



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

Oral history interview with Joseph Hirsch,
1970 Nov. 13-Dec. 2

Contact Information

Reference Department
Archives of American Art
Smithsonian Institution
Washington, D.C. 20560
www.aaa.si.edu/askus

Transcript

Interview

PC: PAUL CUMMINGS

JH: JOSEPH HIRSCH

PC: It's November 13, 1970 - Paul Cummings talking to Joseph Hirsch in his studio at 246 West 80th that Street. Could we start with some family background. You were born April 25, 1910 in Philadelphia and you went to the Museum school, so did you grow up in Philadelphia?

JH: I lived in Philadelphia until I was thirty which is about half my life now.

PC: Were you born right in the city?

JH: Right in the center of the city and lived there until two years after I was married. I continued to live at the same address because in the building (which is Philadelphia red brick which is the equivalent of New York brownstone) there were several apartments in the building that my father owned. My father was a doctor. His offices were on the ground floor and the family lived in back. After my marriage we moved into one of the vacant apartments upstairs and lived there for about two years. And then we moved to New York.

PC: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

JH: I have one sister who lives in Philadelphia. I never had any brothers. My parents died years ago -- well, my father about ten years ago.

PC: What schools did you go to before the Philadelphia Museum school?

JH: Central High School which used to be City College and when I went there they still had courses in subjects such as ethics, philology, architecture and students had to take eight terms of Latin and something like ten terms of science, chemistry and physics. I wasn't a good student because I had many extracurricular activities. And that combined with this left over college curriculum --

PC: What were the extracurricular activities?

JH: I was art editor of this and the Art Club. We had a weekly newspaper, the Centralizer. And a monthly magazine The Mirror and I would do covers for it. We had exhibitions.

PC: It sounds as if you got interested in art very, very early.

JH: I was interested in art very early. I guess the earliest things that I did -- I think most children are picture makers; I think the great majority of children make pictures and make music when they're young. And then as they grow up the stop making music and stop making pictures. I would say that most children make pictures. Wouldn't you say so? I mean the average child makes pictures, draws. Well, I just scribbled more than the average. My mother occasionally used to take me to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra when I was eight, nine, ten, or eleven. She would take along a pad and pencil. That would be my tranquilizer. If the concert was a little long or tedious for my ears apparently it wouldn't matter if I had a pad and pencil.

PC: Was there a great interest in music at home?

JH: Yes. There was a piano in the house. My sister played. My father played. My mother used to play. Dad was torn between medicine and music to a great extent. Although he was quite interested in medicine and was chief urologist at two of the hospitals in Philadelphia his love of music and his interest in doing something about Sundays in Philadelphia resulted in his being one of the founders and the manager and treasurer of the Philadelphia Philharmonic Society which used the musicians in the Philadelphia Orchestra and gave eight or ten concerts a season on Sunday evenings, which were practically the only public event in Philadelphia. At that time the movies -- Philadelphia was closed on Sundays. The blue laws in Pennsylvania really were applied. And it was kind of a breakthrough. That lasted roughly during the twenties. But his interest in medicine prevailed and he couldn't do both things. Music was important in our lives. We heard a lot of concerts. We lived only a fifteen minutes' walk from the Academy of Music in Philadelphia.

PC: Was there interest in literature and in the visual arts, too?

JH: There were pictures on our walls. Many of them were the usual bourgeois pictures of sweet things. I remember we had several etchings by the Philadelphia artist, Joseph Pennell. He actually came to the house once or twice. I remember piping up and criticizing an etching he did of the Philadelphia railroad station; it looked as if the locomotive was coming through the guardrail or some strange thing. Our contact with artists was perhaps a little more than average. I think music was the more dominant influence. I still play piano every day; not by design; I just sort of drift to the piano. It's right there; it's the piano that I had when I was ten.

PC: What kind of music interests you? What do you play?

JH: I did play a lot of jazz by ear. I happen to have a good ear. My sister is three or four years older than I am and I had the same music teacher that she had. This meant that very frequently I would play pieces that were assigned to me by the teacher largely by ear. I never learned to read music as well as someone -- my youngest son now reads music better than I used to because he learned the right way, whereas I faked a lot because I have a facile ear. Which, of course, has nothing to do with musicianship. I still play a lot of popular music but I think I play much more classical music now.

PC: Which composers?

JH: The old squares -- Schubert, Beethoven, Scarlatti, occasionally Bartok, Ravel, Rachmaninoff. The old standbys that are still good.

PC: Do you think there's been any relationship between the painting and the music?

JH: I'm sure there's a relationship but I don't know what it is. The amount of time spent playing piano and the amount of time spent at the easel are bound to impinge on each other. I don't think the painting has affected -- yes, I suppose I'd play the piano better if I didn't paint so much. Perhaps I used to play more than I do now. But as I say, I still play a bit every day. I'm sure that there's been a relationship. In my choice of the things and the forms that interest me once in a while when I go over photographs of past work I notice the appearance, for example, of musical instruments a lot, much more than I realize.

PC: How did you decide to go to the Philadelphia Museum School?

JH: Mr. Milliet, who was my art teacher at Central High School, without telling me, sent in an application for a municipal scholarship to that school. Just before I graduated he informed me that I had been awarded a four-year scholarship to what is now called the Philadelphia College of Art but which then was called the School of Industrial Art. I had planned to go to college without thinking too much about it. The son of a Philadelphia physician goes to college. For some reason I had applied at Amherst; I think because I had spent a lot of my summers up in Massachusetts at a boys camp. When this four-year scholarship came through to the art school -- it was a municipal scholarship, the City paid I think two-thirds or three-quarters of the tuition each year -- it occurred to me to try it, at least for a year after I finished high school. Incidentally, one of the things -- a completely artificial thing that influenced my decision to postpone or perhaps forego college was that I was in possession of a big snazzy-looking diploma which said Bachelor of Art; I actually got an authorized Bachelor of Arts diploma. I don't think Central High School continued with that more than two or three more years after I graduated. But at that time the high school graduates got either a B.S. or a B.A. And since I had a diploma with Bachelor of Arts on it occurred to me that maybe I could postpone going to college. And I think it worked out very well.

PC: Who were some of your teachers at the art school?

JH: I suppose the chief teacher there was a Quaker illustrator named Thornton Oakley. I believe someone who still teaches there is Henry Pitts; he teaches pen drawing. The painting courses chiefly were taught by Thornton Oakley and an Italian whose name I'll think of only after you go.

PC: Were there lots of students? Was it a fine arts school? Or a commercial or industrial school?

JH: It was not as commercial as it is now. I get appeals from the alumni association now and it's very much involved with the world of art editors and advertising agencies and packaging and commercial design. The poetry aspect of painting and personal expression play an increasingly minor role than they did even when I was there. In Philadelphia there were two chief schools, as there are now. One is the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts at Broad and Cherry Streets. The other is the Philadelphia College of Art at Broad and Pine Streets. I chose the one at Broad at Pine. I lived closer to it. My teacher in high school, Mr. Milliet had applied for the scholarship to that school and he thought it was better; and because I was the recipient of that scholarship I chose that school. The Pennsylvania Academy did at that time, and still does, teach painting much more than this other school does. I did study a lot from the cast.

PC: How was Oakley as a teacher? I've talked to a few people who knew him but no one who really studied with him.

JH: He was a student of the Wilmington illustrator, Howard Pyle. I guess he was Andy Wyeth's father -- N. C. Wyeth -- studied with Pyle. I guess he was about Wyeth's age. Now that I've mentioned Wyeth I'm trying to remember why it was that my father somehow knew him. I remember driving down to Chadds Ford and meeting Andy and Henrietta Wyeth, who is now married to Peter Hurd. Now that I'm in a thinking mood, my father's interests apparently were not confined to medicine and music. He was a friend of Joseph Pennell, the etcher; and indirectly he knew N. C. Wyeth. And he was a schoolmate and an old friend of one of the greatest bibliophiles that this country has ever had -- Rosenbach. We did drive down to Chadds Ford and met Wyeth. I spoke to Andy last year and he remembers Dad. You asked me how Oakley was as a teacher. He was a didactic, old-fashioned teacher who would make you memorize things: "What is beauty?" "Beauty is truth, etc." Clearness, force and elegance were three precepts that he kept reinforcing. It was almost a kind of recited chant in the class. "You get clearness by having one thought only. You get force by living in your picture. You get elegance by loving your subject." It was something like, "Praise be Allah. There is only one God." It was something that we learned by rote. We were amused by it. He took his teaching very seriously. I got along with him. He amused us. He was a big, warm-hearted, frowning, tweedy man who paced back and forth before the class. Some of the kids used to titter. He was a personality. His work didn't command our great respect. He confined his own work largely to book illustration. He wasn't in a class with his teacher, Howard Pyle, or with his associate, N. C. Wyeth. He wasn't that active a person.

PC: How long did you study with him?

JH: Two years I think.

PC: In the art school did you continue all your other outside school activities? Or did you just continue your art program? Or were there no outside activities for students there?

JH: I had some stitches put in my scalp playing touch football during one lunch hour.

PC: I'm just trying to get the atmosphere of the school and what your involvement was.

JH: At lunch hour in nice weather we would play football. ON rainy days we would have peg fights in the studio (pegs being the things you put in the holes of the easels to support pictures). These made handy objects; we would throw them back and forth across the room. We had a lot of fun. There was no real hell raising. But there was a nice atmosphere in the school as I remember. I enjoyed it. But i didn't get much training in the use of paint as color, as pigment. The training was largely drawing and arrangement of forms and composition. But the use of color was something that I had to ge later on from George Luke here in New York and briefly with Henry Hensche up in Provincetown.

PC: How did you get involved with him in Provincetown? Did you go there to see him specifically? Or was it a summer place?

JH: One of my classmates had gone up there and studied I think with Charles Hawthorne in the last year of his life. He enjoyed working up there I went up the following year and studied with Henry Hensche. This was in the mid 1930s.

PC: How did you find being in Provincetown, spending the summer there, and his classes and so on. How was he as a teacher?

JH: Hensche took over Hawthorne's school -- the Cape School of Art. I was warned -- I've forgotten by whom -- to study with him only briefly, for a couple of weeks perhaps. I think I studied with him one summer, in the summer of 1935, for about two or three weeks. I didn't go back the following summer. A couple of years before then my classmate who had studied with Hawthorne in 1930 or 1931 had said that he enjoyed Provincetown very much. After I graduated from art school I decided that I might like something like Provincetown. So it ended up in Noank, Connecticut. Do you know of Joank? It's near Mystic, which is about twelve miles on the other side of New London. I was recuperating from a hernia operation and that was an excuse to take it easy. This was in 1931 I think because it was after I graduated. I met Robert Brackman there. I visited his studio. He did a portrait of me. As I talk I'm sorry to retrace my steps.

PC: Oh, that's fine.

JH: The teacher who I think of most fondly and I don't know if she was the greatest influence but she was my first teacher at the art school -- this was Gertrude Schell (S-c-h-e-l-l). She was living and painting in Germantown, Philadelphia. Do you know Philadelphia?

PC: Yes, slightly.

JH: And she is still living and painting in Germantown even though I met her half a century ago. On several occasions when I had exhibitions in New York she came over to see them. We've had a warm relationship. She was my first teacher in antique and she encouraged me. I didn't study painting with her. She didn't teach painting. She taught drawing, beginner and intermediate. She had mentioned Noank, she had been up there and that stuck in my mind and I think one of the reasons I went to Noank was because Miss Schell had recommended it. It still is rather unspoiled. It's off the main highway south of Westerly and north of New London . It's a little lobster village. Brackman had a studio there at that time. But it still wasn't Provincetown. Three or four summers later I decided to go up to Provincetown. Since Hawthorne was no longer living I studied with his successor, Henry Hensche. I have an idea that it was perhaps two weeks that I studied with him. But it was not a long time because he had such very definite ideas about color relationships. He knew all there is to know about color. He had opinions about everything but the ones I respected were the ones about color. I must say that working out of doors against the sun on the beach with little Portuguese kids sitting for the class, working without brushes, with a palette knife on whitewashed panels, using pure pigments, I learned a lot about color. In the course of a week the average student up there would do perhaps ten or fifteen paintings. In a morning you don't work on more than one study. I was little too facile and Hensche said, "Why don't you work bigger? Work on a forty-eight inch board." He didn't think that I'd take him seriously, and I don't think that I should have. But I did. I went to the lumber yard and got some Upson board. Despite a strong wind I got out there on the beach with this tremendous board. The board was so big that just to cover that area I didn't have a chance to get finicky. Later on I remember doing two color studies in a three-hour morning and sometimes two watercolors in an afternoon. Recently I found out that Van Gogh painted seventy-five pictures in the last sixty-five days of his life. I remember that in the course of one week I did something like twenty-one pictures -- three watercolors in one afternoon, sometimes a watercolor before breakfast in an hour and a half. We would have a model on the beach both morning and afternoon, different pose, different model, different picture. Those studies were called by Hawthorne and by Hensche and also by us "mudheads". We just smeared different colored mud around on this board. It was good study. I mean working without brushes on couldn't become very finicky. It was good, solid --

PC: It had a freedom to it didn't it?

JH: Yes. You couldn't pursue anything except color. And you learned what one color does to its neighbor, and how colors affect each other, and what air and light do to color. You didn't learn much about anatomy or perspective or design.

PC: There seems to have been a certain pressure to get x amount of work done in a given time, too.

JH: Yes, but it was concentrating not on design, not on anatomy, not on proportion, not on any of the refinements; it was just on color. I remember that some of the people who couldn't draw at all got some beautifully-related color ensembles that were almost abstract. You see, sunlight falling on any object, in my opinion, has a tendency seemingly to bleach it out; whereas with things against the sun with reflected light, in shadow, there's a much richer range of color to study.

PC: That's very interesting. When did you come to New York and work with Luks? How did that come about?

JH: That was between graduating from the art school in Philadelphia in 1931 -- I came to New York about a year later. My closest friend who is a well-known electroencephalographer -- now he's a psychoanalyst as well --

PC: Who is he?

JH: Dr. Silverman. He came to study in New York and enjoyed it. Before going to Wisconsin to study at Meiklejohn's experimental college he put in a year at New York University. He took several courses in chemistry and math. He was a real scholar. Then he went to Wisconsin. Then he went to medical school. Then he went to the Menninger Clinic. He studied until he was in his early thirties, I believe. But Dan Silverman had come to New York and liked it and that was one of the reasons I decided to come. Luks had advertised his class in one of the art magazines. And I had admired his work. So I decided to study with him. I studied with him for a couple of months in the fall of 1932.

PC: What were his classes like?

JH: His classes met every day on the top floor of a building that's still standing at 7 East 22nd Street. The American Anderson Galleries and auction used to occupy this space. The red velvet walls had been whitewashed. Here and there the whitewash would chip off and we could see that underneath was actually red plush. Anyway, the top floor of what was the American Anderson Galleries was where George Luks held his class. There was a model there in the mornings and afternoons. I think I registered for both morning and afternoon sessions. I was there for two months.

PC: How did you find him as a teacher? Was he there? Was he in and out? Did he say much?

JH: He came in one morning flipping -- he was wearing his monocle, which he would wear on occasion -- or rather he was wearing his glasses with a black ribbon. Also, as I remember, he had a monocle with a black ribbon which he would wear sometimes just for fun. He came in this morning flipping a big coin. We crowded around him asking, "What's that?" It was the Corcoran Bronze Medal that he had just received in Washington the week before. They had called him on the telephone to tell him that he had been awarded the first prize plus the purchase, plus the gold medal, and they wondered if he would please incorporate the money award into the purchase price. He said he wouldn't; he insisted on collecting both. And he was boasting to us that he held out and they reluctantly said all right. He felt that that was a kind of victory and thought it was not very nice of them to suggest that -- it was not a purchase prize; it was a purchase and there was a prize and they wanted to apply the prize toward the purchase. And he said no. My most vivid recollection of Luks as far as I am concerned was when he painted on one of my canvases and painted out what I had done. He did this in a way that annoyed me very much. But he made his point so well that I subsequently was, and still am grateful that he did it. What had happened was that I had painted a male model sitting in a white jock strap and I had painted the body with an overhead north light in a rather chalky manner. He said, "You know, if you priced that man with a pin red blood would come out of any part of his body. There's red blood underneath that skin. You've painted him in a very ashy way." And he proceeded to pick up one of my biggest brushes, dipped it into cadmium orange and started to put slashes of warm color all over the flesh area. I said, "Well, what would you do if he were wearing -- supposing the jock strap were orange, what would you do? You'd put the orange on his skin?" He said, "Ah! if he were wearing an orange loincloth and then you painted the jockstrap with pure orange, cool off the flesh a little bit here and there." And it worked. And then he wheeled around and said to me, "But he isn't." And he scraped it off and put back the white which was there and replaced the orange. In other words, I realized then that skin does not have a color independent of what is seen next to it; and Luks was saying to me that the skin would be changed by the fact that he was wearing orange instead of white. But actually it would actually change the appearance of the skin. Now this seems to me very rudimentary. But I had not known it. Since then when I'm teaching I realize that the idea is widely shared by young painters, art students: that a certain thing has a certain color under a certain light regardless of what is next to it. The neighboring color is such a determining factor -- B is so determining when you're trying to find out what A is but you must take into consideration that A is not A if it's next to C or to D or to E. If it's next to B then it's that color; if it's next to another color it changes. So Luks' rude, unpedagogical procedure made a dent on me. Later on I think it probably had an effect on my teaching.

PC: How were the other students in his classes? Were they people you were interested in? Were they friendly students? Or just the normal kind of art students?

JH: I guess there were about twenty in the class. I think most of them were there because they wanted to find out something about painting. They weren't there for any reasons of status. Certainly they weren't there for the reasons that some college students take a fine arts course because they think it's a snap course. They were there because they wanted to find out things.

PC: Where I lose track of my 1930's --

JH: Do you want to come up to the present?

PC: Well, no, I'd still like to --

JH: No, I mean do you eventually?

PC: Oh, yes, sure.

JH: I don't mind.

PC: You were still living in Philadelphia really at this time -- right? When you studied with Luks you were in New York but your home was in Philadelphia?

JH: Yes, I was rooming here. Yes, I returned to Philadelphia.

PC: You had a picture in the World's Fair in 1939 so you must have started to exhibit before that or about that time. Where did the first things start?

JH: Yes, I had a picture in the New York World's Fair in 1939.

PC: You started showing at the A.C.A. in Philadelphia.

JH: That's right. I forget what year that was. That's in the Georgia catalogue.

PC: But had you been showing in group shows in the late 1930s?

JH: Right after I studied with Luks, I think in 1933, I did a small picture of a couple of wrestlers and that canvas was exhibited somewhere: I think that canvas was exhibited either at the Art Alliance in some show or maybe at the Pennsylvania Academy -- I'm not sure, frankly. I saw it reproduced in the New York Times. A Philadelphia gallery was offering it for sale about a year and a half or two years ago for seventy times the price someone had paid for it; I sold it for \$50. Someone went in and asked this Philadelphia gallery that was offering it for sale and the price was \$3,500. That was a small painting. I'm not sure whether that was the first painting that I exhibited. But suddenly in 1934 I won, for me, a very big prize. It was a Walter Lippincott Award which is still given by the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts for the best figure piece in oil painted by, I think, an American Citizen. Anyway, it's an important figure painting prize. It's a painting of a masseur, a standing figure in a red loincloth in the lurkish bath that my father used to frequent. I painted this man with a handle bar mustache -- although he didn't have one. By the way, the painting is over there. It's a big 80-inch canvas which fell off the wall two years ago and has some holes in it now. When it was first exhibited at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in 1934 it won the Lippincott Award. And here in New York a few months later it was exhibited at the national Academy of Design where it won the third Hallgarten Award. I decided to retire it from exhibition; I wanted to keep that batting average up -- it was not a very salable picture -- a big, heavy set giant of a man standing with a cigar in his hand and a towel around his neck, and a crewcut, against the red background. It was called Masseur Tom. It was subsequently exhibited in 1942 at the Museum of Modern Art when I had a group of seventeen canvases there. I think the publicity attending those two awards -- It was in 1934 that I won the two prizes with that one painting. In the following year, 1935, I went up to study with Henry Hensche on Cape Cod. It was suggested by a friend or by someone -- I forget who -- that I ought to see Europe. I had applied for a Prix de Rome. At that time the Prix de Rome was won so consistently by Yale students that it was known as the Prix de Yale, although I didn't know that. I applied. The composition was held and I won what I was told was the highest prize you can win for a first applicant candidacy -- and that is Honorable Mention. That was in 1935. Then I met Audrey MacMahon, (Philip MacMahon's wife), who used to be head of the College Art Association. I met her in the Philadelphia home of Lessing Rosenwald, the great print collector. She said, "Oh! don't go to Rome! The Prix de Rome is deadly. Why don't you try out for a Woolley Fellowship to Paris?" I hadn't heard of the Woolley Fellowship. I made application for it and to my utter astonishment I was awarded a Woolley Fellowship. This was in 1935 and it was after I won the prize at the Pennsylvania Academy. So in 1935, a few months after I had studied with Henry Hensche, I went to Paris. To me the chronology of these things is irrelevant but I say "after" and "before" merely because there's some sort of alphabet involved to show what comes after what. I don't think it makes too much difference -- though perhaps it does.

PC: So you went to France then.

JH: In 1935, yes. I stayed there a year.

PC: And then you came back to the Depression in this country. Was it bad in France, too, at that point?

JH: I don't remember. I received a stipend every month from the Institute of International Education and a studio in the Fondation des Etats Unis. D you know Paris?

PC: Not any more. I've forgotten it.

JH: Well, on the southern rim of Paris there is Cite Universitaire where a lot of student buildings are. And the United States House, which is still there -- I saw it a few weeks ago.

PC: You had a studio in this building?

JH: Yes. I lived modestly on a small sum. What little money I had come over with I sort of saved because I had the idea of perhaps making a trip around Europe. I changed my plans and the trip around Europe turned into a trip around the world. I came home by freighter through the Orient. I came back on an Eastbound freighter. For some reason most around-the-world ships then -- and I think still -- go West -- I don't know why. I found a Norwegian freighter that was going East. I got it at marseilles. I changed ships in Japan. And ended up in San Diego. On the way back from California to Philadelphia I took a look at what was then called Boulder Dam. As my father said, I wanted to get home in the worst way. The first ship was a forty-seven day voyage with stops at various ports. I did a lot of sketching, a lot, and on board ship I read War and Peace. I enjoyed it. I think that was the most rewarding part of the Woolley Fellowship. I had gone to Paris by way of Italy. In Europe I saw museums. But what I saw on the way back in the ports -- Port Sudan; Colombo, Ceylon; Singapore; Hong Kong; Shanghai; and in Japan opened my eyes to an awful lot. It was a different kind of seeing.

PC: Have you been back there since?

JH: During the war as an artist correspondent I got to the Pacific -- to Hawaii and down to New Caledonia to Guadalcanal, to the Solomon Islands. But I haven't been to Japan.

PC: Let's see, that gets us up to about 1936, 1937. How long did it take for that tour? Months -- didn't it?

JH: I went to Europe on the Woolley Fellowship in late August 1935 and I got home in mid-November of the following year. I was away about fourteen or fifteen months.

PC: Did you do a lot of work in France? Or did you travel around?

JH: I did some work, but not much. I went up to Brussels and I went down to Madrid. With a friend, Carl Morris, who is now an abstract painter living in Portland, Oregon, I bicycled down from Paris to the Spanish border. We parked our bicycles and went to Madrid and Toledo. ON our way back we stopped off in Jarnac which is near Cognac, and stayed for five weeks and did a lot of landscape painting. And then returned to Paris. That trip to Spain and back through the Charentee country near Cognac took about two months altogether. When I got back to Paris it was late August. The Civil War in Spain broke out just a few weeks after we were there. As I said, I came back here by way of China and Japan. A few days after I first arrived in Paris I was describing to two you Canadians who were also at the Fondation des Etats-Unis just for a few days -- they were returning to their home in Winnipeg. They had been around the world. And I had said what a stunning experience it had been for me to get on a ship in New York and to get off the same ship and find myself in Naples in a completely new world. And they said, "When we arrived in Naples" -- which was only a few weeks previously -- they were coming in the other direction -- "we felt we were back in Winnipeg. Everything was so familiar." I said, "What do you mean?" They said, "Our first exposure to things not familiar was our arrival in the Orient." And it was only when months and months later, a year later, when I arrived in the Orient did I full appreciate what they were talking about. Naples is indeed very much like our culture compared to what one sees in the Orient. It's astonishing.

PC: When you came back you were still living in Philadelphia?

JH: Yes.

PC: What did you decide to do? -- you started teaching; but that was a little later, wasn't it?

JH: When I came back to Philadelphia in 1936 I forget what I did. I tried to support myself and did in part, by doing pastel portraits of friends and then friends of friends. I got some small commissions. I did a mural for some Democratic club. By 'mural' I mean it was a decoration in the recreation area of a Democratic club in some ward in Philadelphia. I was paid a few hundred dollars for that. Then an architect asked me to do some murals for a restaurant -- Steuben Tavern in Philadelphia. Which I did. Then some other architect saw that and suggested that I submit a bid (which I had never done) for a mural for the Philadelphia municipal court. I did submit a bid and to my astonishment I got one of the commissions to do a mural for one of the courtrooms there.

PC: Was that a very prescribed kind of mural? I mean did they want a certain thing?

JH: It was up to me to choose what the mural was to be. It was in the domestic relations part of the municipal court. This particular courtroom where the mural was to go is next to the Library in Philadelphia. The twin buildings in Philadelphia, which are the Library and the Municipal Court, are modeled after the twin buildings at the Place de la Concorde in Paris -- the Ministry of the Marine and the Hotel Crillon. The Parkway in Philadelphia and the Museum -- the Parkway's proportions were inspired by the Champs ___ Elysees. And those twin buildings in Philadelphia, the Library and Municipal Court were constructed at about the same time. This was in the late 1930s. And the courtroom that my mural was to go in was the one where F and B cases -- Fornication and Bastardy -- were tried. Time magazine wrote up the story and quoted me -- misquoted me (because I never said any such thing in my life) as having said that "I can't cover that wall with bastards." In legal parlance it was known as the unmarried mothers court where the City brings suit and a support order is decreed so that the father of the child of the unmarried mother is legally bound to support the child until he is twenty-one. What I did was a mural depicting adoption and some allegorical figure on a cliff and a child climbing up a ladder and another person holding a child aloft against the sky. It was a very corny but presumable appropriated decoration for this courtroom.

PC: Is it still there?

JH: Yes, it's still there. Then the WPA came along and I did another mural for the Benjamin Franklin High School, which was my old Central High School. I did a football mural. That was the first mural commissioned in Pennsylvania by the WPA.

PC: Did you go on that Project early on?

JH: I was on the Project in 1937 and 1938 I believe -- I'm not sure of the dates. In 1938 when I got married I was on the Project. (I have remarried since.)

PC: That was also the period when there was tremendous interest in murals being put in public buildings and it

seems that it was much in the air, I suppose because of the Mexican painters.

JH: You're quite right. It was very much in the air. On the Project I only did one mural -- the football mural in the Benjamin Franklin High School. Prior to that I had done the little mural for the Democratic club, and I think eight murals for the Steuben Tavern, which is a restaurant in midtown Philadelphia. I also did more elaborate murals for the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Joint Board in Philadelphia. These murals are still up there. There's a big, big mural 11 feet x 65 feet -- that's a big wall to cover -- in the Roosevelt auditorium of the Philadelphia Joint Board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers. That is still here. Plus some lighthearted murals down in the basement of that building.

PC: How long did it take you to do the large one?

JH: I imagine about four or five weeks. It was done in one warm color. Opposite the wall where the mural appears is a wall of glass brick which was so light that I knew in advance that I could not employ anything that had the least shine to it. So oil paint was out. I used dry color -- casein. And did a mural in -- well, the tone is the same brown that the old rotogravure sections of newspapers used to be published in -- a warm brown.

PC: Sort of sepia.

JH: Yes, dark sepia. Between chocolate and dark sepia. The subject of it was merely tracing the history of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers from the early immigrants way over on the left through outstretched hands and rather cliché symbols to the modern advantages of unionism way over on the right, with Sidney Hillman and Franklin Roosevelt the central figures in the middle, and the gangplank with the immigrants way over on the left, as I said. I haven't seen that mural for some time but as far as I know it's still there.

PC: Did the idea of doing great public decorations like this -- great murals -- interest you? or did it become a problem after a while?

JH: I did the murals only for money. Although the ideas were mine. Most of the time spent in doing any mural I think is not spent on the wall but in the preparatory sketches and ideas and the arrangement of the emphasis. The actual enlargement and putting it on the wall is -- perhaps it might take as much time, but certainly no more. I think the bulk of the work is done in the preparatory sketches.

PC: Did you have assistants on those?

JH: No.

PC: You did the whole thing.

JH: It had to be approved by the architect and the Joint Board, etc. etc. In other words, the submission of the sketches and approval of them involved a certain amount of care. When I say 'it was done for money' I mean just that. I was earning my livelihood as a plasterer or carpenter or painter.

PC: What was the Project like in Philadelphia? Were there lots of people on it there?

JH: I was not on it as long -- it started while I was in Europe and I didn't get on it right away when I came back. I have an idea that I was on it less than two years; perhaps a year and a half. I don't know how long it lasted. Do you happen to know? -The PWA?

PC: There was a change.

JH: First there was the PWAP -- Public Works of Art Project. Then there was the Works Progress Administration.

PC: It was 1941 or 1940 or something. I don't remember the final date.

JH: It was liquidated about then.

PC: Yes. The war came along about then and that cut everything off. It's always been my feeling that the artists involved with the Project in New York City and in Chicago were a very gregarious group. Could one say that about the Philadelphia artists? Or were they more dispersed?

JH: I think they were more gregarious in New York than in Philadelphia. The Project, because a number of artists had the common interest of one employer -- the United States Government -- engendered a getting together. And the formation of an Artists Union in Philadelphia and in New York and in Chicago was an outcome certainly of that. I was active in the Artists Union in Philadelphia.

PC: In New York there were two or three bars where artists always seemed to congregate.

JH: It was less so in Philadelphia. Even though it is the city of brotherly love.

PC: You began an association with the A.C.A. Gallery, which still exists (now it's on East 73rd Street) had nothing to do with the original A.C.A. Gallery. I spoke earlier of my friend Dan Sliverman, who is president of the American Electroencephalographic Society. Well, his wife was proprietor of the A.C.A. Gallery in Philadelphia. She was interested in art. It was her gallery.

PC: Was it the same as the New York one?

JH: No, there was no connection. Except that I think she knew Herman Baron and had asked his permission to use the name American Contemporary Art -- A.C.A. Gallery. But other than that there was no connection.

PC: We've about come to the end of the reel.

PC: Okay. This is Side 2.

JH: I had no great impulse to do -- as you say, mural decoration was in the air, not only the Mexicans but the use of wall space in public buildings by the WPA generated a kind of coast-to-coast interest in mural painting. And I was just swept along in that but it was not --

PC: It wasn't a great enthusiasm for murals as murals.

JH: No, because it was such a collaborative -- and properly so -- such a collaborative kind of work that I did -- as I say, one, two, three, four, five murals. It worked out all right but it was not a source of inspiration for me.

PC: I think in about 1941 you began an association with the Associated American Artists (A.A.A.) Gallery. You showed paintings with them initially, didn't you? Or prints also?

JH: Paintings. It is now only --

PC: A print gallery?

JH: Yes. I don't think that there's more than one gallery in New York that I know of that does not sell paintings or drawings; I think it's the only gallery that does not sell paintings or drawings or posters or reproductions; only prints.

PC: There are a couple of others; not many. But most of them sell prints and drawings. How did you get involved with that gallery/ -- because you've had a long association with them.

JH: The year before I decided to move to New York I came over with some photographs and a few small canvases and started to make the rounds. Since I had exhibited at the ACA Gallery in Philadelphia I went to the ACA Gallery here in New York which was then down on Eight Street and the proprietor, Herman Baron, looked at my work and with a very friendly smile said that it wasn't the kind of work that he would be interested in and suggested that I go to Hudson Walker who at that time had a gallery on 57th Street. He had come down from Boston. So I went to Hudson Walker and he was very cooperative and friendly and we worked together well for a brief year, I think, perhaps a little bit more. I met Marsden Hartley there. Everett Spruce was one of his artists. I don't have to tell you about Hudson Walker, do I?

PC: No.

JH: I saw him four hours ago. Hudson Walker was my dealer for a while. It worked out fine. But the Depression plus the needs of his family lumber business out in California entered into his decision to give up the gallery after a few years. Walker and his partner in Boston -- I forget his name -- I think gave Human Bloom and Jack Levine their first show in Boston years ago. At any rate, when Hudson Walker left New York I went to the Associated American Artists and apparently they were glad to take me on.

PC: That was Reeves Lewenthal then?

JH: Correct.

PC: Now who was he? -- because he's one of those people we know very little about at this point.

JH: His enterprise was almost depressing it was so constant. He's not a New Yorker. He's in utilities -- oil and gas or something. He liked to, and still does like to initiate things. He was a plunger but not in the Wall Street sense. Way back when he had a little place down on Madison Avenue he invested almost his last money in a full-page ad in the New York Times Magazine or Book Review advertising Grant Wood and John Steuart Curry and Thomas Benton and Adolph Dehn original signed lithographs for five dollars apiece. He would go to these artists

and say, "You draw on a piece of stone and I'll give you \$250 or \$300." The artist would be glad to cooperate and he would sell the proofs for five dollars apiece. He had a mailing list. Later on he moved to a building at 711 Fifth Avenue. Of course his telephone number was 0711. He did things in a sweeping and plunging way. At this peak I think he had about forty artists in his stable. Associated American Artists was at 711 Fifth Avenue; it was on Wilshire Boulevard in Beverly Hills, and on the Magic Mile -- Michigan Avenue in Chicago. It existed in three places at one time. It was very much of a going outfit. Frank Oehlschlaeger in Chicago who now has his own gallery was in charge of the A.A.A.

PC: Oh, I see. That makes sense.

JH: Oh, you know that name?

PC: Yes. He has a gallery in Florida now, too.

JH: Perhaps.

PC: Was Lewenthal a collector? Or a businessman?

JH: He was a businessman. No, he was not a collector. He was a very enterprising, very energetic man who was involved in some of the first purchases that Joseph Hirshhorn made. I remember Hirshhorn came to see us when I was living on 67th Street when we first moved to New York in 1940 or 1941. Lewenthal was a businessman first of all. One of the last transactions he made was to sell a still-life, a supposed self-portrait of Van Gogh by candlelight to the Hollywood producer William Goetz. There was some dispute as to whether or not it was authentic. People were brought over from Holland and it was adjudicated as being an original. Whether or not it was I still have my doubts. It was smuggled out of France. Reeves told me that he had spotted the picture hanging in an obscure corner of some tavern in Brittany. It was standard romantic nonsense.

PC: Yes. People always look for it though, don't they?

JH: Yes. I forget the circumstances that forced him out of business. He involved Abbott Laboratories of Chicago during the war in sending artists to the fighting fronts. I went on three assignments for him that were underwritten by Abbott Laboratories who gave the pictures. It was a series of documentary pictures. The theory was that the camera could not censor itself, that artists could get the kind of visual information. The pictures were pretty successful. I would say there were about twenty artists involved altogether. The majority of these concerned themselves with medical activities you know Abbott Laboratories is a pharmaceutical company. It was the medical aspects of men in uniform.

PC: How did you like that experience of being a war correspondent artist?

JH: It was hard and unforgettable and lonely and sometimes frustrating running into the real McCoy. You know, talking with -- I saw soldiers in more hospitals -- I had been in many hospitals in Philadelphia as my father was a doctor. The three trips I went on had to do with naval air training at Pensacola, Florida; then naval medicine in the Pacific; and army medicine in Italy and North Africa. I was of course moved most by the two medical assignments because I saw wounded kids. It was a very good experience. And the drawings that I did -- I did about twenty-five pictures on each assignment, most of them done from sketches made on the spot. I didn't have any camera with me. Not having a camera simplified everything because there was no censorship. The majority of the work was done immediately upon my return. I'd go out for a couple of months and come back and spend another three or four months doing perhaps a dozen paintings and as many drawings both for the aviation series and the naval medicine and the Army medical. The Navy had never had any shore-based installations before World War II and they were very proud of whatever they had. I also visited a hospital ship. I suppose the most vivid experiences were down in Guadalcanal with the Marine Corps. I watched a hospital set up from landing until it was in operative condition in less than three hours from landing on the beach and set up in eight tents the entire thing with portable X-ray -- everything within the space of three hours. It was a rehearsal landing with L.S.T.'s and dispersed units so that any aerial attack would not destroy the hospital. They were dispersed under the palm trees. This was on one of the beaches at Guadalcanal. To see the kind of organized spirit of cooperation was -- I don't know what the Navy's Medical Corps is like now but at that time during the war to see a lot of wonderful improvisation made for material for good sketching and painting and drawing.

PC: Were you involved with Abbott Laboratories after that, too, for some period of time?

JH: Lewenthal -- the Associated American Artists Gallery obtained commissions for its artists. As well as selling easel pictures occasionally it frequently obtained commissions for its artists. These commissions were of a commercial nature. I remember I was commissioned to do a portrait of the tenor John Charles Thomas for an advertisement for R.C.A. I painted this from photographs against my better judgment. It worked out all right. Mead Paper Company wanted a picture of some aspects of paper manufacturing. Abbott Laboratories publishes a monthly magazine called What's New that is sent to all doctors in the United States. It's profusely illustrated.

They commissioned drawings on the fearful child and anaesthesia and they wanted something to dramatize the trauma that can be inflicted on a child in connection with a minor operation, say, a tonsillectomy when it is not handled properly. When George Washington Hill of the American Tobacco Company wanted to expand the company's advertising Reeves Lewenthal was in on the plan for sending artists into the field and doing the tobacco industry. I went into the South with him and was told that none of the black labor and the child labor which constituted ninety percent of the labor involved in the tobacco growing was not to be indicated. When George Washington Hill himself cut out a piece of white paper and placed it over a sketch that I had done showing that this is what he wanted I told Lewenthal that I would not do any more. But he did a series of paintings that was used by Lucky Strike in their advertising. He veered towards the commercial. He was a very, very enterprising man. Some of the other dealers grudgingly or sincerely took their hats off to him because he kept his artists busy. I was right in the thick of it and so perhaps I didn't have the same perspective. I resented a lot of the collaboration with the needs of the advertising world.

PC: Yes. They want all kinds of changes and all kinds of demands and group decisions.

JH: Fortune magazine sent me to Washington to do a series of documentary pictures on a day in the life of a congressman. The congressman happened to be Everett Dirksen who was then a congressman. I did a series of drawings on a day in Dirksen's life. And it was used. But that kind of assignment came through Associated American Artists. Lewenthal did not maintain a relationship with collectors of fine art. He maintained the bridge between the world of industry and the world of art.

PC: That's interesting. I've often wondered why there were so many commercial things associated with that gallery in that period of time. In doing other research projects I always run across these things. So he was the one who really provoked commissions for the artists.

JH: He felt that the bridge was an artificial gap -- that the gap could and should be bridged by having this rapport between industry and art.

PC: Also in those days the museums were not as active as collectors as they have been recently.

JH: No. I don't think so.

PC: I think the general price of art was much lower than it is today even in proportion to the economy, was it not?

JH: Yes, proportionately I think it was lower. You mean for a piece of sculpture or a painting?

PC: Yes.

JH: Yes, I think in proportion to the buying dollar I think the prices were lower.

PC: And prints were terribly cheap.

JH: Yes. And there was no explosion, no overpopulation in any aspect of the art world the way there is now; at least not that I was aware of.

PC: I'd like to go back for a second to Artists Equity. You were a founder of that and treasurer for a while. How did you get involved? Where did the idea come from?

JH: The first meeting that I remember -- I had come back after the war in 1945 and I went up to Provincetown. I remember talking with Hudson Walker who was President of the American Federation of Arts. He was very sympathetic to the idea. The artists had their very first meeting in Leon Kroll's studio in September 1946. Recently at home I ran across a list of the artists who were present. There were artists I think from eleven galleries. Guy Pene du Bois was there. Robert Brackman was there Henry Varnum Poor, Uasuo Kuniyoshi. I tried not to get several artists from one gallery. The idea was to get a more representative group. And then the first meeting at which the name "Equity" was proposed based on Actors Equity, Hudson Walker attended that meeting. Of course it's all in the record. Artists Equity became more and more concerned with its own growth and it started to examine itself and its own faults. The meetings consumed a lot of time and many of them were involved with the organization and improving its structure. In my opinion its accomplishments were minimal compared with the amount of time that went into it.

PC: Because it got on this tangent of looking at itself too much, do you think?

JH: Yes. For example, the amount of time and energy spent in making the distinction between an artist and a non-artist, which still is a moot point. The amount of time spent arguing that a photographer could be just as creative as a painter although some of the old squares said that pushing a button is not being creative. The amount of time excluding very well-intentioned amateurs from giving their time and support. So much time was

spent on that Artists Equity never functioned nearly as efficiently as ideally it could have. It never achieved the function that Actors Equity has achieved. Actors benefit by the existence of Actors Equity I believe.

PC: Oh, yes, tremendously.

JH: I don't think that artists benefit by the existence of Artists Equity. It's still in existence. At one time there were chapters in thirty-seven states. I don't know what the condition of the organization is now. It still exists.

PC: You moved to New York in the 1940s, right?

JH: I moved here in 1940 or 1941 I forget which year.

PC: Was there a reason why you left Philadelphia and came to New York?

JH: Obviously, I think there's always more than one reason for anything -- even swatting a fly. I suppose the chief reason was that I knew from thirty years in Philadelphia what it was like to live in Philadelphia. I had studied in New York with George Luks since my good friend the psychologist had studied in New York. Since I had a connection with Hudson Walker's gallery here it occurred to me that living in New York might be a good idea for a while. My first wife was interested in dancing and had studied with martha Graham in New York. We knew New York. It's only ninety-three miles from Philadelphia so it wasn't a tremendous move. We decided to chance it for a while. We came over and moved into a studio at 15 West 57th Street where we lived. It's the same building that Leon Kröll lives in now. It had been Robert Philipps studio; he was moving to a larger place so we took it over.

PC: That's a great studio building, isn't it?

JH: Yes. It's second to the Hotel des Artistes.

PC: Where does Lincoln Rothschild come in with Artists Equity? He's another one of those people who has not really been defined very well.

JH: The sculptor?

PC: Is he a sculptor?

JH: Yes. Hersche Rothschild?

PC: No, -- Lincoln.

JH: His name is H. Lincoln Rothschild. It doesn't matter. Lincoln Rothschild. I had known him when I was eight or nine at a summer camp in Massachusetts. His brother Edward was quite a scholar and I think lectured or taught in Chicago. He died at an early age. I had known them both at this camp. I hadn't seen Lincoln for many, many, years until I saw him -- I don't know enough about his role in Equity to give you much information about him.

PC: I was just curious because his name pops every once in a while.

JH: Is he still active Artists Equity?

PC: I don't know. I have no idea. To sort of move back and forth here, originally with the A.A.A. you showed paintings and prints? Or just paintings?

JH: Paintings. My second print was done there and my third and fourth, etc. were done at their suggestion. My first print, which was done on transfer paper, was done in Philadelphia. Yes, they were interested in prints right from the beginning. I had an exhibition there I think in 1942 chiefly of paintings and drawings. At that time I had hardly done any prints.

PC: Were they really instrumental in getting you to produce prints? -- because you've done quite a lot.

JH: Yes, I've done sixty-seven prints. Which is not very many.

PC: Many of the prints seem to me closely related to specific paintings.

JH: A number of them are. They usually come after the paintings.

PC: To talk about how things work, how do you build the painting in the sense of putting it together? Do you make sketches? And then large drawings? Or do you work directly, developing it on the canvas?

JH: I usually make some sort of sketch. Sometimes it's just one sketch. Sometimes it's several sketches

combined. Sometimes it's a piece of a sketch. You know sculptors either subtract or add; either they work with an armature and build out with clay, or they work from stone and come down to the finished result. I suppose the way I see the picture is one way or the other way. I think sculptors do only one. I think a sculptor who works in stone and chips away in stone or wood or whatever until he gets to his final result generally does that. The welders chiefly weld. I think the people who work from a thin skeletal armature and build in clay generally build out. In art school you learn to do both. But I don't know of any sculptor who does both. You tend to do one or the other. In my instance I either start with an idea and add to it quantitatively; or the other way around, start with an idea and eliminate what I think can be eliminated and see if I can get down to a small --

PC: Is that done through drawings? Or do you do that on the canvas in the process of painting?

JH: It's done mostly through drawings. But sometimes it happens on canvas by eliminating this -- the subtraction you mean?

PC: Yes.

JH: It's mostly done in drawings. But it happens on canvas also that you just eliminate.

PC: It changes as you go along.

JH: Yes. There's a picture up there, -- I don't know if you can see it -- on top of that -- the Two Heads facing this way -- the girl's head --

PC: The Janus kind of --?

JH: Yes. That's very recent. As a matter of fact I'm working on it now. I did a big forty-inch circular canvas, it's one meter (forty inches), of two people seated, their entire bodies, with a baby, facing in opposite direction. He's seated in back of her. This seems to be a detail of that bigger canvas. The canvas was done about a year ago. This is in a sense -- although they're not the same faces -- a detail of that canvas; the heads are in the same position. I don't too often do that.

PC: There's a print of that, too, isn't there?

JH: Yes. There's a print of that, too. The painting is better. I don't frequently take a detail as in an art book where you have the entire picture and then you turn the page and see a detail of it. I don't often do that. But in this instance I did.

PC: Is there any reason why the prints are so closely related to the paintings? Or is it just you prefer working that way rather than doing the prints as a separate, maybe parallel activity?

JH: I've done so many more paintings than prints that I'll just have to take your word for it. I haven't thought about it enough to -- although I accept what you say -- come up with some reinforcing notion. For example, I'd have to stop and think before I could say that most of my prints, or half of my prints come from paintings.

PC: What I'm driving at is, are you interested in print making as an entity unto itself, a separate activity of making lithographs or working in the intaglio process?

JH: Yes, I think so. I can think of only one of my sixty-seven prints which preceded the painting; and it is of this seated couple with the baby. That is, the forty-inch circular painting that I just spoke of followed the print that you remember in the catalogue. It's one of six called Couples; and this is called Couple and One -- the baby. That's the only print I can remember having done which preceded a painting of the same subject. I guess that most of the artists who paint and make prints -- I guess that you will find similar images in their work. I'm not sure of this.

PC: Well, it's true. But some use the print as a kind of way of doing drawings in addition to finding a new idea and then once they get an idea they'll work it out or develop it in the painting in a more elaborate way.

JH: You mean you think many of them will start with a print and it will end up -- chronologically the painting will come later?

PC: Yes. There are some who will do prints instead of doing drawings because it has certain financial rewards. There are so many different ways of doing it. That's why I am curious to know what the relationships in your work are.

JH: As I said, in only one instance -- this one -- do I have any clear memory of painting a picture after the print was made. And of the sixty-seven prints I have done I would offhand say that perhaps a dozen have to do with paintings that exist. But it might be that there are twenty or twenty-five or perhaps half of those prints that I've

done -- if we had the print catalogue here and went through it and you showed me carefully and found out that forty-three of the sixty-seven existed in the form of paintings I would be bowled over. My guess would be that maybe a third of them -- I really have not thought about it.

PC: Do you like doing prints?

JH: Yes. How do you know that paintings of prints exist, or that the same subject --?

PC: I just look through the catalogues. And I remember seeing exhibitions.

JH: I see. Have you seen my work in exhibitions?

PC: Oh, yes. Sure. That's the reason I said it because I was looking through the print catalogue last night and I remember --

JH: The fact that these were familiar to you might have to do with your recollection of having seen them. Many of these prints appeared in supplements which were sent out to the Associated American Artist's mailing list.

PC: Oh, but I remember paintings.

JH: As far as publicity goes, the most famous picture that I've ever done, which was voted the best painting at the New York World's Fair way back in 19?? whenever it was, was Whitey Being Told Like It Is by a black man pounding his fist. It's a very wide, low canvas that's owned now by the Museum of Modern Art. I haven't gotten around to doing a print of that. At the World's Fair it received a lot of votes -- the most votes at the conclusion of the World's Fair. The New York Times when they had a rotogravure section published it with the caption underneath -- "they may know nothing about art but they know what the like:" "they" meaning the people who went to the contemporary art exhibition at the World's Fair and cast votes. And that painting came out as having received the highest number of votes as the best painting at the World's Fair. That I haven't done as a print perhaps because it was reproduced a lot. I think, but I can't justify it, that it would be bad if all my prints appeared in the form of paintings and vice versa.

PC: Oh, I don't --

JH: I don't know why that should be. I just have the feeling of it. If you ask me why it's bad I can't answer. I don't know why not.

PC: You've done some teaching in Chicago and at the American Art School and at various places. Did you have it in mind to teach at a certain point?

JH: Never.

PC: In other words, did you look for jobs?

JH: No.

PC: Have you liked teaching? Has it been an interesting activity?

JH: Yes. Because there's always somebody in the class who is really interested; sometimes even two or three. But the proportion is generally small. When I put in brief appearances teaching at universities as visiting artist there the motivation is less. Boys in college who choose to take a studio course in painting largely do so because they think that it's a snap or a gut course. But in an art school it's a little bit different. At the Art Institute of Chicago and at the Art Students League the proportion of people who are genuinely interested is higher. The other day I passed the Art Students League. The faculty is listed outside. The asterisk next to my name means "on leave of absence." I should tell Stewart Klonis that the leave is going to be for a while because unless they institute a policy whereby the instructor can have something to say about who is in his class I don't want to teach. I told him so two years ago. The only way I know of that you can choose your own students is to have the class in your own studio or have your class apart from the school. But those who matriculate at the Art Students League have the right to choose the instructor with whom they want to work. That's the way it's structured. My class was quite big. It was much too big for me. I can't work rewardingly with such a large class. Of course, the League likes big classes.

PC: Right. How many students did you have there?

JH: In the neighborhood of thirty. Once or twice I went over thirty-five. You get a bonus if you go over thirty-five full time students. Six or eight would be fine; ten at the outside. But going in there twice a week and trying to give individual instruction to twenty-five or thirty people is too much. The Art Students League is such an unaccredited school that it has the great advantage of attracting people not for status reasons, although there

are some young people who don't really know what they want to do, and art is sort of safe; you're not in any social strata. In art anything goes. It's a kind of grab bag thing in that sense. But at the League, because there's no diploma or certificate involved, the great majority of people come there because they're curious as to how sculpture is made or how one proceeds with a painting. It's not for credit; there is no credit as a reward. So the motivation is all right but a lot of it is pointless. And I'm completely crippled by a total inability to turn to someone and say, "What are you doing here? What makes you think ...?" You know, some of them are so astonishingly inept especially in a field where the transference of paint from a palette to a canvas is technically such a rudimentary, easy thing to do compared with, say, violin playing or brain surgery. The technique of painting doesn't involve that much manual dexterity compared with other pursuits. And yet there are some astonishingly inept people. I'd like to write a book called *Painting Made Difficult* I really think that if people could be discouraged from painting, if a sieve could be applied -- it's such an all inclusive, permissive world. Anybody can study painting. There was an ad that appeared three days ago in the *New York Times* for the third or fourth time showing a man at an easel. I think the caption was "Why Wasn't Tom Horgan On The 8:15 This Morning" -- and you see him in a big hat painting. He decided to chuck it all and to retire because he invested wisely. Painting has become the symbol of non-work. Retirement means you paint at an easel.

PC: Oh, that's true. There's a retirement village in New Jersey and one of the things they always mention in their ads is that you can paint and sculpt and do all the things you've always wanted to do.

JH: What I regard as hard work is the occupation. And it attracts people. I don't miss teaching for this reason because the very few dedicated students that you get don't offset the tremendous nervous burden of having to be polite to the impossible. Louis Bouche used to call them "little old fur coats;" there's the kind of woman who comes in at nine and she has a tenacity and a stamina, she works every day all week, she's pleasant and hard working, and she wants to be praised. But her painting does not improve. She just pays the Art Students League. She exists in legion.

PC: I think the League has become famous for that.

JH: However, I do think that the atmosphere at the League is on a considerably different level from the atmosphere, let's say, in the art classes down at the New School. Julian Levi, who heads the art department down there -- I don't know if I'm betraying any confidence -- said they needed somebody. I said, "Sure. I'll leave the League and go down there." He said, "Oh, no!" I said, "Well, I don't want to teach in two places." He said,, "Well, then, stay at the League." He admitted that the atmosphere at the League is nice, is good. At the New School the older people who study in the evenings are more of a burden. No, I don't miss teaching because I don't have the nervous system that a good teacher should have.

PC: Did you teach at the National Academy at one point?

JH: I have, yes. The same thing applies there, too. When I taught at the Art Institute of Chicago I commuted by plane from New York once a month; I stayed for one week each month and did a month's teaching in a week. In other words, I taught five mornings and five afternoons and got back here Friday night. Once a month I did that for a full week.

PC: How did you like that?

JH: It was all right. It worked out better than I thought. They wanted to renew the arrangement but it was enough. Eight or nine trips in the course of a winter for a five-day stay each time was enough. When I'd return three weeks later the students would come up with some fairly good work. It worked out fairly well. But I don't like the idea.

PC: Too much wear and tear.

JH: I don't like teaching that much to teach for a week. It's only thirty hours a month but in one week it's too concentrated for me.

PC: What would you do? -- criticism? and projects? organization of things for them and then they'd work?

JH: Yes. I'd criticize what they had done, what they were doing and what they were going to do and the half-finished things.

PC: You've done a number of portrait commissions -- right?

JH: Yes.

PC: How do you like doing those? Does it make a difference if they're a person you know? Or a person you don't know?

JH: I don't do any portraits now of people I haven't seen. I don't accept a portrait commission of somebody that I haven't taken a look at. Nor do I any longer -- as I did as an art student -- do portraits posthumously. I did about twelve or thirteen portraits for the Book-of-the-Month Club; of these, two of them were of people who are dead. But the portrait that I like to do now is -- after an interval of quite some time -- one a year is plenty for me -- of a man who appeals to me, who is living, and if it's one portrait a year it's all right. But if it's a woman -- you must know that the people who do Portraits for some reason don't do other painting, or hardly do other painting.

PC: Right.

JH: There are one or two exceptions but not many. Usually the professional portrait painter is either so oriented to custom building something or they're too busy, or whatever the reason is, they don't participate in the contemporary scene very much. Don't you agree?

PC: Oh, yes. I know a couple of those people and occasionally I'll walk by a gallery with one of them and he'll say, "It must be marvelous to do a landscape." He remembers when he was a student and did those things.

JH: An occasional portrait is fine. Just a few months ago I found myself in the wide back seat of a Lincoln Continental telling Cristina Ford who had misunderstood -- she's Italian -- we have the same dermatologist and he had convinced her that I would -- I had told him that the present Henry Ford would be all right -- but she wanted the grandfather, the original Henry Ford and her father-in-law Edsel Ford. I said, "I don't do posthumous portraits." And she said, "But I cannot bring them back to living." I said, "Know you cannot bring them back to living but there are artists who can do." Either she had been misinformed or somebody got their signals mixed. I said the present Henry would be all right if I could see what he looks like. She was disappointed. I don't want to do any more women. I have done women. Two of the last portraits of women that I did were not society women; they were Dorothy Canfield Fisher, the writer; and Amy Loveman who used to edit The Saturday Review. Both of these I did for the Book-of-the-Month Club. That was a whole series of portraits. There were eleven or twelve separate canvases of various authors. There are five authors who meet every month. They wanted me to do those five plus Heywood Broun and William Allen White who had died, plus a big group portrait of the meeting; and then another canvas of the original meeting way back in 1926. I had to do Christopher Morley without his beard. I had to do Harry Sherman as he would have looked in 1925; and John P. Marquand. It worked out all right. Those portraits are up in the office of the Book-of-the-Month Club now.

PC: Were they done from photographs?

JH: Oh! Just the dead ones -- Heywood Broun and William Allen White. The others -- Robert Hawes and the others came to the studio. It worked out all right. I was up there with Cristina Ford. She wanted to see them. I looked at one that I had done of Christopher Morley and of John Marquand, those two. I looked at them carefully and I was struck by the ear on one and something else on the other, and I heard some whispering behind me. Then they explained that those two were copies. The Marquand family had his, and Christopher Morley's daughter had the original of his and these were just for the office. But Adrian Lamb had made excellent copies; they fooled me for a while. I didn't realize they were copies. I hadn't seen them for many years. That was a series of portrait Henry Seidel Canby, who I think is Vincent Canby's father; and Christopher Morley, and John Marquand, and Clifton Fadiman are considerably different from a society matron. So I don't do the latter kind of portrait and never have.

PC: Character interests you more.

JH: Yes. And technically I don't believe I could do a satin evening dress the way it should be done.

PC: You've done one or two portraits of William Benton.

JH: I did one portrait of William Benton in exchange for about seven sets of books and an encyclopedia for my three sons. It was swap. It was small I think it's fourteen by eighteen inches, just a head study. It's not a very auspicious thing. It's hanging in the Wadsworth Atheneum now in connection with the -- and it went over to Tokyo in the Osaka pavilion there. Seventy of his paintings were shown at the Osaka Fair this past summer. They're now at Hartford, Connecticut.

PC: What about the various organizations you've been involved with? -- like the National Institute of Arts and Letters. Is that one?

JH: That's one of them.

PC: Are you an active member?

JH: I'm too active there. The Childe Hassam Fund gathers together pictures for possible purchase and disperses them to various museums. I'm on that committee. I have to go up for a meeting next week. Yes, I have to soft-

pedal some of that activity a bit.

PC: You're also a member of the Century Association.

JH: Yes.

PC: Do you like that?

JH: Yes, to my surprise, I do.

PC: How surprise?

JH: I thought of it, and still do think of it, as an old man's -- it's such a prime target for the new generation. When the revolution comes I think that it will be high on the list of number one places to change. But right now is that building at 7 West 43rd Street -- the Stanford White Building as Brendan Gill says, the club rooms will never be chic or modern but it's a kind of sanctuary when you come in off the screaming street into that place and see the paintings on the walls and the books. I told Louis Bouche "no", you know, with a laugh, and then someone else -- Julian Levi -- asked me to join. Then I went there once or twice for lunch and looked at some of the paintings and browsed in the library and I thought it might not be bad as a hedge against old age. And I find either that I'm old now or that you don't have to be so old to enjoy it. There are some white-haired doddering centurions who find their way in. But most of them are pretty active people still. A few are businessmen. Very, very few, as a matter of fact. Most of the members are educators and professional people and artists -- well, artists and writers started it as The Sketch Club about a hundred and thirty years ago.

PC: Is it that old?

JH: 1856. A hundred and fourteen years ago. They moved into that very building in 1890 -- over seventy-five years back.

PC: That's fantastic. I didn't realized they were really that old. Could we talk about the images in your paintings, the people and the objects and the light or the atmosphere which is very unique I always feel in your pictures. They're not like -- you know, there are so many landscape painters who have very similar qualities, but there's a very unique quality about yours which -- I mean we can't put you in a box anywhere or put any particular labels on it. I'm just wondering do you have a specific idea of where -- are these models that you use? are they ideas that come from -- I don't know how to say it -- you know, in that sense, where do they come from? Like this one here with eight running figures. Where would an idea like that come from? I mean is it something you've seen? Or is it imaginary?

JH: You ask two questions. The first question I can't answer because I don't know. First of all, I'm not sure that I could recognize my own work. On the canvases of my colleagues I could see a little corner of a canvas sticking up out of a bunch of canvases and say that So-and-So did that. You know, you can recognize the very texture. I know that others recognize my work. People frequently say to me, "I knew that was yours before I saw the signature." I used to be puzzled as to how they knew, and I'm still puzzled how they knew it was mine before they saw the signature. I remember discussing once with Hudson Walker, my former dealer, the frequency of exhibitions, the closeness of having an exhibition. One artist had had four exhibitions a year apart. I said "I think there should be at three, four, or five years between exhibitions." Hudson said, "It all depends. In your case since your pictures are so different and so non-repetitious I don't think it would matter if your exhibitions were more frequent." He seemed to mean that sincerely that my pictures were different. Occasionally I'm aware that they are different. But I feel that we're all in our own kind of rut. In the New York magazine John Gruen spoke of my last exhibition with regret saying that he wished I weren't so "predictable" -- from subsequent criticism I've observed that "Predictable" is a word he relies on or finds himself using, or is not aware of. When he's familiar with someone's work you have to say that it is predictable. And I'm sure that that must pertain to my work. The second question I can answer: where did this particular one come from? Down in Pensacola, Florida I saw a bunch of -- or I imagined I saw, or was told about a bunch of men with parachutes running to their plane -- young pilots a simulated alert. And I did just a little drawing of six or seven figures running in the same direction in a frieze-like pattern. A few years ago I came upon this drawing looked at a reproduction of it and did a wash drawing just of running figures neither men nor women, certainly not aviators with parachutes -- just running figures in this very dark, free wash. It was reproduced in last summer's New York Times -- a year ago while I was away. Someone saw it and sent it to me. I looked at that drawing, which I had forgotten about, and I thought that might make an interesting painting. So the result of what originally were aviators with parachutes is now ladies with nothing. But that's to answer you second question. END OF TAPE 1 - SIDE 2 TAPE-RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH HIRSCH - TAPE 2 DECEMBER 2, 1970 INTERVIEWER: PAUL CUMMINGS

PC: PAUL CUMMINGS

JH: JOSEPH HIRSCH

PC: This is December 2 -- Side 3 -- Paul Cummings talking to Joseph Hirsch in his studio. Could we talk about France for a while: why you found that a particularly interesting place to live for various periods of time; what there is about it --

JH: You know you're more interested in this than I am because --

PC: Has it been an influence in any way would you think?

JH: Yes. I mean it's tedious for me to talk about -- even as much as I like to talk about myself -- it's tedious for me to talk about the past to this extent because I assume that my most interesting work is coming up. However, nothing in my background that I can think of would attune me or predispose me toward French life. To me it seems like an accident that I bumped into somebody -- Audrey MacMahon -- in the mid-1930s who said, "Don't try for a Prix de Rome for goodness sake! Try for a Woolley Fellowship to Paris. Rome is a deadly place," etc. I think I may have mentioned this. And because of bumping into her I filled out this application for a Woolley Fellowship. And because of that accident I found myself in France for a year. Having lived away from the United States for sixteen months, most of which were in France, I naturally gravitated toward France when I went back to Europe years later after the war. I was there in 1935 and 1936 and then I returned in the spring of 1949 to see what it was like. I thought perhaps I'd give myself my own fellowship for six months. I went over to case the joint for three weeks around Eastertime. And, by the way, this was a coincidence. There was a World Peace Congress being held in Paris in that month of April 1949. I attended that and did sketches. There were Americans there -- Paul Robeson for one; and the French poets Louis Aragon and Paul Eluard were there. It was quite an international event. Having seen what Paris was like and the rationing of food was not too stringent I decided that it was a good idea. So I came back here after April and returned with my family -- my wife and two sons the following September -- five months later. About six weeks after I arrived in Paris in September I received a letter from the United States State Department addressed to me in New York and forwarded to me in Paris informing me that I had been awarded a Fulbright Fellowship. Is this material that I've gone over?

PC: No.

JH: Two years ago Dorothea Spire -- or last year Dorothea Spire in Paris who twenty-one years ago was the Assistant Cultural Attache at the American Embassy told me that I was the only artist who up to the very end of her tenure at the embassy (which was just a few years back -- she now has a gallery in Paris) -- that I was the only artist who had ever won a Fulbright research fellowship. All the other Fulbrights were either teaching fellowships or regular student -- I mean nine out of ten Fulbright fellowships are student grants. Whether I just had beginner's luck or they didn't know enough about it to -- but I was bowled over when I received this letter. So that the five or six months that I had planned to stay in France with my savings turned into a year by virtue of the fact that I had been awarded a Fulbright. What I had done in 1949 was to sell the little house I had in Provincetown: I swapped the house on Cape Code for a year in Europe. It worked out fine. The first contact with France was by virtue of this accidental Woolley Fellowship and the second happy accident was the Fulbright. All the good luck that I've had, which has been endless, seems to have been completely accidental.

PC: What was it like living in France? Was it that you just set up a studio and worked? Or was it quite a different kind of life than here for you?

JH: There always was a nucleus of non-French Parisiens -- people who lived in Paris though they weren't born in France. And among them were some Americans. The painter Joseph Floch had had a studio there during the 1930s before the war. After the Occupation he came back to his studio in Paris and found it intact. The painter Robert Gwathmey went to Paris that same year. In fact, when I went to Paris for that three weeks in April I took a list of questions from my wife and from Robert Gwathmey's wife as to food and school and diaper service, etc. Frank Kleinholz, the artist, was also there at the time. I asked questions of Frank. The photographer Paul Strand was in Paris then, and still lives outside of Paris. During the Peace Congress there were some Americans there; for example, Howard Fast was there temporarily, wasn't living there. Joseph Floch had a studio in Paris and through his good offices I found a studio. He was acquainted with the neighborhood and knew of an available studio. In September when I went to Paris with my family I decided to paint and set up a studio. You won't believe this but I'll say it anyway: I rented a studio from a person who had been orphaned by the Paris Commune. This was a sculptor named Du Bois. He didn't refer to himself as a sculptor. He used to say, "Je suis statuaire;" he did statues; that is he did monuments rather than -- he was not a modeler in clay, he was a carver in stone and made statues or monuments as opposed to ordinary sculpture. Which is a nicety of distinction that I was never able to understand. But actually he was orphaned at the age of two -- he was eighty-one at this time, 1950. Both of his parents were killed in a cannonade or bombardment or something during the Paris Commune. That aspect of France in particular has always fascinated me: that you can buy your sausages in a little grocery shop in the same house that Victor Hugo lived in, or you rent your studio from somebody who -- you slip back into the nineteenth century with remarkable ease. There's a nice continuity about it. Mr. Du Bois's studio was on the fourth floor (in Paris the fourth floor corresponds to the fifth floor here because one flight up is the first floor) and there were too many flights for the old fellow. So I took his studio for a year. I enjoyed it. At the conclusion of

the year I came back here and decided to resume residence in New York.

PC: In Paris did you get involved with the French art circles? Or did you pretty much work on your own?

JH: No, I was pretty much a pebble on the beach. The major activity in the French art world was teaching American GI's. That is, many of the professional French painters were teachers of hundred of GI's. The GI Bill education program was such that the Grande Chaumiere was filled with Americans. I sat in on Fernand Leger's lectures once or twice just to see what they were like. Andre Lhote and many artists had classes in which the great majority of students were American GI's. That was one of the major activities. There was at that time talk of forming a union of artists to iron out difficulties with American Embassy which they felt was not representing them well enough. Dorothea Spire, who now has a gallery in Paris -- the Dorothea Spire Gallery -- was very sympathetic. She was conscious of the fact that all the other embassies had money for fine art activity but the American Embassy did not. She was outraged when she heard that the curator of prints at the Boston Library -- his name may have been Arthur Heinselman? --

PC: I can't remember offhand.

JH: Actually paid out of pocket to have prints matted and sent over to an exhibition of prints, I think, in Rouen -- an international exhibition of prints. Dorothea was rather outspoken and, despite her role as assistant cultural attache wrote a strong letter to the State Department pointing out that someone had to spend money out of his own pocket to send a group of prints from the United States to Europe -- that it was a crying shame. It should have been a scandal -- obviously it was something that was unnewsworthy. But what it symbolized was much more. Frank Lloyd Wright had an exhibition in Paris in the spring of 1950. I asked Dorothea why it was not held under the aegis of the American Embassy instead of at the Ecole National des Beaux-Arts. Her answer was that if we had held it it would have been a kind of stigma we felt and it was better that it was held in an art school. Which is a disgraceful thing. I remember that the Yugoslav Government sent an astonishing exhibition to Paris of copies of ancient Yugoslavian mosaics. The Greek Government, the Spanish Government, as you know, all the governments have fine arts programs.

PC: You didn't go there to study with anyone, did you? You went there just to work?

JH: No. As a Fulbright researcher I had to check in and matriculate at the Sorbonne. At least the first years of the program required that you matriculate. So I did check in and sat in on a lecture or two or three by Thomas Craven -- no, I think it was Thomas Monroe of Cleveland. Yes, it was Thomas Monroe. He had received a fulbright grant as a professor and he taught at the Sorbonne. He gave his lectures in French. His subject was Aesthetics in the New World. But the bulk of my activity on both fellowships, the Woolley fourteen years earlier, in 1935, and the Fulbright in 1949, was seeing paintings in museums and working in my studio. I traveled as much as I could on the Fulbright grant. I made side trips to Italy and down to Spain and up to Belgium. The standard procedure.

PC: Do you think that living there for that period of time and working had an effect on your painting in any kind of direct way?

JH: I'm sure it had an effect but I can't give you any examples of it. Occasionally critics for want of something else to write will speak of the fact that I seem to have been unaffected by the French nineteenth-century school of painting. And I think to a great extent it's true. To me there are small bits of evidence that I've been affected by this but not nearly -- I've never fallen in love with that school of painting. I'm a great admirer of nineteenth-century French painting but either my roots are such that the Eakins Philadelphia background was stronger because it was earlier, or I had some sort of resistance coming from my German ancestors. But I was never very receptive to French painting, much as I like it.

PC: I was looking through a catalogue of your prints the other day and I notice that there seems to be -- I don't know if it's my interpretation or if it's meant on your part -- an interest in discussing or illustrating social situations, political office, the relationships -- I remember the one of the man, woman and child. And to me there seems to be a social attitude at work in many of your pictures. Is this true? Or is this just something that I'm putting onto it?

JH: It's true. I have difficulty in seeing it as clearly as other people do. I'm convinced that it must be true because everybody talks about it and I can't be the only one out of step. But if I do a picture of a mother and child -- a mother with a baby in her arms with a rattle and the mother is holding a bottle of milk in the same hand that holds the child and the child is over her shoulder and obviously is not taking the milk -- but on the other hand, if the mother is black and has her head in her hand, and the baby is playing with a rattle and the mother's head is down, she's bowed over and the title on the painting is Lynch Family, then it's not just mother and child. A white mother giving milk to a baby would have -- I think in a sense there are tangential, destructively distracting -- I think a noncommittal title usually is better -- as the French say "qui non engage a rien" (it doesn't commit itself). Interior with Figures, which is the name of one picture I have in the Whitney I think is a better title than "twentieth century office scene", which is what it is. It's ten or eleven men each one

on the telephone. They're sexless, as my first wife noticed, or would notice, because they're all cut off at the waist -- they're not cut off but the desk seemingly amputates them. I think to a great extent the social content of my work -- the consciousness of the content in my work is your as much as mine. At the New York World's Fair after five months of voting one of my pictures, *Two Men*, was selected as the best painting at the Fair. Now that title is very noncommittal. It is now owned by the Museum of Modern Art. It is just a painting of two men; one of the me, whitey is listening, and the other, a black man, is talking vociferously. Obviously from the expression on their faces they're not joking. But that's as far as I go in regard to the subject matter. The only verbal description of the painting would be that they're two men seated at the same side of a table -- they're not separated by the table -- and they're both leaning on the table toward each other. One is listening and the other is talking; that's all. What they're talking about is up to you. Apparently they're involved in something that's -- where the structure of the painting which is visible -- would be visible if the painting were exhibited upside down (and once I heard a docent explaining to a group of ladies about Hirsch's involvement with interlocking triangles,) which is probably true. But that would be truer if the painting were exhibited upside down. But the fact that this painting with the innocent title, *Two Men*, could be voted the most successful painting at the World's Fair would indicate,, or impute to the painting things that lie in the eye and in the mind of the people who walked up to the picture -- in other words, the conscience of people must have been touched by this painting. It is not a pretty painting. I look at it now and am embarrassed at the caricature. The white man's neck is skinny, has a chicken-like quality. I don't like the picture at all now.

PC: But some of the pictures seem to be so aware of certain social situations.

JH: Is that one of them over there -- the Couple on the Motorcycle?

PC: Yes.

JH: Is that social realism?

PC: Well, I don't know -- I think social realism is more --

JH: I seem to be challenging you but I --

PC: Social realism seems to be a term for another period. Well, in a way, but less so than -- there's a large painting of four policeman carrying a girl that was in a show a couple of years ago.

JH: Yes. It was a triptych at the Whitney Museum.

PC: Right. And very large.

JH: A very wide painting?

PC: Right.

JH: Yes, that was last year at the Whitney.

PC: And in that one gets the feeling that there's a great deal of social awareness and commentary on --

JH: That is one picture I can think of that is an out and out propaganda picture. It's a picture that takes sides. I happened to see one of my friends carted off and put into the paddy wagon down on Times Square several years ago. I think she had just graduated from Wisconsin. She was one of the students protesting the war and she was put into a police van with others and taken off. Being carted off by the wrists by the police has become almost the recognizable twentieth-century symbol in America just as the cross -- the Crucifixion -- in other words the kids have this sick, sick story which goes like "Good evening, Mr. Murrow" -- Christ being interviewed by Ed Murrow. Just the fact that it's like that indicates that - no, it's the twentieth-century crucifixion. This triptych is the only painting that I can think of -- there are police cars in the background, there's a courthouse, there's an old cannon and a stack of cannon balls, and all sorts of images. That and one round picture that I'm doing here is an out and out representation in legible terms of my position. But I certainly don't think that these women running, or those peaches over there, or that landscape -- although the landscape --

PC: Well, that has some kind of comment.

JH: Raphael Soyer saw it the other day and talked about the arid earth. I said, "They're faces." He said, "I know they're faces but they're also arid earth, cracked earth." They are just five men looking at the sky and just where the social ingredient is -- how did you put it? --

PC: Well, you know, it can be indicative depending on how one looks or wants to look at it.

JH: I will admit that if I do two men riding two horses, as interested as I am in the arch of the neck of the horses

paralleling the curve of the horse's flank and the twist of the bodies, the fact that they are two police officers one with a bullhorn gives it for me an immediacy and a legitimacy which otherwise it wouldn't have. If the police were nude and if the background were nude perhaps it would be something that would have been done many times by many -- (looking for a painting). This is just a start. Do you see? PC; Yes. But, you see, that gives you a feeling that there are all kinds of things between the spectator and the canvas that the policemen are involved with.

JH: Between them?

PC: Yes. I mean they're coming this way and there are lots of lights behind.

JH: But it makes the spectator a demonstrator.

PC: Right.

JH: No, this I must say is inescapable -- if I do want to escape it -- a social picture. And I suppose that a bouquet of tools instead of flowers has implications.

PC: One would think, you know, less so than, well, even the one with all the students and the equestrian statue -- right? -- the monument.

JH: Yes.

PC: There seems to be very much of an involvement with what's currently going on in your pictures over --

JH: Would you say that about that one?

PC: Well, maybe not that one so much.

JH: That's one of the biggest pictures I've ever painted. You're quite right. I still tend to think that it's just -- this one of the students and the monument, and that one of the police with the bullhorn, and the triptych at the Whitney; and that's it. But maybe -- I can point to -- for example, this wine and cheese to me seems just devoid of any soapbox -- I'm not quoting you, you didn't say that --

PC: Right.

JH: Put this Signals in a Snowstorm or this Peach With Peaches or the still-life there with tools.

PC: I think there's an ambiguity in some of them.

JH: This is like an Indian blanket to me.

PC: Yes. You know, the Couple on the Motorcycle here depending on what one feels of young couples on motorcycles you're going to get different reactions.

JH: Of course. Of course.

PC: But I don't think -- there's a lithograph you did called The Law, an early picture.

JH: Yes. It's a policeman in a rain cape standing underneath a traffic semaphore; a little tiny lithograph. The angles of his coat and the angles of the semaphore have a lot in common. He's part of the whole works.

PC: Right. And there's just the white -- there's a sign and the light and his face. And it's very dark, the contrast is --

JH: Yes. It's a tiny,, tiny lithograph. Would this (indicating a work of art) fit in the same category? I ask the question seriously. I suppose that it would. It's nothing more than an automobile. Or this (indicating another picture)? Are they --

PC: Well, the automobile obviously makes it --

JH: I suppose it does. I guess it's in all my work. Now I can pretend that that's nothing more than an automobile lying on its side.

PC: In the middle of the --

JH: I'm not pretending anything, I'm describing it accurately.

PC: Yes.

JH: But if I say that's all it is then I suppose it's --

PC: Yes, but the condition of it and the fact that it's lying right across the center line of a highway somewhere, you know, leads into all sorts of other implications. And it's not a new car.

JH: No, it's not.

PC: The fenders are all battered.

JH: This was exhibited and the reason it's back here is because I wanted to change the sky, which I'm in the process of doing. I may leave this Wedgewood blue and white arrangement, I may leave the palette more or less just like that picture.

PC: Frozen people. It looks like that French icing that they use, that they make all the white things out of. It's always interested me that there's been something - you can describe the painting like it's a car turned on its side, but then it's what's been done with the car and where it is and the condition of it and all those qualities that give it personality.

JH: I have the impression -- and it may be an illusion -- that I don't say anything which is complete, that I start a sentence and you finish it.

PC: You leave it open.

JH: Yes, I mean all I say, well, here is an automobile lying on its side in the middle of a highway. And you take it from there. The picture Two Men that I don't know how many thousand people picked at the World's Fair years ago the most interesting thing in the picture was what the men were talking about. I can't tell you what they were talking about but obviously they were so engrossed in their conversation that whoever looked at the picture was -- some years later, or I think that very year, copies of that picture were distributed to an evening high school class and I have at home some of the answers, about forty answers, and they're astonishing. "The muscles of his neck are like the cables of Brooklyn Bridge", things like this, this kind of imagery in response to the question, "What is your impression of the picture?" People bring so much to pictures. And I'm very dependent upon what people bring. They bring up stuff that I would never have -- there's so much there that a painter or writer never dreams of that is there. Because you make contact on levels that the author is not aware of.

PC: Oh, sure. That's why interpretation so often gets people angry because very often it's not what they thought or it's something entirely different sometimes.

JH: In that catalogue that you mentioned of the print show there's a little preface that I wrote on the second or third page and I said that artists's explanations tend to become like media and they're suspect and therefore are very limiting. It has very much to do with the fact of my dependence upon the person standing in front of the picture.

PC: I think it's also the fact that there is that -- I don't know --

JH: For example, let me show you this picture of three men carrying a woman. This is a sketch for a painting which is now owned by the mother of (the father died last year) one of the Civil Rights workers who was killed in Philadelphia, Mississippi -- Andrew Goodman. Do you remember the case in 1964? there were two boys who went down to Philadelphia, Mississippi. It was done independently of that incident. The larger painting, of which this is a preparatory sketch, is owned by Andrew Goodman's mother. These are not policemen, there is no police wagon, there are no handcuffs, there are no gas masks (as there were in this triptych that you mentioned). In the painting Mrs. Goodman has one man is wearing a motorcycle helmet. The expression on their faces is rather neutral, at least in the big one. As I say, This V -- the familiar carrying -- somebody being carried off by their wrists and ankles is so common that I think we immediately associate and identify.

PC: You talked about the development of the painting with the nude. How did that come about? Do you work as a series of sketches? Or what's the progression?

JH: I forget

PC: Is there a standard way that you work? Or is each one quite different?

JH: I generally make preparatory sketches, yes. Not always, but close to it. Almost always. I like to take familiar things and re-do them in an unfamiliar way, I mean to reexamine things.

PC: And change the context.

JH: You see, our only pictures starting, as far as I know, in the Lescaux Caves are only pictures of animals in profile. Our concept of a penny is something that's round; it's not flat. But a penny could be drawn as a straight line if seen on eye level. A horse can be done head-on, as I have done horses. I did a horse and a bicycle, which traditionally also is seen in profile. I did a painting of a girl on a bicycle coming straight at you leading a big, heavy Clydesdale work horse right at you, the two of them coming straight out, straight toward you on the canvas, not going to the right or to the left slightly but coming straight out. And having done a series of sketches of men carrying women into heaven in this portfolio in profile, I reversed it and had them the same way. Perhaps I was tired of the frieze-like composition and wanted something that would come directly out. I'm just observing that I'm answering your questions as to how I came to do this. Evidently I don't forget but I forget the details. I don't like this one; I think the big one is a great improvement on it. Those stripes which in this picture are steps because they're horizontal in the big painting that Mrs. Goodman has are the fluting in a column which suggests the government and the law. The associative value of objects, the small details, is something that apparently I'm very aware of. The fact that those policemen in raincoats are near part of a white building -- in our minds in America white buildings are government buildings. So I'll admit -- though I tend to fight it -- that throughout my work there's always the awareness -- I think it would be a little illegitimate, and by the way, I can't justify this with any logic, to do a naked man riding bareback on a horse as opposed to the man with a bullhorn wearing the equipment of a police officer on a horse. I don't know why. I wish that I could be concerned only with form. If these women who are running here, if one were not calling, if they were in less of a hurry, apparently even here although there is absolutely no specific notion that I can think of but apparently there's some compulsion here, they're acting in common. Where and why and what they're doing and in what spirit is hard to say. I had the woman in the middle covering her mouth with her hand. Then I changed that to have her shouting and her hand is next to her mouth. But when her hand covered her mouth all the women seemed frightfully panic-stricken I wanted to avoid that.

PC: But still they all do have a sense of direction.

JH: It would be nice -- and by "nice" I mean in the broadest sense of the term of comfortable - if I could concern myself with the grace and the felicitous interplay of forms only. But I can't.

PC: Do you feel that you've moved through various periods? Or that your work has been fairly consistent?

JH: I haven't changed very much. I still bat righty. I've tried to bunt, and I've tried to hit home runs, and I've tried to wait out a walk, but when I step up to the plate I don't step up -- I stand on the same side of the plate. I think you have to make up your mind how you're going to bat. Did I mention some of the Book-of-the-Month portraits that I did?

PC: Yes. Right.

JH: In Paris I had done something and I was grumbling out loud: I said, "This looks like another canvas that I did last month." The dancer, Paul Draper, said, "Are you afraid to have, are you ashamed to have your work recognizable? Are you afraid of being Joe Hirsch?" And I remember tying that in at the time with my feeling that it was absolutely necessary that in seven portraits that I did for the Book-of-the-Month Club each background had to be distinctly different from the other backgrounds so as to keep them from all running together. The consciousness of being in a rut I think plagues most artists from time to time. At least I hope it does. But if that becomes the Number One consideration then you'll give priority to versatility and you'll take great delight in not ever repeating yourself. One of my childhood fantasies -- I mean when I was a painter at the age of nineteen, twenty, or twenty-one, was to have an exhibition of one still-life done in thirty different ways. Apparently as a green painter I gave versatility an importance that now seems ludicrous. I never did it, but it crossed my mind that it might be interesting to show the son of a gun that painting by one pair of hands, my hands, could be that versatile. I'm trying to justify it now and I don't think it's justifiable. But, to repeat, the consciousness of being in a rut even before I started being in a rut was something I anticipated with a kind of dread. But I don't mind it now. And in answer to the question you asked me way back there I haven't changed basically. I do canvases that are bigger than I've ever done before. I work more slowly than I've ever done. I work with a more limited palette occasionally than I ever have before. A couple of years ago I did a picture using black and white which breaks all the rules I was brought up on. But it worked.

PC: How does it break the rules? In what way?

JH: When you use paint you're supposed to use hue, pigment, color. A painter is a tinter -- Tintoretto. If you confine yourself to black you might as well work in charcoal. I mean this is a rigid kind of Puritanism which is ridiculous. I was on a Prix de Rome jury and was going to vote against giving the prize to Robert Birmelin, I almost did, but Peter Blume persuaded me that Birmelin was an artist. He submitted two or three beautifully poetic dramatic arrangements; one was a big oval table in front of a mirror in front of a window in a dark interior; and he used nothing but a tube of black paint in various gradations no color at all. I don't know if he even used white paint. It was just on white canvas. But it was very very beautifully atmospheric. The greatest

photographs in the exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art -- what is it? The Path of Man? The Family of Man -- the great exhibition of photography -- the greatest photographs in that were in black and white. The supreme achievements of Durer and Rembrandt in etchings and engravings are minus pigment. No, I do things now that I didn't do before. I will abandon color from time to time. In this one there will be practically no color. And I work now with a greater variety of sizes, from the tiny canvas of the wine and cheese to this big one of the six women. But I think basically I'm still recognizable. The name of this picture of the six women -- and which I think is going to be changed -- for the moment the title is Anna Bella Cora Dora Ella Flora (A B C D E F).

PC: Why do you think the canvases have gotten larger in recent years?

JH: I'm just succumbing to the current mode. There are pictures down at the New School for Social Research -- I was down there the other day and I went up and looked at the little tag next to one or two enormous canvases and I saw gift __ the artist and I almost felt amused and sad. But these enormous, big abstractions -- no, the bigness which to a great extent is a compensation for emptiness is something I have succumbed to. And once in a while I think it's nice to work with a big canvas. Most of my pictures are not this big.

PC: You've never had any particular interest in abstract painting anywhere along the line?

JH: My first wife has a couple of drawings I did which are abstract in that they represent nothing. Three or four drawings. One is called Mama and the Catastrophe. They represent nothing but very sculptural forms; some are coming out of others; some are dropping, some are flying through the air, some are combinations of concrete things such as a bolt in a piece of cloth, that is, a piece of cloth with a bolt going through it as if it were not a piece of cloth. This was just elaborate, rather hypnotizing, doodling period that I've gone through. Which I think is healthy and necessary and I intend to do more of it. But in painting I've never --

PC: Just a second ago you mentioned being on a jury and awarding prizes. Have you served on many juries?

JH: Yes.

PC: What kind of an activity would you describe it as being?

JH: It's one of doubtful value. I think the awarding of prizes is disappearing. As a matter of fact, I helped make it disappear up at the National Academy of Design ten months ago. Henry Varnum Poor and I persuaded the rest of the jury not to award either of the big Altman Prizes because of the quality of the work submitted. The National Academy of Design, which has now just under \$150,000 tax-free dollars to dispose of every year and they succeed in disposing of that, some of it is earmarked for this, etc. etc. The yield from their investments comes to that. The school eats up some of it. There's a lot of waste. They offer the world's -- or the United States's largest annual cluster of prizes. There's about \$12,000 worth of prizes plus sometimes \$18,000 or \$20,000 in Ranger Fund Purchases which have served in the past as an inducement for artists to submit work. But the submissions, despite these prizes serving as a lure -- and the prizes, by the way, are not peanuts; they're not twenty-five dollar prizes; the Altman Prize is \$2,500. I felt very embarrassed at withholding the prize (even though I felt we should do it) since on two occasions I have won the big Altman figure painting prize. And it was sort of nasty to withhold it. But the work was just terrible. And the bequests have so many conditions on them. One prize actually has the qualification that the canvas must show an act of kindness toward an animal. I mention this because you asked about serving on juries. This happened to be the next to the last jury I served on. The last jury I served on was up at the National Institute of Arts and Letters a week ago -- ten days ago, having to do with Childe Hassam Purchase Fund. They picked out eighteen canvases out of about seventy for distribution to national museums.

PC: That's just about coming to an end though, isn't it? Haven't they sold most of those painting that they got -- the Hassam paintings?

JH: No, not at all.

PC: Oh, really? They still have some?

JH: The Hassam Fund comes from investments.

PC: Well, but he left a number of paintings --

JH: Yes, there are still quite a number of Childe Hassam paintings; quite a number. Many. Several dozen. By the way, he got big prices during his lifetime as well as after his death. No, I don't think it's coming to an end. If it is, it's news to me.

PC: I had heard about a year or so ago that there were very few pictures left, but if they've got dozens obviously it's going to go on for a long time.

JH: The source of the income is not the sale of his paintings. The Fund is the yield from the investments. I think one or two of his paintings are sold occasionally but the program isn't coming to an end. It's growing this year. There was \$45,000 available this year whereas as recently as six or seven years ago it was under \$30,000 something like -- \$27,000, \$26,000 -- then it went above \$30,000 and now it's up to \$45,000.

PC: What do you think is accomplished by jurying exhibitions?

JH: I was talking about the awarding of prizes. There are two kinds of juries. There is the jury of selection which is a sieve, and a jury of awards. Generally I don't think they should be the same people; and usually they are not. There's also another kind of jury which is a one-man affair. Some museums will employ this so that frankly there's just one person's taste. Usually they try to get a different person every year, frequently an artist or sometimes a museum director. The Butler Institute at Youngstown, Ohio is the only gallery that has a summer show on a national basis. I was out there a few years ago serving as a one-man jury. I think Lloyd Goodrich as served there. But even there after the pictures were chosen by me the purchase awards were chosen by a committee from the museum. I think that's proper. From what I picked they picked their purchase awards.

PC: Do you think it accomplishes anything? I mean do you feel that you accomplish something when you win an award in an exhibition like that these days?

JH: The last prize I won, which was the Carnegie Prize at the National Academy of Design last year or maybe the year before last or -- in 1969 or 1968 -- I started to answer your question before I realized that you hadn't asked me that. No, I didn't accomplish anything. It gave us three weeks in Europe for the family, \$750 paid for our air tickets and we decided to splurge. We just needed that justification for splurging. The winning of a prize doesn't accomplish anything other than boosting one's morale for about ten minutes; and it lengthens the obituary notice. But other than that I think the competitiveness is such the for prizes -- I'm not sure that they serve any purpose. They certainly have ceased to lure people, if that can be their function, -- to send work to the National Academy of Design. It used to be that there were between 1500 and 2000 entries of paintings and sculpture in it and it's got down to 1200 and 1100 and 900. Last year I think there were less than 9800 submitted. Even though the prizes have grown. The Altman Award both for landscape and for figure painting used to be \$1500 and \$1000. Now it's \$2500 and \$1500 -- the first and second award in the landscape category and the first and second award in the figure painting category. That's \$8,000 of Benjamin Altman prizes. And even that has been much criticized because it has to be awarded to an American -- born painter. I believe Benjamin Altman was not American born; I believe he was born in Germany. Joans Lie at the time was a friend of Altman's and I think he may have suggested to the old man that an American-born -- there was a lot of prejudice at the time against European art. The thing that yanked me to New York I think were two exhibitions -- well, really one exhibition. The first time I exhibited pictures in New York was in a one-man exhibition at the Meatcutters Union on Columbus Avenue. It was given a full page or perhaps a two-page spread in the newspaper PM that used to be published in New York. Dorothy Miller saw that spread in PM, went up to the Meatcutters Union, wrote me in Philadelphia and wanted to -- and did --- include me in an exhibition called Americans 1942. I had seventeen canvases in the group. In that group I think there were nine painters and five sculptors -- Fourteen Americans in 1942. It was the first of several shows that Dorothy Miller had. Not on an annual basis but every few years she'd have a group of Americans. This was the first one. And it was merely on the basis of the fact that she had seen that issue of PM and had gone to the Meatcutters Union. That show at the Meatcutters Union was arranged by the son of a butcher who wrote me after having seen my picture at the New York World's Fair, the painting called Two Men, that I've spoken of. He saw that picture at the New York World's Fair, wrote me, asked if I would send pictures over and said he would arrange to have the hiring hall cleared; he thought the things should be seen by working men in the trade union. They had never had an exhibition there. It was an interesting experience. I was still living in Philadelphia when I heard from him. I acceded to the idea of exhibiting in the hiring hall of the Amalgamated Meatcutters and Butcher Workmen of America. I thought it was a fine idea. PM thought it was newsworthy. Anyway, one thing led to another; you know, A led to B which led to C which led to D. Now that seems to me lucky. You have a picture in a World's Fair. Somebody sees it and gets you to exhibit other pictures in his father's trade union. It's written up in a newspaper. Dorothy Miller sees it and you end up in the Museum of Modern Art. It's a capsule. It all happened in about eighteen months.

PC: Yes. That's amazing. Was it successful for you to be in that show at the Museum of Modern Art?

JH: I guess so; yes, I think so. Most of the people in the show are still painting, still active in painting or sculpting.

PC: You did some prints for International Graphic Arts Society.

JH: No. I don't remember that I did. For I.G.A.S.?

PC: Right.

JH: No. I would like to have. My memory is not that accurate. I may have, but offhand I don't remember.

PC: When did you start doing prints with George Miller, would you say?

JH: In 1941 I guess. In that catalogue are the dates.

PC: What was it like working with him? He's one of those people that one always hears about but there's very little actual --

JH: I enjoyed working with him. I didn't mind or fear his surveillance. Of course he didn't hover over one -- but every once in a while he would come by and let you know frankly that he'd prefer printing from a stone on which the black grease had been placed with care rather than slammed on in ten minutes. I imagine the prototype of the kind of stone he would like to work on were the stones done by Stow Wengeroth. Stow would come in and tickle a stone for three and four weeks. I may be exaggerating but I don't think so. He would work on a stone for practically a month just tickling it and tickling it and tickling it and it looked as if it had been sprayed with an air brush. I was quite patient but I didn't have that kind of -- you know, that's in a class by itself. George Miller preferred to work with painstaking, methodical care. END OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 1 TAPE 2 - SIDE 2

PC: We haven't talked about any of your artist friends and people involved in the general culture scene. You have a great interest in music which I think we've touched upon. Are you very friendly with musicians, or composers, performers?

JH: Most of my friends are in the world of painting and sculpture and the theater. I know some writers and I've corresponded with them as well as with painters. The musical friends -- musical people that I knew were in Philadelphia. I have played with a violist who was in the Fonselay Quartet -- Nicholas Moldovan, an old friend; he's with the Coolidge Quartet. He and Sir William Primrose were regarded as the great viola players. I think Primrose might still be playing. Nicholas Moldovan has retired and doesn't play any more. But most of my friends are painters and, for some reason, people in the world of the theater.

PC: How did the theater part come about?

JH: I don't know. One of the boys I met in summer camp was Mike Gordon from Baltimore. He became a film director. I happen to know Ring Lardner who wrote M-A-S-H. Did you see that film, by the way?

PC: Yes.

JH: Joe Heller is a writer who because of CATCH 22 is probably now as much associated with the film industry as he is with the world of letters. I knew Irwin Shaw when I was a war artist correspondent. I have worked with Arthur Miller. That familiar image of the salesman with two suitcases -- I don't know if you've ever seen it -- it was originally used way back in 1949 was done for Death of a Salesman. And I did several images that Kermit Bloomgarten used later on in some of the half sheets (which is the theater word for a poster). Lloyd Goodrich's sister is Frances Hackett and she and Albert Hackett wrote -- adapted Thomas Wolfe's You Can't Go Home Again for Tony Perkins; and I did some drawings for that. One of my close friends is James Proctor who was press agent for Kermit Bloomgarten; he's involved with films; he was press agent for the film The Great White Hope. I did a wash drawing for a half sheet for Arthur Miller's latest play The Price; however, this was never used. The Death of a Salesman was so well known that I was once invited to Toronto to appear on a guessing program of the Canadian Broadcasting Company in which I was supposed to be identified by the five panelists merely by some objects on the stage. The objects were two suitcases and a hat. The panel finally got around to identifying me as the artist who had done the picture. By the way, that picture of the salesman with two suitcases seen from the back was on posters all over London as a teaser. There was a life-size reproduction of the wash drawing with nothing on it, no lettering on it; just that; it was all over London arousing peoples' curiosity, which was the point. And then later on the appropriate words were pasted over the Phoenix Theater that on such and such dates Arthur Miller's play the Death of a Salesman will be playing. It was called a teaser campaign. I enjoyed John Hersey's The Wall which was adapted by Millard Lampel; I did a wash drawing for that. I enjoyed doing a series of sketches for The Diary of Anne Frank which is a Kermit Bloomgarten production. I'm attracted to the theater. It may be because as a boy I went a lot to the Academy of Music with my father and listened to and saw a lot of opera. But no one in my family has been involved in the theater.

PC: Who are the painters that are close friends? -- people that are important to you?

JH: My closest painter friends I think are Julian Levi and Robert Gwathmey and Raphael Soyer, Peter Blume and Ben Shahn. They've all been in this studio. No, Ben hasn't been. By the way, I gave a talk on Ben up at Columbia shortly after his death. I did the last portrait of him about three months before he died. I went to his funeral the day before my exhibition opened in New York which opened on St. Patrick's Day 1969. On the day before I went out to Roosevelt, New Jersey. At his funeral I know I was -- as they say ungrammatically -- empathizing or transferring. It was an astonishingly familiar-looking funeral. It looked like a Ben Shahn painting. There was white snow everywhere. The people, about a hundred and fifty of them, seemed to be dressed in uniform black. They weren't, but their dark clothes against the white snow was such that they looked as if they were all dressed

in black and there was a square of fake grass, a green synthetic carpet, and then around this square hole in the ground and resting on two boards over the hole was the oaken casket, and standing next to the green carpet holding on to a leafless sapling was a rabbi who chanted and spoke briefly. The whole setting -- the leafless tree and the people in black and the white snow -- looked like a Shahn picture. Obviously I was associating. I've never seen a picture of a funeral by Ben Shahn. But the people in the art world who are living and I see most of are Jacob Lawrence, and, as I've just said, Gwathmey and Soyer. I've served on juries with Walter Murch, who is no longer living; and with Jim Rosenquist whom I found crazy and likable. I have served on juries with Adolph Gottlieb whom I don't know as well. I don't have a great number of artist friends. About a year ago I think or perhaps a little more there were perhaps fifteen artists who came to the house one evening for dinner. I think Jack Levine and Bob Gwathmey and Julian Levi are my closest friends. I did one group portrait of four artists -- Bob Gwathmey,, Jacob Lawrence, Julian Levi and Jack Levine.

PC: Gwathmey is marvelous.

JH: Raphael Soyer and I painted each other in his studio years ago. I think he has both paintings. And I painted him here; my model Karen was posing and I painted him sketching her. One hip or one buttock is visible in the picture and he's looking up in rapt wonderment from his sketch pad. And I have an idea that the reason this is hanging in his studio rather than in his home is because of the buttock. When the painting was finished he said, "Don't touch that side, that hip and that part of the thigh; that's fine; don't touch that; you'll spoil it." I said, "All right, I won't." And about a month later after I had given it to him he said, "Do you mind if I paint out that buttock?" I said, "Are you kidding! Of course I mind. You're not serious are you?" He said, "Well, I thought I'd ask you. I wouldn't do it if you mind." I said "Of course I mind!" So it remains in his studio and I have an idea that Rebecca -- if there are any buttocks to be around she wants the ones that Raphael has painted, not the ones that he's sitting in adoration under. That may have something to do with it. But those are the people that I see most often. Jack Levine and I have been to each other's homes. That's true of the Lawrence's, and of the Gwathmey's, and of the Soyers. Peter Blume and John Heliker and the people I see up at the National Institute, the people that I did associate with when I taught at the Art Students League, I don't necessarily see those. Ivan Albright and Abe Rattner have been to my home and so have Isabel Bishop and Moses Soyer. But generally the ones that I've mentioned are the ones that I see.

PC: You've mentioned a model; do you use a model very often?

JH: You know, as I see you sitting here -- you can shut me off if you don't like this -- but I'm just wondering if the proportion of -- that is, if there is a proportion between the energy and interest expended in getting a record of contemporary painters and sculptors and engravers for the Archives of American Art and the quantity that exists. I mean don't you really think that there is too much? Are there not too many -- You know, C. P. Snow said it: that there are -- (not that there will be) but there are too many people today; there are too many people.

PC: Well, there are going to be more in another ten years.

JH: No, I'm not proposing anything but I'm just observing that -- I feel a little more sure of myself because one of the few people I respect who writes about art feels the same way. His name is Edgar Wind (W-I-N-D). He wrote this wonderful little bible, *Art and Anarchy*. He feels that what's alarming is not the number of people who see pictures but the number of pictures that they look at. It's really alarming. They look at so many pictures -- I mean it's true that not enough people see pictures. When the WPA started years ago -- and I'm certain it's still that way -- circulating pictures through some parts of Pennsylvania people would look at a bronze head and say, "What's it for? Is it stuffed?" They had never seen a piece of sculpture, had never seen an original painting. And still despite, or because of, electrical communication and television not enough people see painting. But those that do see paintings see far too many. I don't mean John Canaday; obviously that's something special. But most people are exposed to too much. And I'm wondering how the Archives of American Art can function in the face of this vast cataract of work.

PC: It's unbelievable. But I do find that people who are seriously involved with painting and go every week to museums and galleries and things and look -- it's like popcorn. The more they see the more they want in a certain way.

JH: I think it is an invidious development if it becomes like popcorn.

PC: I don't mean it has the same value as popcorn but I mean it's that --

JH: Apparently there's an endless, bottomless appetite. In Boston Koussevitzky said "The more music the better." And he's evidently had his way. Edgar Wind, the author of *Art and Anarchy* -- the man I talked about -- was talking about the fact that if someone has the means he can see a Poussin exhibition in Paris one day and the next day can see a Picasso exhibition in London and he can sincerely get a lift out of both; and he said that when such desperate artists can find a reception either our organs of reception -- our sensory organs are atrophying together in proportion with the growth of one's appetite. Wind feels that art is becoming more

digestible because it's lost its sting; it's easier to take because it's lost its sting. He feels that many artists -- although they might not be so frank as to admit it -- are conscious of this atrophy in the perceptive organs and some of the shrillness in their work is partly due to this. We all tend to raise our voices when we speak to people who are getting deaf. To attract attention -- not just to attract attention but to break through the protective thinking that surrounds someone who frequents galleries there has to be something that's really dynamite; you have to light a fuse. I think, to a great extent, it's because of quantity. You were shaking your head in doubt as I mentioned the drop and I think it's possible to be crazy for -- (Excuse me, Women's Lib) but I know some women who find it difficult to say whether they prefer Mark Roghko or Louis Eilshemius. I mean for them it's just, well, north is north and south is south; they're both directions. And I say that you just can't be that catholic to ingest any and all sorts of stuff without setting up some sort of protective immunity. Nobody talks about this because it's a disturbing thought.

PC: One just gets sated and there's no effect at all.

JH: Wouldn't you admit that it's very much easier to see ten exhibitions in twenty minutes if they were next to each other, you know, look in for two minutes and two minutes and two minutes than to see those same ten exhibitions more carefully. It would be tiring to see ten exhibitions successively and spend half an hour in each one. The rapidity with which one sees an exhibition helps to keep from tiring us.

PC: I think so. I find that there was a time when I could see quite a few exhibitions during the day and I find that now I don't want to do that any more. I would spend maybe the same amount of time but I'll see fewer shows in one day.

JH: The same amount of time seeing fewer shows, yes. You're starting to be more selective then.

PC: But I think you have to go through a period of looking all over to find out what you're interested in for one thing. And people do. I find when I'm talking to collectors that some of them all of a sudden will find that this is what they're collecting.

JH: They'll find -- you mean that this is what they are collecting these days? I don't quite get your thought.

PC: That somebody will start buying pictures and he'll not really have an idea of what he's doing; he may own a number of things and somebody else will say, "Gee, I didn't know you collected still-life paintings. And he would never have thought of it as collecting still-life paintings.

JH: I see. I see, yes.

PC: Or I have one friend who collects flower paintings; he has flower paintings by all sorts of people. There must be thirty of them in a couple of rooms.

JH: Well, this kind of sensitivity makes sense to me.

PC: Yes. But he never thought of himself as a collector. He thought of that as a Picasso and that as a Chagall and so on. But they were not all different. And when it was pointed out to him he said, "I never thought about that."

JH: That's a real sensitivity. That's good. Don't you think so?

PC: Yes. And I think it's certainly better than people buying a piece and putting it into a warehouse and hope that the value will go up in six months.

JH: Do you understand this phenomenon or do you think I'm just being semantic? -- We have a little reproduction at home. It's in a little frame. When it's near the piano it's Chopin. When it's on the other side of the room it's a Delacroix. It happens to be Frederic Chopin painted by Delacroix. But the circumstances of the picture -- it's generally on a little table next to the piano. And it's Frederic Chopin; it happens to be just part of a picture that was cut out, the canvas literally was cut. George Sand was standing behind him while he played. I've forgotten exactly what the story is. Both parts of the canvas exist; but they were actually one at one time. No, but your friend was thinking of the artists, of the authors of these works and, from what you say, was completely unconscious of the common denominator. Are they in fact all flowers?

PC: Oh, yes; every one. It's extraordinary. No, but it's interesting how pictures change in the sense of being, say, by the piano, or away from the piano, or being looked at ten years later after you've seen 50,000 other pictures. I think that one of the great fascinations about them is that you can look at a painter and then years later look at him again and physically you know the painting hasn't changed; your eye has changed and all kinds of things have changed.

JH: By the way, Raphael Soyler not so long ago went to some collector's home and saw about eight or nine of his

canvases that he hadn't seen for a dozen years and he was depressed because they were so good. And he thought he had -- you get into the habit of thinking that you make strides, progress; you think that every picture is slightly better than the one before. Then when you come back and see this and -- He was disturbed really.

PC: I think we've talked a little bit before about the relationship of the prints to the paintings. You're not particularly involved with the whole printing process, are you? You don't do prints as a separate kind of activity?

JH: No -- I wrote a foreword to the print catalogue and because of a change that I made in it it was able to be used as a foreword for the Georgia exhibition of paintings -- just my ideas about auto-motivation. But in the foreword that I wrote for the Associated American Artists exhibition last May, before it was changed, I said, "As a weekday painter and a Sunday printmaker, I have ..." etc. etc. My wife Genevieve prevailed on me to realize that Sylvan Cole would not particularly like me to call myself a Sunday printmaker when he was giving over his galleries to an exhibition of sixty-seven lithographs: that it was not a good idea and sort of insulting to him. So I did change it. But I do think of myself as a Sunday printmaker and a weekday painter. There's some snobbishness in that, too, because the strata of value artistically, associatively, psychologically and financially is: the paintings were up there, then down here were the watercolors; and below those were drawings, and down here were prints. It used to be that way. The cheapest thing you could buy was a print; the most expensive thing was a painting or a piece of sculpture if the sculpture was unique; if it was one of an edition it became like a print. But there are some printmakers who have started to paint. And there are some painters who are just starting to print. I think of myself as a painter who started to print a while back; but if I don't do any prints for one month or several months I don't care. I did one print this summer in France and one rather big lithograph and some about ten months ago and in between I didn't do any. I don't think they're necessarily full time jobs even though you can devote your entire time to one or the other. It's very possible to do both. And certainly there are countless examples of men who have. Now, of course, there are people who are doing everything. They're doing sculpture, they're doing colored sculpture, they involve themselves with collage, with three dimensions, with paint, and they don't like to be classified as painters or sculptors.

PC: Have you had any interest in sculpture?

JH: No. Bruno Lucchesi, who is one of the sculptors over at the Forum Gallery and I have occasionally in a half-serious way exchanged ideas; he, looking at one of my paintings would say, "That would be much better as a sculpture," and I would look at one of his bronzes and say, "That gives me an idea for a painting." But I have never been interested in sculpture. I think there are many more people who do prints and painting than who do sculpture and painting.

PC: Just going back -- have you ever thought about where the ideas for the paintings come from? I mean do they come out of ideas in your head? Or visual stimulation -- I know you mentioned that some of the other ones have come from particular things that you've seen. Which way would you think that they develop?

JH: I usually know where they come from when I think about it. I don't care where they come from. That Janus arrangement up there -- the two heads upside -- the little square canvas that was a detail from a larger canvas called Chase Manhattan in which there's a young hippie couple with a baby sitting on a curbstone -- also a round picture (which has never been exhibited, by the way). Somebody bought it before I had a chance to show it. But I'll borrow it. That was a detail from that big painting in which her head was in front of his head and they're both in profile looking in opposite directions. But where that came from I don't know. I don't particularly care. The fact that I remember that the proprietress of a restaurant in France midway between Paris and where my mother-in-law lives in Mont Aiguët? In the Hotel de Lyhon (it's a two star restaurant). I saw her at the table and the cook was sitting there, he had taken his hat off, he was her husband, and she put something in his mouth. Obviously they didn't look like that; but that's where that happened to come from. There's a painting that Sam and Bella Spewack own of one man whispering into the ear of another man. The painting is called The Confidence. It's been reproduced a lot and I did a lithograph of it. They've been referred to as the politicians, or the lawyers, or the campaigners, or the ward heelers. But what I saw was a boy leaning over and whispering to his mother in a delicatessen store late at night in Philadelphia Kellm's Delicatessen was on South Street and Mrs. Kellm was sitting at the table having a glass of tea and her son with an apron on came over and whispered something in her ear; and that was all. I transferred it to -- There's one picture called Lunch Hour which is now in the collection of -- it was in the Schulman Collection -- I forget where it is now. It was my first lithograph. My father posed for it. It's a man asleep at a table seen head-on with his head down on the table and one hand hanging over the edge. On one of the streetcars in Philadelphia I was coming home late at night and saw one tired passenger whose hand was draped over the front seat and that came from that. I mention these merely because I happen to remember these things. I've never painted anything that I've seen that I can remember. I've seen things which have led to paintings.

PC: The change and metamorphosed in the process.

JH: Yes. I've painted things the way I wish they could have been or fear they might be. But I've never painted anything the way I actually saw it other than a portrait of someone posing for me.

PC: What about the little still-life there? Is that again a model picture?

JH: No, no. That was done from -- that study -- well, I'll except some still-life studies that I've done from this category. That I will except. The man who put the linoleum down here in the studio went out to lunch and left his tools in a bag. While he was out to lunch I looked at the tools. They were all sort of curved tack hammers and strange tools. They were in a wonderful -- looking canvas bag. I hung the bag on a nail in the wall and did a charcoal drawing of it. I knew that if I started to paint it I wouldn't be finished by the time he came back from lunch. And I made that into a painting. But studies like that come from -- it ended up in a painting, by the way,, on a different wall and it wasn't exactly the way I saw it; it was exaggerated and overstated but essentially it was what I saw. I refer not to still-life studies so much as the more conceptual arrangements of people. This automobile -- we have all seen highways with yellow stripes in the middle and we've all seen automobiles on their side; but I just put them together. I don't remember ever having transferred a scene indoors or out to canvas, I mean something that I actually saw.

PC: One thing we haven't talked about at all is criticism -- the kind of receptions that paintings have gotten during and after exhibitions. Has that had any value or meaning for you? -- that is, art magazines or newspaper criticism, that kind of writing.

JH: Not that I'm aware of, no. The kind of criticism that I feel has been a positive factor is the overheard comments or the written comments or the unsolicited comments.

PC: You mean somebody writes you a letter?

JH: Somebody writes me a letter or writes in a visitor's book or I overheard things. My father who had a hearing aid which was rather sensitive would sidle up to people who were looking at one of my pictures in an exhibition and turn it up as much as possible and he would eavesdrop on them like an FBI man with a concealed mechanism. He would frequently do this. Then he would report to me. Occasionally I will sidle up to people at an exhibition. I'm just curious to hear what they're saying. Sometimes I'm surprised. I remember years ago I had done a watercolor in Manayunk, which is a suburb of Philadelphia. Being a city boy I didn't realize that one of the objects in the picture I painted was an outhouse; I really hadn't know it. And when I heard one tall man say to another man even taller in a low voice, "I can't say I like his subject matter;" as they went away I looked at my watercolor and I realized that it was an outhouse. I had been interested in the fact that it was a spot of strong green against the tapestry of the fall hill.

PC: It's interesting the thing about criticism, a lot of artists have said that they find a great deal of the criticism is involved with things that to them don't seem apparent in the paintings or the critic is out to flail his own horse or something. I read so much criticism I often wonder myself what really it does to open one's eyes to seeing things. Frequently it's a language exercise.

JH: Ira Levin whom I don't know, at least I don't think I do, wrote an article that appeared in the New York Times when the Metropolitan Museum acquired a painting of mine called The Room. There was a reproduction of the painting also. He was furious because one of the men looked too much like a movie actor that he knew; he wanted to know: what the men were talking about, why they were there, and what does Hirsch have in the back of his mind -- it certainly isn't apparent. And I enjoyed very much reading this angry comment. But the helpful, positive aspects of criticism I think come from the questions that are asked me and the things that people say the find in my paintings that I am not aware of. That far outweighs the unpleasantness -- that makes up for the lack of substance in many of the written criticisms. When you say "criticism" you mean the printed word?

PC: Yes. Like Art News, the Times, and so on.

JH: It's when they speak of things that don't occur to me, either things that I welcome, or things that I don't welcome -- it's those things that interest me most. Very frequently I will put things into pictures that I'm not aware of. I did a painting called Supper and somebody noticed that the absence of a thirteenth -- there were twelve people at the table -- made it a religious picture; that is, because the thirteenth person being absent became very conspicuous thereby. Which is a convoluted way of thinking.

JH: Do we have to finish this tape? (Interruption) ... from exhibiting rather. It would be a fine thing in the sense that we discourage people from driving unless they have a permit. In other words, not only do we discourage them, we punish them. I may have mentioned to you that my class came to jerky attention when I happened to drop some joking remarks at the League a couple of years ago; I said, "Did you read about the new requirement that you have to have a permit to exhibit;" Some of the old gals really perked up at that. They took me seriously: I hadn't realized that they would. No, but I wish there was some way by which we could separate the good ones from the bad ones. It's an old, old yearning on the part of people who don't paint on Sundays -- who paint every

day except Sunday -- there's an old wish that they all share that those who do paint on Sundays somehow could be put in a separate category. But it's hard. And I really think that if we could -- I think anybody who wants to paint obviously can. I think I mentioned to you that Albert La Maurice, the French film director who did the Red Balloon, said, "It must be hard to be an artist because anybody can paint." And in a sense it is true. I'm very offended by the use of people at an easel using that as a symbol of retirement. It's funny and after it's funny it's offensive. I mean it's much more than funny.

PC: And it's also the whole business of art as therapy and all that kind of thing.

JH: Certainly. By the way, I don't think anybody questions that. I think I certainly would be more nuts if I didn't use my hands. I think the therapeutic or the preventive therapy, if there is such a thing, pertains to people who paint every day.

PC: Working it out on the canvas.

JH: Not using your hands is a sickness that -- it's forced on some people I suppose by the nature of -- they're sedentary hands. In making your Archives rounds have you met any painters or sculptors who have retired? I've never heard of it except for Marcel Duchamp. He played chess.

PC: Yes, but he never really did retire either. He was always making little objects and doing little books. He was always making something. I mean officially he retired.

JH: Well, he said that he stopped painting in 19?? whenever it was.

PC: Yes, but he made the green box which has miniatures of all his notes and little objects. He kept on making editions of his works and various things right up to the end.

JH: But you haven't met anybody who has retired? But you're not saying that you haven't met anybody that shouldn't retire.

PC: I've never heard of anybody who's retired either.

JH: Did I tell you that a couple of years ago a nineteen-year-old arts and crafts counsellor at my boy's camp said to me, "Are you still painting, Mr. Hirsch?" That was one of the more unforgettable remarks of the last few years. No, apparently if you paint you keep on.

PC: Yes.

JH: There must be some painters or sculptors who don't work any more but I just haven't heard of them.

PC: I've never known of any. I mean even Rockwell Kent who's eighty-something and whose health isn't good works.

JH: Leon Kroll I think is going to be eighty five this week. He just had an exhibition open two weeks ago at the Danenberg Gallery. A big show. END OF TAPE 2 - SIDE 2 - END OF INTERVIEW