



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Joan Mitchell,
1986 Apr. 16

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Joan Mitchell on April 16, 1986. The interview took place in New York, and was conducted by Linda Nochlin for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Person's names are included each time mentioned in a new context. Descriptions of individual are largely JM's. JM also referred to persons in the draft transcript she had not mentioned in the interview. These are indicated in this list by "[JM's note]." Place names are mentioned only if they are somewhat unusual, and only the first time they occur.—Ed.

Joan Mitchell reviewed and annotated this interview. Her additions have been inserted in brackets. Other bracketed words indicate inaudible or unclear words on the tape, or are editorial comments.—Ed.

Interview

[Tape 1, side A]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, Joan, we're going to start at the beginning; we are supposed to. And I'm just going to halt this tape to make sure that it is actually doing its. . . .
[Interruption in taping]

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . _____, they're plastic.

JOAN MITCHELL: _____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, that's _____, perfect. Okay, we're going to start at the beginning and I'd like to just find out something about your background, your family, you know, sort of where you come from, who your parents were, even your grandparents, that far back.

JOAN MITCHELL: Chicago.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, let me see. My father's parents died when he was very young, I think four and six, so he was brought up by an older sister. And he was self-made, worked in a pharmacy, put himself through the University of Chicago, Rush Medical School, and married my money, my mother when he was 40. . . . My money. . . ? [referring to slip of the tongue—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Forty-something and had two children. He [James Herbert Mitchell—Ed.] was good in fungus diseases, very good in jungle rot during the war [World War II], well-known, president of American Dermatological—whatever it is—Society.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Skin and so forth [dermatology and syphilology—"skin and syph" as I called it].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And something about your mother? Her name was Marion Stobel, was that it?

JOAN MITCHELL: Strobel, S-t-r-o-b-e-l. Her father, Charles Louis Strobel, I think was from Cincinnati. His family, I don't know how immediate, from Germany. I think they made toys in Germany. He was a steel engineer, built bridges over the Chicago River. I have all his. . . . He went to [Stuttgart] Germany to study engineering. I have all of his, oh, schoolbooks [notebooks] with these fabulous drawings of steel engineering bridges. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: So he was into, yeah, I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . all in German, just fabulous. And his diaries, and he talks about Bugatti [French car maker—Ed.], and I think he thought Frick was—no, was it Carnegie?—was a bit dishonest.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) He had a social conscience.

JOAN MITCHELL: And his diaries, with all the highly detailed bills from such and such a hotel in Paris or England

or. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, he sounds wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh yes. He never spoke. He liked me; I didn't speak either.

LINDA NOCHLIN: So you really got to know him, in other words.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, not at all. He would arrive on [Sundays]. He died in 1935, I think.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, but I mean as a child might.

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, no?

JOAN MITCHELL: He wore spats and a cane and morning coats, and he was very shy, I guess. Oh, no. He sat and I sat.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You didn't talk?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I mean, children were seen and not heard.

LINDA NOCHLIN: In your family it was like that, I mean that. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, around him.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, yeah. As far as he was concerned. Well, that sounds like. . . . I mean, I never knew that; that's interesting background. I mean, this person who drew, for example.

JOAN MITCHELL: My father drew.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Your father drew, too?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah, well, sort of a little like Lautrec [Toulouse-Lautrec—Ed.].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Really.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You mean, as a kind of amateur pastime?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, he'd do sketches of his peers, doctors, [heads], ____ caricature, a bit.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's interesting. And your mother I understand was a poet.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, you have said that before. How did she work? I mean, did she publish professionally or ____ ____?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, she had books. [She published poetry books, novels, and mystery stories]. She worked with Harriet Monroe on Poetry magazine [Chicago].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, um hmm. So she was involved in really avant garde poetry?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, no. She was more of a lyric poet.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Well, that was in ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I mean Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot and all those. They were published first by Poetry magazine.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I think she liked lyric poetry such as Eliot more than Pound.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: When you say avant garde, I don't think. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, no. Would it be more like Edna St. Vincent Millay?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Edna, she knew her.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right. So did you meet any of these people, through your mother?

JOAN MITCHELL: [Yeah. No.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you must have heard about poetry from birth.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yes. Well, Thornton Wilder used to read to me as a child. Yes, it was quite. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: So you came from a background where. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: There were books in the house.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . there were books and a real interest in literature.

JOAN MITCHELL: Either skin diseases or literature.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) One or the other?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, there certainly was. And, you know, father took us [my sister and me] to the [Chicago—Ed.] Art Institute to look at. . . . Or to the Field Museum in Chicago. It was, you know, [on Sunday mornings]. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. It was a cultivated house.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you were the only child?

JOAN MITCHELL: No. Sally.

LINDA NOCHLIN: ____ had a. . . . That's right, you have a[n older] sister, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Who died a couple years ago.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, I remember. Right. And you have a niece, ____ ? [And two nephews.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. She came here.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, yeah. Charming. That's [a, the most] darling person. Where were you educated? What was your earlier education?

JOAN MITCHELL: I went for twelve years to the Francis W. Parker School [in Chicago].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And my sister went to Girl's Latin [where Nancy Davis Reagan went].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Quite different.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Why were they different?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, Girl's Latin was sort of a correct whatever, and Parker was full of Jews and. . . . [Chicago was very racist and still is.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Was it more progressive?

JOAN MITCHELL: Very progressive [and very wonderful].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, I somehow remember, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Very bright kids and not conventional at that time.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's become much more so. Great education.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Did you learn classical subjects, or was the emphasis on art and literature and ____?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, there was a . . . My class was the last, I think, of an eight-year program, or maybe Bobby Adams [Robert McCormick Adams—Ed.]. He is the head of Smithsonian, and ____ his class, ['43] at Parker.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) Oh, ho. Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: I was talking with Sue Ann [Kendall—Ed.] about that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Where we didn't have to take college boards and all that sort of thing, and we could just get into college.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Hmm, you mean, without doing any of the normal sorts of stuff?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Well, then they changed it to Scholastic Aptitude [tests]. We did take that, but I didn't have any math, for example.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) Lucky you.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I had a lot of Latin. I mean, very lopsided kind of education.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Other people had only math.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. It was what you were interested in, sort of.

JOAN MITCHELL: Sort of.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That sounds great. And where did you go to. . . . You also went to high school there?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, twelve years.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, I see, twelve years.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's a grammar and high school.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, I see. And then you went on, from '42 to '44, I understand, to Smith.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: How was that? I mean, what was that like?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, father said I was too young to go to art school and ____, so I applied to—it was Bryn Mawr, Bennington, and Smith. I wanted to go to Bennington, but he said that was too arty, you wouldn't learn anything. And Bryn Mawr I had seen, and I thought that was death warmed over. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: So, since I'd never seen Smith and it was the biggest, I thought Smith. There were 2,000 women. However, it was during the war, and so Smith had Waves in it, you know. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . and Amherst had all the Navy and [language] groups.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it had totally. . . . It was very, very much more mixed than it is now, [I suppose], an Ivy League atmosphere that. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, sure, I remember Vassar was during World War II, too. Opened up, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure. It was kind of a mixed bag.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is there anything particularly about Smith? I mean, anything important that you think took place there that might be relevant to your later career?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I got a B+ in art.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, that's something. (chuckles) Who taught art history there?

JOAN MITCHELL: A man called Hyman George Cohen.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Never heard of him, but. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And I don't think. . . . I don't know. The art department wasn't very good, the art history [was taught by Mrs. _____ Vanderbilt.]. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Did you do painting?

JOAN MITCHELL: There's a nice little museum there. [A lovely Goya.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Did I paint there? Sure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. I mean, did you study with anyone that you felt was interested. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: There was Hyman George Cohen. I did watercolors out under the apple trees. [Tamayo came and did a fresco in the art library. I watched.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see. Well, that is something or other. What about the art collection there? I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It was all right. It's nice. Nice _____ and. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it's a nice little museum. Right. Then you came back in '44 to '47 and went to the Art Institute, or was there something between?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well then, the summer at Smith, that summer I went to the summer school of the Chicago Art Institute.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: In Saugatuck, Michigan. I went there two summers ['43 and '44].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Uh huh, I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: So I got some credit there and I went into the Art Institute as a second-year student.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, I see. What was the normal course at the Art Institute? Was it four years?

JOAN MITCHELL: Four years.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, but you went in. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I did it in three years, but I also went at night.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see. And in summers.

JOAN MITCHELL: And those two summers, which was really nice because the nude was outdoors [mornings].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, how wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: It was really Frenchy.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Gee, that's great!

JOAN MITCHELL: And then the afternoon class in landscape was outdoors, and nobody was around the Oxbow, an Indian site on Lake Michigan.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, and beautiful, I'd say.

JOAN MITCHELL: Very nice. [Heavenly place—it still exists. Lithography at night. No electricity. Kerosene oil lamps.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who were your teachers at the Art Institute?

JOAN MITCHELL: You wouldn't know them.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, it doesn't matter; it's just for the record.

JOAN MITCHELL: Louis Ritman.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Louis Ritman?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, he came from Russia, lived in France [even Giverny].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I have friends there, cousins, grand-whatever, of the Hoschede family?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: In Giverny, and in their basement—in their attic [correcting from basement to attic—Ed.]—they had a lot of Impressionists who lived around there when Monet lived there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: And they pulled out this painting and I recognized the way the hands were drawn and I said, "Who?" And it was a Louis Ritman.

LINDA NOCHLIN: He had been out there, Giverny. He lived there.

JOAN MITCHELL: He lived in France for a while and then he went to Chicago.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Fascinating.

JOAN MITCHELL: And he _____. And I refused to draw hands the way he did.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Probably the root of your success! (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: That's right.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Any other teachers that you particularly remember?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I remember all of them, but they're not. . . . Von Neuman, he was a German with a wooden leg that he lost in the First World War [seven years in the army]. He was a wonderful man. His etching, sort of like—a la Durer, some of that _____. Not avant garde at all, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Boy, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: But he was very inspiring. I don't think good teachers are necessarily good artists.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Not all, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Max Kahn, but I didn't study with him, lithography. George Buehr, I didn't study with. Boris Anisfeld, I didn't study with.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Did you feel the whole atmosphere was conducive, I mean to. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: To what?

LINDA NOCHLIN: You know, to your. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I did six hours of life drawing a day and three hours of life painting. And on the weekends I did my own still lifes and landscapes or whatever at home.

LINDA NOCHLIN: So you just painted away.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And worked all the time.

JOAN MITCHELL: But it was very classic education, and I was trying to win a fellowship, traveling fellowship, which I did. And so there were certain requirements like anatomy, art history, and all that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. So you had a full classical training, would you say?

JOAN MITCHELL: That and then I was minus some art history credits which I picked up at Columbia and NYU here in New York [to get an MFA].

LINDA NOCHLIN: So were there any fellow students that were particularly interesting or that you remember, that you felt had something?

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure, Ellen Lanyon. She lives here [New York]. Leon Golub, but he was younger—or behind me. Nancy Borregaard, she lives in France [near Moulins].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh right, I remember. I met her. She had poached eggs. (chuckles)

JOAN MITCHELL: Really?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. We all went out and. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And Zuka and all that?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Zuka _____ sort of. [Painter who lives in Paris, shows at Dorthea Speier Gallery, and had shown at Betty Parsons.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: At the summer school.

JOAN MITCHELL: The first summer. She came with a painter called Dan Lutz, who died. He taught in L.A. [remembering:] Art Institute. Katharine Kuh. (chuckles)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Did she teach there?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, no. She was. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: No. She was a critic, though.

JOAN MITCHELL: She was a curator, too. I've lost touch. [I just had lunch with her. She's a wonderful person. She had a gallery of "modern art" in Chicago. Has written books and was curator of the Art Institute. I was terrified of her and admired her immensely. I still do.] Herbie Katzman [a painter] I haven't seen in years.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But all in all, you found it a stimulating environment? Or just, you wanted to work so much that it would have been stimulating anywhere?

JOAN MITCHELL: I think it's anywhere. I mean, if you're working from the nude.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: What was stimulating was the Art Institute—you just walk up the stairs and take a look at a good painting.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And what were some of the ones that you would most remember from those years as being ones that you'd want to look at?

JOAN MITCHELL: All of them.

LINDA NOCHLIN: All of them.

JOAN MITCHELL: Van Gogh, the Manet, that lovely fish that I saw again in Paris [in '82]. My goodness. All of them.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. That was the real inspiration, in a way.

JOAN MITCHELL: The painting, the French painting?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. It was mostly the French that you looked toward.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Nineteen and twentieth.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that was their best. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, that's what they are best [in].

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But what you would be most. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: They had a lot of Chester Dale, a hunk of that collection then, during the war, Picasso and so on.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: The Guernica was first shown there, in the back stairs, in 1938.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Really! I always thought of it in connection with the Museum of Modern Art, but it was there first.

JOAN MITCHELL: From _____. I think so. Well, I know it was there. But I think it was shown there before it moved to a whole Picasso show and that was fabulous. And there was painting to look at, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. It was a very good painting atmosphere.

JOAN MITCHELL: There was the Arts Club. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. What's the Arts Club?

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . which was a fancy society thing then.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: But with [good] shows [like Brancusi, Braque]. It exists today, the interior done by Mies van der Rohe. I have had a show there once. They put up. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: When did you have that show?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't remember.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But early, you mean, in your career? [early seventies, I think?]

JOAN MITCHELL: No. I was _____. . . . I don't know. ____ pre ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: But they had Brancusi. . . . I would go there as an art student ____ any kind of _____. But there was art there. There were no galleries, one gallery, as I remember. Fairweather Hardin. There was not yet the gallery scene.

LINDA NOCHLIN: The gallery scene.

JOAN MITCHELL: That there is in Chicago now.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Then what happened? You won the prize?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What was the prize? What was it called specifically?

JOAN MITCHELL: There were three traveling fellowships. I won the Ryerson Traveling Fellowship.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Which as I remember was \$2,000. You were supposed to live a year on that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, in those days. . . . (laughter)

JOAN MITCHELL: I did, ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I bet you did. Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I came [to New York—Ed.]. . . . It was just after the war and I thought it was a little early to get over there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: So I spent the winter under the Brooklyn Bridge, on the Brooklyn side, living with Barney Rosset, and I came here [to New York] to study with Hofmann, this is all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I went to Hofmann's class and I couldn't understand a word he said so I left, terrified.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: But he and I became friends later on. Friends, but I never studied with him.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Now when was this, in what?

JOAN MITCHELL: '47. And then the spring of '48 I toddled off to Paris on a Liberty ship.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh yeah, in those bunks?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, those bunks. The painted, repainted floors, green, and so the green paint came off on my feet, I remember. And I ended up sleeping on deck, in sort of a tool shed up there, with some other people because it was impossible [down below].

LINDA NOCHLIN: It was horrible. I went over in one of those.

JOAN MITCHELL: With the saltwater? And some sort of soap they gave you for the saltwater?

LINDA NOCHLIN: The smell, just when you went down below was. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, the crew, they were very nice. [I had fun.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Everyone was very nice. It was the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Gave me booze _____. Although I don't get seasick, so that wasn't any problem. Took a long time to go across. Ten days.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you arrived where? [Le Havre]

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, then, those other two summers at school, I spent in Mexico, instead of going back to Saugatuck.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Not with _____, though.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That was in the later forties.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, forty. . . . What would it be? '45 and '46.

LINDA NOCHLIN: '45 and '46. Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. [Weetucka, We took a].

LINDA NOCHLIN: You went to Mexico?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, those two summers.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And how was that? Did you study there with someone?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, no, I painted all the time, in Guanajuato.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Where were you?

JOAN MITCHELL: Guanajuato, G-u-a-n-a-j-u-a-t-o. I met Orozco and I met Siqueiros [in Mexico City]. It was very moving. I mean, it was the first foreign country I'd ever been to [other than Canada]. You know. I was thinking of it because when I arrived in France I kept thinking, "Why isn't it Mexico?" I had been in love in, with Mexico, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And it's so romantic, I think, Mexico as a country.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, and arriving in Le Havre on that Liberty ship and seeing all those—the sun was coming up—and seeing all those ships sunk.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it was nasty.

JOAN MITCHELL: It was hardly. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Horrible.

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, war, war, war, war.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, you went very early. I know because I went to England that year and it was the same. Devastating.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, dark red and. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Whale sausage was. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . everything rationed, and the poor people, that wasn't exactly. . . . I mean, we didn't suffer [like that], ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: So where did you go? You went to Paris.

JOAN MITCHELL: I went to Paris, and I stayed with Zuka and Louis [Mitelberg] [her husband, the cartoonist "Tim"]. And I looked for a place—and found it on Rue Gallande. Across the river was Notre Dame. That was all of four dollars a month, with a hole on the stairs as a toilet and a spigot with cold water and one lightbulb. That was all the electricity there was. [No heat, no coal.] But this view, I mean, God! (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: It must have been extraordinary.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes. With. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: The most perfect view, I mean.

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure! Saint Julien le Pauvre [Greek Orthodox Church, oldest in Paris] was right in front of me, the _____. And so I painted there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then I really. . . . I didn't have any heat and I got pretty sick. So at the American hospital, while I was hacking away, coughing, they said, "Well, you know, I think you better go south for the winter." (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's good advice, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: So Barney came with me, and he had the. . . . You know her, Joan Simon?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: Joan Lewisohn Simon [Crowell]. [Fabulous collection was given to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by her father. I think she now composes.] Well, she and Sidney [Simon, painter] had rented a house in LeLavandou for all of \$75 a year. Wonderful house. And she was having a baby, so she gave us the house, and we went down there. I remember we rented it. And it was so cheap because the woman owner had been a collaborator. That was strange. So I spent a year there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Painting.

JOAN MITCHELL: Painting, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, yeah. It's a beautiful area.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, it was then. It's horrible now, all built up.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Horrible, yeah. I remember.

JOAN MITCHELL: But the house _____. [microphone noise] Well, it was lonely. I mean, people visited us. It was. . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: What was your style like then? Can you describe what kind of work you were doing back then?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, it was Cezanne-ish in school. Moving Cubistically, whatever you would call it, into abstraction. Sort of cubed-up landscapes, things like that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it got more and more so, and into. . . . Well, I know what it was, but I don't think you would. Well, maybe.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I can see. It was moving out of Cezanne into some. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: More Cezanne. Like his watercolors into more. . . . Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Late stuff.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Were there any artists that were painting at the time that you felt were going in your direction, or that interested you, or that were relevant to what you were looking for in your own?

JOAN MITCHELL: Gorky, a little bit. I didn't know him very well then, and I had seen a Matta show at Pierre Matisse [1947?]. I was here that winter, don't forget. [Kandinsky of course and even Hartung.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right, and so what had gone on?

JOAN MITCHELL: And so Jackson Pollock I knew of [Art of This Century].

LINDA NOCHLIN: You got. . . . Yeah. I mean, had you seen his work?

JOAN MITCHELL: [I didn't like it.] I saw one show and I'm trying to. . . . That would have to be checked on.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: At Twentieth Century. I think it was the first show he had _____. Would that be in '49 or in. . . . [1947]
[Interruption in taping]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. No, I was just interested in who you, you know, who struck you in that period in New York?

JOAN MITCHELL: [away from microphone:] Oh, early Kandinsky, [that crowd]. Well no, they had that at the Art Institute in Chicago, don't forget.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: See, everybody, to do modern art then, seemed to me, when you were going "modern" (both chuckle), it was Picasso. I mean, everybody. But I avoided that like the plague. I thought. . . . I loved Picasso, but it just wasn't for me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. So who would you say was for you, you know.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I don't, I have some of those paintings from LeLavandou—they're in storage—and from Mexico. They were Expressionist landscapes, or boats on the beach or something like that, which I still do. Sort of going abstract, going towards. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, late, say, like. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: But [I do] what I do.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: My first show at the New Gallery.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, so you lived in Europe on this traveling fellowship from '48 to '49.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm.

LINDA NOCHLIN: A lot of it in Le Lavandou, and then you came back in 1950?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, then I got married.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, you got married?

JOAN MITCHELL: In Le Lavandou because I ran out of money, and Barney said he wouldn't take me home. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Unless you married him?

JOAN MITCHELL: Unless I married him.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, that was a good bargain.

JOAN MITCHELL: So we married and the mayor cried "Vive, Chicago." Barney was from the Francis W. Parker School, too.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh. Had you known him at Francis Parker?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, and we. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, so it was a childhood. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, then he went off to the wars [China, India]. I mean, he was older than I was.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, I'd gone out with him. He took me to Citizen Kane in high school. He was very intelligent, you know, as all the intellectual kids.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, absolutely. Oops, okay. Now wait a minute; I've got to turn this over.

[Tape 1, side B]

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . is now the second side of the first tape in which Linda Nochlin is interviewing Joan Mitchell, on April 16, 1986, at the Westbury Hotel. So you got married. Did that make a difference?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, yeah, I didn't want to. I think I would have stayed on with him. Then I didn't want to get divorced. That whole thing was sort of _____ to this.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Then we went back [to the U.S.] with all my French stretchers. We left Cannes, boated around Spain, you know, back to New York.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And we played chess all the way. And that, we were in first class. That was a. . . . God! The food. It made me sick, because everything [in France] had been rationed, you know, and they had. . . . (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you finally got goodies! Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: With butter and, oh, I got so sick.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, so we're up to the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: We're going to New York. We're arriving in New York.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, then [the Chelsea Hotel] and then Eleventh Street, and then. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then Barney gets hayfever, and so we took off [midsummer] for [Haiti] Cuba, actually. Sounds funny now, doesn't it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, that's where, my father used to go to Cuba all the time.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, his father knew Battista, so we were [put up] in [one of his lovely hotels]. [Can you imagine?]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh. How romantic, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then there was a hurricane, so we flew to Yucatan, which was wonderful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Ah, how marvelous, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And of course I had this passionate feeling about Mexico. And then I saw Chichen Itza and all that stuff. That was lovely. Oh, no, wait a minute. We went to Haiti first. That was a big deal, because Magloire was in [power] instead of Papa Doc.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Barney had something to do with the four-point program, the Marshall Plan in the U.N., and so we were looking at yaws [a venereal disease] and films and. . . . It was a very interesting, and now I'm very involved with Haiti again. I mean, interested to see. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: What's going to happen.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm. So anyway then, Campeche [Mexican state], you know. . . . This has something to do with painting. He wanted to go on to Mexico City, and I just said to hell with it. So I went back to New York, and we had to be moved. So I moved us from Eleventh Street to Ninth Street, with the help of Paul Brach, Michael Goldberg, and a couple of other people.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: In the meantime, I had moved back and I had walked into Hayter's Eighth Street, you know, Stanley William Hayter? [Graphic studio, etchings. Wonderful man.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Yeah. Sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: Wonderful. And he wasn't there, but Paul Brach was there [with wife]. I had met them. They came from Iowa [University]. They looked me up. Oh, from another man, Dick [Richard] Bowman, my first lover, in Saugatuck.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: They had studied with Lasansky there. This is all midwest, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right, in Iowa.

JOAN MITCHELL: And they looked me up, and Paul was at Hayter's, so I thought if I went to Hayter's or hung around there. . . . I was starved for painters.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Barney was with film people and in Le Lavandou there were no painters. I was really starved to get back into a painting situation.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: And that's where I met Mike and so on.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Mike Goldberg.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. This is for the record. (laughs) Many a ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, he helped me move to Ninth Street, which was fine.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: As well as many other things. And the first studio I went to. . . . I was trying to find deKooning because he had a painting at the Whitney, which was in the old Studio School [Eighth Street], you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, the old. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And I thought I would like to know him. I really dug his painting, and I dug Gorky's painting—because you asked me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, who the people are, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But the first studio I went into was Franz Kline.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Uh huh!

JOAN MITCHELL: I was interviewed about him yesterday, by Harry Gaugh? That man who wrote the big Kline book? Right up there. See it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. [Finding book—Ed.] Harry Gaugh, I guess. Yes. Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Anyway, and there were all these Klines, unstretched, hanging on the brick walls. Beautiful. You know, with the telephone book drawings all over the floor, and Kline yakking away, and it was just, I was out of my mind!

LINDA NOCHLIN: I bet.

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, just uhh!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Exciting!

JOAN MITCHELL: And so from then on I got involved in the Artists Club. They allowed very few women in, and I was included for \$35 a year. And I got very involved in the Cedar Bar and the whole thing.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And of course less involved with Barney.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, that seems to follow. Now it says here, on this outline, that you went to Columbia at some time? Attended Columbia University?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that was then, because I wanted to get my MFA [Summer 1951].

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: I said earlier I did art history at Columbia and NYU?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was to get a master of fine arts.

LINDA NOCHLIN: MFA from the Art Institute of Chicago.

JOAN MITCHELL: The Art Institute, in order to teach.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who did you take art history from at Columbia? Do you know? ____?

JOAN MITCHELL: [Professor] Smith.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Smith?

JOAN MITCHELL: Northern Renaissance.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: There's a little spot. It was sort of interesting.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Great. And it says here too that in 1950 you had your first solo show in St. Paul, Minnesota.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I guess I did.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah? What did you show? Do you remember that as a significant moment?

JOAN MITCHELL: Paintings from. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: From Le Lavandou, those, right. Did you get reviewed?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. But I ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, where was it in St. Paul?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't know. [The St. Paul Gallery.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) So. I mean, why St. Paul, when you were from Chicago? What was the connection ____ there? [The Midwest. People from the Art Institute.]

JOAN MITCHELL: I have a blank about that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, seriously, I'm not even sure I went to see it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____. Well, I mean I just have it on this vita that's printed.

JOAN MITCHELL: I did it. Yeah, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, that's terrific. Okay. Then you've got your master's and you're now painting in a studio in St. Mark's Place?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, then there was a little. . . . Then I moved around to Tenth Street. We [Barney and I] lived on Ninth Street in. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Now who is "we" now?

JOAN MITCHELL: I said "I."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: I.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Moved into a studio that was vacated [on Tenth, Spring 1951].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: [Whispers something, then:—Ed.] That was a coal stove, a bare place, and then Guston lived above me. But I knew him when I lived in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And this is in 1950?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, it's '51.

LINDA NOCHLIN: '51, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, when's my first show? '52? February of '52.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Your first show, according to this. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: The New Gallery. [The Stable Gallery.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . your first show in New York is right after '51, but then we jump to '55, so I mean, it could be '52.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I think it's February '52.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, February '52.

JOAN MITCHELL: And the Ninth Street show was. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: You participated in a Ninth Street show.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, that was '51. [Spring.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: In '51.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, that's right.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And that was organized by charter members of the club with the help of Leo Castelli.

JOAN MITCHELL: Leo.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right? And who else participated in that Ninth Street show? Everyone ____?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, about forty people.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Forty people, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: As I remember. I haven't any written things ____ ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You said there were very few women included in that group [the Artists Club]. Who were some of the other women of those few women? Were there any others?

JOAN MITCHELL: Elaine [de Kooning].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Elaine.

JOAN MITCHELL: Mercedes Matter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Mercedes Matter.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, May Rosenberg, but she wasn't a painter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Isn't a painter. Jane Freilicher. Nell Blaine. . . . Nell Blaine didn't come [to club]. [The Ninth Street show had several women and artists' wives: Helen Frankenthaler, Grace Hartigan, Lee Krasner. [knock at the door—Ed.] Come in.
[Interruption in taping]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. Now I was just asking about who some of the other women were and whether you were. . . . I mean, I don't want to read any proto-feminism into any of this, but I mean, were you. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Proto? Well, you can say it, I think, for ____ ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's fine! It's you that's saying. Okay. No, I just wondered if you had any particular feelings about being one of the rare women included in this group?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, there were Grace [Hartigan] and Helen [Frankenthaler], of course.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: How did I feel, like how? I felt, you know, when I was discouraged I wondered if really women couldn't paint, the way all the men said they [the women] couldn't paint. But then at other times I said, "Fuck them," you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I think the women were, some of them, more down on women than the men.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, that's perfectly possible.

JOAN MITCHELL: [A lot, Like], you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But I just wondered whether the generally nonsupportive atmosphere for women artists,

whether it's by fellow women, or by men, or by a general atmosphere, or what?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I don't know. I adulated the men so much they sort of liked me. I mean, I thought Bill [deKooning] was a great painter. They liked me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, but I mean, they would have liked you if you weren't a painter, too. I mean, was there any feeling that. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't think. . . . No, no, [Conrad] Marca-Relli [shows at McGee now] and Nic Carone [teaches at Studio School] in the Stable Gallery, they. . . . Hans Hofmann was very supportive—of me. I used to run into him in the park. I'd be dog-walking at nine in the morning, he'd say, "Mitchell, you should be painting." Very nice. (both chuckle) I don't think women in any way were a threat to these men, so they could encourage the "lady painter."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Umm. But what if you. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, no, I was very seriously involved in painting, they knew that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Philip Guston was very nice to me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. So you didn't feel any difference?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, about what?

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, if you'd been a man painter?

JOAN MITCHELL: I would have had a lot easier time.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: And had a lot more security, assurance of something.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. If you'd been Joe Mitchell.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, but I never painted under. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, no.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, Grace painted [as] George.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Grace, George.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I went to female shrink who sort of encouraged me. I encouraged her, too. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Both of you needed all the encouragement. . . . Right, okay. No, I think that's an interesting aspect of coming of age in the fifties, etcetera.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I'm. . . . Well, with the—I've said this—the galleries had quota systems, two women to a gallery, if they were lucky. [Kootz] didn't show women. Janis didn't show women. You know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, so it was there.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, you couldn't ____ do your show.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. So you had your first one-woman show in February 1952 at the New Gallery.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, that New. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: How was that received? I mean, what was the response?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, all of the club came. I mean, your openings were assured in those days.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Assured, right, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Because we all went to each other's.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I was so scared. But it was fine.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it went well. The response was good. [Artist's response, which was wonderful and a great deal. Now there's just money and cutthroat horror.]

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't. . . . Well, that's all there was in those days.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't remember selling anything. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, well, I didn't mean. . . . That was not even what I was, you know. . . . No. But were there reviews or general. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I think so. I was always reviewed in those days.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. And it was positive.

JOAN MITCHELL: Only. . . . I think, aside from wonderful statements, like Canaday saying I was even worse than Kline and deKooning. [That was later.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, well, that's a compliment. Of course, that ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't think, aside from a review of Paul Brach, not too long ago—I'll find that—I don't think I've had many bad reviews.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: I'm

LINDA NOCHLIN: Or you're reviewed well?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. I've been kind of lucky over the years.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Well, that says something about your work, aside from your luck. (laughs) Maybe. Okay, so you went back to Paris in 1955. And you began to move back and forth between France and New York?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. That's. . . . Do you want a story on or off the record?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's how I met. . . . Shirley [Jaffe—Ed.] introduced me to The Twenty-Four-Year Live-In [Jean Paul Riopelle].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Ohhh.

JOAN MITCHELL: I wrote to Shirley, whom we were just speaking of. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: My shrink said, "Don't go back to Easthampton for summer. Come on. Call up your mother. She has money. Get her to give you a ticket to Paris for the summer."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it wasn't the kind of the thing a shrink usually did, sort of giving advice.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I said, "I don't have no money. Mmm, I don't like France." But I, you know, I wrote Shirley [Jaffe], and I said, "I'll be in such and such a hotel and I'm going to go to bed, and so do something about it." So she called me from Saint Germain des Pres, and I said, "Oh, come to the hotel," and she said, "Oh, no! (chuckles) I'm sitting in a cafe in Saint Germain, and I'll wait for you." [In other words, "Get out of bed and do something."]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: So I had to go out of the hotel, right?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeess, of course. That was a very clever move, right?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah. And I got there and then I met, there I met Sam Francis and then [Norman] Bluhm, [Riopell, etc.]. A day or two later I met Saul Steinberg. There were a lot of people in Paris [even in summer].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. There was in fact a kind of group, wasn't there?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, but there were a lot of people from here.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who came back and forth.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, oh yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But there was a kind of staying over. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And the end of the Surrealists and. . . ____ all the stuff up and down Saint Germain des Pres.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Still an existentialist. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Well, there. . . . And then I got involved [with Riopelle], and that sort of [screwed everything]. And then I would go back and winter in New York, and see the shrink.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: And paint. And then in—on St. Mark's—and then I would go back. The summer in '59, I bought a place—not bought; I bought the key—to a studio, so then I started painting there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. That was on the rue Fremicourt?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Which was in what arrondissement?

JOAN MITCHELL: Fifteenth.

LINDA NOCHLIN: The fifteenth.

JOAN MITCHELL: On the wrong side of the tracks.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right. And you started staying there, just. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. And painting there. Then. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Full-time, not going back to New York?

JOAN MITCHELL: Pretty much. Then we spent a summer, in '60, in Easthampton.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: With his children.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Do you want to mention his name for the record?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh. If they want a record, they can get it. [Jean Paul Riopelle, French Canadian painter, born 1923, Montreal. Left me for ____ with 26-year-old American dogsitter (1980) who was living in my house. They too are split now.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: Doesn't matter to me, really.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. So you spent the summer of '60 in Easthampton with his children?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, we rented one of Barney's houses.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Who was on his third wife then. [Now he's on his fourth. We're still good friends. I think the fourth is over.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then we went back, and then he had a sailboat that belonged to, had belonged to Pierre Matisse, and then we sailed, after that, in the summers.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Very fatiguing.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. (laughs) It doesn't sound so terrible. You can ____ fatigue.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's a lot of hard work.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, I know, I've sailed.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's a small space to. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I sailed a 45-foot ketch.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's what it was: 45-foot single-mast Bermuda cutter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: But it's small space to fight in.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It is hell when you fight on one of those boats, 'cause there ain't no place to go!

JOAN MITCHELL: That's, Rufus Zogbaum [painter] used to sail with. . . . [His dead father was the sculptor Wilfred Zogbaum.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh really?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, he was crew.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What about that group in Paris?

JOAN MITCHELL: I never felt there was a group.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You didn't feel there was a group.

JOAN MITCHELL: But they seemed to. . . . I thought it was sort of Americans clinging to Americans.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, well that's a group. (laughter)

JOAN MITCHELL: You know. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sam and. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I saw a lot of Sam in those days, because he was a good friend of Riopelle, and the three of us were together a lot. Also I lived near his studio there [summer '55]. And I didn't like his work and it took me a some time to like it. And then I did—like acquiring a taste for olives or beer?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Those are the two things I had to acquire a taste for. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. But once you get the taste it tends to stick with you.

JOAN MITCHELL: But it was a little like that. And I missed New York terribly.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What did you feel lacking in Paris?

JOAN MITCHELL: People.

LINDA NOCHLIN: People.

JOAN MITCHELL: [A year or so].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Brutal. . . . Not brutality, the strength of the city.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I miss, I still miss that, but it's not here [New York] anymore. It's not the same thing.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it's changed, totally, _____. So the years between '59 and '69 were mainly spent in Paris? I mean, until you moved to Vetheuil?

JOAN MITCHELL: Umm, yeah. Well, then I'd come to New York. I kept on showing in New York.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I didn't paint here, only came.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you were having shows all the time, just talking about these years between when you moved into the studio. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . in the rue Fremicourt and when you got the Vetheuil place.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You showed at the Stable Gallery?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I showed at the Stable and then, oh, and—oh what was her name? [Beatrice Monte. She had a gallery—rue des Beaux Arts—with Larry Rubin, where I first showed in Paris. Then I was with Larry Rubin [now head of Knoedler Gallery, New York] very briefly. Until. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. But he had the Lawrence Gallery in Paris.

JOAN MITCHELL: I showed there. And also at the [Jacques] Dubourg.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then [Clement—Ed.] Greenberg took over [as adviser to Larry Rubin].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Do you include that? It's up to you.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure. And then you showed in 1960 at the Gallerie del Ariete [Beatrice Monte again] in Milan, it says.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think that was a little before that. I think it was around '58.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: I'm sure it was.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you showed at Dwan [in L.A.] in those days?

JOAN MITCHELL: I never went there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No?

JOAN MITCHELL: I showed there, yeah. [Once, I think.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, but you did show there. And then you had a big retrospective, or something, at Carbondale, Southern Illinois University?

JOAN MITCHELL: I never saw that either.

LINDA NOCHLIN: In Carbondale. Joan Mitchell Paintings '51 to '61.

JOAN MITCHELL: I never saw that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It must have been an early. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Retrospective.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . retrospective. It's interesting when you [think] you're all go. . . . And obviously your reputation was growing, I mean, you were. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It was good then, until the Pop Art and Stain school squished us all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, tried to. And did a good job, I think, for a while.

LINDA NOCHLIN: For a while, but I mean, as you say, all these things go on without. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh sure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Also I just wondered, you know, that whole term "second generation."

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I've been asked and asked about that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, is that a boring term, or isn't it?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, it seems to have stuck! I think it's a very boring term. I've answered that in the fall show.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: No [Stephen] Westfall [painter, critic Art in America]. I think. . . . I mean, we were younger, so we were second, but we were painting at the same time as they were, really.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: We were.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. I totally agree.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it was, you know, a way of. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____ were castoffs.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's a put-down, but, I don't know, I don't care. I call myself a "lady painter" and AEOH—Abstract Expressionist Old Hat, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, that's absolutely. . . . So you moved to the house at Vetheuil, the gardner's cottage of which had been. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Monet's house.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . Monet's house.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, my mother died, in '67, so I got some of the bridge money.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. (chuckles)

JOAN MITCHELL: And so I bought that house, thinking I wouldn't have to dogwalk—I had three Skye terriers, that came from Patricia Matisse—and keep Fremicourt, but it would, thought that also, ohh, maybe cheer up a kind of bad relationship with The Twenty-Four-Year Live-In. And. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. So you could sort of go to Paris. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: But then they demolished my place in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, did they?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I never knew that.

JOAN MITCHELL: I had to get out of that. So I was stuck in the country. That got a little bit hairy.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I still am. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: There you are. Could you talk a little about the place of dogs in your life? (chuckling) Because I happen to love dogs, too, and I'm just. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think they are very important. When Barney insisted on divorcing me, as he had on marrying me, he went to Paris and bought George, and he said a Frenchman was coming, and it was George, my poodle—who had distemper. It took me all winter to cure him. But he was a very important part of my life. And the first dog I had ever had. And then from then on, then I said, "No, I like dogs too much," then Patricia Matisse gave me these dogs.

LINDA NOCHLIN: The three Skye terriers?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, they were children of their Toy-Toy. Patricia Matisse gave me that one dog, and then three dogs. Well, for the children, only Joan took care of everything.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, I mean, that's standard, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. I've had thirteen dogs, and I've never bought one.

LINDA NOCHLIN: They've all been given.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. [Mme. Gigitte] Maeght gave me Iva, the German shepherd.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, and you now have, what, four German shepherds?

JOAN MITCHELL: I've three Germans. . . . [Iva had puppies and I kept two—Marion (named after my mother) and Madeleine (named after a mistress of The Twenty-Four-Year Live-In). Iva died September 25, 1986. I am still crying. She was wonderful.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Three. That's right.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . and a little Brittany spaniel that was the daughter of another Brittany spaniel, that a vet gave me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh. (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: Okay, and then I've had abandoned dogs and one thing and another. But they are very good company, and. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. No, I would never be without a dog, so. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: What do you have, Linda?

LINDA NOCHLIN: I have a Scotty. I had a Saint Bernard.

JOAN MITCHELL: Up in. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: In the country.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . in Vassar, not in. . . . That's heavy stuff.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, but the Scotty is just wonderful. He is. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Nasty little terriers. They are very tetu, very. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, stubborn.

JOAN MITCHELL: Stubborn, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: He just sits down on his haunches and that's. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Nice dogs.

LINDA NOCHLIN: They are nice. Okay, so you have been at Vetheuil since 1969.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, '68, I think. [July '67. I bought it.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: '68.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I didn't work there. [Painted there starting '68.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: I started in, got it in summer of '67, and Ed Clark, who is a painter, and his wife, lived there and painted. He painted in my studio, but he also painted the walls; it was kind of an exchange.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I'd go out on weekends.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, in the sixties. [1967 to be exact.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, well, and then I started. . . . I was still painting at Fremicourt and I remember starting the sunflowers, which I saw in Vetheuil and painted them in Fremicourt, you see, and _____. The thing about Fremicourt, also about St. Marks, I had to roll [big] paintings to get them out, which was a real drag, because of thickness [of paint]. And when I started painting in Vetheuil, you can just take the [stretched] paintings out. Well, that really changed unconsciously an awful lot of. . . . Walk them out stretched, it's great.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure, exactly. Oh, because otherwise, it's a real mess with heavy paint.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, the paintings start cracking and all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When did start working in, you know, diptychs, triptychs. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: That had to do with Fremicourt, because of transport [to New York].

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: Wanting to make a big painting and doing it in. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Parts.

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure, you couldn't get anything out [down the stairs]. And then I got. . . . I don't like the idea of, I see no reason for a painting that is continual, you know, and then cut. Why cut it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think it should have, I mean, go together but not. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Necessarily. . . .

[Tape 2, side A]

[Carl Plansky (CP), whom JM describes as a "good painter," arrived for his "date" with JM, joining in the conversation—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . intermission _____. (laughs) _____ go _____ since _____. This is the second tape.

JOAN MITCHELL: You're doing my crossword book.

CARL PLANSKY: Just only the easy ones. I'll leave the hard ones for you.

LINDA NOCHLIN: This is the second tape on the Archives of American Art Smithsonian Institution, an interview with Joan Mitchell on April 16, 1986, at the Westbury Hotel in New York. The interviewer is Linda Nochlin. Tape number two, side A. Okay. Now, we were, I was up to, you remember, the triptych.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yup, why did I do the. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Why did you move into that?

JOAN MITCHELL: It got sort of fun, and then on little paintings, one doesn't work too well, then you add on another, keep hoping. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____. I've noticed in some of the literature, that people have tried to read some religious meaning into these diptychs, triptychs, you know, because that was a form that was used. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: That's not my style, no.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I mean that. . . . [noise, unintelligible] Have they? Have they?

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, I think some people reading into, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I haven't done triptychs, three pieces, in a long time. I've been doing two and four.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Two and four. So it's really a kind of way of getting more space to work in.

JOAN MITCHELL: I also like the vertical—the cutting.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. You like those divisions?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's interesting. You go over them?

JOAN MITCHELL: Not at all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No. No, I mean, but, you always work within the individual rectangle.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: For the individual shape. Okay, can I ask you some things like, you know, what are your usual working habits?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, they've changed considerably. I mean, I've always worked in the afternoon, and at night, and then I go back to the afternoon the next day.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I like the day light and I like the night time.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Not the night light. Electric light.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but you work by electric light at night.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I hope so. (laughs) Turn it all off.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but I mean, you find it. . . . [speaking to Carl, who is rustling paper?:] (giggles) I can't because I can't hear you.

CARL PLENSKY: Ask it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. You work, you don't find any problem with working with an electric light?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yes, I do.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Or do you change it the next day?

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, but I'm so used to it. I mean, I know that an Old Holland blue Carl has given to me will be bluer in the daylight. ____ ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. So you know that already.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh sure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, by experience.

JOAN MITCHELL: And if something. . . . I can always pull out a painting and. . . . And I'm pretty good at. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, at. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Judging what the difference might be.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Yeah. Certain colors change more than others.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Blue, more than. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, but they all change. Quite a bit, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: How do you start a painting?

JOAN MITCHELL: [thoughtful pause] Well, I would go back to my word “feeling” that Shirley can’t bear. (chuckles) You know. ____ might all have. I might get an idea sitting looking at the river, or something, or a specific. . . . Oh, maybe a month ago I got two ideas that I’ll use.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, keep working.

JOAN MITCHELL: They’re just some I had. If I can recapture this feeling of the idea.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When do the titles of your paintings come?

JOAN MITCHELL: Ahh, after. I mean, you know. This group was between, sort of hospitals before and after, one thing and another.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. What’s your major medium?

JOAN MITCHELL: Turpentine.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: In empty dog cans.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right. But you’re basically, I mean, an oil paint. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, oil, yeah. Medium is usually. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, I know.

JOAN MITCHELL: But turpentine and the oil that’s in the paint, which is very good paint, is sufficient to keep it. . . . [I don’t have to add medium to the turpentine.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you have any preferred dimensions, I mean, for your canvases?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, to stack paintings in the studio, which is really very high, but it has beams that cut, I can’t go higher than two meters eighty [centimeters—Ed.].

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: Which is the reason for that height.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I gathered, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then it’s quite a narrow studio. I can never see a big four-panel job all at once ____ _____. I can see two big panels. That’s about all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That’s about what you do. Do you like to finish one work at a time, or do you go back and forth.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I go back and forth.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. How many do you keep going at once usually, or isn’t there a usually?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, this show I had an awful lot going at once. [I think] going back and forth. One painting I had started in. . . . I finished it about nine months later.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Really.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But that was with interruptions?

JOAN MITCHELL: I put it aside. I never knew what to do with it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see. And then you get ideas from other paintings?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, or courage or, "God damn, I, so it doesn't, come on do something to it," that kind of feeling.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you leave it in the studio where it can be there for you, or do you turn it to a wall?

JOAN MITCHELL: I turn it to a wall.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You turn it to a wall.

JOAN MITCHELL: I can't paint with everything showing. I think. . . . Sometimes I leave one in the back there, a big one, that maybe the spirit will move.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But basically while you're working on a painting that is what you're. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, there's one painting. But at the other end of the studio I might have something showing I'm thinking about.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, right. I know people have asked you this a great deal, but did moving to Vetheuil, which is the prototypical landscape scene of the nineteenth century, did that have an impact?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, I suppose.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, the whole region along the Seine, sure, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, I guess.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, not Vetheuil specifically.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, I guess it did. Yes, but. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: But you know, that's painters' nature. Did that have any impact?

JOAN MITCHELL: [thoughtful pause] I'm trying to think of what you mean by prototype. Because I'm thinking, isn't that just pretty nature? I mean, pretty fields and the midwest in deluxe?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, partly, but what I am saying is that painters in the nineteenth century used it.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, oh sure, I know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You know, you sort of recognize it as being a painters' subject.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeess. I'm sure, yes, I'm sure it influences me in terms of green and gray and color and, I mean, New York light is so different, and it always hits me when I come here [New York], and it excites me to see great extremes of dark and light and no nuance—which I love. But there the Isle de France has that, you know, filtered light that is that, where even on a gray day, the green is very green, and the red is very red.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. So color and light are intensely different.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. I think. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . in ____ France, than say in New York, or in Chicago, or in. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . than in other. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Or California.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And they have an impact on your. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I think they have an impact.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . on your color sense rather than what you paint.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think. . . . I think walking out barefoot and moving the paintings, being able to move them out of my studio, for transportation, things like that have had more. . . . As well as the landscape. Lake Michigan was pretty important, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, but do you generally feel that something we call nature is important, both to you as an artist and as a person?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I once wrote in—it's in "Joan Mitchell Paints a Picture," as I remember, Irving Sandler, a long time ago, that I hated the word Nature with a capital "N."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But now I accept it. I suppose. I mean, I really like trees and flowers and dogs and all that much more than . . . a lot of other people.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: You know, I really do get pleasure out of. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, I know you do.

JOAN MITCHELL: Great pleasure. Out of just looking at. . . . But I have fun here too, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Well, you're a visual person ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's, yeah. Right, right.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Whatever is interesting visually around you you're going to respond to. You use the word feeling quite a lot. And. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Uh huh. Well, that's in that catalogue. You read it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: You did read it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure. I read it cover to cover.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Absolutely. But you also at some point say you're very much against the term Expressionism or expression.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I didn't say against. I said German Expressionism, so-called. The real stuff, you know, I don't, I never felt as close to that as I did to Cezanne or Manet or. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, in terms of, you know, I don't think. . . . What is a really Kandinsky expressionist thing? [loud noise]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, he's ____ [posed, composed], but just, he's very abstract, I mean, that's the point ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: And Bill deKooning is a. . . . Well, I certainly like his work, and I suppose that's expressionist.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. But it's not expressionist in the specific sense of expressing a particular angst or a particular. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I think his women are really expressionist, don't you?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, yes. I would say.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Well, that doesn't grab me as much as Excavation or Ashville or. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, the lands[capes].

JOAN MITCHELL: Whatever they were.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What's my other ____ question. Here. [ruffling through papers—Ed.] How would you say that your recent work. . . . Do you see it as a continuation of your work in the past?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, always.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you see any breaks, any significant breaks.

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You see it is a continuation.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Except I will go back to the lake [as subject], or I will go back to some feeling, I mean, some. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. But there have been no. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I've never felt a break of any kind.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Of any sort.

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe. Not enough. I keep feeling I'm repeating myself all the time.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But you also must feel some sort of gradual process of change, or certain directions you'll go in at one time and not in another.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. [hesitant]

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, within that continuity, you must feel that there are certain moments of change.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think there have been. I mean, I think. . . . Yeah, probably.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, it seems to me that in your most recent—let's get this [reorganizing papers?-Ed.]—your most recent show, there seems to be—to me, anyway. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: That's the painting that I, nine months later, I was still working on.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, the Then, Last Time I?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see that. For example, there seems to be a sense of time and temporality, stress in the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, stress. Death warmed over, okay.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, okay, because. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: That's what that's all about.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Exactly.

JOAN MITCHELL: [Signeth].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, because there's Before, Again, I mean, the five. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I was sick before and then I was sick again, you see.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: So it was sort of between hospitals.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, but there is also a feeling of air and space in some of these works, which I see as the ____ one.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think. . . . Now, you [Carl—Ed.] were there when I painted Faded Air, one and two.

CARL PLENSKY: No. [hesitant—Ed.]

JOAN MITCHELL: No? Or just before you came?

CARL PLENSKY: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't know. I think. . . . My. . . . I was having more and more trouble getting around, walking, painting. I think that's why they're so airy and thin.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Ahh, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: (laughs)

CARL PLENSKY: ____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Perfectly valid, absolutely.

CARL PLENSKY: I think you're also. . . . Of course you have to get the mark where you wanted it in the first, the first time.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, so that I didn't have to work over them. I didn't have the physical. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think. I mean, this is unconscious, but I really think so.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But that is an ingredient, you know.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then I got into my, what I call my. . . . Because I ____ _____. [searching for painting?—Ed.] This I call my "Rothenberg scumbling" technique. ["Scumbling" is a renaissance term meaning underpainting for glazes. The underpainting is built up in white and dark.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, the Before, Again IV: Rothenberg Scumbling.

JOAN MITCHELL: And this one.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Before, Again III.

JOAN MITCHELL: This is much earlier.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that's, you see, you get up close to the. . . . [Started, While I] scumble around.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Don't, I mean, don't tell [Susan—Ed.] Rothenberg, please. [She's a very good painter and she doesn't use glazes.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. No, no, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's much easier to do than getting back and making a very accurate big thing, where if you can't walk. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: So I developed a new. . . . (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: So, you. . . . A new technique to work for you. But then that's true of all artists. I mean, you know, that ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I suppose with your brushes strapped to your arthritic. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, Renoir, yes. Exactly. I mean, that's part of the style.

JOAN MITCHELL: Although I really didn't much, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Or Titian's late style has some similar qualities to it, certainly.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I wanted to. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Aren't we moving right along, here?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, we're moving right along, very. . . . Yeah, could you talk a little bit about the impact of some of your, how you feel about your dealers? I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: I know you don't want to. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Off record! (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, no.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It seems to me you've had very pleasant relations.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, Eleanor Ward was a crook. [My lawyer called her that.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, yeah, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I had to, you know. . . . I mean, or shall we call her a dishonest "lady? She was being such a "lady" all the time [i.e., not a woman].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: You know, that hurt my feelings. Larry Rubin [William Rubin's brother] kicked me out because Greenberg "dropped me." Because Greenberg said, "Get rid of that gestural horror."

LINDA NOCHLIN: (giggles)

JOAN MITCHELL: Jacques DuBourg was darling, but he stopped his gallery because of age. Kornfeld showed me [Bern, Switzerland], but I had, then I was, he sort of—what do you call it?—stored my paintings for free and never showed me again. I don't know. [He has the Swiss auction house.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Beatrice Monte. She worked with Larry [Rubin]. That was that. From '58, I think, that _____.
_____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: She stopped dealing—or certainly stopped dealing with me. I don't know. Now she lives in _____ [USA maybe]. Let me see now. What wonderful dealer do I have. Umm. [I have two and they are fine.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you think the gallery system is different in France than it is in the United States?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think the whole thing has changed.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, before, in France—well, they still do—they buy a certain amount of work for the year at a much cheaper price. Then they, I mean, you can have two dealers and they'll split your work. They'll split your output, while here [New York] it's on consignment.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I'm on consignment with [Jean] Fournier [Paris], also. [And Xavier Fourcade, New York]. I prefer consignment. [I am close friends of them both and have been for a long time.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: However, _____ with that one deal I had with Larry [Rubin], I don't think this should be in in any way. I really don't.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: He did say he'd buy \$10,000 of work a year, which was the first stable income I had.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Didn't last. It lasted for one year. (laughter) But. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, okay. Whose writing about you have you found particularly. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yves Michaud.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yves Michaud. Could you say a few words about his writing and why you find it particularly. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I had read the deKooning thing of the catalogue at Beaubourg [Pompidou Musee, 1984], that book.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I liked it very much, and it seemed to me very, that he, who is a philosopher and so on, understood painting in painting terms, not in some sort of conceptual way.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: You know what I mean?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Did you read that?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, I thought it was an excellent piece.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, I did too. And when I, and—Fournier suggested him—I first met him, which isn't long ago, two years ago. We hit it off like that. I didn't have to explain about a painting, "Well, do you know what I mean?" And then this. . . . (laughs) [gestures]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I liked—it was more psychological, but I liked it—Marcia Tucker and the Whitney catalogue—about territories and isolation.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Right, I thought that was a very interesting insight that it was about. It wasn't landscape in the traditional sense, but it did have to do about territory and home and, you know, and things like that.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, exactly. I thought she was good. Those are the two. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: The two that you would think were. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I've had, you know, a lot of—what's the [referring to buzzer going off or searching for word?—Ed.]—complimentary stuff. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . but I don't think [all, or] is more biographical, you know. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Not his _____?

JOAN MITCHELL: Or about my garden, by you [Linda Nochlin—Ed.], I think that was. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Umm, do you have young people who you think are. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . you know, are interesting, or perhaps that you are an influence or, or whose work you have _____ interest in.

JOAN MITCHELL: I have a lot of, young people's work I like.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't, other than encouraging them, I don't think I'm an influence, particularly.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But you've had young. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Do you, Carl?

CARL PLANSKY: [Not very much, not really].

JOAN MITCHELL: You're the closest one I've influenced, if I, the closest. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I think I went through a period ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . one could call influenced by, but. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Could you mention the name?

JOAN MITCHELL: Carl Plansky.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I, the other younger people I was telling you I see and I enjoying seeing what they've done in a year and all that. I think it's more that I encourage them, or would hopefully try and get some dealer to see their work, or something like that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What about, do you have assistance?

JOAN MITCHELL: Wish I did.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No. You have none.

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You have worked also at times with poets or. . . . I mean, you've done other kinds of things. Could you talk a little bit about your activity as an illustrator—you're not an illustrator.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I did pastels to three poets.

LINDA NOCHLIN: [Letters, leather].

JOAN MITCHELL: To Jimmy Schuyler.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, four. There's Jacques Dupin, Pierre Schneider [wrote the big Matisse book], and J. J. Mitchell [dead poet, died Spring '86].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Were you happy with the collaboration?

JOAN MITCHELL: And, oh! And Chris Larson [dead young poet], also. Five.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What kind of collaborative effort was it?

JOAN MITCHELL: The only one. . . . [pauses] There was really no collaboration; I just took the poems.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And you did what? I mean, what kind of work?

JOAN MITCHELL: They're on a, they're quite nice. You can see some of that. Hal [Harold] Fondren has some of them—and Jimmy Schuyler. They're on a sheet of pastel paper, and depending on the form, whether. . . . The poem is typed, so it has a rectangle, right? Or what? Or a long thin, or short fat, or whatever it is. And I place that on the page so that is white. You can read the poem when I colla—when I do a poem.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, _____. (chuckles)

JOAN MITCHELL: It isn't a painting, you know. And then in relation to that shape, I do color abstracts.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, around the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . the shape of the poem itself.

JOAN MITCHELL: I've pasted the poems on. I didn't like that collage effect. I've fucked around a lot with it. I had a good time. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: And how did you work with the other people? Like with J. J.?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, J. J. was living at the house [Vetheuil], and Chris would come out every weekend, so they were kind of writing poems at the house.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see. And then what did you do in. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, then they would type it up for me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, and then you would. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Then I would pastel it up.

LINDA NOCHLIN: On the paper, the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, they would type it up on pastel paper, expensive paper [where I wanted it].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then I would show. I had a show of the. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Were these made into prints ever?

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: They were. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: They're just unique objects.

JOAN MITCHELL: I had a show of them, yeah, in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When was that?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't remember. Pierre Schneider put it on.

LINDA NOCHLIN: So those are really unique objects.

JOAN MITCHELL: I gave Pierre his poems. I gave Jacques Dupin his poems. I gave Jimmy's to Hal Fondren. J. J.'s I don't know where. [I have a lot.]

CARL PLANSKY: At Joe's.

JOAN MITCHELL: They're at Joe's! Of course. They're nice.

CARL PLANSKY: Yeah, they are.

JOAN MITCHELL: Joe Le Sueur. [Writer, great friend of Frank O'Hara.] [For, Where, Well] the big ones. . . .

CARL PLANSKY: You have five of them.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Have you. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: They're at _____. You can see them around.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I'd love to see them.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I have some at home.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have you ever wanted to do that or something like that again? I mean, working with, you know, an _____?

JOAN MITCHELL: I wouldn't do it like that. I don't know what I would do! Paper, trouble with, my studio is so small for, if I start working on paper, I can't work in oil. I wish I had a. . . . Maybe in the house, I'll fix up a paper room.

LINDA NOCHLIN: A [solar]. . . . Have you ever thought of, have you done prints?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What media have you worked in?

JOAN MITCHELL: Etching and litho.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And who did you work. . . ? I mean, did you work within a. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I got a first print prize, juried by Philip Guston when I was a student at the Art Institute, in the juried Chicago show.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Fantastic!

JOAN MITCHELL: Hah! Hundred bucks.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Terrific.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was a lithography. Then I worked in etching, at the Maeght Foundation and, yes, and at the Maeght Printing Press in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And those I don't have any more of. I liked them. Joe [Le Sueur] has one of those.

CARL PLANKSY: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Hal [Fondren]. . . . Pierre [Bondreau] has one. Poondie [my niece, Sally Perry] has two of them, I think. Anyway, then I had, then I've worked with—I never finished those—essence de lavande, in my studio Vetheuil with Sam Szalron's cousin [painter; shows as Claude Bernard]. [I got some lavande essence and plates. I'll work through a printer in Lille, Michel Le Cote, January '87.] Then I have worked with Ken Tyler twice [at Tyler Graphics, in Bedford].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I haven't finished. Those were lithos on mylar.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Um hmm!

JOAN MITCHELL: I've been asked to go to Lille to work; they said they'd come to me. I've done silkscreens for a book of John Ashbury. Oh, that's a long time ago!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, tell me about ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, that was a. . . . [editor Richard Miller]. He's dead now. With Floriano [Vecchi, the printer]. . . . What's his name? He's alive. With Grace—they were beautiful books. I have one. [Joe Le Sueur sees Floriano Vecchi.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Those were books?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, they're four books. [I have them. Lovely.] Big books. There was Kenneth Koch, John Ashbery, Jimmy Schuyler, and Frank O'Hara. Frank and Mike Goldberg. No, Grace and Al Leslie. No, Leslie, who ____ Grace Hartigan. (chuckles) You gotta have a _____. I had John Ashbery. Mike had Frank O'Hara. Kenneth Koch had somebody [Al Leslie].

LN/CP?: ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, she wasn't in it. Al Leslie. Al Leslie had Kenneth Koch. And who else did I say?

LINDA NOCHLIN: I don't know.

CARL PLANKSY: Grace.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Grace Hartigan.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . had Kenneth Koch. No, Al Leslie had Kenneth Koch. Jimmy Schuyler [had Grace]!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Jimmy Schuyler, okay. So it was a book?

JOAN MITCHELL: There were four volumes in a whatever, one sleeve or whatever. What do you call those?

LINDA NOCHLIN: That wasn't Peter. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Miller. [Richard Miller. He's dead. A very nice person.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, who put it together? ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: It was shown; Museum of Modern Art put it on, showed it once.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: They were silkscreen.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, and when was this? In the fifties?

JOAN MITCHELL: It was in around '56.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Silkscreens. Big?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, let's see, you had two small ones, like this. [gestures—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And three full-page. . . . There were five all together. So the full-page were. [gestures—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And how big an edition was this? It must have been a pretty small edition.

JOAN MITCHELL: A hundred and fifty, maybe, two hundred; I don't know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That sounds terrific.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, nuts.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Was that fun? It must have been.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It was interesting _____. This is a kind of. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And then I worked—I never finished them—two etchings at Hayter's when I first went, that one week at Hayter's.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, that's right. I wondered what happened with you _____ [at, to] Hayter's.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I scrapped the plates, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: He wasn't there. I should have. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do ever feel like doing prints now, or is that not. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, this wasn't so long ago that I. . . .

[Tape 2, side B]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, this is the second side.

JOAN MITCHELL: Aren't we about done?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, will be. They say four to six hours, but I think we've been so concentrated. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I do too. I was looking at the time, thinking, could I have a little shot of Scotch?

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) Because you keeps _____. Yeah. Why don't we take a little. . . .
[Interruption in taping]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay. Well, some of the things I wanted to ask you was sort of. . . . Who do you think your audiences, I mean, who do you. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I've always been told that I was a painter's painter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, now what does that. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: What does that mean?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: That painters like my painting and the big wide world overlooks it. I suppose?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, doesn't seem to me the big wide world is overlooking it either! (laughs) But I mean, to say that somebody is a painter's painter who has been, let us face it, as successful as you are in every possible public way, that means something additional. And what is it that. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh! I see.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . painters, you know, when people say you're a painter's painter, what is. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I know. . . . To me, it would have meant that—this is pre this new rage in buying and selling paintings—that, I think, that the formal values, like light, space, color, all those things that a painting is made up of, as well as the Jacob going up the ladder or Venus on the half shell or something (chuckles) would be what interested the painter. And perhaps the public would want the picture of the Christ child, so to speak. You know what I mean.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I suppose that's what it means, no?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Yeah, I mean the people who are really interested in the painting as painting.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, just in there as a subject, I have a good friend who has a house and a swimming pool, and a lovely thing, looking right at the Mont Ste. Victoire. It's framed between trees. I could never paint there. When you asked about my Normandy landscape.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I just couldn't. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Mont Ste. Victoire I understand perfectly, yes. It would just be overwhelming ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sort of like in competition, with or something like that.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm, um hmm.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Exactly. Do you ever feel like going back to the middle west and taking a look there?

JOAN MITCHELL: I'd love to see the Art Institute. I'm doing a commission if I can ever get around to it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: I haven't started it. It's a man who has a collection of some sort. I think he does interiors. He sounded very nice. And he has a window in his dining room, double window, overlooking Lake Michigan.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I know exactly where, what building he lives in.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And in the daytime, he. . . . He has two paintings on each side. He had a Motherwell diptych there. But he sold it. And then at night, they come together and cover the windows, like the curtain or something.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well.

JOAN MITCHELL: And he asked me if I would like to do the lake, and of course my reaction was, "Don't cover up the lake! How can [you, we] do that?" (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____. Crazy!

JOAN MITCHELL: Having lived over it, at all my childhood. Well, he said at night—which made sense—when he has people for dinner they will reflect in the windows. And I said, “You mean, you can’t see the drive going up and along?” That’s what he said. So you see yourselves in the window.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, which is disturbing, no doubt.

JOAN MITCHELL: That’s what he. . . . I wouldn’t be. . . . [I would never close the lake out.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: So he wants you to what?

JOAN MITCHELL: To do. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: To paint the panels.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I’d do a diptych, right?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then in the daytime, it’s opened. It’s got an elaborate structure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it sits on each side of the two windows, and at night it’s closed like a shutter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: And becomes a diptych. So it has to work as two separate paintings, and it has to work together, which is a little trick. But it’s. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see. That’s an interesting commission. I mean, demanding. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I ordered the stretchers for it, and so. . . . I ordered four [six] in case I. . . . (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe I’ll do it. In that case I’ll go there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, take a look at the lake. [January ‘87 I met the man and wife. I doubt if I’ll do the commission. Crappy idea and people. Have painted lots of pics but not those.]

JOAN MITCHELL: I’m always looking for an excuse. Now, I mean, I couldn’t go back for a long time because my mother and the whole. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Were you very broken up by the death of your mother?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. Yes, I was.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, you’ve been close to her for. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, as a mother she wasn’t much good. She was like my child.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But as, I, yeah, I always felt very maternal towards her, actually.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right. And she did die recently?

JOAN MITCHELL: ‘67.

LINDA NOCHLIN: ‘67, well, that’s, I guess. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It’s not that recent, but it was ____ to her and all that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, I felt. . . . I didn’t want to go back there, but now I’d sort of like—I was hoping this Cornell show they funded could go to Chicago; that would be nice.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When is that coming off?

JOAN MITCHELL: Couple of years. ['88, I think]

LINDA NOCHLIN: And that's going to be a complete retrospective?

JOAN MITCHELL: I guess so.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Starting right. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Cornell and then Albright.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, they're not going to get my paintings right from the beginning.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But from about when, would you say?

JOAN MITCHELL: Where would I start it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Um hmm.

JOAN MITCHELL: '52, I think, around in there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Who's curating that show?

JOAN MITCHELL: Tom Leavitt and, no, a woman. Judy [Judith Bernstock]. I'm seeing them on Friday.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I know Tom at Cornell. Who's the woman?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But anyway, it's going to be a full-scale show, with how many pieces?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. And it'll be. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Then it goes to Albright-Knox.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: So far that's all that's definite. Maybe San Francisco. Maybe Texas.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Wow.

JOAN MITCHELL: I would love to have it go to Brooklyn, but [they're renovating Brooklyn].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I don't know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who decides all this? _____?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, the museums, if they have an opening.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right. That would be terrific to have it in the New York area.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, sure! Although Cornell isn't that far away. I had a ball—I didn't know even Carl [Plansky]—at Syracuse; that was the funniest thing in the world.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You had a show at Syracuse? [At Pei Museum.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, and it's an I. M. Pei Museum too, at Cornell, which will be nice.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, right. This is at the Everson? [Syracuse.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes. I had a, that was my first museum show.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When was that, do you remember?

JOAN MITCHELL: My Five Years in the Country, '68, '69—that was what it was called—'72.

LINDA NOCHLIN: '72. My Five Years in the Country.

JOAN MITCHELL: James Harithas did it, and he titled it that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, right. And did you feel that was a good, I mean, that was a good show? I mean, representative and interesting?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh yeah. It was a crazy weekend with the Berrigan brothers. [The priests.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: You had fun.

JOAN MITCHELL: . . . and the peace marches and the Attica prisoners.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Ohh. ____ ____?

JOAN MITCHELL: Everything was going on. Angela Davis was talking. All at the museum.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Fantastic!

JOAN MITCHELL: [Jean] Fournier [my French dealer] had never been to the States before, and he said, "My God!" (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is it always like this? It was that ____ sometimes.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was fun. It was a nice show. I have a catalogue of that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: Ask Fourcade.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's in a hard cover.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Because I have a lot of material from other. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It's not a good preface at all, I don't think.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who wrote that?

JOAN MITCHELL: Jim Harithas.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Harithas, oh. Right. What do you feel about the political situation now, just to move away from art, because I think it does feed into how you feel. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Where are we now? I mean. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Both in France and in this country, and in the world now.

JOAN MITCHELL: The terrorism and the. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, you know, you were talking about sort of the liveliness of the sixties, I mean, what do you think. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, the fifties, I guess.

LINDA NOCHLIN: This was in the fifties. This was Angela Davis, was that in the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, that was seventy. . . . That was Viet Nam.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right. Okay, but then what about now in comparison to those days?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I was talking about that. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think there's some lively, there's some manifestations going on. They're all the time in Paris. They're always manifestations, so I mean. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, I know, right. But do you think there. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: But there weren't the events like in '68, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: What do I think about what? I'm afraid to get depressed.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) That is ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: So I don't, I. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: You don't think about. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I read the paper every day, but gee whiz!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it's. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Creep city.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Creep city, exactly.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think there's a general kind of valuelessness . . . I don't know what it is. Values seem to be in—what do you call it?—the yuppie, the yupper east side, west side, is that what they call it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yupper. I don't know whether it's yupper west or yupper east or yupper coast to coast, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't. . . . Or the painting world, I mean, all of that I think is rather distressing. I think for, it'd be very difficult to be a young painter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Now. Say specifically why you would think that now, as opposed to when you were a young painter.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I don't think one expected to make money, to sell out a show. I remember [Franz] Kline saying to me—this was later on—he had a show at Janis and he said [whispers:], "I didn't sell out, but don't tell anybody." That was when it was just starting to. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't think it's inspiring. What inspired me—what inspires me—is, well, like that Manet show I mentioned, when my sister had died. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Which was in, what, seventy. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: '82. [Paris]

LINDA NOCHLIN: '82, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: When it came here, beautiful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't mean necessarily that kind of painting—well, yeah, I mean good painting. And maybe I'm a very conventional old-fashioned person.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, do you think there's something in the atmosphere now that would prevent young people from achieving even good painting? I mean, what would you say the state of the art world is that would. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I mean, I really think just a bad drawing, bad painting, bad color, because you can't take the time to do it correctly doesn't inspire anybody. I mean, I'm not that far off of. . . . You've [LN—Ed.] said the same thing a lot. I mean, but maybe we're both old-fashioned. (both chuckle) You know, I like to see some good drawing, like yours, Carl. You know, I mean, fuck it. I don't care whether it's abstract, figurative, this thing, that thing; I just. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Well do you think there's too much, maybe, emphasis on immediate commercial

success?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes. And the artist becomes that immediate merchant, almost. The artist as a merchant, okay. Wheeling and dealing. Well, I always thought, but maybe I'm. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: I'm not religious or anything like that. A little more spiritual something or other.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: A little more feeling. And there's my word again. You know?

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I thoroughly agree.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I find that. . . . [pauses] I find that uninspiring, and if I hung around too much I might find it very deadly. If I let it enter my studio. And it would be hard not to have it enter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Here.

JOAN MITCHELL: Here.

LINDA NOCHLIN: This ____, yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe not, I don't know. I went to people's studios yesterday. I guess you just lock yourself in your studio and then see the few people you like.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, but it's probably harder in New York, you think, than it is in France.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yes! I'm, people. . . . Oh no, in France I live in the country; I have no choice.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I have no place in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe if I lived in Paris, I think it would be the same thing.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You would feel the same pressure and the same. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, maybe. Although I think it's. . . . There's much less money, there's much less. . . . Well, there is a pretty high-powered. . . . And they, in France, they call it a star system now. I mean, my God, ____ you want to puke.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Have you ever taught?

JOAN MITCHELL: No. But privately I have.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. I mean, you've given advice to people who. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I actually taught [and was paid].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Did you?

JOAN MITCHELL: My shrink—no privately—had a man in our group—I was also in group therapy—who was a commercial artist. He was about fifty years old. And he wanted to make a painting that he could hang over his fireplace. And he was so. . . . He was very facile, and he was so used to putting in the highlights that, you know, that he didn't see them anymore.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is that right?

JOAN MITCHELL: The commercial highlights. And so [Edrita] Fried [dead psychoanalyst] got me the job, but I think he paid me \$10 an hour, plus whiskey.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And also he sort of fondled, but I just said, "No, no, this is professional."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I'd make a setup, and he lived up here someplace, over east, and I was very serious about it. And he [wouldn't, would ____ the] paint, and then I would come twice a week for criticism.

LINDA NOCHLIN: So you really do, very serious teaching.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh yes, oh yes. And I taught your friend, Gabriel [____—Ed.]. That was not, that was for free, but he's a doctor, older than I am, and he wanted to. . . . Every Saturday he would do his thing in a. . . . That's hard work, to teach. And I would say, "Go in and look at this," or I would think about it, and I would have a book there of, and think about this line and space, and. . . . Those are the only two.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Because it seems to me you'd make a wonderful teacher, ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: What do you think, Carl?

CARL PLANSKY: Oh, I think [not].

JOAN MITCHELL: I think I'm a little tough.

LINDA NOCHLIN: [unintelligible] that's what. . . .

CARL PLANKSY: ____ what did you do at the Studio School.

JOAN MITCHELL: They ask questions.

CARL PLANKSY: Oh, it's just a question and answer.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that was the way I did it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When did you give this talk or this visit at the Studio School?

JOAN MITCHELL: Umm. Were you there?

LINDA NOCHLIN: It was this year?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, no. Several years ago.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Several years ago.

CARL PLANKSY: [I was in town.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have you done that often? I mean, gone to. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: And that's the way I got. . . . Mercedes [Matter] was there. Quite a few people you know. I mean, students were there. Oh, what's his name was teaching, of course. The man who takes the photography.

CARL PLANKSY: Oh, Steven [Sloman].

JOAN MITCHELL: Steven. I just said, "Ask me questions."

LINDA NOCHLIN: And what sorts of questions did people ask you?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, sort of, "Why do you paint?" or "When did you do this?" Students, and so it's easy, and you get going and then they're arguing and. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And that's fine.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Then you can sort of. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: But to speak about my painting, I would never do that. Or even to speak about. . . . No. No, I wouldn't.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Are there any particular younger painters that interest you now, either in New York or in Paris, or anywhere for that matter. I mean, you know, sort of young painters that you feel have sort of kept that feeling [and faith, in paint].

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure, lots of them. Lots of them, yeah, and I think if I were around I would find more.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I like to go to, if I could walk better, to people's studios. I love that. Young people.

LINDA NOCHLIN: To just visit and see what they're doing.

JOAN MITCHELL: And look at their work! Oh, yeah. Yak and. . . . See, I don't think that atmosphere exists anymore, either. Now, check me on this. Because I think there's such a competition running around and this money and all that, that you don't sit around Schnabel's studio with a beer and talk about painting. I don't think that's the name of the game anymore.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: Or send over a collector to the other one down the street: "Oh, go see so and so's work." No, I don't think that exists anymore either. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: On the contrary.

JOAN MITCHELL: On the contrary. And so. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: You don't think among certain young people that kind of. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Carl, why don't. . . . You would know better. Does it?

CARL PLANKSY: That kind of camaraderie?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: No. Also artists sending over. . . . You have a collector, you send. . . .

CARL PLANKSY: I don't think a man with one [painter] [to, would] send a collector to another painter.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that used to be done a lot, in Paris and here. "Go see so and so, who. . . ."

LINDA NOCHLIN: Any particular young painters that you might find interesting?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think Peter Soriano, Becky [Rebecca Purdum], Carl. . . .

CARL PLANKSY: Purdam?

JOAN MITCHELL: Purdam. Carl Plansky, David Humphrey, Billy Sullivan, Cora Cohen. Keep going.

CARL PLANKSY: Rufus.

JOAN MITCHELL: Rufus Zogbaum. Sarah Holt—this is Paris—[Zoncklo Divan], Michael Andrea Schatt. That's a nice story. She's a young painter.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Who is that now?

JOAN MITCHELL: I was on the jury of the Montrouge Salon last year, because I won the prize the year before, and then you're put on [the jury].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And God, these [creams], they're just, all the art, Paris art world and I was the only painter on it—and politics and voting for. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: And the paintings. That's the best salon in Paris and it's pretty bad. [Oh, no worse than the Whitney or whatever.] And this one girl, I'd seen her—she was in a three-person show. One of the people I had known so I had gone to see it, and I liked her work. And there she was. And I saw some of her work in Mantes La

Jolie [my railroad stop for Vetheuil]—three more paintings—and then I saw it in the Montrouge Salon, and I thought it was a hell of a lot better than—and I didn't know her. And I pushed her, with Danny Blach, who's a well-known [art person, curator, etc.]. We got her, we almost got her a medal—they don't give money there. And then sometime later, I knew somebody that lived in Mantes La Jolie who knew her. And I said, "Well, I'd like to meet her, because I'm trying to get to know some people, or jazz up my life a bit, or. . . ." I don't mean famous people, I mean. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, no, people you can talk to and be with. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, and we've become very, very good friends.

LINDA NOCHLIN: How wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: And she's a very good painter [26 years old], sort of A.E. [Abstract Expressionist—Ed.] kind, and works in this vast place without heat. She reminds me, of energy in a kind of unfucked-up [young] Joan.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Like you.

JOAN MITCHELL: When I was young. With a lot of very intelligent, very nice person. So there's one, and she knows other younger people. Well, I, you know, I'll try.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's terrific. I mean, there is the possibility of some sort ____ of interest in other. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, sure. She knows other people and then. . . . I've met some. . . . Then I see the people in the gallery, like ____ in Paris.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Is there anything else that you want to talk about? I mean, that you would like to go down forever in the Archives of American Art, I mean? About your work, about your feeling about other artists, about. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Feeling about gardening with you? (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: You can do that, that's fine.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, we had fun that weekend.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, that was a wonderful weekend. I really, I loved it.

JOAN MITCHELL: And then Linda gets out, Carl, in the morning [in, and] her jogging and goes jogging around the Seine and around the—I mean, my God.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, I hope we do it again. Looking back on your life, I mean, you know, you are a truly successful, important artist. I mean, do you think there have been prices you've paid for this? Like, as a human being, has it all been worth it? I know these are in a way questions that are impossible.

JOAN MITCHELL: I'm not so sure I could have done otherwise, but I wish I. . . . I'm regoing to a French shrink now, and she's helped me a lot. I wish I'd gone sooner, because I think women are inclined more than men to be self-destructive, and I really think I had the masochistic medal there for a while, and I, you know, I want to, that I wish I had stopped. I think it's also very masochistic to sit and cry in my spilt Scotch for areas in my life that have been very creepy and that I should have cut, left sooner. So what's, that's, I feel sorry about that. But I'm getting to [me, be] perhaps more, oh, I don't know, trying to look at that in a more positive way. Maybe I got something out of that too, I don't know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: You mean all parts of your life, in some way, a part of. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe. I mean. . . . I feel also uncomfortable about staying in France, but then, if I could only make sort of a, instead of saying negative, "I'm too lazy to move," a positive thing, "I really like this house. I really like this view. I really like Paris better than New York"—or not better, or equally, or differently, or something, which is quite true—instead of sitting—which I can do, I used to do—and missing the country and missing New York, or missing France.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is there any way you could envision the sort of [part and, important] part, or [heavy], or one place and. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't think so. I think it would split me, and I don't have that much time. When I'm working, you know, I have to be available; I can't be traveling all around.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And it's important to you. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And I have my dogs.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, and that's harder yet.

JOAN MITCHELL: I mean, there's no way I can find a way.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It's important to you to be rooted in one spot, even if that spot may have drawbacks, like any other spot.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I lost my Saint Mark's studio and that, it was a hundred and sixty bucks and, you know, they wanted, after thirty-some years, they wanted \$3,000 for it, I guess. But I was thinking, again, it goes with catalogue last night we were. . . . I was at David Humphrey's, which is right on the corner of—and Emily Cheng's [American painter]—Lafayette and the Cooper Union there, looking up.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Right across from Astor Wines and Liquors. Fabulous place.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Oh, it's a wonderful spot.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that's where, you know, where I've always bought my wine and St. Mark's and Astor Place in the. . . . The whole thing. It hasn't gone away.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Um mm.

JOAN MITCHELL: There I was sitting and looking at it, you know. (laughs) Certain things have a. . . . Still there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you think you could be an urban person again, like. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Not with dogs, but I saw a couple of. . . . Alicia, she's good. What's her last name?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Creuse. [I think. Ask Carl.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, Argentinian sculptor. She has a loft I could easily live in. In the same building as your star, J. B. [_____]—Ed.].

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) Okay.

[Tape 3, side A]

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . Joan Mitchell, interview by Linda Nochlin, at the Westbury Hotel in New York, on. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: April 16.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (chuckles) April 16, 1986. Tape numero three. So, I mean, you think you could maybe in some ways respond to the _____. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, but, there again, I don't know. You asked me about what inspires me, I mean, the sunflowers. I don't know how much I would miss that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Walking out barefoot onto the grass. This is all in, "if my dogs die," which I suppose they will even one day. [Iva died September 25, 1986.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Then I might move here, but I don't know. And the brutality and I wear a cane and you're a sitting. . . . An [old, older] woman with a cane is a sitting duck, no?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, not necessarily, I don't think. And you may not have a cane all the time. Isn't that _____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, but running. . . . Oh, I don't know. I'm not being—I'm being realistic.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, you're being perfectly realistic, but I was talking also in an art sense whether you would feel at home.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I was thinking. . . . I was at, oh, art sense, I think. . . . I don't know, I mean, would avoid what I don't like. I was down in the Bowery in Billy Sullivan's [studio], and then I walked up to Alicia's, which is a question of from the Bowery near China [town?—Ed.] up to Mulberry Street, over. . . . Not very far. But I didn't feel comfortable. He [Billy] walked me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: He said, "Oh, come on"—we couldn't get a cab—"I'll walk you over." And. . . . [searching for the right words—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: It's not. . . . Right, it was hard. It was hard. And you also said you wanted to use all your energy for working. I mean, is that. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. I think it takes time; I mean, the way I work, it does.

LINDA NOCHLIN: How many hours a day do you work usually?

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't. I might just sit there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see.

JOAN MITCHELL: But I have to be available.

LINDA NOCHLIN: How many hours a day would you be in your studio?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I might be six hours, but three if I'm working, four. But I can't do that now. I can't even work for twenty minutes standing up.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do you sit now, when you work?

JOAN MITCHELL: I do watercolors, honey.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Ohh. You're doing watercolors.

JOAN MITCHELL: I did them in the hospital. He's good [CP?—Ed.]. But I'm learning. I can't be Malcolm Morley, but. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have you done watercolor before?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I've done a lot of gouache and stuff like that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: This isn't gouache; you mean real watercolors.

JOAN MITCHELL: Watercolor. My father used to do them, and then suddenly it struck that's why I don't do them, so I said, "Come on, now's the time." (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, right. It seems a natural thing for you to do, now that you think of it. I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I don't work a lot with transparency.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: Still, there is. . . . In *The Faded Air* there's transparency.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, I mean, in these, you do feel, in the most recent show. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . it seems to me there is a sense of like what Cezanne was doing—in a way, with those watercolors. I mean, Cezanne used watercolor to sometimes work things out first and then do them in oil. But all this bare space and sort of. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, it's a. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is this how you work in water—has anyone seen the watercolors?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, *Fourcade* took a few, but, no, not my latest.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: You haven't seen them, Carl, no. Then I got mad at it all. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: You got mad at having. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: The medium.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Is it hard?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, it has none. . . . If you use, I have watercolor sticks that are like oil sticks, you know, and then you can get a drawing in there in the _____. But there's. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: You can't draw [in there]?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, you can do anything if you're good at it technically. Wetting the page and [untranscribable sound]. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Is that, you wet the page first?

JOAN MITCHELL: Depends. I wet some of it and. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Because I was, Wallace collection, I saw the most beautiful watercolors by that friend—Bonnington—he was a friend of Delacroix.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm, sure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, boy! I never knew you could get effects like that with watercolors.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, look at Turner, look at Blake.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure, sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: Fantastic.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Incredible stuff; you don't think of those as being part of watercolor. Are you going to make more?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, Malcolm told me to get those bamboo brushes that you know about, and he gave me some technical know-how. I don't know. I guess I might.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do more. Have you ever done sculpture? I'm curious.

JOAN MITCHELL: I most certainly wanted to.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have you done it?

JOAN MITCHELL: No.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No. Is that something you might think of [some day]? I mean, do you have a feeling that you would want to do it?

JOAN MITCHELL: I used to want to do lost wax. It's so expensive that, you know, and I think Camille Claudel did it for me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Did you see that show?

JOAN MITCHELL: Beautiful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: She's a wonderful sculptor.

JOAN MITCHELL: I could kill that brother of hers.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Disgusting.

JOAN MITCHELL: Disgusting.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, keeping her in an asylum. Yeah, right.

JOAN MITCHELL: You saw it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I was in Paris, I. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Did you get. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I have the book about her.

JOAN MITCHELL: And the catalogue?

LINDA NOCHLIN: And the catalogue, both.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, it's so depressing.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. I mean, the book is just heartbreaking.

JOAN MITCHELL: You [CP—Ed.] saw that.

CARL PLANKSY: No. I wasn't here then.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I came right after it closed.

CARL PLANKSY: I saw the book ____ felt sad.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. Right after it closed. Someone should. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I was angry. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, the whole thing. Her mother wasn't exactly a lily in all this. And Rodin.

JOAN MITCHELL: And that motherfuck.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sorry, but you were _____. They're used to it. They're all interviews of artists, there must be dirty language. (laughing)

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, well, O.M.F., as my niece would say.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. But I mean, wasn't. . . . I mean, Rodin was one of the least attractive people in _____, no?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, according to our _____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Most accounts of _____ work. But I was just wondering about how you felt about three dimensions and did you miss. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I had, I sort of, I was. . . . I've gone through periods where I get very involved in sculpture—in other people's sculpture.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And for some reason, I was talking to Peter Soriano; we were talking about sculpture and somebody else. Richard Serra, who was I talking about? David Smith, and Mark diSuvero, and nothing seems to be grabbing me. Why? What is it that. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. But what sculptors do you like?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, that's what. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: [_____—Ed.] [Haskman's, Pastman's] work?

JOAN MITCHELL: Maybe. Oh, well, Giacometti, of course. And I suppose more painterly sculpture, like Degas and the. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Hmm, right. But you've never been inspired to seize a lump of clay and beat it up?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, Riopelle did it, you know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. Yes, I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, and he shared [owned] a foundry with his mistress [Rosalyn Granet], so it wasn't quite the place for me to hang out.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, well, you could find another foundry.

JOAN MITCHELL: I know.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. So, but is that anything you think of for the future?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh yes. I was thinking of it at Peter's, with the wax he was using. Very definitely.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have you had many other commissions? You said that this man was commissioning you.

JOAN MITCHELL: No, and I've never accepted them. And I'm not so sure I'm going to do this one.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: But why not take a . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure!

JOAN MITCHELL: The reason, it's because it's Chicago and the lake and that I would take a crack at it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But I could very well envision something like a Joan Mitchell Orangerie, I mean, the notion, you know, like that whole. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh!

CARL PLANSKY: That [Blue, Palouse, Toulouse] show that had what ____ was all ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was the. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: You saw that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Umm, did I? Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: The Grande Vallee?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, yes. Okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: The blue. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's why, that's probably exactly, the Grande Vallee, which was very blue and very like that.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Maybe that's why I thought of it, but, you know, a permanent installation somewhere of that sort, you know, would be a tempting kind of. . . . I don't know, it would have to be a commission or using things that you've already done.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's where, I think, I changed for that Grande Vallee subject, which was really not a subject—the Grande Vallee was a [wild vast] place where this Gisele Barreaux [composer] played with her cousin when they were children, and the cousin, aged 28, died of cancer. And she told me he said to her [when he was dying in 1982], "If we could only return to the Grande Vallee once again," as he was dying. I mean, that was what that was all about, so that was a subject of. . . . You know, it was the summer my sister died—the same week—and we went to the Manet show.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That was in '82.

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm, when I started the Grande Vallee.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I was stuck on a subject, and I thought, "This is very true and very simple," and I thought, "Shit, I'll paint the Grande Vallee for her." And now, I got her to tell me about it, and it was green and blue, and it was just a vast sort of territory outside Nantes [Brittany].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: And so that's how I got started on that whole series, which had nothing to do with. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well, it was a realm of feeling and memory and so on.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, right. Yeah, which has, which I liked, that show, I liked that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: But you might envision at some point, you know, a room, a Grande Vallee room, where they would all be together.

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure. Give it to me. (laughter) Set it up, Linda, I'll paint it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but I mean, your paintings are so individual. Do you sell them? I mean, do they go as triptychs and diptychs? Like if a museum wanted to buy. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . a work of yours, can you, would Fourcade say, "That's part of a triptych. You have to buy all three," or do they split up?

JOAN MITCHELL: Are you kidding?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Huh?

JOAN MITCHELL: It's only signed on one side, on one end.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I see, okay. So they're thought of as individual. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Paintings.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Always!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Always, okay.

JOAN MITCHELL: And there's no way they can split them, because the rest isn't signed.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, okay. (chuckles)

JOAN MITCHELL: Very simple.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It's a very good way of ensuring it. No, but you know what people do. I mean, they. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: I know what people do.

LINDA NOCHLIN: They do that. But I mean, what if you did a whole room and just signed one of those.

JOAN MITCHELL: One painting. Well, I can't afford that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And Fournier would never be able to sell it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, no, but I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: But maybe one that, you know. . . . I was sorry to see that Grande Vallee—there were two that really didn't belong to it—yours [LN's?—Ed.] and one other that—split up, because it looked so nice there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It looked wonderful. And I'm sure that's why I'm asking this question, because I thought of it as an environment. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It was.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . rather than. . . . You know.

JOAN MITCHELL: And I think that's the first, the only show I've done like that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Are you thinking in those terms again?

JOAN MITCHELL: No, in this show, I was. . . . Then I showed at the Fiac [Paris art show at Grand Palais. Fournier's stand, big space].

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was different paintings, just anything to paint, because then I got sick and I was so depressed. But then. . . . This show was, "How To Paint Without Cigarettes," so. . . . (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Hard.

JOAN MITCHELL: Anything at all. Anything. I didn't. . . . And I was very scared—not very scared, but I started to get anxious—coming here. I couldn't imagine how to hang them. This disparate group of. . . . [Fourcade '86]

LINDA NOCHLIN: You are the one who decides on the hanging of your shows? Do you work. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Always. But. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: In conjunction with, or all by yourself?

JOAN MITCHELL: Usually in conjunction with, but this one he [Fourcade] put up and I walked in, hobbled in, and said, "Change two," and he said, "Of course," and "Put that one in instead of that one," because they weren't all hanging. And that was it. There was no. . . . He did it, except for choice of what paintings to hang.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: But if I had disliked it, it would have been changed.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Because I'm, I reserve that right.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure. But you are the one ultimately who decides on the hanging. With Fournier also?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I'll listen to anybody's ideas, except. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Do you think where the space is. . . . Do your paintings look different to you here?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Hanging in Fourcade's than they did, say, at Fournier's in Paris?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, they're not the same paintings.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, but I mean, if you do show in both, I mean. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, very.

LINDA NOCHLIN: There's a. . . . What's the difference?

JOAN MITCHELL: Don't you think, Carl?

CARL PLANKSY: Uh huh. I think the light is totally different.

JOAN MITCHELL: There's a. . . .

CARL PLANKSY: There's ____ different rooms completely different.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, Fournier's Gallery is just beautiful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Um hmm, it's gorgeous.

JOAN MITCHELL: And when the light of the, the daylight—of the day—when it goes down, it gets cloudy or something, or when the sun's out—I mean that light in there, _____. It's like, that's, that light has feeling.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: And it's some uneven space. It isn't like a. . . . It's not a commercial space, at all.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's got a personal. . . . And one wall is crooked, and they're very old. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, building. But Four. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think that's just beautiful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it is.

JOAN MITCHELL: That's why I like Fournier's. I mean, just to show there is what. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, just wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. And he's. . . . We, you haven't been there.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What Fournier's?

JOAN MITCHELL: Not since he. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, sure.

JOAN MITCHELL: After my Grande Vallee show, were you then?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure. Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Where he opened the first room?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Isn't that beautiful?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, it was just gorgeous.

JOAN MITCHELL: I've never hung in there since that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I was there in November.

JOAN MITCHELL: You never call me, so I mean, you know. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: I was there for one day. (laughter) Looking at one Courbet and then I ran to. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, no, I like that space.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah.

JOAN MITCHELL: This I would hardly complain about, but it's. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yet this is, I mean, this is not your average commercial gallery either.

JOAN MITCHELL: Not at all. And it has a, because it's a townhouse, it has an intimacy that Green Street, Leo Castelli's, doesn't have. So I prefer that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right. Yeah, I mean, this is like ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: I think of my paintings as easel paintings.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: Although that one Grande Vallee series did have a, but they were easel paintings, you know what I mean.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sure. But I think Fourcade, for this country, is really a kind of wonderful space.
[Interruption in taping]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, I realize we have six hours. We have done approximately three and a half or four. And I think we have covered just about every aspect, unless there is more that you want us to discuss now.

JOAN MITCHELL: What is the point of this? It has to do with painting, right?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes, it's the Archives of American Art. It is that every American artist of, you know, stature will have an archive established which will be available for research purposes. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Sure.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . by people writing history of American art.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I think whatever. . . . I don't think I have really much more to say.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I mean, is there anything, though, specifically that you want to cover that I have not covered in my questions? Because I try to go into every area from soup to nuts to [salad], but, you know, there might be some aspect like your religious life or. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: What! (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . _____, something.

JOAN MITCHELL: Let's do, do that one.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Or like books that you've read that are interesting to you. I mean, like your favorite authors or who you're reading or something like that. I know you're a big reader.

JOAN MITCHELL: What, nothing else to do, honey. (laughs)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sort of what you do for recreation.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I've got, you know, in the hospital I was reading good books since mysteries are sort of boring me (laughs)—in my old age.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes. What are good books?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, Robertson Davies, the new one that Carl sent to me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Did you think it was as good as the trilogy?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Not quite. (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: Not quite, yes.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Nothing could be that good.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, it's too bad.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, for example, I read a book that I thought was fabulous. Harriet Doerr.

LINDA NOCHLIN: A Stone. . . . Ohh, for Ibarra? Is that what it's called Stones for Ibarra?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's Mexican. [She's not.]

JOAN MITCHELL: Yes, and she wrote that when she was 68 years old?

LINDA NOCHLIN: I think she was older than that, in her seventies?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, and I keep meaning to ask them. I wrote. . . . Well, I lived in Mexico, so that, I mean, when, the end of it when she says about the stones, bringing the stones, oh, ummm?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Umm, [incredible].

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, you've read that!

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, it was an. . . . I had to put it down because it got me so clutched.

JOAN MITCHELL: It's beautiful, Carl. We'll get it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: It's a great book. It's really wonderful, yeah. Anything else that you've read, either now, or. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Show her, under my address book is. . . . I love that.

CARL PLANKSY: _____

JOAN MITCHELL: But Yves Michaud gave it to me.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What is it? Let's see. Oh, von Hofmannstahl, The Lord Chandos' Letter.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, now that's. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: That I don't know. But that's all in German!

JOAN MITCHELL: No, it's in English.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, it's the beginning, it's in English.

JOAN MITCHELL: Give it out to. . . . I'll show you just a page. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Tell me what it is that's so _____.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't know which glasses I have on now. Umm, well, he's talking about he can't write anymore; words mean nothing to him. Well, I mean, just take a. . . . It's very short. I had another copy, but I don't. . . . He does that spiritual thing with things.

LINDA NOCHLIN: [reading:] "Just as I once saw a bit of the skin of my little finger in a magnifying glass and found it to resemble a huge field full of ridges and wallows, so it was for me now in my encounters with men and their conduct. I could no longer comprehend them with the simplifying glance of habit. Everything fell into fragments for me, the fragments into further fragments, until it seemed impossible to contain anything at all within a single concept. Disjointed words swam about me, congealing into staring eyes whose gaze I was forced to return. Whirlpools, they were, and I could not look into them without dizziness. Their incessant turning only drew me down into emptiness."

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, well that's. . . . But then he makes a spirit so _____, out of a. . . . Oh, it's so. . . . [pauses, looking for a passage—Ed.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: "A watering can, a harrow out standing in the fields"?

JOAN MITCHELL: That's it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: "A dog in the sun, a rundown churchyard, a cripple, a small farmhouse, any of these can become a vessel for my revelation."

JOAN MITCHELL: That's it, that's it.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Sounds like your painting.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah. All right.

LINDA NOCHLIN: "Each of them, or for that matter, any of a thousand others like them that the eye glides over with understandable indifference."

JOAN MITCHELL: Carl, I gave you this.

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____.

JOAN MITCHELL: I've been reading that.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, can I see that? [reading:] "And all at once. . . ."

CARL PLANSKY: Is that [Pride]?

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: “. . . at some altogether unpredictable instant [assumed, assume] for me an aspect so sublime and so moving that it beggars all words.” That is wonderful.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, that’s why Yves gave it to me. After he had done my interview. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: It’s a great book. This. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: And he found it. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: The Rainer Maria Rilke letters on Cezanne. One of my students is doing a report on this.

JOAN MITCHELL: It’s a sweet little book, isn’t it? Nice book? [I love Rilke. All of him. Except last summer (‘86) my painter friend Michael Schatt told me to stop reading Rilke (I was very depressed) because he was “passive morbid” and I needed an “active morbid.”

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. I didn’t even know it was available in. . . . And it’s translated by Joel Agee. Where did you get this?

JOAN MITCHELL: I got it at. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: At Books. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Books, Inc. [Or Books & Co., next door to Whitney.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, I’m going to rush. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Where I got this.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I’m going to rush right over and get it, because I only have it in German and my German is not very good. These are wonderful letters.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, they’re wonderful.

LINDA NOCHLIN: They’re short, and they’re a way of looking at ____ ____

JOAN MITCHELL: Here, I put it in this sack here.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Unique, unique. I want it now. A bag? ____ ____ .

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, I was going to forget it. You’re welcome.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Have books been important to you all your life?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, yes. Now a book that I [love, loved], but now it’s sort of been taken away because of the movies, which I will never see, A Color Purple.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oh, yeah. A wonderful book.

JOAN MITCHELL: I wonder what the movie is like.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Well. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: It scares me.

CARL PLANKSY: Did you see it?

LINDA NOCHLIN: No.

CARL PLANKSY: I haven’t seen it, either.

JOAN MITCHELL: I hesitate and I just love that, “Dear God,” her letters, you know, and I often think. . . . I think, again to do with God.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I read that book at your house.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, you did?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, these are _____, and Harriet Doerr. I've got to get another copy of that.

CARL PLANSKY: Linda, did you see Room With a View [movie]?

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, no, I haven't seen that.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well then, of course, poems. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah, what poetry do you feel most. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, everything. But I was rereading, some reason, because of death warmed over, just wondering why I liked T. S. Eliot so much, and I still do, just as much. Because it all has to do with death warmed over. (laughter)

LINDA NOCHLIN: Or not warmed over.

JOAN MITCHELL: The early poems and the, all the, yeah. . . . Oh, I like. . . . I like Jimmy Schuyler's new book, which is titled A Few Days. I like that poem, "A Few Days." I think that's beautiful. [I used it as a title.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____ "A Few Days."

JOAN MITCHELL: Um hmm, the book is called A Few Days, too.

LINDA NOCHLIN: What do you like about his poetry?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, it's so exact. It's so. . . . When it's good, I mean. It's exact, but it's so. . . . Well, it's very visual. It's descriptive of green tree, blue sky.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right.

JOAN MITCHELL: I like it. It's, I always have.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Any other modern poets that you have. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, that's. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: _____

JOAN MITCHELL: And when, that. . . . "And when I thought my love would die." I mean, it is dead, "when the" something "the sun went right on shining." I can't get, that's all. I illustrated that. I mean, did it. "And when I thought. . . ."

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . my love would die?

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, no, "was dead," but anyway, the sun went right on shining. You know, it just goes on, but you're. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: That's a wonderful image.

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, it's wonderful form, but I've got to get it right; I don't have it right. That's all there is. I'm so glad you like that. Boy, have you got books?

LINDA NOCHLIN: Do I have books?

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, and you sent me Mr. Bridge and Mrs. Bridge.

CARL PLANSKY: _____.

LINDA NOCHLIN: And I've never heard of him. What's his name?

JOAN MITCHELL: Evan Connell?

CARL PLANSKY: Connell, yeah, Evan S. Connell.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I've never read that, no. CP: He's very good.

JOAN MITCHELL: Very good.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I read all the time.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, so you do, so tell me. Give me goodies. I mean, ideas.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs) You're accepted. I'm not going into the Archives!

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, yes you are.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, I just remember enjoying reading at your house, and that's. . . . I was just trying to, wondering what books you ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: What books do you have?

LINDA NOCHLIN: That I have?

JOAN MITCHELL: Lately.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Oooph, what have I read?

JOAN MITCHELL: Other than, everything I mentioned you have read, so. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: ____ ____, I can't think of interesting books that I have read lately. ____ ____.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, I was too.

LINDA NOCHLIN: When you ask somebody that question it goes. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, I read—I liked it—but it's not a good book. I was in the hospital. Jimmy Ernst? Not Such a Still Life. [The Bend in the River, Naipaul, all of Kundera.]

LINDA NOCHLIN: Right, yes.

JOAN MITCHELL: That was fun.

LINDA NOCHLIN: That sounds like it would be interesting.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah, very interesting. Good review in surrealist childhood. I mean, good. Moving, quite moving.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Yeah. I haven't really read anything major recently. I guess everything's sort of moving around. I'm reading whatever my hosts and hostesses have, which is. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Hmph.

LINDA NOCHLIN: (laughs)

JOAN MITCHELL: I've been weekendending.

LINDA NOCHLIN: No, not weekendings; staying with to save hotel bills is more the. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Oh, of course.

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . more the level of. . . . Well, I think we have touched on everything.

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Touching, unless there, again, if there's something that you feel. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: No, I just. . . .

LINDA NOCHLIN: . . . we should get into the Archives that we haven't and is totally relevant to your life.

JOAN MITCHELL: I don't think so.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I think we've touched on practically everything: working methods. . . .

JOAN MITCHELL: Yeah.

LINDA NOCHLIN: Okay, then we will call it a deal. And thank you very much, Joan.

JOAN MITCHELL: Well, thank you.

LINDA NOCHLIN: I think it's terrific and I would. . . .

END OF INTERVIEW

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