teaching." Me teach full time! "Oh God, did you pick the wrong man! Never!" I had trouble once, one period I was teaching two nights at Columbia and two days at Pratt.

PC: Oh boy, at the opposite ends of the earth!

FC: Yea, and I'd finish And one of them overlapped, so I'd finish at Pratt and, bingo, take the subway, zing up to 116th Street, quickly over the Chock-Full-of-Nuts, and walk to my class. And I used to become confused; I didn't know whether I was a teacher or an artist.

PC: That subway ride

FC: Yeah, after that experience I decided that a teacher has a kind of subservient attitude about his profession because his class is compromising his ideas. His class is compromising his actions if not his ideas; the school is adding another little compromise to his actions. And as an artist you find that you're almost absolute master of whatever you do, I'm willing to allow one little sacrifice or two

little sacrifices a week but too much is too much. Therefore I became a guy who begins genuflecting too much and then I boost

PC: A little push here, push a little there and pretty soon there's nothing.

FC: So I told him I can't, I can't accept it and he said, "You know it's true, it's part of the school system. There's security galore and there's early retirement and it's only You get three months a year vacation and everything else." And thank God at that time I didn't say yes. And, three months behind me, you know, it was easy to get out of it.

PC: And what did you teach at Pratt? Was that . . . ?

FC: At Pratt it was painting most of the time, then once they gave me a life drawing class and it was a very unhappy circumstance. I just can't In my own work, you know, I've never done anything directly from anything and I felt that an artist is in his head and we're not interpretive, we're creative artists. So life drawing wasn't too happy for me, so Fritz Eichenberg, who was then chairman, gave me something even worse, the History of Graphic Art, a series of lectures and studio work. So we'd begin every session with a lecture and a series of slides on the history of graphic art and then studio work in graphics because Fritz was very strong in the graphic field and he was kind of down on painting and painting classes.

PC: That's interesting.

FC: It was pretty bad to see a whole class go off to sleep until the lecture was over and then, as soon as the lecture was over, work like demons. However, I had to get out of all this between Columbia and Pratt. Columbia I really liked.

PC: Why? Because of the students or the atmosphere?

FC: I think the students. Intellectually they were much more alert and much more receptive and none of them had a genius complex so that you had no walls. Well, Pratt had a good proportion of people, the kids that felt I'm a genius and you're just trying to step in my way.

PC: Oh really, that's interesting.

FC: A lot of them, once you got through to them, they realized you were out to help them because it was a challenge to your ego and we got along fairly well. But it meant fighting, you know, a good third of the year to impress them by the fact that you were there to help them, not to destroy them and with the Teacher's College group, they were really trying very hard to do good and become conversant in the arts, and very few of them had it. But then very few at Pratt had it, but the Pratt kids were younger and more ambitious and they made it later.

PC: They were tuned into the scene.

FC: Yeah, and while the Teacher's College students, although they may have begun doing better work when they got out, when they got away from you, or rather while they were with you, once they got away from you they began to fall apart and they fell back on their securities as teachers. I think primarily it's the same thing that happens in spite of the woman's lib movement and everything and that's that at Pratt. A lot of the female students would be far superior to the male students but the male feeling of "I've got to prove it, I've got to make it" and, you know, "I can't fall back on my looks and marry into money," while the girl always felt that, "well, if I don't do it, I'll marry somebody." I think for the same reason the Teacher's College people, the students there were as

good and many much, much better than my Pratt students. But the fact that they already had a job teaching gave them that sense of security which absolved them of any, you know, responsibility and the Pratt student had already defined for himself what his ambition was, "and I'll kill myself at it," and they fought and they became good. A driving ambition is very important for an artist because it prevents him from being satisfied with very little, makes him work a lot harder. That's why before I said I can very easily live in Spain like a lotus eater, but I have to forget I'm an artist because there's nothing driving me on. There's nothing equal to me and I don't want something equal to me, I want something that I can admire or do more. What I admire a little more may not be as good as mine; that's beside the point. I don't realize what went into his working to do that little thing and I can think, it just flowed out of his finger. He might have sweated ten times more than I did and ended up with a lesser result, but the fact that it's lesser has nothing to do with it. I feel that it just flowed very easily and here I have to work like hell.

PC: Right. Well, let's go back to Louis Lowenthal who you talked about a little bit before. I don't know him, he founded AAA, didn't he?

FC: Yeah, he was supposed to be the boy wonder of the business world at that time and he was making, I think he was probably the first one in America to understand that art could become a good, paying business. Now, everybody is in on it, so we're loaded with Lowenthals. I don't think he was a good thing on the scene.

PC: No? Well, he was a terrific kind of merchandiser.

FC: He was going to make art pay, no matter what it lost in the process, and he did build a kind of empire until he realized that it had its limits. As long as you limit it to the production by your hands and at that period nobody was paying any hundred thousand dollars for a painting, then, as a matter of fact, there was even a Durer painting at that period that sold for six thousand dollars. Because, even though it was called Associated American Artists which of course it still is, but now there's no pretense about it all being American. In that period it was. They had paintings in the back room by other people, Picasso, everybody. Well, the six thousand dollar Durer painting was very cheap, but Reeves was not. I don't think he knew what good art was in the first place, otherwise he would have respected it enough not to destroy it.

PC: He knew what he could sell.

FC: Yeah, what sold and what didn't.

PC: Well, he did a marvelous promotion of magazines and advertising agencies, all sorts of things like that, it seems.

FC: The opportunities were great, I think for If he had done a better selling job of telling people this could bring you prestige. So you've got an arm where the head should be, what's the difference, people will still look at it more. If it's got a head where the head should be, why look at it? That's where all heads are. I mean, if he had done a better selling job, he could have sold the clients on good art. Unfortunately, there was always a middle compromise. The client had to swallow a little harder, he wasn't getting the usual commercial stuff and the artist would have to compromise a little more and do something that was palatable to the commercial man. He called me on jobs where the whole thing was I realized the client wasn't ready. There was one, oh I forget -- some powder company dealing in chemicals or whatever -- and they were going into a series of ads called "D-Day" and what follows D-Day and everything. And for the first ad they wanted not a G.I. but somebody in a well-pressed suit coming over a hill and there's a big sunburst. They said "we want

somebody, the war's over." "Oh my God, but where's the war? It looks like a guy who got up in the morning and got into his natty little suit and just came over the hill and there's the sun." "Well, we can't have any bad images. Everything has to be promising for the future." "Well, fine. Have the sun coming up, but does it have to have these rays? And can't he be in a filthy costume, crawling out from some wreck or another wartime plane?" And finally, the art director took me aside, and he said, "You know and I know, but the public doesn't. We have to pull the public aside." I said, "That's not for me." So I ruined that job for him but I think Reeves See, there was another thing when you're working for Reeves in that period. He was almost too active, too successful. There were times when he got you a good job and the client was all right. But, you know, you had your own work the way you want to do, what you wanted to do. The fact that you had a technique that was applicable to something else was beside the point. At no time was his subject matter the thing that I would have selected for myself. I'd be working on a job and suddenly the phone would ring and it'd be AAA again and, "Hey, Fred, we've got a job that's right down your alley. You'll love it." I said, "I've got a week and a half on this one." "Put it aside; this is even more important. And what is it? And it's still junky. It's more important why? Because it pays more, that's all. So you find you're seduced and then a third job would come. Sometimes, you know, they may tell you these things, but the art director calls you up, how's the job coming? Well, you're not going to tell him Reeves Lowenthal told you to go on to another job so you begin acting like a whore that way and eventually you realize you're becoming a hack, you're an aesthetic hack. So at one point I just stopped doing aesthetic hack work. It was just too much, I couldn't. One of the reasons that I ran off to Europe for two and a half years was to escape all these things. Because, at one point, I began doing sculpture, or . . . no, first water colors, I felt watercolor's not really my medium but I have to do something that really concerns me deeply, that hits close to home. So I do water colors and I do it all morning long and finally lunch would come. Oh, it's lunchtime and I haven't gotten onto the work yet. Well, right after lunch. So I'd go down, have lunch. We had a house here on Pierpoint Street at that time and I'd come up to the studio again and I'd look at the work I'd have to do and then I'd look at what I'd worked on that morning and I'd think if I work about an hour more I could really whip this little section into shape. Oh, what the hell's an hour. So I'd go back to my fine art and work for an hour and then, before I knew it, the day was over. It was an hour, two hours, three hours, I'd start another one because it's too late. When am I going to start working on a commercial thing? And this went on and everything was being delayed so I finally thought, I'd better get off watercolor, I'd better go into a foreign area, completely foreign to me. So I began sculpture and the same thing happened. I had finally about twenty-seven pieces of sculpture, three of them were seven-footers, you know, completely taken out of the commercial field again. And I decided to sell the house, go to Europe and really give it all up. That was one of the sculptures of that period.

PC: When did that happen?

FC: In 1960, about. It's one of the ones that fit in storage and the others were all too big. Some of them were left in the house when we sold it. They were My studio was on the sixth floor; I just couldn't carry it down six flights so I left it there.

PC: Somebody had a surprise.

FC: I don't know where the heck it is. I knew I couldn't bring it down.

PC: Well, Lowenthal left there, didn't he, at some point? Did he sell . . . ?

FC: It's more than that, he was almost forced to The lease was up on the old gallery and I think it was going from something like 25 hundred a month to 22 thousand. It had been, I think, a ten-year lease.

PC: Oh, and everything else in the neighborhood had gone way up.

FC: Yeah, and it was on the corner of Fifth Avenue and 55th Street and it was a two-story, two floors. They rented a huge area and not only had it gone up, it's also that the landlords wanted him out. So he looked around for a house to buy and there were a couple of little things he became interested in, finally decided the hell with it and it has been that attracted to me, so he decided to give it up and then, to the people that were with the Gallery, Sylvan Cole, who was then a very young guy, took over the print end, still owned by Reeves, and Landry took over the painting end. Landry eventually went to Marlborough.

PC: Oh year, Landry was there, kind of a . . . FC; Then he opened his own gallery, and now I think he's with Marlborough or he quit Marlborough.

PC: Moving around again. When did Sylvan come into the Gallery?

FC: I would say he came in, it was after the war; maybe about '47, thereabouts.

PC: Then he's been there a long time.

FC: Oh yeah, and most of the artists that had connections with Reeves were not happy about Reeves. None of us were, even his good friends were unhappy with Reeves.

PC: I think we're going to have to almost stop on that. [END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE TWO]

PC: This is reel three, the fifteenth of April, O.K.?

FC: Yes.

PC: Just to sort of finish off Reeves Lowenthal from the previous side . . .

FC: He would probably be very, very amazed to know that he was very disliked by most artists he handled. Because he always felt that he was doing them a hell of a lot of good. He was making them money and to a commercial man like that making money was of the most interest.

PC: Well, you say he kept piling commissions on everyone.

FC: And if he realized how resentful I was of him and his gallery, he would be stunned. My God, I was making a couple of thousand dollars a week for you or more. But friend, is even worse, (he used to call me that and I'd cringe) you know I made a great deal of money for you. It's like being told, O.K., I give you the whole . . . Broadway Avenue, you can hustle all you want and you either end up with a pack of meat from the customers and he didn't realize this. And I had an exclusive with him on paintings, I couldn't bring them to another gallery. A couple of times, to prove that I could do things on my own of the same type because there was no limitation on the commercial work, I did do a couple of things for Life magazine and it paid better than some things he used to get me.

PC: Well, he was very enthusiastic about having his fine artists do commercial work, wasn't he?

FC: That's right, but they weren't doing fine art for commercial purposes. They were doing commercial art, but by fine artists, which only makes it worse, because they're not used to functioning within limitations that way.

PC: Or other people's limitations or ideas.

FC: I think a slave would work better for a master if he's been born a slave, but to suddenly take a free man and make him a slave, he makes a lousy slave and this is what was happening to the fine artists that he used. They were doing the world's worst commercial work, they didn't If you'd gotten up Picasso, Matisse, Roulat and everybody else has done commercial work, if you want to call illustration commercial work, but nobody says, "Now look, here's a book, follow the story." And if they do their drawings, an art director says, "My God, where'd this little kid come in? I don't remember him as part of the story." Here in this country with the people that Reeves Lowenthal used to get, if you said, well, I like that for the composition, it would be better

PC: That's hard to figure.

FC: You know the volat edition, we don't have to

PC: Who was somebody called Peggy Sullivan?

FC: Peggy Sullivan was a wonderful gal who tried very, very hard to raise the fine art standard, not too successfully and she since We all loved her very much. She's the one that smoothed our feathers down. I was going to her at least once a month and saying, "Peggy, I'm getting out of the Gallery. Get all my things together, I'm getting out." "Oh, Fred, don't talk like that." I said, "I've had it. I just can't do the commercial work." She would say, "No, no. Next week, please leave it for a week. There's somebody interested in your painting, such and such a painting, and I'm sure they're going to buy it." Well, again this is before the war, a little after the war, and if you could sell enough, you could go to Reeves and say, "Stick it all up." But unfortunately you weren't, and we allowed Peggy . . . being a nice person and knowing damned well she was lying but she was so nice.

PC: Where did she come from? I've just seen mention of her name and I don't know her.

FC: I don't know. She had worked for

PC: Was she there long?

FC: Yeah. She was there quite a number of years. She left only because her daughter was growing up to a teenage and she felt that she needed her. She knew her daughter needed her. But she came from a very reputable gallery, I'm not sure, if I said Downtown, or whatever, it may be all wrong, but it was a very reputable gallery that she came from.

FC: Well, when did they kind of drop painting?

FC: Oh, the company that owned the building, I think at that time it was Columbia Broadcasting or Mutual Broadcasting, it's one of the broadcasting companies, owned the building. They either wanted to use the space or they felt the space was worth a great deal more money and they didn't want one gallery handling it all. They wanted to break up the space. We had two floors, huge floors, and they raised the rent, the ten year lease which had just about come to an end and they were raising the rent from something like 25 hundred dollars a month to something like 22 thousand or something. It was a bona fide raising, it was only to get the Gallery out. So Reeves looked around for a building that he might be able to buy, a building, and make one entire operation, because by the time we got out, there were annexes from mailing whatever from the rented place. Reeves thought, if I could get a building, inexpensive enough and a gallery area, I could have all these services within the different floors and he looked. There were a couple of buildings he was interested in but, by that time Reeves I don't think was interested any more in the art business or that end of it with direct dealing with artists.

PC: What do you think his interest in the first place was? Was it purely a business venture?

FC: It proved what a genius he was, I think. No, I think he felt in the beginning there's money to be made and, by God, I'm going to make a reputation out of it and also make a mint at it and everything else. I think he had dreams of building empires. He didn't have any taste though. This is what killed him -- one of the things that killed him, he got really bad groups together. He had names in that period, but his better names would quit. Max Weber quit, some of them died off, and Tom Benton quit. Names that he wanted very badly and people like Grant Wood died and he went around tearing his hair out. Now Grant Wood was a dirty name to most of us aesthetes at that period, now that because of a campy quality is becoming popular again. But at that time I wouldn't have touched him with a ten-foot pole. My goodness, aesthetically, they were nothing and when they It was a hell of a way to get rid of him. You kill a man . . . having him die on you. But we didn't get rid of him yet. Reeves went around tearing his hair and saying, "Oh, he killed, he killed This Gallery is done for. It's done for, it's done for." "Don't be crazy; it's going to improve the image." And by God, in a year or so the image hadn't been tarnished. It had improved and we found that some of the museum people would come around who hadn't come around earlier. Then John Stewart Currey died and he went around the same way, "Oh, we're dead, we're dead." "Don't worry about it." And I think when he quit, if there had been somebody aesthetically oriented to the Gallery who had any power, he had the beginnings of making a successful gallery. You know, aesthetically, we weren't, you know, we weren't any great shakes as a gallery at all. He didn't . . . because he was tasteless, he didn't know how to encourage an artist in doing his best.

PC: Knew that he could sell, maybe.

FC: That's all. But it's so important to have a gallery that, no matter what business is like, where the artist feels gee, I'm accomplishing something great because what I know is good, is very much appreciated by the director or whatever. Jacob Lawrence told me that, you know, when he was with Edith Halpert, he didn't do well at all because he was just beginning more or less in the very early years right after the war. But he said, "It doesn't matter that I'm not doing well, the way she treats me I feel as if I'm something like a demi-god. I feel so great, I feel like a genius and I don't care about the sales so long as I know that these starvation periods and these battles that I'm going through are appreciated for what they are." But Reeves Lowenthal, no matter what you did, if it didn't sell, you were a nudnik and he never cared about quality of work or anything. This is the thing that I hated. That's why I said as a pimp he was perfect, but not anybody that was Why should a pimp praise his girls' virtues? So, if you've got virtues, forget them, you needn't develop your virtues.

PC: Well, it's interesting, because I've only known the Gallery, you know, vaguely, for maybe ten years or something.

FC: They were very successful in a financial way, but it eventually ended up that he was out of fine art and advertising and we discovered, most of us discovered that he had a lot of commercial artists coming in doing jobs. They never became part of the Gallery certainly, but it ran almost as a commercial agency in every respect.

PC: Like an agency.

FC: Yeah, with a respectable front.

PC: What a terrific idea, yeah.

FC: Yeah, nice and weird, but in order to become economically successful he thinks this way.

PC: Yeah, yeah. Well, had the Gallery changed much since Silverman got it?

FC: Oh, yeah, yeah. Well, when he found that he couldn't find a building, he decided to give up the whole business. He had holdings in a car company.

PC: Russ Kraft, yeah.

FC: Russ Kraft. And he decided to work with them. He gave up the painting business to Landry and Sylvan asked if he couldn't take the graphics business and start a gallery with that and Reeves said fine. It would have been almost better if Sylvan had done the reverse because the painting section was not beholden to Reeves at all because Reeves didn't own any paintings to sell.

PC: Oh, I see.

FC: So that all Landry did was carry the contacts but when Sylvan took the graphics section, AAA had an enormous investment in graphics which was lent to Sylvan as Reeves' holdings and that, as a matter of fact, he was both through the beginning with AAA, the old AAA was really Sylvan's on a lesser scale but only as Reeves Lowenthal and it kind of bound Sylvan because the artists that knew Reeves didn't want to go with Sylvan in the beginning. They didn't want any part of the old AAA and Sylvan had to break that kind of prejudice down and then finally when he succeeded he found the situation had reversed itself. Sylvan no longer wanted most of the artists because tastes had changed and yet he felt a certain debt to a lot of the old artists so he kind of did things, commissions, favors and things like that. I didn't help Sylvan at all and at that point it was helping the artists rather than the artists helping Sylvan, whereas in the beginning it would have been the artist helping Sylvan. Anyway, the tables got changed because of And then eventually Reeves sold his interest to Russ Kraft and Sylvan at the beginning used to talk about making it a successful gallery and eventually getting enough money in percentages put aside so that he'd buy the Gallery, but of course the more the Gallery made . . .

FC: The more difficult

FC: . . . the more Russ Kraft decided not to sell and yet Sylvan couldn't buy it without making a hell of a lot of money, enough to get percentages back so that became an impossible situation. Now the inventory of the Gallery is in the millions, I'm sure. Sylvan could never buy it. If he had bought it at the very beginning, if he had gotten a loan somewhere, probably he could have had it for ten thousand dollars because he started with the leftovers, the five-dollar-a-print program, that's about all. The Gallery didn't own anything. They only, they handled living American artists but, outside of the five dollar program, everything was on consignment. Now it's not American anymore and the foreign holdings, like the present [Kahlo] show, he'd never buy it.

FC: It's fascinating because I was talking to a friend of his the other day who said, you know, he sort of now feels that he's getting a little old fashioned. You know, he doesn't handle a lot of very modern things and tastes are shifting rapidly again.

FC: Yeah. He hurdles some of it but, of course, his reputation for goods is for selling it well.

PC: Oh, the price ranges, too.

FC: Yeah. His price range is low as a rule, pretty low, but he has the Jim Dines and Rauschenbergs.

PC: Not a lot though.

FC: Not a lot, but then Jim Dines doesn't put out that much. Well, lately, in the last couple of years, not too much.

PC: In the catalogue, prints of the last ten years and there's two hundred prints. It's a lot, you know, it's a lot.

FC: That comes unpublished. Ye Gods! Editions of the stuff.

PC: Well, it's very interesting, the price thing has always interested me because they have so much traffic, so many things

FC: He can't afford You know, a lot of the things aren't given on consignment by these artists, you have to buy it outright. And he bought that Oldenburg car, you know, that Oldenburg didn't do it all, he used that fund

PC: Yeah, and not it's turning into old spots or something.

FC: He didn't even touch his, he didn't do anything for him and he bought that, I think, something like two thousand dollars. It was selling at three thousand and I think the poor guy sweated bullets until it was finally sold. You know, you get into this field and the price range that they work in. God!

PC: That's right, that's right.

FC: Now, even a Picasso

PC: Oh, he's frightened of Picassos.

FC: And also I think there's several things about Sylvan that don't work well. He's the He's the kind of guy who Like the three things that I did for this Chicago outfit last year, he saw them. Hilda brought them up because they were going down to Washington to my show down there and she was having the Gallery pack it here in New York and sending it off. And Sylvan saw them and said, "My God, why doesn't Fred do this for me?" And he said, "You know, he hasn't not only done anything for us in the last three or four years" Actually it was more than four years, it was about seven years ago that I did my first thing for him, published a portfolio of etchings and that's the only thing. I wouldn't touch him because of a certain way that I'm complaining about. Sylvan, and this is typical in this story, Sylvan said, "Why doesn't Fred do this kind of thing for us?" Well, not only hadn't I done anything like that for him, but I hadn't brought anything lately to him because everything I've done has been on commission and Hilda came home and told me this. "You know," Hilda told him at that time, "Well, Fred is approachable, just get on the phone and talk to him." But Sylvan doesn't like it that way. He wants the typical business man's advantage of letting you know that he wants you and then you wait and you wait until you become impatient, not that you're anxious for it but you're trying to plan for next year. Now does he or doesn't he? So you finally, becoming impatient about your own plans, you may say, "Well, Sylvan, what's with this thing you wanted, those three prints or something like that?" "Well," he'd say, "You know, I was thinking it'd be a nice thing, but I'm a little afraid the present market" And then he's already giving me the squeeze. He wants . . . he thinks that by putting out a feeler, you will come begging to him and he doesn't realize that many artists don't have to beg anymore. It's a guy living in the past thinking that artists will take their dignity, walk all over it and go to him and say please.

PC: Let a nice print sell for fifty dollars.

FC: And what's happening, he was in the position when he started out to make it a real top print

gallery, tops in America, and it could therefore have been tops in the world. But his own schoolishness . . . I've always insisted Sylvan should be like a delicatessen, all over the bedroom in the back, this is how he thinks. He can't think big enough to have a big business. If it's gotten big, it's because the time made it big, not him, and this, you know, it's like if you're born with certain potentials, you try to make the best of them. And here's a guy who actually sat and prevented them very successfully. But he's underrating, he's gone through that with this friend of mine, Chaim Gross, many years ago, many years. About three years ago, about '68, I was going to do this job for Rooton Gallery, "The Mask of the Red Death," and all the erotic . . .

PC: Right, Aquarius . . .

FC: And I knew that I'd be in Paris for quite a while and Fran had been told by Sylvan to prepare a portfolio of Jewish holidays and we all knew that it would sell like hotcakes.

PC: Gold in the bank!

FC: And how! Sylvan wanted badly, the summer before up in Provincetown we were up at Chaim's. We went up with Sylvan and Sylvan looked at the water colors; Chaim had been working very hard on them and it was understood then that the following summer Chaim would be going to Paris to do this portfolio. Well, that winter, Sylvan didn't say a word and Chaim didn't open his mouth either, because, like I told you before, why should . . . Chaim knew this, "Why should I ask Sylvan and . . ." Finally I was just about set to go. I had signed my contract, I was leaving in a couple of weeks and I spoke to Chaim. I called him up to arrange our being together in Paris, not too far apart because Chaim doesn't speak a word of French. And I thought, well, if he comes to Desjoubert to work, I can help him, because nobody speaks fluent English there. So Chaim said, "I don't think I'm going." I said, "What are you talking about, you're not going? What about that big portfolio job?" "Sylvan never said anything about it." I said, "Chaim, I mean, all those water colors and all those drawings and everything. You're forgetting about the whole thing?" he said, "Well, he never mentioned it again." I said, "That's crazy. Sylvan has talked to me about being so happy that I'll be there while you're there because I might be able to help you somehow. I'm sure Sylvan wants them." "Well, he never said anything." So I called up Sylvan and I said, "Sylvan, I thought Chaim was doing that portfolio for you." "You bet he is." I said, "You're the only one who thinks so." He said, "What are you talking about?" I said, "Sylvan, when are you going to get off that big fat ass of yours and hustle a bit? Do you expect artists to keep running around to you? It's your business to get work for your studio. It's an artist's business to work, not to run around like an agent. You're the agent. You better get down there and see Chaim because he doesn't expect to do anything for you." "Oh no, you're crazy, you're crazy!" Well, that night he called Chaim and he obviously talked Chaim into inviting Sylvan and Lidian down and the went. So Chaim was all fixed up. Sylvan had settled all the terms. It was so easy to arrive at, but Sylvan loves to be kingpin enough doing anything and that's what I find irritating. God, even the meanest of or even the biggest guy in the world had to work hard as hell. Why should Sylvan be an exception?

PC: Well, he 's one of . . . really the only three dealers you had long involvements with.

FC: Yeah, yeah. The others I had . . . Incidentally, these tapes aren't going to be issued shortly so I'll be honest. I've had such bad experiences with some, Dintenfuss, I was with for one exhibition and, God, she had the impression that when you brought in work, you gave it to her as a gift. When you had a show, it wasn't bad on sales and I kept after her, one month, two months, three months . . . "I'm not getting an accounting of the sales." "Oh, I'll get to it. Don't worry about it, I'll get to it." And then finally one day, after reminding her, I said, "Look, Terry, I have to pay rent and things like that, meaning it all, you know. stolidly. Well, a couple of days later, there was a check in the mail of two

hundred dollars. What the hell is two hundred dollars for? So I called up and I said, "What's that two hundred dollar check for?" "Well, you said you had to pay your rent." "Oh, God damn," I said, "You want to send me a check for the butcher and the grocer and everything else and besides that the rent is two hundred and fifty, not two hundred." "Oh well, really, I'll get to the account and . . ."

PC: It's very hard for her to give up money.

FC: So two afternoons I spent in the Gallery. She was going to go through her bookkeeping and at that point it consisted of two huge stuffed drawers in her desk where she would take out every damned letter to see if there was a bill or something pertaining to you and she'd get involved in, my God, we never answered this, here, darling, talking to her secretary, we have to do something about this. They want to . . . I don't think we got straightened more than fifteen letters in both afternoons and none of them pertained . . . I kept saying, "Look, I know the bills that went out in my case. Why don't we settle all this right now. You call up the people, you know, who you deal with. You call up the people and find out the debits on my account." "Oh, it's not that easy; it's not that easy. I'll get it done; I'll get it done." The end of the second afternoon, I said, "I've spent two days doing nothing but sitting here. I want all my work, everything assembled, I'm getting out." "Oh, but this is ridiculous, Frederico." "I'm sorry; I want out. I want it all." And she realized she was up against a wall so she said, "Oh God, I'm awfully sorry you feel that. However, how about . . . Can I keep some of your prints?" And like a stupid ass -- she's dishonest about my paintings, why should she be honest in my prints? And I said, "Well, the prints . . . I need distribution on the prints. Yeah, I guess you can keep those." So I took back my paintings. Fortunately, she never sold the prints, otherwise I would have really had a tough time. She kept them in her storeroom. They were clean, they were neat. Years went by. They had all . . . The editions were sold out and, as they sold, the price kept going, climbing and climbing and climbing and I guess it was about two years ago, Sylvan had some guy come to the Gallery with a long list of my prints, a great mass of them and all preceding 1965, all the lithographs of my Paris period which included some of the best things I had done. Some had sold extremely fast and I regretting not having more and they . . . I don't know what the price was the guy wanted for them, but Sylvan showed it to Hilda and said, "Look, Hilda, this guy came in today and he brought a list of Fred's prints. I very much would like to have them because the price is right." And if Sylvan says the price is right, they were giving them away, because I know how tight he is. "However, I feel that Fred should be told about it and if he wants them. However, if he feels he doesn't want to buy them all, I'll very happily buy half of them." And she took home the list. Terry Dintenfass's collection! What the hell, she doesn't own these. I got so mad, boy, I got a hold of my lawyer who, he was going to bring her up on charges of grand larceny. Because here's a stranger to me, a stranger, who came around with this whole collection that I had left with her. So we were going to bring her to court on charge of grand larceny and I called Sylvan and told him about it and he said, "Fred, please don't do anything. I've bought a lot of things from this guy and I would hate to cross him up this way." "You're sure, you're sure, Sylvan, I know where these things have sold and where they haven't and in what amounts, nobody could possibly have that much except Terry Dintenfass." And he said, "Well, please don't do anything about it. Let me call up this guy and get it all fixed up." And he did. Maybe about two hours later, Terry's on the phone, "Darling, how are you?" "Don't darling me, what the hell are you pulling?" "Frederico, I thought they belonged to me." "Come on, you know God damned well you wouldn't pay a penny to purchase any one of them. What are you talking about, they belong to you?" "Well, I didn't know where you lived." "You have Frasconi there, you have Jake Lawrence there, you've got a mess of people who are friends of mine. You didn't know where I lived? How hard did you try to find out? You know my other gallery, you could have asked." "I really didn't know. I just drew a blank and I thought they'd been here so long that they belonged to me." I said, "Well, you've saved yourself a possible jail sentence because I was all ready to go to court yesterday." She said, "That's crazy; that's crazy." So I went down and we finally

... I got finally paid off after what, about three years ago this happened, two and a half years ago, since 1964, about six years, nine years. No, no, no, five years, she finally paid me off. Now, I'm back with a gallery, I guess that I quit with a nasty letter from Paris. This is another thing that's really riling me. I went to Paris last year, I think I told you to do, no, I didn't, it's a very, very good gallery, and I guess I'm trying to find out which one it is because I'll be with them, it got rectified only because of a party that I went to and he was there

PC: Sounds like Fleischman.

FC: How did you know?

PC: I just hear.

FC: You're kidding! God, did you know what Fleischman did to me last summer?

PC: No.

FC: I was doing a -- supposedly a poster for Kennedy graphics.

PC: Oh, that.

FC: I had done a job at . . . I think I told you about the job that I did at Morlot, and this is where

PC: Where?

FC: Here in New York.

PC: No, we were talking about older things.

FC: Oh, well, anyhow I did a job at Morlot here for Fleischman and, Christ, their printers are atrocious!

PC: Everybody says that. Why?

FC: Oh, they absolutely slaughtered me. You should have seen the stone I did and what came off it. It was unbelievable!

PC: What's the problem with the printers there. Because, you know, everybody I talk to says, oh, I did poor prints there and, you know, never again and

FC: Oh, they absolutely slaughtered me.

PC: Where did the printers come from? Are they French, or . . . ?

FC: Yeah, they're French. One of them worked at de Pris, the guy that really did my trial prospect, he's the guy that over-etched my stone. I never allow my stone to be etched unless I'm there. I came back after I finished it and he said, "Well, we won't get to it for" Oh God, that's another thing. It took about two months to finally get that damned thing started and the printing and I like, I'm with it, I like the thing to travel fast because a lot of the work I do while the stone is already about to begin production -- I take out tones, put in tones, I change and make it go through different states, because it seems to need it. But in this case, I came down at a point of time, maybe a week or two later, and my stone has that gum Arabic with acid, it's over a half an inch. I thought, what the hell am I going to do with it? I never saw a stone so gummed up in my life! Well, they

washed it off and it was absolutely slaughtered. Secondly, I couldn't use anything but zinc plates for my colors and it's a very bad commercial zinc they use, no medium tones, everything is black or white, and that butchered me. So then, I hadn't picked up my trial proofs, my artist's proofs on, oh, ten of them by Kennedy's One of them eventually I'll have to take just for it to go through the motions, but the whole thing is such a heartbreak I hate to look at them again. Anyway, he wanted me to do the poster of six hundred for Kennedy graphics and I told him I will never do it at Morlot's because I don't want to be slaughtered this way and he said, "Well, I think I should encourage a good printer here in New York." And I said, "I'm all with you on that, but let's find a good printer first, then encourage him. And on top of it the prices just abominated me, he charged because of the Fleischman connection with Morlot, he charged three dollars a color, where ordinarily it'd be four dollars a color, this was a fair color charge, it was fifteen dollars a print. I asked for a hundred and twenty prints because Fleischman was going to keep the artist's proofs, I would get ten and the edition of a hundred. He printed a hundred and fifty-six and he charged for the hundred and fifty-six. Well, I didn't want this fifty-six. Fleischman said, "Now I don't believe in such big editions." I said, "Neither do I." "Good," he said, "We'll tear up the rest." I said, "Not when I'm paying for that printing." I said, "What are you talking about, tear up the rest. That's thirty some odd at fifteen dollars a print. That's four hundred and fifty dollars you want me to tear up. Don't be crazy. We're selling them." So that's something that wouldn't happen in Paris. Any extras, we usually In an edition of that size they may print five extra, you lose two through errors, you end up with three extras, or say you've got an extra three for your artist's proofs, instead of ten you've got thirteen, but you don't pay for those extra three. They're That's protection, the insurance under the print plan. Anyway, I told him, "I couldn't do it here in New York. I'd have to go to Paris to do it." And Fleischman looked very unhappy. He said, "We can't send you to Paris to do one print. It's too expensive." He said, "I'll do better than that and it wouldn't cost you money, you'll save money." I said, "Really, how come?" He said, "Well, first you want six hundred prints. Here in New York they would all be pulled on a flat bed press, you know, power press. No hand pulling because you don't do any hand pulling in New York for any amount of money." I said, "I'll do better than what Morlot would do here." He wanted five hundred regular editions of the posters here at Morlot on a cheaper stock, not colored but smooth and then a hundred on good paper, all signed. And then I said, "I'll do better than that in Paris. I'll give you a hundred signed on good paper, pulled by hand, minus the lettering Kennedy Graphics on it. We'll have a really bona fide deluxe edition and then the machine ones would have Kennedy Graphics and the difference in the printing we'll divide in half and I'll keep half of it to save and do my work in the other half and save some of the money." So Fleischman says . . . oh, he didn't say fine, there was still a little defense going on and everything and I became a little confused. I was going to go ahead to Paris because I'd gotten in the mean time three other commissions, that outfit in Chicago and several galleries.

PC: That's Sullivan.

FC: However, this came up in the meantime so it had nothing to do with Fleischman at all and I was a little confused on Fleischman. Do I do it? Do I not do it? All this defensive move was So a day or two days before I was leaving I thought I'd better get it all cleared up and I had really raised a storm the previous session, because I was so mad at having been slaughtered by Morlot that, when I went back a second time to clarify it, Fleischman was very, very amenable and making all sorts of advances and said, "As long as I'm locked in, you'll be working at the Desjoubert." I was stunned because before I had said, "I won't work at Morlot, never, not even in Paris because in Paris he only works with machine too."

PC: Oh, really?

FC: Yeah. And I was stunned at Fleischman's, you know, conciliatory attitude and I thought, well,

maybe I'm being silly by being upset and I became conciliatory and said, "Well, if Morlot in Paris gives me exactly what Desjoubert does, with a hundred hand-pulled and the price is right, because you have to bear in mind that I'm going on the difference in price between Paris and New York and the sharing seems in doubt. Then I'll work at Morlot, otherwise it will have to be Desjoubert; well, whichever way you want. So fine, I was secure; he really did want it, it was all set. I got to Paris and I did the first color. Oh, first of all, I found out that Morlot wouldn't touch another job from outside, other than the people that were already working now for three months which put me beyond, you know, in August and it made any other possibility of working with them impossible. Because, first of all, they don't know who I'm there for. So I began working at Desjoubert. I did the first stone, the key stone for the poster and it's one that I eventually gave to Jack Solomon, because I thought it came out a beautiful print. It's called "Portal Romances," this very long haired figure in the center and these doors with things coming into it and rolling through the closets to these rooms in a kind of two walls, that is, a wall coming out here, here an area here and a well here and an area here. There's a door here, there's a door here and the bands at the top, you know, ordinarily where they have that section between the wall paper and the ceiling cleared. I was going to have that thick coming up this way, so this thing was at an angle and that was going to be the poster and I thought it came out very, very good. And I was more concerned about the thing as a print and the poster was secondary and I thought the lettering would fit there fine. So I sent him a proof of the keystone in order to get him prepared for the final which was going to be four colors plus a fifth color for the lettering. And I get a telegram back to please call him and I did and he said, "Look, we've abandoned the poster project. The posters we had done for us have been showing and we just can't sell them. They don't sell well at all, not the prices, that we get for prints, and we abandoned the whole idea because as prints they sell for far better." I said, "Well, where does that leave me? I'm here working on it." He said, "Well, when you get back to New York, we'll do a couple more." I said, "At Morlot in New York?" He said, "I thought we'd have to do this here in New York. They're not that big an edition to do in Paris. If I were to say yes in Paris, what would there be left for us to share on a small edition of a hundred?" I said, "That's beside the point. I'm here now. You made a commitment to me." And he said, "Well, Morlot insisted and he let me have my own way all this time, but I felt that I had to give on some points." I said, "Fine, so I'm your sacrificial lamb. You gave on me." He said, "No." He'd been pressing a little bit and all of a sudden he came at me. So that was the end of the call. I got real upset after the phone call and I wrote back a scalding letter. You know I don't like being part of a gallery whose word means nothing. I could never feel secure because no matter what they said, things might change, turn out different I'm sorry I'm out and only in the last couple of months. I was at a party and the Fleischmans were there, and he cornered me and we gabbed and gabbed and gabbed and gabbed and he said, "I didn't realize you'd be that upset." Because he bought a painting of mine and everything and I thought, you know, he's really being nice, he believes in me enough to have really purchased the painting. However, I did feel that he was the kind of a spoiled rich kid, had no feelings about honor and dignity and everything, not a word would mean that much. And, of course, the difference in Paris and New York in the price would have been more than sufficient because here, with five dollars, fifteen dollars a print, times six hundred is nine thousand dollars. In Paris, Madame Desjoubert gave me the estimate on the whole job with a hundred pulled by hand and it was forty-five hundred francs. That's less than nine hundred dollars. They would have been eight thousand dollars left over and four thousand each, it would have cost him four thousand less, I would more than be able to support myself during that period in Paris and it would have worked out fine.

PC: That's fantastic.

FC: It's crazy! Morlot wants to charge five dollars a print to discourage any new artists coming up there because he's up to here with work.

PC: It's interesting. Everybody wants to find a printer. Good printers are so busy they can't take anybody and where are new people?

FC: And Miller isn't that great. I did a two-color print with him. I was shocked because I brought in, you know, color swatches, brought in colors that showed him the colors that I wanted. He said, "Well, forget those at the moment. Let's pick it out of this." And he brought me a color book, like a paint company.

PC: Oh really? Marvelous.

FC: Nothing like going to a guy and saying the colors I want are this. So you have to choose color number 732 and color number 160, and this is no way to run a fine arts studio. Jesus!

PC: Well, that's what happens, though.

FC: I know.

PC: Well, that sort of leaves the dealers in that

FC: Yeah. But it's one of the things that's encouraging my leaving. Yet Carl Zigrosser in his letter, this recent letter that I mentioned last time, said, "Don't think that the dealers in France are going to be any better. Actually, they're a hell of a lot worse." But I know this, you see, I didn't know it about America, and finding out about it individually, I was in shock. I find it shocking.

PC: Oh dear. Well, I'd like to go back and sort of ask some coordinated questions. You've gotten a couple of Guggenheim grants?

FC: 1940 and 1950.

PC: How did you find them? Were they difficult to get? Did you find them useful?

FC: They were useful all right. The unfortunate thing was the first one, the first grant I got in 1940, the war was on in Europe and I decided, well, to go through the Southwest, see what I can get in the way of material. And I went to the Southwest and it was very moving material and was very touristy for me.

PC: That was what, Arizona or somewhere?

FC: Arizona, New Mexico, California. It was very bad for my art work because, I think I don't understand it, I don't relate to it, because it's not me, it's a farm culture completely. I loved it because it was a new experience but I can't warm up to it in the sense of being so close to it that I can put it into the work. Based on it understanding and There is no understanding, it's picturesque. That's why I always felt that any artist who goes around in search of picturesque places is putting out postcards. It's going to dazzle, but you can't sell anybody on the honesty of it. And almost all the work that I did in that area was packed away, stored away, not being seen.

PC: But in your other work, did the energies and things relate to very real situations?

FC: Yeah. Well, all my work, the very real situation is that, I would say 9/10ths of my work, the situation is in my head, but it's very real because it is there.

PC: I mean in the sense

FC: Of seeing it?

PC: Yeah. You know, metamorphosizing it.

FC: Yeah.

PC: What were the qualities that didn't relate about the Southwest?

FC: It was just so picturesque that I wasn't part of whatever I looked at. It's something that I looked at the way I would a display window; it's something that I couldn't become part of because it's too foreign.

PC: In what way? You know, I'm curious about that.

FC: I can understand the Indian situation and I can understand, you know, the reservations and you have corn . . . Navaho is placed in this horrible thing and everything else. But unless you're part of it and can depict the Navaho in his living as part of the whole problem or the whole story of what the Navaho is

PC: Then it's just traveling around.

FC: It doesn't mean Yeah, it's almost for the same reason that I can't do landscapes too well. I don't warm up to it; I can enjoy looking at a tree and a flower and everything, but I can't get into being part of it. Cezanne had a big beautiful quotation for it. He said, "When I paint a tree I try to feel like a tree." Well, with Cezanne he can feel like a tree, I can't. I can't feel like an Indian either. Though I understand it and I know how a tree grows and it needs water and everything else but I have to feel very close because externals never meant anything to me, even though we're artists and externals as aesthetics are important. As a feeling person I have to go beyond the externals.

PC: To the emotions and the symbols and the

FC: Yeah. And then on the second Guggenheim in 1950, I went to Italy and there I related immediately to the character. The Latin character was so obvious, something that I was born in and then I felt very, very much at home. As a matter of fact I wrote to Carlo Zigorser at that time: this is such a beautiful experience, it's like returning to the womb, you know. I know this place; this is what I've been and I've never seen it. And I was very happy, but I could understand the people, I could understand their living in Italy. So that even the immediate result after having been in Italy looked very Italian but only when I was able to absolve it and I was home for a little while did it begin to feel Italian as all hell, colors got vibrant and wild, the figures got more brittle and broken up and virtually everything else and then it began to feel like a volatile Italian rather than looking like what everybody sees in Italy.

PC: Oh, I see the difference.

FC: Then, it was a little, oh within a year or so it began to feel just right. And it was that period -- 1950 was bad for everybody and here I was on the Guggenheim doing something that I really enjoyed enormously. And we had a big exhibition. Actually within a year after the trip to Italy I had an exhibition at A.A.A. which was then my gallery, 45 paintings in the show. It did miserably, it was much too wild. A.A.A.'s clientele is much calmer. Art News gave it a wonderful writeup but that's about all, it really frightened the hell out of me about the results.

PC: But the idea of grants and things you found useful. I mean it did things for you.

FC: Yeah. Very, very.

PC: National Institute of Arts and Letters.

FC: Yeah. Well, they're a financial institute, an outright gift, so it's nothing more than if somebody came in and bought a painting. But there they don't ask for anything. The honor is great, because you feel, gee, well, you know. At the period that you got the grant from the National Institute, the money was more than welcomed but on top of it the feeling that, you know, your own peers approved what you've done. You never want to pay for a public, but you do hope that you can look to what is a sensitive sounding board and seek approval from it. Sometimes it's (a legally) person that you found such a communion of interests and everything that you suddenly focus attention on. Am I going off, am I going, if that person likes it, no problem. After a while you don't even care, as a matter of fact, you may, you may think this way and if that person suddenly says, "Hmmm, you know, I liked your other colors," you call him all sorts of names. You write him off your list. So I got this attitude, but it is pleasant to know that other artists approve.

PC: What about the, you know, print prizes from various exhibitions and things? Did that have meaning or value to you? Or are they just something that . . . ?

FC: I find they're pleasant little things but it's something I don't pursue. If you become addicted to that kind of thing then you I know of several artists that find out about, you know, fifty million exhibitions in every country for a year. They send to everyone and some of them send the three prize-winning things they've had in different shows. They send the same three, same three, same three all over the place. What the hell does it prove after all?

PC: It's something that I think is in a way peculiar to people who make prints for some reason or other.

FC: Because there are so many of them and prizes are cheap. And the available. Some of the print shows overload and decide a show, there are just too damned many prizes. It doesn't prove anything to get a prize.

PC: Everybody enters, everybody gets a prize.

FC: That's right. They invented You know, now it's gotten so bad that they limited you to no more prizes than once every two years. On the other hand, some of the other places will give you a list which seems a little more logical; these people have already gotten prizes, so try to avoid and so what happens if you've gotten a prize at that exhibition, you don't send for the next ten years because they won't let you win one. It's a stupid attitude about prizes. As I say, it feels nice because they send you money for nothing, I mean the grant from the National Institute which is as selective as the Guggenheim and you feel a little better about that.

PC: It's a different level.

FC: Yeah. No matter what happens, you feel, well, at least you're entitled to a little confidence. Somebody thought it was good enough or something, whatever the career's worth. But the other prizes I think are a little . . . well, there are some that become insulting.

PC: Yeah, they're too much.

FC: Yeah. John Taylor Arms and the old Society, we used to call it the grave digger's society, because after it became First it was the Brooklyn Society of Etchers, then it was the American

Society of Etchers and then again it became the American Society of Etchers, Lithographers, Wood Cutters and Wood Engravers or something. Anyway, at that period John Taylor Arms used to busy himself with rounding up all the prizes for the shows and as I was a counselor of the Association during his lifetime, when he was president. I think he was always president. Anyway at one time he was asked, when you prepare your catalogue for the show, how many prizes he had and he began enumerating them and somebody said, "Well, look, I think I can get somebody to come across with a prize." He said, "Now, look, enough is enough. I could if I wanted, get a prize for every exhibitor, but that's not the point. We have to have some honor attached to this prize and if you get fifty of them, you have a tough time with prizes, you can't give them out." And it's true. Once I was on a jury for the Tiffany grants and I think we were asked to give something like ten thousand dollars, no five thousand dollars in thousand dollar prizes. Well, we were . . . I think we may have agreed . . . Will Barnet was on that jury that year, somebody else, three of us. Anyway, we selected the first prize, there was no question about it, that one is really worth a thousand dollars. But nobody else was worth a thousand, so we began breaking it up into five hundred dollar prizes but we didn't have half enough good artists who merited five hundred bucks. So we decided, well, we'd got that for a thousand. We've got these six selected for five hundred, that's four thousand dollars. Oh Christ, and those . . . Well, let's do this. We'll give two more, more one thousand dollar prizes, so we got three thousand and then we had four supposedly at five hundred dollars apiece, but the last two were just too much. We couldn't agree to give the last two, five hundred dollars. So we decided we'd save Tiffany one thousand dollars this year. We could only give four thousand and we went and announced that we had selected the prize winners but it only came out to four thousand. Hobart Nichols I think was president at that time. He said, "Oh God, that's awful! I wanted to ask you to give out another thousand dollars." "You're kidding! This work doesn't merit. It's so bad, what's left over we wouldn't give a dime to, we just barely made it and the last two are questionable." He said, "Well, we have to get rid of a lot of money because our investments are making so much money that the Treasury Department's going to start taxing us unless we give out more." And we said, "Fine, instead of a fifty dollar honorarium, why don't you give us each a thousand bucks and we'll call it a day."

PC: Did he do it?

FC: Of course not.

PC: He should have.

FC: But that's what happens when you load up prizes. They don't mean anything; there's so many around these days.

PC: Well, do you like jurying? Or has that been something you've done . . . ?

FC: I think jurying is a necessary evil. It's not good, but if we get ten million artists or ten thousand artists, a juryless exhibition becomes ridiculous. There's just too much work. Where are you going to hang it?

PC: Somebody's got to make a decision.

FC: Yeah, you can't fill up an entire museum with an annual show. They do. I mean I like the Whitney but it makes it too much, it takes away from the work. I think the Whitney should make its annual a different selection a year. Every five years they can go back but if you've exhibited one year and the next year you don't and limit it to one floor so that you can even make comparisons of last year's kick against this year's kick. But to go every year and see the same damned show with a

guy who's using pinks instead of greens and the same thing on every damned floor of the place, that's too much.

PC: Well, we always want something new, but there really isn't that much.

FC: I know. Well, today annual shows are ridiculous because there are so many galleries. They're useful only in introducing to certain collectors and interested public new faces, that's all. But they don't put in new faces, they're the same old beat-up ones. So they introduce the over-introduced.

PC: Anyway, I think that finishes this side. [END OF SIDE ONE, TAPE TWO]

PC: This is side four. A couple of questions. You had mentioned before doing that portfolio, the "Mask of the Red Death." Have you done many?

FC: Portfolios?

PC: Portfolios, as literary as that one?

FC: No, not as literary as that one. As a matter of fact, that came out too literary.

PC: It did?

FC: I don't think . . . , yeah. I don't know if you've seen it, the format?

PC: I have, yeah.

FC: The format was so much a book, bound and everything. I was very, very unhappy with the way they eventually put it out. I think it would have been better to have it a little more spaced out. I think it would have been better to make bigger prints so that it could have involved myself, you know, the quality of the print itself. But at the time they did that, that was the first on the project. They were very concerned about every . . . that binding a little upset, you know, on the literary thing; that is, mixing fine art and illustration. That was the first that I had ever done; I hope I'll never do another one. Individually I liked the prints.

PC: How did they pick that one, though?

FC: Well, I picked it, they didn't pick it.

PC: Oh, I see.

FC: I picked it because a lot of my work is devoted to this kind of questioning of what the hell is it all about and to me that was typical of the philosophy that Poe seemed to project. That we try to pose whatever we want, do whatever we want, everything, and therefore the whole game Shakespeare calls everybody an actor on the stage and everything but in the end he has that equalizer.

PC: Right, yeah.

FC: No matter how you try, he's there so your success is so temporal and since life is so temporal that it doesn't mean anything.

PC: Well, did Poe interest you? Or is he just an under

FC: No, he interests me, as I discussed the last time, there is a dark, very dark side to my work and Poe is quite a dark guy.

PC: How about Rédon?

FC: Very much, yeah. Because even then, I think rather out and out, expressively morbid, my work is more, well, it could be depressing because it depresses you; it's more disquieting. But I think I usually try to make it more of a spiritual thing in the sense that . . . Poe depresses me enormously in the sense that his compositions are basically lonely people all the time, rarely puts two people together. He has of course very often but a great bulk of them are alone and he impresses me with the uniqueness of an individual, this kind of floating and trying to find a niche that really isn't there. You have to function within what is there, but none of them is a comfortable niche for anybody. Some people because they're flabby will fit into one part of society, but other people who have an individuality that doesn't give that easily feel it.

PC: Are there other writers that interest you?

FC: There are even some strange writers like William Beckford who interest me, but he's not a popular writer and Rimbaud has always interested me. Baudelaire, the symbolists, poets have always interested me. I think probably . . . Among the younger writers I feel an awareness of each other, of people, too much so that almost as if anybody got off by himself he'd fall apart.

PC: It's very ingrained, as a little friend writes about their little . . .

FC: Yeah, yeah.

PC: The New York School of Poets, oh dear. Well, I was just . . . To go back to the "Mask of the Red Death" portfolio again, you've done series of prints and suites and things?

FC: Oh, yeah. The first one I did was on Ghent, twelve lithographs, etchings on China. That was primarily because while I was off in Calcutta on furlough one time, we had a flood in China and all my drawings, dozens and dozens and dozens of them that were in my tent . . . a We had a bureau which we had made for peanuts, and I kept all my drawings and films in it, you know. Sundays I'd take off in a jeep, go out down the road and make drawings, or out in the rice paddies, or whatever. In the flood that occurred while I was in Calcutta, all my tent mates saved my helmet, helmet liner, carbine, all my G.I. equipment. That was, ye Gods, dispensable as all hell, that they saved. All my art work went off in the flood, so I came back, got out of the Army and decided what happens to all these experiences. And I began remembering some of the drawings that I did, picked twelve, put them into a portfolio form. It's not the best portfolio I've made, but that was the first portfolio series that I did. I guess I did a series of drawings but it wasn't published as a series, it was just kept in a folder.

PC: Do you like the concept of series, suites or portfolios or . . . ?

FC: Yeah, yeah. But I don't think they should have a limit. The limit should be established by the lack of enthusiasm. When your enthusiasm has given out then, you should . . . That's the limit, that's the end of the portfolio. And right now, as I may have told you the last time, I've been involved in this series of portfolios that will be coming out I hope in about a year, semi-annual portfolios of twenty etchings.

PC: Well, you were just speaking about . . . Do you do lithographs and etchings and the whole thing? I mean, don't you . . . I mean all the graphics, not woodcuts?

FC: Not woodcuts. I've tried and I've done linoleum cuts, woodcuts, it's a little too unbidding. With me it's almost a slight battle with it. Also, I find that with woodcuts the aesthetic nature of the medium itself is a thing that, you know, projects itself on the artist and if the artist Even a bad artist can look good in woodcuts.

PC: Oh, it has a certain dramatic quality.

FC: It has. I mean it's To make a woodcut most effective means to make the woodcut make itself. Now you can't say that about an etching or lithograph. If you don't bring something to it, you're lost.

PC: Well, a lithograph can become very painterly.

FC: Oh, yeah. Yeah, it can. It's the artist responsible for The nature of the wood is so, that it's a beautiful thing, I think the German expressionists probably appreciated that more than anybody else. They knew the nature of the wood and they allowed it, they allowed the wood to determine it's own quality, unlike say the Durers and the others who Fortunately the artists didn't do the woodcutting itself otherwise they would never had evolved that way, the artist not being involved in anything more than making drawings, painting, whatever, did whatever they pleased and let the craftsmen cut the wood, otherwise we may have had Germany expressionism as early as the early fifteen hundreds.

PC: That's interesting.

FC: I know.

PC: Well, just kind of an oblique question. You never had an interest in abstraction, did you?

FC: My first exhibition was an abstract show.

PC: Oh, really?

FC: I thought, until the critics wrote it up as a Surrealist exhibition, they were abstract forms. I had no realistic forms, no actual figure was involved, but the fact that they had volume and they were in space, was the thing that when criticized made it Surrealistic, but I thought it was abstract. I was only eighteen at the time so I wasn't supposed to know too much about it. I enjoyed it. A lot of the paintings at that period also started out not seeming anywhere and some of them I liked very much. And I've even thought of making big versions of them, because they're extremely small, they're very small.

PC: Of little paintings.

FC: Yeah. I would say 9 by 12 is about the limit in size.

PC: But you know it's interesting we always keep coming back to Surrealism and things like that. I don't think in the first tape you said much about your interest in any of the Surrealists or, you know, that kind of theory or any of that sort of thing.

FC: Mostly because Surrealism is a thing that I've been called without really feeling, without feeling a Surrealist. It's I feel that Surrealists have devoted themselves a little too much to what they claim is irrationality and I think maybe the psychiatrists are right that it isn't that irrational; that there's a definite

PC: Awareness going on there.

FC: Not even aware. Well a lot of them purposely make it irrational in order to shock. They themselves have said, if you shock a little, you'll awake an interest. The thing never does. However, I don't think you can, it's not the shock of intellectual shock. I think it should be emotional shock. I don't think any of Goya's etchings, you know, or paintings, then his portraits, shock because of irrationality but the shock because of it's beauty. Van Gogh I find enormously moving and very shocking in the same sense. And it's almost as if to say that if you're a poet, don't worry about writing good poetry, if you recite it loud enough it will be effective.

PC: Be a good, I mean for a politician.

FC: Well, I think that the Surrealists, they went a little too far out in developing irrationality for shock while something that interested me was the given, some sort of meaning, it's like one of my later lithographs that I did last summer for Solomon, I called "Walking the Tightrope on a Starry Night" because I didn't want to give the whole feeling about it. But I had a very definite feeling about it. It's a woman walking a tightrope and this whole bunch of people sitting on . . . kneeling on the tightrope and the gesture of the hand, yeah, and it has meaning to me, it has the meaning of a public falling for anything.

PC: I see. Well, but does that mean that there's a kind of story or something in some of the . . . ?

FC: Some of them have . . . , some of them develop, the other that I call "Blessed are the Meek For They Shall Have the Right to Dream," is giving this poor non-hero a place in the sun for the first time. He's involved with this lush nude and on his lap she's sitting and all the aspects of Renaissance religions beyond him, you know, as if he's become projected into a starring role and here's our meek little nothing and the meek little nothing to me is the thing that counts. I'll put him in a good place for once. So, you know, I can't give a whole story on these things because I don't think art should have whole stories that you follow in sequence. But I think a certain aspect of it, if it's there, I don't think you should fight to eradicate it nor at the same time in these titles do I want to do anything more than barely hint of the story because I don't want people to suddenly look and say, ah, ah, now I see, now I see, now I see the beginning of the story. This painting I call "Voyeur in the Garden," and the voyeur is mixed in with the flowers. It's actually God, he's a voyeur looking in on, what else, why should he get so jealous and say get out of my house, doing that kind of dirty thing in my garden. It's that he couldn't join the fuss.

PC: Oh, I'm very serious about the titles on the pictures and prints because they're, you know, in some cases, very straight or they're very terribly exotic it seems.

FC: The titles?

PC: How do they evolve?

FC: The titles, as I say, I usually try to hint at what I mean by the whole thing. Also, at the beginning when I was doing slightly neo-classical drawings, not paintings that I can think of, neo-classicism in painting, I once picked up a list at the Gallery of the things had been listed . . . of things I had brought in and they had given titles to them. There were plenty of titles like "Two Figures," "Man and Woman," "Old Man and Woman," "Old Woman and Man." Holy God, if somebody should ever come and say, "Hey, I like that painting of yours, the 'Two Women.'" And I've got five hundred on two women, so I decided I would decide

PC: Individually?

FC: I would decide myself what this is to be called. If somebody said, "Hey, I have to have your print, 'The Traveler,'" I would have known immediately which one it is and there's no question about it.

PC: So it's an obvious identification.

FC: Yeah. It's an identification but also the projection of what my

PC: But do the titles come afterwards or during the making or when?

FC: No. After, after, at the very end. Very often I discard a whole mass of titles, because I select the one that fits it most, or not discard completely, but I'll cut down

PC: And change

FC: Yeah. And get synonyms and

PC: I'm always fascinated by how people title their things, because I have one friend who keeps a list of titles and when he finishes a series of paintings he gets out the list, which might have taken a year, you know, to track them down, and he looks at the list and says, "Well, I'll pick a title to that one." But people said, you know, "But what do they mean?" And he said, "No, they're just titles, you know. I thought of that one in the bus one day and I wrote it down."

FC: Well, in the early stages of doing surrealism, at that time I guess I was too young and I was perfectly happy to shock a bit once in a while. I hated titles and I would invent them, and I would invent even words and one painting I had was called "The Perelovation of Mamosited Satats." and it was on exhibition and people never mentioned the meaning of it. Outside of the end of There's nothing else that's a word. There is no such word as perelovation and mamosited satats.

PC: Oh, it sounds very scientific or something.

FC: I know.

PC: Anthropological.

FC: Nobody bothered to find out what the hell I talked about it. It proved one thing: that people don't really know what the hell titles are about and, as I say, I do it mostly for my own clarification. I would prefer not to have titles on anything but that's if I never exhibited, or let anybody see anything. I don't have to see my work to identify, now the title of my work to identify, but if I don't see my work then I have to identify somehow, and when it leaves me I'm going to be able to identify it.

PC: And it's difficult to talk about five things if there's nothing to differentiate with. Well, is there a great relationship between the paintings and the prints? Do they go back and forth or are they separate?

FC: There used to be. There used to be a great difference between them. Now they've gotten very, very close. I used to have what I considered in the older days my more normal ideas and those I could do in my prints, my more normal, I have normal ideas. I couldn't because it was hard enough selling one print but it would be presumptive as hell to make an edition and, you know, when editions hang around too long you destroy them. If I had to destroy one after the other, I would have

done the other. I had to allow the more normal things for the public which are the prints and now, as I say, it doesn't matter. As a matter of fact, the public is one the other side, prying the artist. We discussed that once with, I forget, it was Adolph Gottlieb, it was a conversation. He was very upset by what I said. We were teaching down at the Pratt Institute and one time in the cafeteria we were talking about how the public had changed. In the old days, you know, just think of it when the impressionists were working here. The collectors, critics, the whole public, totally against the artists and here we have today, where the museums, the collectors, the public and the press are in favor of the artist changing and becoming more modern. Isn't it great the change that took over the public? And I said, "It's presumptive of you to think that the public, and the museums, and the critics and all have changed. We may prove that we're all wrong, don't presume. You paint like you feel you want it, but they may be wrong again and we're wrong with them. It may mean a little painter we may have never seen or heard of in the studio is going to be the great genius of tomorrow. I never have any faith in the public, I mean they'll go anywhere."

PC: Whichever way the wind is going, yeah.

FC: Anyway, he got very upset, he wanted to believe that everybody was right.

PC: Well, do you find, though, that ideas and images will occur and appear say in paintings and in prints, or back and forth, or . . . ?

FC: Yeah, they're not too constant but they do appear and reappear sometimes.

PC: I mean, you don't say, do a painting and then do some prints that are related.

FC: Oh no.

PC: There's no back and forth like some people have.

FC: No, no. I don't have the time to do all my ideas. It's driving me crazy. That's why I think I'm doing these portfolios. It is supposed to be, as I say, semi-annual portfolios, twenty prints in each, that's only forty prints in a year. Ideas shouldn't be hard to come up with for that but I've already got a hundred and thirty-five of them finished. It's putting down, you know, on copper ideas that otherwise I have to throw away because I don't have the physical time in which to do it. I tell myself because I'm doing If I weren't involved in this apartment I'd be doing them right now. I tell myself that I'm not, you know, throwing away any ideas because I'm putting them all down and maybe I'll use these as versions for the bigger prints, because these are small and a lot of them are a kind of description of the miniature print. They're so small, two inches square, but I know damned well that when I get to do a bigger print, I'm not going to look over these old things and say, hey, I'll do a version of that, because there'll be so many goddamned many ideas up there that I'll have to begin selecting it. Ordinarily when I'm working on a painting, it takes a little longer so I'm not that involved in conceiving new things, but in Paris, when I'm working on my prints and in a good period, I'll do twenty, twenty-five in a short period of a summer. Very often I'll finish a print tonight at the hotel. In the evening after dinner and everything I'll come back and begin thinking, parading all the ideas that have come, what happened to that other idea I had that I was conceiving? Can't remember it, but these are two good ones, these new ones. And then finally I fix on one idea and I have general composition assume itself in my mind. The following day at breakfast, knowing that I'm going off to Desjoubert to start a lithograph, I begin focusing in on the same idea that I had decided the night before that I wanted and the idea, this kind of tonality here is lighter and I see it kind of waving itself, stopping a bit here at the top, breaking off here and there, this figure involved here, that little thing there and it begins to grow, then I finally begin at Desjoubert. I have breakfast and focusing in on a

detail of the conception, the new stone is brought up very fresh to me and, all of a sudden, I think of some good thing and everything disappears. It's a new thing all of a sudden, so I try to project any idea that I had and the things begin to change, the stone is changing them.

PC: So you don't do sketches or water colors as preliminaries.

FC: I don't do any drawing any more. I don't have the time for it because

PC: You go really right on the stone or right on the canvas and . . . ?

FC: No preliminary drawing. The only time that I did preliminary drawings in recent times, even the whole Poe thing, the sixty lithographs and some of them are very complicated, I don't think I had more than two sketches, quick sketches for it. I don't do any. As a matter of fact, the erotic side effects of the job started only because I didn't do any sketches. Roton had written to me while I was working and asked me to save all my drawings and everything. He wanted to have a series of exhibitions around the country to sell the book and I wrote back and said, "I don't have any preliminary drawings." As soon as I looked at the stone I began inventing a thing and I worked directly that way, so the only thing that I have other than the job was, at that time, very mildly erotic, you know. There are so many textures and semi-abstract the effects that it wasn't really realistic, eroticism, in part it loosened me up a bit after the doing and being involved with the blackness and the darkness of Poe. And I had done that to two stones already and I said, however, "Don't worry about it because those we clean up as soon as the trial prints are pulled." And I got a call from Roton, "Don't clear up any erotic prints, we want them." I said, "What are you talking about?" "You know we want something that's really erotic."

PC: He was very enthusiastic about it.

FC: I know. He said, "Well, it doesn't matter, we want them." I said, "But they'll cost you more money." "Well you're doing them anyhow, aren't you?" I said, "You don't think . . . you're selling them, aren't you?" "What do you mean?" They expected a gift because they were there. "Oh, no, I'm sorry, we're sharing this." "How much do you want?" Shoot, I don't know, and out of the blue, in that case a black spot in the sky, came I said, "Seven thousand dollars more." And he said, "Well, wait a while. Don't touch it." And he sent somebody off to Paris to look at them and I said, "Fine." But I regretted it. It was much too cheap. Eventually they put out, I think they called it an edition of eighty or ninety, seven-five of seven hundred and fifty dollars. Well, even sixty, or say, at a thousand dollars, would be sixty thousand dollars and, you know, it's . . . My God! I gave it away in the end anyhow. Jesus, but it was my fault; they surprised me by asking me for a figure immediately and I didn't know.

PC: You know, that was a good idea, you know

FC: Yeah. In the original very quick sketches, only about an hour apiece, that later on I thought, Oh, if it's going to become public without some decency and thinking about it.

PC: Well, do you have an interest in eroticism? Because I notice you have things in your collection you've talked about at other times.

FC: I guess I have. I've not done any of it. The Roton thing is one, I remember one of my first shows at Weyhe the, I forget her name, she's the art critic for (P) and the newspaper, Anne . She began writing about the deaths and everything.

PC: Oh, my goodness.

FC: Yeah. She used to write criticism on art. We had an early morning interview following the opening of all my exhibitions and, in the review she gave of it, she said, "Castellon looks as if he'd blush at his own work." I didn't think it was erotic, but obviously she did and I thought it was perfectly normal.

PC: I didn't know she ever wrote about art; that's interesting.

FC: Yeah. You know I don't do any of that kind of work. As a matter of fact, the last thing that I did was only done because of the lithographs. This friend of mine, Peter Peholm, another artist, talked about, well, there are two of us, you know, gabbing about our work, decided we'd do an erotic alphabet and we did etchings, thirteen etchings apiece and a self-portrait. And I realized that was the only time that I did preliminary drawings because there you're limited to a composition of a letter and a limitation imposes something that has to fit. Therefore, I began working for the first time on preliminary sketches of prints. Half way through the job, I hadn't finished more than about five letters and I thought, God, what luck Pete and I sharing this job, I would never be able to go ahead with twenty-six letters in eroticism. I had gotten it all out of my system by the time I reached the thirteenth letter. I regretted doing the work at all; it was just too much.

PC: Has it been printed?

FC: Yeah. It's printed and only the deluxe edition has the self-portraits. The later edition is not out yet; it's coming out, I guess, in May or June. The printer will finish it.

PC: Who's publishing it?

FC: We are, Pete and myself, yeah. I decided on that, even the semi-annual portfolios which will be coming out in about a year, August Brown of A.A.A. was here and saw the preliminary first states of 135 of them and he got very enthusiastic. He told Sylvan Cole about it and Sylvan asked Hilda if I wouldn't let him see them. Well, I thought it was to see them and I brought them up one time when I was going up to the Gallery. I let him see them and he began telling me, "Well, Freddy, I don't think we should do it for six years because of" Sylvan Cole also calls me Freddy and, ye God, at my age that kills me. Anyway, he began telling me it shouldn't be more than three years because six years, My God, how much, and he began . . .

PC: Assuming.

FC: . . . assuming totally what we should do and I said, "Sylvan, I don't know what you're talking about. You're not publishing this, I'm going ahead with the project exactly as I planned it. I had hoped, you know, you saw it because you told Hilda you'd like to see it and I brought it up to show you, but I wasn't trying to sell it to you. However, I had hoped that, since it is a big distribution job, two portfolios a year for six years, that you would handle the distribution on it and, of course, give you a cut, naturally like everything else you get up here. But I want it understood you would be only on the distributing end. It would be like things on consignment, I'm the one that's publishing it. So if you want to come in on it, fine, but I mean my only hope with you is distributing the thing and I've decided, like the Milton job, you have no idea to motivate me and then, hey, get out of this thing." It's crazy and yet, if they had . . . if they had shown The first upset was they never showed me a dummy of what they were going to do with it. I would never have allowed them to do what they did, in bound small format and everything. I was very upset with the whole thing. They asked me, after it was done, "How do you feel about it? It's too late to start to change around." I said, "Oh, it's fine." What do you do? I wash my hands of the whole thing. So I thought from now on I do my own publishing and I'm the one that says everything from beginning to end. Like I told Sylvan, "If you

want to come in on it, fine. But I'm the one that's putting it out." If they want to come in on it, fine, but I'm the one that determines everything. And that's why when we put out that alphabet, Pete and I, I had had it and we put it out ourselves. And I'm going into this semi-annual thing, putting it out myself. I've got, you know, that portfolio, I've also got two portfolios of fourteen etchings each that I'm also publishing. Publishing, it's not a secure relation, no. I think I told you last time I try to do all my painting in the daytime and all my print work at night and it's amazing, prints just get finished, finished, finished.

PC: It's very interesting, because, you know, you mentioned And I was thinking before that a number of people I've talked to who have the same kind of schedule: working on plates and stones at night, painting, sculpture, whatever, during the daytime. Why is that?

FC: It's more intimate and more relaxing, yeah. With painting, any stroke might be the final stroke that gets seen and you have to be very sharply alert to make sure that's it. With etching, it is such an intimate thing that the richness is limited to the space not The space in a painting means nothing. It's It tires you to keep looking at all the space all the time, while it's great to sit down at a table and recognize the values of a very small space. So, when you're tired at the end of the day, you can still go on projecting into etching and printing. When I've worked a day at painting Jack Levine used to say, "Anybody who starts before 12 o'clock noon is a scab." He felt that his working period was from 12 noon to five, five hours, period.

PC: But that's right straight through.

FC: Very possible with Jack. He used to love to study and study and study. He had a table next to his easel; he loved company while he painted. Because he always half listened, only half listened. And he'd look at his thing, look at his thing and Also, he said, he became aware of certain things that he would like to correct because of a self-consciousness. Suddenly you'd walk in, he'd realize, "Ah, that little blue, that didn't mean much to me before you came in. Now I'm suddenly aware that it's wrong." So he'd change it and it was He would sit there and gab and gab and gab and suddenly he'd get up and mix a color; dab, dab, dab, two minutes, and sit down again and gab, and look and look while you're talking, you know, and he's not listening.

PC: That's very unusual. I don't know very many people who like to have anybody around.

FC: I know. I can't allow a cockroach in the same room. Well, I was never indoctrinated that way because I never went to art school. So I could never work easily with people around.

PC: You know, making the prints, have you ever done, you know, new experiments, using materials, colored stones, plates, papers, things like that?

FC: Well, there's so much that's unusual, in the whole field, yeah. Usually, I say, unusual only because you haven't done it before, everybody else has tried it.

PC: It's one of those

FC: I have, usually my class, in any school, any idea that I have of a new approach, will say, "Hey, why don't you do this?" And I begin telling them. Now, there have been things that I've become very excited about, like the use of opaques with transparents and everything, a mixture of opaques and transparents in lithography, and I would love to have a long period of experimentation in that. But it would be purely experiments and I thought, ye Gods, can I afford to take off, say, six months of just pure experimentation? But on the other hand, can I afford not to. I've got so damned many ideas

that I tell myself yes, I can afford not to because you're projecting within the frame that you made for your own from, you know, previous experience. Therefore project those that you know. If you have no ideas, begin developing.

PC: What about museum people? You know, you've talked about Zigrosser being your dealer initially. Are there other museum people that . . . ?

FC: That I'm close to?

PC: That you've become friendly with.

FC: No. I've known a lot of museum people, yeah, but not as friends. We've seen each other, we know each other, we're . . . hellos and all the exhibitions. That's as far as it goes.

PC: What about artists? Are there many artists that you consider close friends?

FC: I think the closest friend among the artists that I've had has been Gehr, and we've known each other, oh God, from the very early days, also at Weyhe, and in the Depression days.

PC: He was there forever, it seems, wasn't he?

FC: Oh yeah, yeah. He started in the early, the late, I guess mid-twenties with Weyhe and at the beginning I'm sure that I was nothing but a little snout nose because I got in there at the age of eighteen. But after I came back from Europe, we began to develop a closer friendship and I think we've been very close friends all through. There have been, you know, a lot of other, a lot of artist friends, Peter Penoe is really a close friend. Al Blumstein, Will Barnet, a lot of them.

PC: Everybody knows Will.

FC: Yeah, Will makes it a party.

PC: Yeah. But it's phenomenal, you know. Any school, every idea, you know, everybody's worked with him, or knows him, or had a class with him or something.

FC: That guy, he's an amazing guy. He gives the appearance of inadequacy, you know. He's like a lost searching soul. He isn't that at all, a strange guy. Another guy that I like very much is Abe Rattner as a person and Jose de Creeft because I used to be very close to Jack Levine but Jack always had the opinion, in his old radical days, that nobody should own anything more than what he can carry on his back and when I bought my first house that was the end of it. I used to do nothing but fight with the guy.

PC: Well, he's got a few things he can't carry on his back too.

FC: He's changed. When Susy was just a little girl, I would say between the age of five and ten, he introduced a Christmas tree into the house. For Jack this was amazing. And now he's even, I understand, joining the Century Club, which is

PC: Oh, really.

FC: Yeah. When was it? I guess it was a close, yeah, Joe Mirsch asked me if I wouldn't back Jack for membership. I said, "You're kidding! He wants to go in?" Even I didn't really want to belong. Xavier Gonzales, who was part of the nominating committee, called me up about joining the Century Club

and I tried to be nice about it and, by God . . . by saying, "Ah, come on, with a name like mine they're going to say what's happening, Puerto Ricans coming into the club? You know damned well that I won't get in." "Oh, no. They'll be proud to have you in, believe me they will." "No, a name like mine could never, no. Look, I'm very sensitive. I'm very easily hurt and I don't want to try because I know I'll be blackballed and a lot of people have been waiting and I know some people, Elliot Ellisopheme, has been waiting for years to become a member and his name is still on the list uncrossed, meaning that he's become a member or dropped out from a candidate. That's something that I don't want to even try. I'm hurt too much. It's a throwback to my being hurt as a child; I don't want to renew it." And he said, "No, you'll get in, you'll get in." So I didn't want to tell Xavier who the hell wants your God damned club, he'd feel lousy and I didn't want to hurt the guy. So eventually I became a member. Do you know what I've gotten out of it?

PC: What?

FC: I pay a hundred and fifty dollars a year membership dues and I attend one the average two dinners a year. So I pay seventy-five dollars a dinner. And this Jack Levine wants? What the hell for? Nobody in the world but another Centurion knows your name so what do you profit from it?

PC: Ah, but that's part of it.

FC: Oh, God.

PC: It's funny.

FC: It's a crazy thing. I will say this, I had an ulterior motive which I think is damned good, at least it helps my own feelings about it. They have reciprocal connections with another club in Paris, which is an old Rothschild mansion on Fauberg St. Honore and there it's even better than the club here because they allow women into it. You can even, if you want, set up little cocktail parties for friends in a private room with a garden. And in the garden they'll set out a little table for you, you pay for everything, of course. But it's very inexpensive compared if you went out to a bar in Paris, you'd pay twice as much and they get out all your little canapes and drinks. When we go to Paris we most often stay at a hotel and we're invited to friends and there is no way for us to reciprocate but for saying, "Well, why can't we take you to La Coupole for dinner." It's too cold-blooded. So this way, to repay some of these favors and they love it. This garden, you know, almost backing on the Elysee Palace, a huge garden, trees and everything in the back . . . it's a beautiful way to reciprocate. Not many members in the Century Club are aware of this . . . and the Century Club wants to keep it quiet, but I learned about it.

PC: They have one in London, too, I think.

FC: They probably have as well. I'll have to find out about the one in London. Paris I found out about because I've made something

PC: You know, it's curious in mentioning a number of times of having shows at age 18 and all that. Do you think that's been a help to you or a hindrance, or has it affected you?

FC: The shows I hate my old shows always because I always go thorough a slight trauma of why I want to do And suddenly by having a show, I know what I have done and suddenly, you know, two or three of the favorite things make me feel, oh God, this is how it should have been faced and gone in that direction. And it makes two or three out of twenty things did that to me and then suddenly seventeen things that I'm very unhappy about.

PC: But I mean in the success of them and the notoriety and the publicity or whatever it was.

FC: That unfortunately is part of having a show I hate the whole business Well, I hate the whole business of having I hate the whole business of business and yet that's part of business. I would very much prefer to have another profession, another business, and keep my art for myself and work like hell at my art and not give a damn. I don't give much of a damn. I tell myself and I do what I want to do, but though I do what I want to do, I do give a damn because I'm not happy, because I'm concerned about the success or failure of a show because otherwise If it's not a success I have to make up for it in some other ways, teaching or Today it's not too bad because I don't have to teach. I don't It is Since it is part of the business and sense, I do have an expensive hobby of collecting. The success of it means something and I'm sure if I ever decided to, well, why not make a lucrative profession outside of the field and sit on my art. There are extremely few artists who have made a success out of not having to be successful and I'm sure if I didn't feel a concern about whether or not it did sell, I'm sure the work would fall. As I say, you try and maintain your integrity and you probably can and you do ordinarily unless you're an outlaw -- a hard, crass and commercial artist -- but you hope, despite the fact that you've been able to maintain your integrity, you hope like hell that some other, others will find a sympathetic environment and this is the best you can do There's no solution

PC: It's a continual

FC: No, there are always the few who are successful and have equally bad problems, you know, when you got to be a de Kooning where painting is \$60,000. Jesus, on the sale of two paintings, you're living like a king so what do you do about the others

PC: But the dealer takes this and the government takes that and

FC: No, that's when you sell more than the two The problem is maintaining a sense of devotion, a sense of fighting. I've always felt that artists really have to fight for what is secure by an elected public to prove themselves. Well, if you've more than proved yourself and you've got applause all about you, what the hell are you fighting for? You're not fighting anymore. No, the problem is how to avoid joining them in my being manipulated and by this public and being propelled into areas that I have no feelings about but I know they'll love it and therefore my feeling for this love Does their applause mean that much that I keep acting like a puppet before it? They have bad problems, there is really no solution, it's no fun. I often wonder who in the hell wants to be an artist? Actually it's a wonderful thing, if you keep the ground you're standing on . . . but you lose it fast.

PC: Well, you know, you mention your expensive hobby of collecting and have a rather enormous print collection. How did that all start? Have you collected for a long time or . . . ?

FC: Yeah, but I lived in Paris in the thirties, in 1934 and 1935, and I was buying very cheaply. For me a Degas print of the African period I think I paid \$6.00 for and BeDrouet has it in one of his recent catalogues, which I have, at \$1,200 or something. Anyway it's become an expensive hobby because everybody is competing against everybody. But in the thirties it wasn't expensive and I loved these things. Now in the thirties I was a young kid and my aspirations were to become as big a person and an artist as these other people whose work I admired. So I began collecting in that period and I began to understand the things to admire in other artists. I never had so little ego, I felt, I admit that I wanted to be better than and I wanted to be great as these twenty other guys.

PC: Well, did you collect in the sense of accumulating?

FC: Accumulating . . . ? I often wonder if that is what it became because I have so damned many and yet I do see a great mass of them. Every evening for instance when we were definitely settled we just barely became settled in this apartment so I presume I'll resume the habit. The only trouble is the bookcases are not made just right. If I take out these boxes that contain prints, it scrapes the whole bottom so I don't mind them. But probably when they are visibly available again, I'll resume my old habit of late in the evening just before I go to bed I'll make myself a cup of coffee and take a box and look through these things and become very engrossed with some of them. Each box holds about 120 prints, 120 to 150, depending on individual thickness. And an artist's visual memory is so great that if I collected prints, in two months there wouldn't be any sense in looking at them because I could remember every line. So I had to collect in numbers that a beautiful thing would reawaken an awareness of its beauty and it may not be the same thing in the next box that stops me every time I look at that box. And I fall off to bed not with the beauty engrossed in the ten prints that really moved me although they moved me when I looked at and they move me slightly as I go off to bed, but the general spiritual feeling of the whole thing is very orbiting, very exciting to me.

PC: Well, do you collect specific artists of specific periods or from all across the . . . ?

FC: Across the whole print history field. Of course, there are particular artists you have to like but it's not specialized in woodcuts, or periods or artists or

PC: Who would you say that interested you the most?

FC: So many, I've got so many Probably the ones that interest me the most are the ones I don't have.

PC: I know that's what a collector would say.

FC: Right. No, but it's mostly because I'm an artist that they are very close to me and even people like Changzses and Edvard Munch, Ensor and even Bresdan, but they are soul mates of mine and I don't have them and they are much more easily available than in older years. However, Paris in the very old days didn't have any of their work and now that Paris understands their greatness, prices

PC: Prices go up.

FC: Yeah, I accumulate in such amount that if, you know, I could devote myself to having only a collection of masterpieces I know some artists who wouldn't buy anything except masterpieces because their theory is that their ego and their status feeling is wrapped up in it. They don't want to say, well here's a Daumier from Sate Gare, it doesn't mean enough if it's a dollar print, or a rare Gauguin woodcut or something like that only ten prints pulled from the block. And they taught my collectors They're talking like artists. They like the work therefore. Very often we buy things which I feel have a certain integrity, have a certain quality, some delight only, some amuse and a lot move, but they have to have a quality of effect on me.

PC: Well, do you think that it has influenced you in particular ways?

FC: Only influenced me a little. I'd want to produce a Naturally the lesser things that I own would never make me aspire to But the great things that are in my collection I respect so enormously that I want to be able to feel that I've reached this level, and I'm not fighting it in competition to reach that level but seeking that within myself. Isn't there something that I feel that I could love as much?

PC: But I'm just curious, you know, because looking at some photos and things . . . of your work I can't think of other artists who could be specific influences, I mean, to get meaning, an atmosphere, or feeling or something. But that's been through all kinds of people.

FC: Well, as I say, the soul-mates, Ensor I feel is a soul-mate, and (Bedain) definitely a soul-mate, Munch for that, also. In his case it is a Scandinavian feeling for loneliness. But also that very disquieting effect of man being never quite understood, being such an entity into himself that even not his wife can understand him totally. If you ever had to argue with a wife that she understands you but think that there is a certain amount of argument, in that argument, not in the way of a fight but discussion on a certain issue means that she hasn't understood your motives. Therefore there is something about man that is total isolation, total isolation from everything else. Not always, but it is there at times and Munch has that feeling in his work. And something that makes me very, makes me feel spiritually close to him is that he is a man who has known what it is to be alone. Sometimes to find pleasure in it and sometimes really suffer by it because . . . even misanthropes, there are times when they don't want to be alone. Then they suffer because everybody has taken their loneliness for granted and nobody will touch them, but they don't want to be alone at that time. I think there have been a lot of artists that I feel very close to but it's usually an emotional thing involved for me that makes me feel close rather than aesthetic affect. I feel the aesthetics of a person is language. Munch I find that we're soul-mates but he is Scandinavian and I'm not, so our language is different, but I can accept the difference in the aesthetic language.

PC: Well, have you, you know . . . ?

FC: It's also that aesthetics seem to me so simple. To make an effective painting is such a very simple problem, you know, it is disturbingly simple. Amateurs have said to me when I'm teaching them and I say, "Now look . . ." They think that I'm a miracle man -- all of a sudden a painting comes out nice and they've been struggling for years and I feel like telling them, "Don't become deluded. Making a nice looking painting is only a very infinitesimal part of the matter. Making an honest painting, that's going to become the problem because it has to be new and honesty is the problem." And it is aesthetically Of course, I'm attracted to good aesthetics but there has to be a great honesty beyond that.

PC: Do you have any theory of aesthetic about your own work or not?

FC: No. I've gone through change. I'm in love with color. I'm in love with a richness of effect and everything but I could also become very taken up suddenly with the fineness, the delicacy of certain things which at least to these two paintings color is not it. Aesthetics is a very important part of the whole thing because, as I say, it is the language but it is also part of the means. The person in what he feels and what he sees is going to find even in the aesthetics -- if I am going to make it loose, it's not the looseness of a Bonnard because even on this it is a little too tortured to be Bonnard-ish. It's as loose as Bonnard probably, but the movements of it are tortured because even my subject matter is tortured -- it becomes a whole thing. No, I think aesthetics are something that absorb me only in the sense that I have to have the thing visually exciting to me, besides having it do something for me beyond the visual effect. In other words, the visual thing will attract me to it enormously and yet something will pull me into it which is the thing itself. I am very strongly for form and matter, the combination of both. Of course, a lot of people claim that in the past this has always been, which again is an argument that doesn't necessarily have to be. But it doesn't mean that because it isn't now, it's wrong.

PC: Right, that's the [END OF TAPE]