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Oral history interview with Robert Morris,
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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Robert Morris on March 10, 1968. The interview was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Interview

PC: PAUL CUMMINGS

RM: ROBERT MORRIS

PC: Today is March 10, Paul Cummings talking to Robert Morris. You were born in Kansas City -- right?

RM: Yes. Missouri, February 9, 1931.

PC: Did you come from a large family?

RM: No, small; two children. I have a sister a year younger. And a foster mother.

PC: Just two children?

RM: Yes.

PC: And you grew up in the city or in the suburbs or was it an apartment house? Private house?

RM: It was a house. I guess you could call it in the suburbs. It was more like a neighborhood in the city but there was quite a bit of land around this neighborhood. It wasn't anything like the suburbs are now. It was a kind of open neighborhood, quite a bit of room to run around in the woods and so forth.

PC: So you had trees and grass and things like that?

RM: Right.

PC: It wasn't one house after another?

RM: No, it wasn't a cement environment.

PC: What kinds of things did you do before you went into school in the sense of, you know, did you start drawing early, or reading early?

RM: Well, I did start drawing quite early. I did the usual kinds of things that I've heard other artists talk about. If you can draw Dick Tracy pretty well so you must have something.

PC: Right. So you did all the early Pop images that everybody . . . it's amazing how many people have drawn the comic strips when they were young, or comic books.

RM: Right. That's what I did.

PC: Where did you go to primary school then?

RM: It was a small school called Gracemond. That was in Kansas City. I went there from kindergarten through seventh grade.

PC: Is that a public school?

RM: Yes.

PC: And did you have any art education there?

RM: Well, I had several teachers there that . . . I think it was a pretty bad school in terms of any kind of academic situation but I was encouraged quite a bit by different teachers, some more than others.

PC: Do you remember any one specifically?

RM: Well, I remember a sixth grade teacher that allowed me to . . . when I think back about it, it seems rather strange because it wasn't a large school, but I was given quite a bit of deference in terms of making art, making

murals for the school. I was allowed to spend art periods as well as music periods, and sometimes I remember it seems now they even allowed me to spend other periods like geography and so forth. I was just in this room painting. Sometimes I'd have people helping me.

PC: What grades would this have been?

RM: This would be fifth, sixth, seventh grade. So that I was encouraged quite a bit at that point. And I also started going to the Nelson Gallery which is in Kansas City. I think I was maybe eight when I started doing that on Saturdays, taking classes in the Museum where we would draw, draw things in the Museum.

PC: It wasn't just a class where you sat in a room and drew? You went around in the Museum and drew different things?

RM: Yes. The first one I remember we drew was an Egyptian relief.

PC: In the sixth or seventh grade?

RM: Yes. I mean we went to it and we drew from it.

PC: That's more interesting than what most of them do. Just give children paint and away they go.

RM: Yes.

PC: Who was the teacher there, do you remember?

RM: I don't remember the teacher now. It was also I think a program in connection with the Kansas City Art Institute. We would sometimes use their studios. And sometimes we would go to the Nelson Gallery. So those things all happened.

PC: You got involved in these things very quickly then, didn't you?

RM: Well, I guess so. I was eight years old; I guess that was when I started having some kind of training as an artist that was different than just an art class in school.

PC: A general art class, yes.

RM: But by that time . . . well, I guess that was before I had really started having the privilege of being given a kind of studio in this grade school.

PC: What did your parents think of this? This was rather young to get involved. Were they very much for it?

RM: I think they generally approved of it. I think there was not any special thing made about it so far as they were concerned.

PC: What kind of background are you from? Have they lived there for a long time?

RM: My father was from Minneapolis and my mother was from southern Missouri. My mother's family had been in Missouri for maybe a couple of generations, and my father's family had come from Sweden. I think his grandfather was from Sweden.

PC: They all go to Minneapolis.

RM: Yes. Right.

PC: Well, that's interesting. Because so many parents sort of say, you know, you can play for a while but you've got to start learning something real.

RM: Yes. Well, I think that I didn't get involved in this to the exclusion of other things. I mean I wasn't a prodigy or anything where I was just let loose to develop in one direction. They were not interested in having that happen.

PC: You then went on to the University of Kansas City -- right?

RM: Well, I went to the University of Kansas City at the same time I was going to the Kansas City Art Institute because I was interested in certain academic subjects.

PC: Which ones?

RM: Well, I was taking courses in history and philosophy and biology, things like that, at the University which I couldn't get at the art school. Afternoon or evening courses at the University and I was at the art school in the daytime. So I was doing these two things at the same time.

PC: It was a full schedule.

RM: Yes.

PC: Did you have, you know, any specific direction in the academic world? Or were you just taking general work?

RM: It was pretty much a general course.

PC: Sort of liberal arts.

RM: Yes.

PC: Did you study with anyone at the Art Institute that was a specifically interesting instructor?

RM: Well, let's see, I think there were a couple of people that did stimulate me to some extent. One man by the name of Jamieson who introduced me to surrealist technique and automatic drawing.

PC: What's his first name?

RM: Gene -- Eugene Jamieson.

PC: Had he been teaching that for a while, do you know?

RM: No, I don't think so. And I don't think he teaches there anymore. He was just there for a short period of time. I think he actually stopped art altogether and became a folk singer.

PC: Oh, really?

RM: Yes. That's the last I heard of him. But that was a different kind of thing. For the most part the school was very academically structured. We spent hours drawing the nude, objects, learning how to letter, very technically oriented.

PC: Did you draw from casts?

RM: Mostly we drew from the figure and sometimes we drew from objects. It was a very laborious kind of technical craft, trade school-like. Then there was a painter who had come from New York. His name was Vincent Campanella, who I think got me interested, or was the first one who presented any degree of abstraction as a way of working, besides Jamieson who was involved in this automatic drawing.

PC: Was Jamieson involved with other kinds of surrealist ideas?

RM: Not so much, no. No, I think he had actually kind of applied this to a sort of aesthetics which was kind of regionalism. I mean both of these things were going on with him at the same time. So it was a strange mixture. But the automatic drawing part was really a new thing for me. And then Campanella introduced certain semi-abstract kinds of formats somewhat like Marsden Hartley. He painted somewhat like Marsden Hartley. He was also a regionalist who had been on the WPA Project. Had been in the West.

PC: So he was older?

RM: Yes, he was.

PC: You know, you mentioned you were interested in music. Were you studying music at one point?

RM: No, I was not interested in music.

PC: You weren't?

RM: No, not at all.

PC: Oh.

RM: Did I mention that? That I was interested in music?

PC: Well, you said it was one of the things that you were studying. Or was it just a class you took?

RM: No, I said that during music classes I was allowed to continue to like double up and have another session generally painting on my own, you know, when everyone else was studying music. No, I have no musical skills whatsoever.

PC: Did you read a great deal?

RM: Yes. Not so much in grade school I got started reading in high school.

PC: What kind of things did you read?

RM: Well, I was interested quite a bit in Russian literature at that point and some philosophy. Plato. But mostly literature.

PC: How did you decide to go to the California School of Fine Arts?

RM: I also should say that it was not really my intention to become an artist at this point at all. I wanted to become a professional baseball player. And I was a semi-professional baseball player. I used to travel around the Midwest.

PC: Who did you play with?

RM: They were local teams sponsored by companies there and we would tour around the Midwest playing. That's what I wanted to do.

PC: That's really where it was at.

RM: Yes. But after a certain point, I guess about the first year of art school, I realized I wasn't going to really be big enough to become a very successful professional. So I quit. Just stopped.

PC: How long did you play baseball?

RM: I played through high school and into first or second year of art school. And then I stopped. I guess I stopped when I was seventeen, something like that.

PC: Did you ever play any other sports?

RM: Well, I played football and track and things like that. But baseball was the thing I was best at and was most interested in making a career out of.

PC: That's interesting. And finally you decided that wasn't it?

RM: No, it wasn't. I couldn't hit the ball far enough. I wasn't big enough. So I quit; just stopped. And then I think I became more focused on art. I don't really remember now why I decided to go to the California School of Fine Arts instead of coming to New York. I had been to the West before and wanted to go back.

PC: During vacation period or something?

RM: No, I guess the first time I went to the West was when I was about fourteen or fifteen. I rode a cattle train out to Los Angeles and was very impressed with the West and wanted to go back again, I think.

PC: In what way?

RM: Well, the desert and Arizona and New Mexico and places like that. I think that's probably why I went back as . . . I mean the reason why I went to the Wet Coast as much as anything else.

PC: It was really the landscape rather than the city?

RM: Yes.

PC: Who did you study with in California? Let's see, in 1951 who was there?

RM: Well, I studied there with Elmer Bischoff and David Parks and -- who else was there at that point? Hassel Smith. It was just after Clyfford Still had gone. His influence I think was still hanging over the place.

PC: Did they do figurative things? Or were they still doing abstract?

RM: David Parks was the only one who was painting figuratively. Both Bischoff and Hassel Smith were painting abstractly. I was only there for a very, very short period of time; I think one semester. Then I went into the Army

at that point.

PC: What was this sort of hang-over atmosphere of Still? How did you sense that? Or was it apparent in what the people were painting?

RM: Well, it was apparent in the work of some people like Dugmore who was there. I never had him as a teacher. I think he was teaching or a graduate student. I don't remember. I know his work was around, which had an obvious influence of Still. And also another man whose name I can't at the moment recall -- Lobdell. It seems to me that those were the two people who were sort of carrying on some of the elements of Clyfford Still's work. Bischoff and Hassel Smith were much more abstract expressionists, action-type painters. But Still had some kind of -- his presence was felt -- he was talked about. And subsequently when I started painting on my own I think I was quite influenced by Clyfford Still.

PC: His ideas were still very prevalent there even though he wasn't?

RM: Not so much his ideas, but I think the image of his work.

PC: Oh, I see. Well, what kind of thing were you doing during those periods, you know, through the Art Institute and the California School?

RM: I was painting rather abstractly or working from some kind of landscape motif, I guess you could call it. It ended up being abstract. While I was at the California School I probably was doing completely abstract paintings for the whole period of time I was there. Nothing on a very large scale. I wasn't terribly interested in color. And I think they were just rather undistinguished student-type paintings.

PC: Looking around, trying.

RM: Yes.

PC: Then you said you went into the Army?

RM: Yes. I was in the Army for two years.

PC: What did you do there?

RM: I was in the Engineers. And we were sent to Korea. This was sort of toward the end of the war. The truce was signed when I was there. I was assigned to a Battalion that built emergency airfields. But by the time we got there all the airfields has been built. So there was absolutely nothing for this entire Battalion to do. So they got us involved in drilling a hole into the side of a mountain. And they had been doing this for two years before I had gotten there, a long tunnel about a mile into the mountain. And when I got there they were just completing it so they filled this full of dynamite, this whole thing, and blew the mountain up. But before they blew it up, they built a grandstand in front of this hole at some distance. And all of the brass of all of the Engineering Battalions came to this event. And programs were printed up. And I remember the cook going up with a whole truckload of cake and coffee. And our photographer, the Battalion photographer, was there. There was one in a plane and he was on the next mountain. And they blew this thing up. It was a fantastic event. And there were all kinds of pictures of it, in different stages of the explosion. Then the mountain went up and just came down in big boulders. Then the rest of the time I was there they crushed all these boulders up into gravel and put them into big piles around the landscape and assigned people from our Battalion to guard these piles of rocks.

PC: Why did they blow the mountain up?

RM: To make the gravel. Just in case they needed any gravel. But what it was really about was keeping the Battalion busy.

PC: Busy work. That's the most incredible make-do job I ever heard of. To take a mountain and blow it up.

RM: It was elaborately planned and there were progress charts and people were given all kinds of promotions for making the hole go faster. It was one of those typical insane situations.

PC: It's like a play or something.

RM: It was an event crowned by this enormous exposure and a grandstand full of officers.

PC: I love the idea of the grandstand. Did someone light the fuse or push the plunger down?

RM: I think so. I wasn't there at the explosion. But it was a gala affair.

PC: So that's what happened in Korea?

RM: Yes.

PC: How did you like the country? That was quite different from what you'd seen before.

RM: I was so impressed with the country it was . . . it actually got me into a lot of trouble because I was after a certain point assigned to a courier driver. I drove documents around. And one evening I was driving down a mountain and it was just so incredibly beautiful; the sun was setting over these rice fields and I was looking at the landscape and I drove the jeep right into a truck and demolished it completely. And lost the job. And was assigned to something else. I wasn't hurt but

PC: That was the end of that stage. I've talked to a few people who've been there and very few had anything to say about the country.

RM: I was very impressed with Korea. I went to Japan and Hong Kong and various places. After I wrecked the jeep they didn't really have anything for me to do so I was assigned as a guard to guard . . . to take prisoners to the main stockade in Japan. Generally people were court-marshaled in our Battalion for doing things like selling entire truckloads of oil to the black market. Very few people took the thing seriously and so they made as much money as they could on the black market. And some of them got caught. And these guys were sent to the stockade. I escorted them on the plane and in that way I got to travel around a great deal. And I enjoyed that very much, seeing Japan. I went to various places in Japan. I went to Hong Kong. I went to Formosa.

PC: Did you visit any of the museums? Or see what was going on in the art world?

RM: I spent a lot of time collecting things in Korea. Oriental things.

PC: What kind?

RM: I collected some plates and some bronzes and scrolls and things like that. I didn't have very much money but it was possible to find a few items that were interesting. And when I went to Japan I spent quite a bit of time in -- not a lot of time; I tried to travel around to see the country -- but spent time in Tokyo, and in that very old city south of Tokyo -- I can't remember the name of it now. It's full of temples.

PC: Kyoto?

RM: Kyoto, yes. That was a great time.

PC: Do you think any of those things have had an influence on your ideas or your activities?

RM: Oriental art?

PC: Yes.

RM: I've never thought about it. I would tend to think not. I don't think so.

PC: I want to do a couple of other things here about pre-college. You said your grandfather was from Sweden. You didn't have another language at home, did you?

RM: No.

PC: Are there any things that you particularly remember about living in Kansas City or growing up, things of particular interest to you?

RM: Well, I remember being I think impressed by the landscape, not so much of Missouri but of Kansas. I was right on the border. And I often went to Kansas. My father was in the livestock business and he would take trips to Kansas a lot. And I would go with him sometimes. And that kind of scale and stretch of landscape was I think a pretty important image.

PC: I've never been there. What is the landscape like?

RM: It's extremely flat. Some places it just is absolutely flat in every direction.

PC: For miles it looks the same.

RM: Yes. You can see for miles and miles.

PC: No trees?

RM: No. It's wheat country, so there's really nothing. A few oil derricks. But that's all that breaks the flat sweep.

PC: What happened after the Army?

RM: I came back to San Francisco after that. I spent some time in the West trying to save up some money. I worked as a railroad switchman. I worked as a horse wrangler in Wyoming. And then I finally went on up to Oregon and went to Reed College for a while.

PC: How did you pick Reed College?

RM: I had meet someone in the Army from Portland who told me about the School and it interested me. So I went there -- well, six months or so after I had saved some money. And I studied philosophy and psychology there. There was no real art department there. I wasn't interested in that. I was painting. I guess my pattern for my education was to have been involved partly with the art school and to continue some other studies too.

PC: You seem to have a great interest in philosophy.

RM: Well, I don't know. I guess it was one of the things I was interested in. Maybe more than other academic studies. Psychology I was interested in too.

PC: So you were there, what? Two years?

RM: Yes, a couple of years.

PC: Were there any professors there that stand out in your mind?

RM: Well, there were no particular people there. Some of the students I think were very stimulating. It was a very intense place. Full of very bright students. Very so-called progressive school. A lot of people doing very independent sort of things. A fiercely competitive atmosphere and a very, very tense place. As I look back on it now, it doesn't seem like it was a very healthy place at all. But I met people there; the students were more important to me than the professors. I think there was no one teacher there that I got very much from.

PC: Did you continue your association with any of the students?

RM: No, I've lost touch with all of them at this point.

PC: Was your major then in philosophy?

RM: It was in philosophy and psychology.

PC: Did you have an interest in getting a degree in psychology or philosophy?

RM: Well, I was going to get a degree. And then there was a point when I was starting to paint again and I had gotten more and more interested in painting and less and less in the school actually.

PC: Depressing?

RM: Very, very depressed kind of place.

PC: Why was that, I wonder? If it was so busy in academic stimulation?

RM: I don't know. It was. It was all of those things. But there was this very strong undertone of sickness.

PC: Were there a lot of GI's there?

RM: No.

PC: Not very many at that kind of school. What kind of thing were you painting in comparison to the earlier things?

RM: Well, I think that the paintings had probably less and less color in them and became more and more monochrome type of paintings.

PC: Went into blacks and grays.

RM: Blacks and grays and browns, yes. The canvases got larger. I think that was the result of being at the California School where everyone worked very large. And I had a studio in Portland. And finally I left Portland completely and came down to San Francisco. And started painting full time.

PC: Did you do any art work while you were in the Army? Or wasn't it possible to paint or draw?

RM: No. I didn't really do any. I did some photography when I was there. I think that's what I did.

PC: How did that come about?

RM: Well, I guess there was a certain kind of exoticism about the places to which I went that I wanted to record.

PC: What did you think of photography as an art medium?

RM: Well, I think it has a relationship to what I'm doing now. I wouldn't say it's an art medium but it's a very important part of the art now in some way. Like this piece in here. It changes every day. The only thing that's left is the photographic record as far as anything static goes.

PC: Do you take a photograph every day?

RM: Yes.

PC: It's interesting. You know, there seem to be so many people using photography in different ways now and not as a photograph, either lifting parts out of it or using it to record events.

RM: Yes.

PC: In some cases you get entirely different things. Sometimes, as you said, when it's over with all you have is a photograph.

RM: Yes. Yes, it's becoming increasingly important to me. I mean I'm going into it more.

PC: How long were you in California?

RM: I was there about five years, in San Francisco. I had a studio on the waterfront and was painting every day.

PC: Did you have an outside job or work?

RM: I had part-time jobs, yes. I worked for a while as a carpenter and various little jobs. Usually only part-time jobs.

PC: A few days here, a few there.

RM: Yes.

PC: This was really the first time you had a setup, a studio and had a lot of your own time, wasn't it?

RM: That's right, yes.

PC: How did you like the atmosphere?

RM: In California?

PC: Yes.

RM: It was rather dead there.

PC: Oh, really!

RM: Yes. Or rather quiet. I think that it was probably something that suited me at that point because I just wanted to be in the studio and paint. I don't know. I have to qualify that. I think that as far as the painting that was going on it was not very lively at that point in San Francisco. In other areas . . . in the theatre I was quite involved with Anne Halperin. My first wife was a dancer and she was working with Anne. And I started certain theatrical efforts at that time.

PC: That's when the whole theatre . . . ?

RM: Started there, yes.

PC: And your first wife was a dancer?

RM: Yes.

PC: Where had you met her?

RM: We were married at Reed. I met her at Reed. But I think that was probably the most vital thing that was going on in the Bay area that I knew about.

PC: There's Berkeley and a number of other schools and universities around there.

RM: Right. Yes. There's the Oakland School of Arts and Crafts.

PC: Did you find anything going on in that academic community that interested you?

RM: I was not really around the University at all.

PC: I'm interested in what got you going in the theatre. What attracted you?

RM: Well, I'd say it was partly connected with the painting, I think. The painting I was doing at this time was . . . well, the canvases were I guess six by eight, nine, ten, twelve feet. That tended to be their scale. I started working in an easel painter's fashion by putting the canvas against the wall and working on it. Generally used to paint very heavy and put it on with a knife or trowel. Then I began to work on the floor. I knew that Pollock had worked on the floor. This was in 1953 or 1954 that I started down there I guess.

PC: 1954.

RM: I found that by putting the canvas on the floor I could get back into the picture if I got stuck, if I couldn't get it started again, and felt like it wasn't finished and yet I didn't quite know how to begin on it again. If I put it on the floor, not seeing it in that completely frontal way, allowed me not to have that particular kind of critical focus of seeing all the relationships.

PC: It's almost like doing a backdrop in the theatre?

RM: No. No. It was a different way of seeing, of looking at something. And it was a freer way of looking at something. Because it wasn't that perpendicular vision where things are so focused in that way that paintings are always focused for us.

PC: Right.

RM: And then I painted more and more on the floor. In fact, as I went along I painted the whole thing on the floor. I built a scaffold over the canvas so that I could move it back and forth and I worked off the scaffold. This actually changed the painting a lot. It reduced the gesture, the gestural quality. The first paintings had a lot of action in them. And they became less and less active.

PC: What kind of images were they?

RM: These were completely abstract images. And I think probably the influences that are most heavy in them are those of Clyfford Still and Pollock too. Very much of an all-over kind of thing. And there's not such a kind of geological look that you get in Clyfford Still. But the surfaces were very fragmented and broken. They got more and more fragmented as I went along and as I worked in this fashion. So the whole method of painting changed the image in some way. I finally got to the point where I was just moving the scaffold from one end of the canvas to the next and laying the paint down almost . . . it was almost like the situation of making a tapestry. I would just move it down a foot and paint that area and then go on so when I got to the end the painting was finished. And I either accepted it or threw it out. But I didn't got back and adjust it.

PC: So it was kind of one time over and that was it?

RM: Yes. That tended to be a method I arrived at.

PC: Was it a long-time sequence involved in that?

RM: Well, sometimes the paintings would go on for maybe a week, yes. But I was using the paint in a paste form. I was never spilling it or staining it or dripping it. Sometimes I was putting it on with newspapers or my hands; a lot I painted with my hands.

PC: What kind of paint was that that you used?

RM: Well, it was a good grade commercial house paint, colors in oil. I ground up a lot of my own colors. I made a lot of my own paint.

PC: It must have had fair texture.

RM: It had quite a bit of texture to it. Yes. Quite a bit.

PC: And still you had no interest in color?

RM: A little bit. But it couldn't be called color painting at all.

PC: Yes. You still tended towards the monochromes and earth colors? Or were they getting brighter?

RM: Well, gray, a lot of black and white and gray paintings, sometimes with a little bit of color. One of the last paintings I did was just black and white with maybe a little bit of pink and green here and there; just very little color. But this whole kind of thing . . . I realized that this process was getting to a very developed point. I mean there was a definite process about how I went about making things. But that seemed to have so little to do with the finished image, unlike Pollock where I think the process is registered in the way the paint splashes or drips or falls. You have some indication that it was put down that way. But the way I was working with the thick paint, there was no real indication of any kind of action being registered unless you just made an obvious kind of gestural mark.

PC: Right.

RM: And the gesture was disappearing, as I said, and the last paintings had almost -- had no gesture; they were just a surface of fractured paint, black and white, gray, pink, and so on.

PC: Was it thinner paint then?

RM: No, it was still paste form. And I think that this whole thing about process, which shows up in my work periodically, has continued to ever since, led me to be interested in the theatre, I think, where process is something that is what it is; it takes place in time.

PC: Right.

RM: So that was one of my interests in working in the theatre. And there was a crisis developing in the painting because I couldn't satisfactorily bring the two things together. It seemed to be a complete split. On the one hand there was this process that I was very interested in, not in any kind of, you might say, inspired way, I mean it was a working process which did not in any way equate with the image. And I found in the theatre a situation where that dichotomy was not the case. And I began working with some people, some musicians and some dancers. And people working with light projections. We began to have improvisations.

PC: Who were they?

RM: Well, one was Paul Beatty who was one of the first people to do light shows. And he made films. There was a film-maker, a couple of musicians, my first wife.

PC: Who was she?

RM: Simone Whitman. Other people came and went. But there was a small nucleus of people.

PC: But this was really dance, though, wasn't it?

RM: I guess you'd call it mixed media. I mean there were musicians who would come, play the drums, and there was a pianist, Warner Jefferson. There were all kinds of things to make noise with; we brought all kinds of props, like enormous amounts of fabrics and boxes and lights. There was some movement, dancers did certain kinds of movements that were more or less -- not dance movement, but just moving around the room, moving these props.

PC: Was this at all involved with Rainer? Was she . . . ?

RM: No, no. Yvonne was here in New York. She was not there. And this was independent of Anne Halperin. Anne Halperin was in Marin County. And we were doing this . . . we rented a studio in San Francisco and met. And these things never reached the stage of any kind of performance. We never performed. We never intended to. It was just a matter of exploring these materials. But I think it was that kind of thing, partly my own painting getting into this bind. And having explored certain kind of processes with it that seemed to be more direct in terms of theatre that led me to the theatre.

PC: It's interesting. You mean by materials all the things involved with the theatre, with what was going on, even the people, the music, and the gestures as well? Or by actual physical materials?

RM: All that. Everything.

PC: All the pieces.

RM: Yes. I guess they were sort of like jam sessions, you know. And sometimes one thing would predominate over the other. And there was no real division of labor. Anyone could play or make sounds who wanted to. It was more sounds than music. Anyone could move around. Anyone could move material that was there. Sometime we actually tried to establish . . . give it a structure of some sort. Like we'd set ourselves a problem and say let's explore it in these terms.

PC: What kind of problem?

RM: It's hard for me to remember now. I remember

PC: Because it's interesting. Because you're obviously doing the things that you were all involved with rather than doing things for a potential audience.

RM: Oh, yes. There was no audience. We didn't intend to perform. It was really an exploration of these kinds of things. I think some of the dancers like my wife got interested because it was less structured than the kind of thing that Anne Halperin was doing at that time where everything was oriented toward a performance or toward a very, very structured kind of solution to some problem. And this was very loose. I can't really remember now the kinds of things that came up that we decided we would try to explore. But they did from time to time come up.

PC: Was there at any point a desire to do a performance or develop a performance?

RM: No, not really. No.

PC: So it was really always a laboratory?

RM: Sort of, yes. Very much of a workshop. That's what it was.

PC: How long did that go on?

RM: Oh, I don't know. A year maybe before I left.

PC: But you were still in San Francisco?

RM: Yes. This was done in San Francisco. And I was gradually finding painting more and more impossible.

PC: In what way?

RM: This whole problem about the process of doing it and the resulting image was one that didn't seem to me to be solved. I wasn't solving it. So that around 1958, 1959, I guess it was, I decided to stop painting completely. And I moved to New York at the beginning of 1960 I guess it was, 1961. There was a time of traveling back and forth. There was a kind of inactivity there at one point.

PC: Was there a reason why you came to New York? For change or something?

RM: I had made several trips here. And I wanted to get away from the Bay area. I found it really quite dead. And nothing there stimulated me. I was interested in art even though I found my painting to be really not possible. I wasn't even sure I was going to be an artist. I came to New York and began to study art history. I was going to become an art historian, I decided.

PC: That was where? At Hunter?

RM: Yes.

PC: Who was there then? Goosen?

RM: Goosen was there. He had just come down from Bennington. Tony Smith was there. And Leo Steinberg. William Davis. So I began to study art history when I came to New York. I had had a correspondence with Cage. I met La Monte Young who was a musician.

PC: When did you get involved with Cage?

RM: I really just corresponded with him. And La Monte Young I met I think on one of these trips back and forth actually. He was in San Francisco when I went back in 1960.

PC: When did you start writing to Cage?

RM: Oh, I think I had some theatre pieces. In this period of inactivity I had gotten interested in films and in making some theatrical productions, which I never did anything with beyond just the planning stage. And these involved sound and wind and things like that. They were never performed. I wrote Cage about that, about the possibility of performing them. And then I met La Monte Young the composer whose work interested me very much. He was in a completely different direction.

PC: What led you to Cage, do you remember?

RM: I don't know. I suppose he seemed to be somebody who was really exploring all the uses of many materials. And I liked his thinking. I mean somehow I came across it.

PC: Do you see him or correspond with him still?

RM: No. No, I don't. I saw him for a while. But he's in and out a lot now. I don't see him very often.

PC: Well, the idea to become an art historian, to study art history, how did that go once you started the process at Hunter?

RM: Well, I got quite interested in it. I studied with Reinhardt and I found that a fantastic course. I think he was really very stimulating. So was Goosen in a certain way.

PC: Reinhardt used many, many, many slides then?

RM: Yes. Yes. I took a course in Oriental art with him. And I think he really was very stimulating to me in terms of opening past art up and experiencing it. Because the art history courses I had taken before were really quite incidental.

PC: Survey courses sort of thing.

RM: Yes. Right.

PC: It seems that the people at Hunter then turned out, at least in the academic sense, to be the most stimulating individuals that you had in college?

RM: Yes, they definitely were. Oh, yes, definitely.

PC: Do you think that is because they were involved in the professional art world in a different way than the other people? Or was it just part of the milieu of the students?

RM: I don't know. I guess that there was an intensity of concern for art on the part of people like Reinhardt that I had never experienced in teachers on the West Coast. They were much more casual about it.

PC: That seems to be the key word for the West Coast, "casual."

RM: Yes.

PC: You taught then at Hunter? But that was later, wasn't it?

RM: Yes. I started teaching there . . . before I actually got the degree I was teaching a few courses here and there.

PC: Let's see, you were here in 1961. Were there things on the gallery scene in those days that interested you?

RM: Not very much. Really there wasn't much that interested me. I began making a few small objects. The first object I made when I came to New York was a box with sound, which is a cube about eight inches on a side. I recorded the sound of making this box and put a speaker in it so that it plays for three hours the sounds of its being constructed. And it wasn't conscious with me but I think this was again . . . I mean this completely split the process and the object. And yet put them both back together again. So in some way I think this was a work that allowed me then to go ahead. I mean really resolved that conflict that had occurred in painting.

PC: That produced a whole series of objects, didn't it?

RM: Yes. There were various things that went along that line of process and object where . . . oh, there was a card file I made where all the entries in it had to do with decisions about making a card file. Very reflective things. There was the metered bulb, a light bulb with a meter on it and when the light is on it immediately records how much electricity . . . And various other things went into the processes about my body, using

electroencephalograms as a drawing, things like that. And at the same time I somehow, while actually dealing with this thing or process even in very literary terms, I was also starting to make these very big forms at the same time, which had nothing to do with the issue of process at all. These two things were being done at the same time.

PC: Some of the large things . . . ?

RM: Plywood pieces.

PC: Oh, the plywood pieces.

RM: The first one was a column that was two feet square and eight feet high. And that's interesting because, while there is no process at all in that object, it was used in the first theatre piece I ever performed at the Living Theatre. It was a group concert I think organized by George Brecht. And everyone had a certain amount of time. I had I think seven minutes. So for three-and-a-half minutes the column was standing and then I pulled it over with a string and for three-and-a-half minutes it was lying on the stage. So that this first object that I made, this first plywood object, was put into the theatre in almost reverse situation to process. Process, or the element of time was used on it rather than in its making. There's a funny story: I wanted this column to just go over by itself without any particular device or any person on the stage. And I thought the only way to do that would be just to get in it and fall over. And that was an idea that terrified me to some extent. So I didn't do it until the day of the performance. And I thought I'll have to see if this is going to work. So I got inside this column and pushed it over. And of course you know you can't see anything and you can't take the shock up. And so when it hit the ground I hit my eye here on one of the braces on the inside, and split my forehead open. This was around nine o'clock in the morning. And by the time I got sewn up at the emergency hospital it was about two o'clock in the afternoon. And I had only about an hour to get to the theatre for the rehearsal. So I got there all bandaged up. And for the performance I put a little nail in the top of the column and tied a string on it and pulled it over. It worked perfectly.

PC: That must have been a strange experience falling over . . .

RM: It was really a terrible experience.

PC: . . . because you had no control. I mean the center of gravity . . .

RM: No. And you didn't know where you were in relationship to anything. You had no cues. It's interesting that those first two objects were involved in process in two completely different ways. One that literally revealed it in terms of sound. And in the other it ended up being used in a theatrical situation that involved time. Although that piece was later shown at the Green Gallery completely static. As were all the others of the big plywood forms, there was nothing connected with theatre or process in them.

PC: But it seems interesting that you've always done things that are related to parallel, or unrelated to parallel.

RM: Yes.

PC: You also had a whole series of things made of lead at one time, didn't you, at the Green?

RM: Yes. Right. There's a series of lead reliefs that I think came out of those processes of the body and so forth.

PC: But once you were here in New York you continued your interest in theatre again. Didn't you get involved with . . . ?

RM: Yes, I did. Well, as I say, I did that first thing at the Living Theatre. That must have been 1961, I guess. Then I made an Environment which was in a loft that I had on Chambers Street.

PC: Oh, really? I didn't know about that.

RM: It was a top floor loft and I built a passageway from the door of the loft that curved around into the loft about fifty feet. It was a segment of a circle, two offset segments actually, or the centers were offset so that they converged at a point, say, fifty feet into the loft. But before they met they got narrow, the passageway got quite narrow. So as you went around the curve you finally got to the point where you just couldn't go any further. But of course you could see . . . you couldn't see the end, but it narrowed all the way down. And that was all painted gray. It had a ceiling on it. The entrance was exactly the size of the door and then it curved around and got narrower and one could go in to a certain extent and then had to come out again. That was an early piece, 1961? 1962? I don't remember. But then I really didn't do anything in the theatre until I started making specific dances around the Judson in around 1963; I'm not quite sure when I did the first one there. There was a lot of activity around the Judson.

PC: Did you do anything at the Judson Gallery ever?

RM: No, I never did anything there.

PC: What got you involved with the dance? Because you've done all kinds of things with that, haven't you, ever since you started?

RM: Yes. Well, I'd had this interest I guess in the theatre from California. And there were certain things about dance that I wanted to work with.

PC: You really sort of kept thinking about it in a way?

RM: Yes. There were a couple of moves made in dance to get away . . . to find some way of moving, of having the body moving and have the body to focus without relying on the traditional trained dancers, that image of the trained dancer. One of those things was . . . one of the things my first wife was involved in was to set up rules. Like every time the person in black bent over, you had to, let's say, turn the person in red around. And you could set up enough of these kinds of clues or rules that the movement was a result of having to respond to these and it tended to break down the set of performing, that very self-conscious narcissistic kind of set. That was one structure that was put in to dance. Another thing was to use objects in such a way that they created obstacles or changed the surface. Or some kind of task had to be performed. My first wife did this concert where I did this environment. And she did things like, well, one of the rules she had . . . I performed in this for her, I and another fellow. She told me one thing, she told him something else, but she didn't tell us what she had told the other person. And what she had told me was to lie on the floor for the duration of the piece; and what she had told him was to tie me to the wall. So it created this incredible kind of conflict. Another thing she did was to build a forty-five degree plane to the wall and had ropes on it and people went up and down this thing and of course they could rest but they couldn't get off for a certain period of time. So there was a task to be performed. The first thing I described is a situation with rules. Both of these things gave, or resulted in, a kind of situation of movement. Which was anything but the traditional dance-type movement. Well, I was interested in not relying on either one of these structures to make movement. And I wanted to work that whole area, what kind of movement could be made.

PC: How did you find it being a performer? Or how do you find it being a performer?

RM: Well, I liked it in the beginning because it made me very nervous. But after a while it got to be a bore.

PC: In what way?

RM: You lose your stage fright and you get the feeling just like it's work, something to be done.

PC: Have you done the same pieces a number of times?

RM: Yes. I toured Scandinavia. And I was in Germany. Yvonne Rainer and I went. And that got to be really an enormous amount of work. And after you've performed a piece several times . . . my pieces especially were a lot of work. I didn't have a stage manager. And there was a language problem that involved a lot of elaborate stage cues and a lot of equipment and so on. It really was work.

PC: Did you find that the pieces took on a different meaning too after you've done them, say, four or five times? Or did they become rote by that time?

RM: Well, it depends. The more focused pieces I think, the more prominent focused pieces, are pretty much the same. By the time you've finalized them they don't change very much. One performance to the next may be better or worse. But I think there are no surprises after a certain number of performances. By the time it's ready to be performed, it's pretty set. There were other pieces I did that were more undeterminate and more interesting and surprises did occur; I left it open-ended in some way. There was a piece I did in Stockholm that involved . . . it was in the museum there which is one huge room; it must be well over a hundred feet long and maybe seventy feet wide. There were 800 people that came to this concert that several of us did. And I put all the chairs at random just in place. So after an intermission when the people came in it was just a chaos of chairs. There was no front or back or anything. And the activities occurred all around the place. And no one saw everything. I used I think forty people from the population there, just women, children, old people. And these were groups that from time to time made formations in this chaos. So that piece was very interesting to do, something that I had a certain amount of specifications for but really had very little visualization of what would occur. That was one of the last pieces I made.

PC: You've written for magazines. Do you write a great deal? Or just an occasional piece? Do you keep notebooks or anything like that?

RM: I keep notebooks, yes. I don't write a lot.

PC: I mean are the notebooks like diaries?

RM: Well, I guess they're like diaries, yes. Entries are made. The process I have of writing seems very laborious; it's sort of a process of accretion and after a certain period of time enough ideas come together so that I make an article out of it. But it's not anything that I work at regularly.

PC: Does writing interest you or not?

RM: Yes, it does. I like it.

PC: It's another kind of activity.

RM: Yes.

PC: I think it's interesting. You know, I was thinking back on the show -- I think I've seen a performance. No, I can't really remember I notice it's always a kind of relationship between, say, like the earth, you know, which is all crumbly and then something which is very smooth and defined and pure, cool. And I think the first show you had was at the Green in 1963?

RM: Yes.

PC: And that had the column and the lead pieces and that file?

RM: Yes.

PC: There's always been this, you know, opposite ends kind of thing. Has this always been so? Or am I just seeing it that way?

RM: I don't know.

PC: You don't see it?

RM: I don't see it that way. These pieces here are . . . these two are really earlier pieces or were started quite a while ago and then some of the details were just finalized last year. And then it was made, it just happened to get made this year. And they're quite a bit older pieces.

PC: In what way?

RM: Well, the whole

PC: Four years to be exact?

RM: Oh! How old are they?

PC: Yes.

RM: I think that probably the thinking about those goes back a couple of years, maybe the first sketches. The specifications for this piece were all made in January, or December, I guess. So this is a later piece in here and very different concerns.

PC: Do you make drawings or sketches of things?

RM: Sometimes, yes. This piece was done all very simple mathematics so there were no drawings for any of the pieces. The dimensions of each one of those pieces of metal was arrived at by chance as well as the thickness as well as the material as well as the number of bends and so forth. So that that piece was made without any image or sketch.

PC: Are you interested in chance as a method?

RM: Yes, I'd say it's a method. This is the first piece I've used that really . . . just applied chance to it.

PC: Does that have a name?

RM: This piece? No. It doesn't have a name to it. But it's the first piece I've made that deliberately employed a lot of chance methodology. Other things happened. Like this piece went through many, many changes that were contingent upon the material available, what I couldn't get, what I had to revise, what the factory could make,

what we couldn't make. So that hardly resembles the first sketch except in structure.

PC: Was there standard . . . ?

RM: They're channels put together. The original idea was quite different. There was going to be a single plate of metal and it was not going to rest but notch. It was a grid from the very beginning. But it had an image that it maintains to some extent now, although the contingencies of materials and processes changed its detail a lot. Whereas this piece started completely from a set of specifications, that is, not any kind of visual image.

PC: Well, we're getting into too many things. Before we get

RM: Yes. I'd like to stop for a little while.

[END OF SIDE ONE]

[SIDE TWO]

PC: Could you tell me something about your appraisal of the various art instructors that you've had, and what you feel can be taught, or what an artist can learn from another artist in an academic situation?

RM: Well, since I teach I have to . . . I think about that all the time. I've come more and more to make a teaching situation one where none of the work is done in the class but it's only discussion of work. In other words, there aren't any skills taught.

PC: So the students work outside?

RM: They work outside.

PC: It's a criticism class?

RM: It's a criticism class. That's what it always ends up to be.

PC: I guess the first professional contacts you really had were at the California School of Fine Arts?

RM: Yes. Right. I don't think I really got much from those people in the way of . . . I was always dissatisfied with them. Let's put it that way.

PC: But that can prove a catalyst sometimes?

RM: Right. Yes. I suppose when I first went to art school there was a certain amount of satisfaction -- I'm talking about Kansas City -- where skill or facility or a certain kind of As I said before, it was like a trade school and it was rather clear what the standards were, very academic standards, and you could achieve them. And in that way it's not different from learning plumbing or anything like that. But that was a very insular situation there and I think, after the first year or so, after I got all the scholarships, it ceased to be very interesting. So that's one of the reasons I wanted to get out of there. It seemed so insular and provincial. California was a little bit different in that there were more things going on. But still it seemed to me that everyone there had their . . . there was something very protective about the way they were teaching. And I could only stay for one semester. I really had to get out of it. And that's quite different from what I expected out of academic situations. So I suppose there wasn't ever really too much happening as far as my encounter with art teachers went. Other than that thing I mentioned before about the introduction to automatic drawing. That seemed to be something that was rather surprising and different and didn't have much to do with the kind of mechanical professional notion about art.

PC: How about in the academic world? Was there a philosophy professor or someone like that who was important to you as an instructor?

RM: No, I don't think there were any particular teachers. I think it had more to do with friends that I discussed these topics with. And I think that was also true of the art school situation. There were always colleagues who seemed to be more simulating than the instructors. It was true all through.

PC: And at Hunter you were very involved with Reinhardt?

RM: It became different there in the art history situation where Reinhardt was very powerful. I wouldn't say so much of an influence but he seemed to be really the first person that I encountered who had a kind of passion for art not just his own. Even though it seemed limited, I mean there were certain things about the way he looked at art that were no very acceptable to me. But he was really passionately involved with all different kinds of art.

PC: He seems to have been a very well-defined teacher. I've talked to other people that studied with him. It was quite specific and you could relate or not relate but you knew that that was Ad Reinhardt.

RM: Yes. He tended to break everything down into formal categories and not be interested in any of the context of the thing. But he had a fantastic range of what he looked at. I mean he went everywhere. And all the slides he showed from Egypt to Angkor Wat or China or anything else, he always took them. He went there and he took them. And that was quite impressive to me. He took the trouble to actually go see these things. And he saw them the way he wanted to see them with a camera. And that was very important, I think, the sense of how one sees something. He had that kind of frontal vision about everything. Which was very strong. It wasn't as though he was checking slides out of the Met and showing them. I mean they were very personal slides.

PC: It was his camera and ideas.

RM: It was his eye through the camera and his use of the camera. Although he never really emphasized that. Or even spoke about it. But there was that whole personal . . . art history was very personal through the eyes of Ad Reinhardt. And that somehow made it less distant and academic. Even though I might not have agreed with . . .

PC: . . . his ideas all the time. Who else was there? Tony Smith was there, wasn't he?

RM: I didn't study with Tony Smith. I never took a course with him. And I met him only after I had started teaching there. He wasn't there when I first started studying. Goossen was another person I found quite stimulating in terms of ideas about art, especially contemporary art, writing about art, criticism about art, theoretical concerns about art. I would say those two men were possibly the most alive teachers I have encountered. At that point I was along somewhat myself as an artist. It was an exchange on a more equal level. I mean they weren't teaching me skills.

PC: A couple of things: How do you like teaching? And what kind of things do you teach?

RM: Well, I don't know whether I teach anything. I once asked John Cage what he taught and he said, "Oh! Teaching. I never teach. The only thing I could ever say was to tell them to stop." And I don't think I take quite that attitude. But it's a matter of trying to get them to be more articulate about . . . or more conscious about what they're doing. I find a lot of students doing one thing and really intending something else. Or being involved in some notion of what professionalism and confidence is. And that really doesn't have anything to do with their sensibilities. They're really somewhere else in terms of their sensibilities but they don't really have the courage to go ahead and exploit them or explore them. I guess if I have any function it seems to me to try to draw that out, to give them some kind of response to their work both in terms of showing them if it is conventional, how conventional it is, and just what the structure is they're taking over and how impersonal it is in that way; and then on the other hand to try to find out what it is they really are interested in in terms of what the sensibilities are really about. And there are no real requirements for work. A lot of people don't do very much in my class so it's mostly talking.

PC: What kind of a level is it? Is it undergraduates?

RM: It's graduate students.

PC: So they really have been working for some years?

RM: Yes.

PC: And their attitude is different from what an undergraduate's would be?

RM: Quite a bit, yes. I have taught undergraduates and I don't really enjoy that. You really do have to give them problems.

PC: It's still introduction.

RM: Yes. And they're still concerned with wanting to make something -- some kind of product that is competent. I mean they still have to have that kind of security. And I guess the graduate students do, too. They're just better at it. So that when you break it down in front of them they're not so devastated.

PC: Have you taught anywhere else besides Hunter?

RM: I've been to Yale. I'm going there now. I taught a seminar there last year or the year before. That's the only other school I've taught at. I occasionally go out and give critiques at places like Baltimore, different art schools, spend a day or two talking about the work.

PC: Do you like teaching? Does it interest you?

RM: Well, I need the money. So I do it for the money. And at Hunter there are young artists who are really just beginning to, as I say, uncover what their sensibilities are. And I like that. I mean I like engaging with them and throwing something out and getting it back again, seeing where they're at, what they're interested in. There is some good work done and that I like to see. I don't feel like I teach anything.

PC: Yes. It's very intangible.

RM: It's very nebulous. And I like the arguments. I like the conversation. I like . . . I guess I do like it when they do seem to get though to having some kind of nerve to do what they're really interested in. I like to see that change away from . . . I like to see them getting away from some convention that they've been good at which makes them feel secure. You have to get them over that and into something that is theirs but which of course they're not secure about because it's different from what they know. And I like seeing that happen when it does; it doesn't happen very often.

PC: Like really making it grow rather than . . . ?

RM: Yes. You see them finally have to face themselves or what they want, what they are, what their art is going to be.

PC: Somewhere I reading in a critical essay about you about some interest you have in Jasper Johns' work. Have you been interested in his work?

RM: Very much. Very much, yes. In different ways. I think my interest now in him is that I think he was . . . he provided a certain kind of structure both in terms of perception as well as form that allowed . . . that made possible a lot of moves into three-dimensional art. The fact that in those Targets and Flags he absolutely eliminated the ground situation. Painting had always been a figure ground situation before Johns. And he simply just took the background out and made it the wall. He reconstituted art as an object. He was the first one to do that. And I think that was a very profound move.

PC: You don't think Duchamp was an influence?

RM: Oh, to some extent he was, yes. He was the first one that I knew about who could deal . . . he's the only artist I know about who's been able to deal with ideas without making them precious.

PC: Duchamp?

RM: Yes. Every other artist who deals with ideas it seems to me they end up being precious. And his ideas were deep enough and strong enough that they didn't do that. And that interested me. But I don't connect Johns with Duchamp at all.

PC: You think they were different?

RM: Yes.

PC: Because, you know, numerous critics have said there are all kinds of strange influences in terms of development.

RM: Well, You have to think about the consequences. I mean I think Johns is very interested in Duchamp. But I think the consequences of his work have nothing to do with the kind of consequences that Duchamp's work had to do with.

PC: Yes. Did you know Duchamp? Had you met him?

RM: I met him, yes.

PC: Have you known his work for a long time?

RM: Yes. Yes. I had a very amusing conversation with him once. In fact I was at one point interested in chess and worked at chess problems. In the period when I was not doing any art I got interested in it.

PC: When was that?

RM: About the time I moved here; when I stopped painting and came to New York. Or I was not really working very much. Had stopped painting and gone into art history. I had developed that interest in chess. Some of the games that he played were very amusing, at least to me. They seemed to be games unlike other . . . they don't have the seriousness that other people's chess games have. His lots of moves and retreats -- it's very playful the way he played chess. It seemed to me that way. I once asked him about it. He said that he really did have an

ambition to be a really great chess player but after a certain point he found that he wasn't; there was just some kind of limit that he couldn't go beyond. And he said that was really puzzling to him and he felt like the statements the girls make -- well, what has she got that I don't have. He found that hard to accept. But as always it was with amusement that he could accept that absolute limitation.

PC: Well, for a long time there seems to have been a great degree of humor in his work, either in his subjects or his public or private gestures.

RM: Yes.

PC: A great sense of some sly humor.

RM: I think at one point he said the only reason to continue living was because of humor, something to that effect.

PC: Are there other people, specific artists, who you found very interesting over the years, you know, looked at or sort of studied or been interested in?

RM: Donatello I think is very interesting to me. He's the first artist I know about in past history who made really radical changes in his style. And that interested me that someone that distant in history . . . you see the kind of moves he made which, when you compare the Magdalen to the St. George, I mean they're just like worlds apart. I suppose if we go back that would be the first. I did some work on Brancusi too. And I suppose he interested me because I had to explore him and there are things in him that do interest me. Of contemporary artists -- well, many for different reasons I suppose. Duchamp for his ability to use ideas in a very strong way; Johns for his perception of the object as a focus; and Pollock for his -- well, I appreciate Pollock in many ways. I think he's a very profound artist. His use of material, his ability to connect with material in a way that would really change structure. The structure of the painting changed and had so much to do with the physicality of the means and process which I am interested in now. So different people at different times and for different reasons certainly have been I think not only an interest but in some way an influence or challenge.

PC: There's also mention in an essay of your interest in Tatlin, the Constructivist and people like that. Is that again one of the critical things?

RM: No, I think that again was . . . I mentioned him in passing in an article at one point. The Constructivists I think were the first -- well, maybe the Futurists before them -- I don't really know who did it first, but I did cite the Constructivists as people who were able to use materials in a very, very direct way. Materials that were not necessarily art materials. And I suppose they got that actually from Picasso -- glass, wood, all kinds of things sort of extrapolated from Picasso's collage idea. But more than just making a kind of situation that Picasso was involved in which was one pretty much tied to painting I think. Those early things . . . those things like Tatlin's that he did in a corner where he was actually acknowledging the architecture as a frame. And using different kinds of materials in a completely abstract way. But I think that was a passing reference I made. It was not anything that I could go back to and find any kind of real . . . couldn't work from it in any way. I mean I was working and I could look back and see it, see a few things done, a few moves made, a few actions that were relevant to what I was doing. But I certainly didn't think that what I was doing was Constructivism. I think they just emphasized certain aspects that . . .

PC: In the new materials and kind of new freedom.

RM: Yes, and the complete abstraction, the acknowledgement and room, the use of all kinds of materials. They did those three things. Tatlin did certainly. It didn't last very long but they did it for a while.

PC: Right. You know, you've used so many new materials in different ways and different kinds of things I think maybe the easiest way would be to talk about the exhibitions as they have come along and that sort of gives us a chronology. And, you know, maybe you remember things easier by using those as a guide. Let's see, the earliest show that I found out about was the Dilexi in 1957.

RM: Yes.

PC: Was that the beginning?

RM: Right. That was a show of paintings and I might have had a few . . . no, I think it was all paintings. Yes. Those were paintings that were made I think before I actually . . . I think we discussed this kind of methodology. I got involved in in painting on the floor and the kind of paint I used and the kind of manufacture notion of producing paintings. This was a show before that was really very finalized or worked into and it was pretty much very expressionistic kind of large canvases, still easel-type paintings painted on the wall, a lot of gesture, still a lot of black and white paintings. I'm trying to describe some kind of influence that they would have had. Probably

very eclectic sort of painting. That first show I'm speaking about. A lot of gesture. Still at that time even it was a very fragmented kind of surface that I was dealing with and really not a figure ground situation. It was in a sense like Pollock in that it was very much fragmented and broken and pulsing and moving, a big field of things coming in and out. A lot of evidence of gesture. That was the first show.

PC: And then a year later there was a show there?

RM: Right. In 1958 or 1959, I don't remember.

PC: 1958.

RM: By that time I had really changed the whole methodology and the paintings were becoming much quieter, even more fragmented, bigger, closer in some way I suppose to Clyfford Still literally and figuratively. They're quieter, still static things maybe without that kind of looming geological . . . I never had that kind of geological image that he has. But they were static; they were big; they were fields. They were in between Pollock and Clyfford Still the last show. Also a lot of drawings that were very fragmented.

PC: How were the drawings done?

RM: Made with very, very small strokes of a pencil, again a kind of field situation.

PC: A closely-articulated surface kind of thing with . . . ?

RM: Some of those involved figures actually, figures in different . . . there was a kind of serial set of figures moving together almost like a comic strip or an animated cartoon of fields of these lines which from one to the next changed. I remember there were two figures and they came together over a period of maybe six drawings. And they were shown like one thing. They resembled some of the paintings I did later, I mean the drawings I did later of magnetic fields. It was like that kind of attraction.

PC: then you came to New York, and changed.

RM: Yes.

PC: How did you get involved with Dick Bellamy? Where did you find him or he find you?

RM: Well, I'd made a few things. I mentioned I made this Environment. I had made that box with the sound. And the column which I used in that theatre piece. So I had a few things, plywood things and objects. And I went around with some photographs. I went, you know, to show some of these things. And Bellamy was the only person who was at all interested. So he came to see the work. And he was the first to show the work. No, he was not the first to show the work. The first show I had was with three Japanese guys at a little gallery on 5th Avenue at about 13th Street. I can't even remember the name of it. But it was up above a bar.

PC: Oh, the Gordon?

RM: The Gordon Gallery, yes. It must have been 1962 or something like that. And it was Arakawa and I and one other guy whose name I can't remember now. In that show I had the box with the sound. I had a plywood slab that hung at eye level. I had a square or portal type of form. I had three or four things in that show. I remember that show very well because the slab was, I think, 6 or 7 feet square and would not go up, by one inch, would not go up the stairway. So we had to bring it in through the window and it had to be hoisted up at night because we didn't have a rigging license to get through this long horizontal window they had. At one point it got very dangerous and it almost fell and when those guys got excited . . . they only spoke Japanese so I had absolutely no way of directing this whole operation. When we came in we broke the Neon sign of the bar downstairs because of all this confusion. And after the show we took it out the same way and we broke the sign again.

PC: You must have had great fans in the bar there.

RM: That was the first showing of things in New York. Then Dick put a few things in the back room, a couple of objects I made, little boxes. One that had a plus and minus; when you opened the door there was a rubber diaphragm on the plus side and a bar went out and pushed it and on the other side went in, a plus and minus thing. Then there was an erotic kind of object which was a box with a piece of rubber over it and a thing hanging down very much like a penis that you pulled. If you pulled that, it set off a switch that made a kind of like -- oh, it was a breast, I think, like an artificial breast that you can buy in a dime store, came out against this diaphragm like a nipple emerging and then it disappeared. It took a minute for that to happen. I think Dick showed that in the back room; showed a few things like that, little objects. And then he had a group show. I remember the first group show I was in there. He had a column that I described before that was in the theatre situation and the card file were the two objects that were in that group show with Flavin and Judd and myself, and I think Lucas

was in it, and possibly Claes, I think Claes, and maybe Rosenquist. I don't remember who all was in that show.

PC: You had three shows there, in 1963, 1964 and 1965.

RM: Yes. 1963 was a show that involved many of the process pieces, pieces like the box with the sound, the card file again was shown, the I box which is

PC: That is the electroencephalogram?

RM: Yes. All those processes that related to the body, my body, records of brain waves, photographs of myself, various objects involving recording actions like a hook dropped on plates of lead and drawn through plaster. I can't remember all of the other objects. That was the first show. And I think I showed the slab; there was an eight-foot square plywood slab on the floor, which really had nothing to do with And as I mentioned before at that time I was involved in both of these kinds of activities, those kinds of things that were directly revealing some kind of process or existed as a result of process, and those things that were completely sort of a priori type of forms like the plywood pieces.

PC: What started the whole interest in process in objects? I think it was apparent in the Dilexi show, you know, the interest in the paintings, the fabrication of the pictures. Was it just that you moved into making objects? Or how would you describe that?

RM: Well, I think, as I said before, there was that great conflict in the painting whereas there was a process, there was an object, and the two things didn't get together. There was no kind of jump. I mean there was no kind of continuity. So I found with certain objects that I could split it apart even further. And that was more acceptable to me. Like the box with the sound. On the one hand you do have the process and it's time, literally time it's a sound. And on the other hand you have the object which is spatial. So that was a way of dealing with the two things by separating them.

PC: With kind of real time?

RM: Real time, yes. I literalized it in some way. Whereas the painting, like Pollock the painting is not so literalized. There's a record there. But you sensed the record of the motion. Whereas this is literal time; the box with sound. And literal space. So I was doing both things.

PC: And the charts were given time too?

RM: The electroencephalograms. Right. There was a piece I made that . . . I went to N.Y.U. Medical Center and I had the electroencephalogram made. I wanted to make a self-portrait. So I calculated the numbers of -- in one second the needle will travel so far. So I calculated the time I would have to think about myself for the needle to travel the length of my height. And that was considered a self-portrait. So I thought about myself for this time and used that kind of output as the drawing. There are other kinds of objects too relating to other parts of my body.

PC: You know, I'm curious about . . . because so many times before you've mentioned interest in psychology and philosophy. Do you think those things are apparent in the objects and how the objects have developed and become not really selection of objects but the ideas embodied in each of these. Are they related to these disciplines in a way? Or would you say not?

RM: Not very directly, no. Or even metaphorically. I think not. Certain kinds of language concerns that I've encountered I think are related. I mean I think there are parallels between, say, the breakdown of the iconic character of art right now with the way language is used in philosophy now. Or like the late Lichtenstein where definitions are refused or he refuses to use language in an iconic way. It's all process. He talks about something. He talks around it. He makes up things about it. To talk about paintings, to talk about all the things you can imagine about painting but without ever circumscribing it or without ever giving it any kind of iconic character. And I can see parallels there with certain kinds of work that's indeterminate and then finalized and not iconic. But I wouldn't make any . . . claims have been made about American art as being pragmatic and so forth. And I think those things are very, very suspect.

PC: Are you interested in the visual, kind of actual visual aspect of the objects in the way that, say, traditional sculpture is? Or are you really interested in them as kind of statements of ideas in the abstract. Is that clear or not?

RM: Well, I can't break it down into that -- into those terms.

PC: Yes. You know, in some of them there is not -- well, like the brain waves, for example. There's no traditional drawing thing except for the needle having gone across a chart. But there's not the kind of traditional interest in

materials and texture and color and line. Or do you think there are?

RM: Yes, I think there are. I mean those needles are not all . . . each one of those needles makes a little different kind of mark. The paper is very special. There are many lines. There are eight lines I believe from eight parts of the brain. For me it's interesting to look at. It's also interesting . . . the other thing about it is interesting too that it got to be that because of other things. I don't think that I have been interested -- well, there have been things Let's see, how can I put that? Like some people are interested in presenting information or dealing with information in its most disembodied form now. Well, the card file dealt with information. It was all information; every one of the entries in it was about a decision or a mistake or an interruption or one thing or another. It was all recorded. And yet it ended up in that very iconic form of a card file on a wall.

PC: Yes, it was a vertical fold file.

RM: Right. So it seems to me that most of the things I've done have Until lately the object has been a kind of repository for these things in some cases. In other cases, it was like the plywood pieces. That was not involved at all. It was simply an object. So that I can't separate those two things very easily, like my dealing with an idea or an object. It seems like objects have ideas in them and they're either more explicit or less explicit.

PC: How about things like participation of someone? I remember a number of things had hinges; you had to lift things; the file, you have to flip through it, or look through it. There are a number of things where it wasn't just looking, it was one actually physically had to touch it or move it or flip it.

RM: Yes. Well, I've been involved in that too. That first environment certainly was very much like you had to get in it to experience it. But, I don't know, after a point I didn't find that interesting at all, that the observer had to participate in it at all.

PC: What didn't interest you after a while? It's a kind of backward question.

RM: I guess I wanted the thing to be . . . I wanted a clearer separation between If there was time involved, I wanted to specify the time. Or I wanted to make the situation where time is open-ended, like a big piece you have to walk around. But I don't say how you do it or what you do. It just seemed too didactic in some way, that one should have to go through these kinds of . . . it didn't leave the person alone enough in some way, it seemed to me. That you had to open a door or something. I tended after a while not to like that kind of constraint. I wanted it all revealed there.

PC: It was there and you could see it.

RM: It was there and you were there and you saw it and, if you moved around it, you saw it in a different way, or if you went into it that was possible. But to manipulate it, that carried over into dance. I manipulated the things. It became a real performance.

PC: What was in your last show at the Green? That was, what? 1965?

RM: Yes.

PC: Or you'd had a show at Schmeler in Germany in 1954?

RM: Yes.

PC: Was that before or after the Green show? Or was it the same thing?

RM: It was after the Green show. There was a plywood show in 1964 right after I got back from Germany. And then the show in 1965 was actually mostly older things, older than the plywood things. And they were things that were sort of ending up this whole involvement with process. Let's see, what was in the show in 1965? A lot of lead reliefs which I don't like anymore at all. A couple of big, big objects, I believe, that were very elaborate process-type objects. I felt that that show as much like the end of something, really. It was a show of sort of odds and ends. One piece that did interest me was the four mirror cubes. That was in that show.

PC: That were standard?

RM: Yes. That maybe was the work that I was most interested in in that show. It was a huge big relief of all kinds of little sort of literary notes about things that were covered or uncovered, a box with instructions about having been locked and so forth. It was the end of all that stuff actually. By that time I think I'd worked through the ideas. And the other pieces were far more interesting. The I-box and the card file and so forth. And these things had gotten into something else. I think at this point many of them really were very uninteresting.

PC: Do you think there's a resemblance to any of the Dada activities, of the Dada objects that have been made in

the Twenties?

RM: No, because I don't think it's possible to get back that kind of response to things that could be listed by those objects. I think things like Duchamp's use of indifference in making something has not become . . . it isn't a shocking thing anymore. It's kind of absorbed into the way people work. I mean it's possible to work with that kind of distance from something now. And I don't think there can be Dada anymore. I mean there couldn't have been twenty years ago even, it seems to me. The attitudes and the perception and the culture of what art is are so changed that it doesn't allow for that kind of response. Their objects now seem . . .

PC: Period pieces.

RM: . . . seem beautiful. It's like Duchamp was asked, well, if you really did make that snow shovel just out of indifference, why is it so beautiful? And he said, well, nobody is perfect. It's impossible to recover that kind of . . . we're sophisticated in a way now that makes it impossible to recover that kind of rawness or shock to those gestures. Gestures just don't mean anything.

PC: You had a show at Dwan in 1965 in Los Angeles. Did you go out there for it?

RM: Yes.

PC: How was it going back to California and having a show?

RM: Well, it was in L.A. and I was not in L.A. before so it's a different place. And those pieces were all of them the very large kind of gray, very static, geometric-type pieces. Most of them made in fiberglass at that point. And I think again that was a show that many very interesting pieces were in but they were pieces that I had at that point worked out very clearly. And it was a show that was all right but it was something I knew about so well at that point that I wasn't too interested in.

PC: When did you join Castelli? Because you had a first show there in 1967. Had you been with him for a while?

RM: No, the Green Gallery closed. And I was without a gallery for a while until I went with Leo. And then that was the first show after I left Dick, or after Dick closed.

PC: You've been in so many group shows. Are there any that have been of particular interest to you? That you felt did really something special?

RM: Well, the Wagstaff show, the black, white and gray was an interesting show. I think that was the first time I showed several of the plywood pieces together. I believe that was even before Dick showed them.

PC: 1965?

RM: Was that 1965?

PC: I don't have a date for it. But that was the one at the Wadsworth?

RM: Yes. Right. I think that was before I showed all the pieces together, the plywood pieces, at the Green show. That was an interesting show. I don't know, the others I can't say I had any interest in at all, any of the others.

PC: It's curious, you know, to talk about what is referred to as "new material." It's sort of endless with you because you use so many kinds of materials. And I got the feeling the other day that somehow you select materials and then try and use them. Is this true?

RM: Yes, it is.

PC: How do you find the things you're going to use?

RM: Well, I think part of it came out of a reaction against knowing that I had been involved with materials that are rigid materials, a very narrow range of materials. Although in many of the earlier pieces I had used a lot of different things. I had even used material like velvet and things way back in 1962. But I never used any of those pieces. Soft materials. And had ideas for theatre pieces that involved air and things like that. None of these are realized. But even the materials I used, say, glass and plaster and various kinds of materials; it was all very like a very a priori-type work. It was constructed; it was conceived and then executed. And there were earlier pieces I made involving ropes that were shown in the first Green show.

PC: That was one of a large rope with the box.

RM: Yes, a big rope. And others with tangles and knots and so forth. So I didn't really explore that. I was curious

to find some kind of material that would give me a situation that was not determinate -- or indeterminate -- every time I say that it's slightly different. And then, at a certain point, I wanted very consciously to move into fine materials that I couldn't pre-set or pre-think or pre-determine their form. And soft materials are ones that seem to do that. You can get involved with them in different ways. When I first got involved with the felt pieces I was interested in that whole range of information; how information functioned in something. In a constructed work like a box that you make, a chair, or something, there's a form that's very prior to the construction of the thing. The ends and means are completely separate. You can see and you can depict it is what you're doing. It's not too different really than painting in some way. You're depicting a form that you have in your mind or that you've drawn. And I wanted to get away from that. And I started moving toward it in using felt where I could preconceive, say, methods of cutting the felt that might be according to geometric progressions, or they might be very simple geometric kind of slits or one thing or another. And after I'd worked with it for a while I found that there was in some cases the information if you cut a piece of felt like halfway up the middle and tack it on the wall then that kind of patterning, that information is pretty clearly revealed. If you cut it up into many like hundreds of pieces and you do that according to a very strict geometric pattern and then you drop it on the floor, you've lost the information completely. So I was interested in that whole range of information, like how it dissipates, when it's revealed, when it isn't revealed. The first felt piece I did I hired children to cut up pieces of felt for me. So there's even less information in that.

PC: At Leo's I was looking at a drawing. You had a drawing there of some squares and then, you know, it was nine . . . ?

RM: Yes. Right. That's a drawing for that piece that's right beside it.

PC: The progression. Right.

RM: Right.

PC: The thing that's interesting is that one can see exactly what you've said, how you can cut out, you know, one, two, three, four shapes if they're flat and then of course when you drop them they become something entirely different. But in a way they retain that, the same kind of . . . the edges are still nine inches, or whatever they are, but they look different, the appearance is different.

RM: Well, they're all mixed up. Well, that connects to a lot of things. Like some of the early fiberglass pieces were made in units that could be permuted. And there's some kind of process going on there, like the piece never really finalizes itself because, if you have a piece that's got . . . some of them had eight units in it. But there was a set of arrangements that any of them would be acceptable to me. So the piece never was finalized according to any particular form. Although the units themselves were very specific.

PC: But it did operate within, say, a variety of six possible relationships or ten?

RM: Yes, there were various ones. Furthermore, there were other parts that could be substituted. So it was open-ended in that way.

PC: Oh, I see. Like a chess game there were lots of possibilities.

RM: There were blocks that you could use. And I prescribed certain things in the case of those permutable fiberglass forms. I made it closed, always closed, but different sections could be put in and different relationships would change its form. So even in those very static pieces there's something open-ended. All the pieces that have units, the intervals are not specified. They can be shoved together or pulled apart. That particular felt piece and lead piece that you're talking about is a situation that I was describing where the patterning or the information is very specific in terms of generating the piece. But what's seen is something completely different. Now to say that is to be right back into the situation I was in with the painting where there was a methodology that produced the object. But the object was somehow completely removed from the kind of information or methodology that generated it. But in the case of the felt and the lead piece, or some of the felt pieces, it doesn't seem to be a problem anymore. Probably because it's always indeterminate. That there's the information, that made the thing. But, every time it's set up, it's different. And I can't quite . . . that split is no longer a problem because somehow the indeterminacy, the openendedness, of the thing I find very satisfying.

PC: Now the one in the front room of the gallery, do they have names -- the thread pieces?

RM: The thread pieces? No.

PC: And the mirrors?

RM: No.

PC: The mirrors are kind of strange in that. I saw them again the other day when I was there. And there's also copper tubing. And there were some other lumps of material there.

RM: Yes. asphalt. Well, I was also interested, and I've become interested in the use of very heterogeneous materials. It seems to me like art has gotten to the point in the last few years of being one form or one material. And if it was more than that you got into a situation of composition where all these little things were arranged. The things on the floor are different than the things on the wall. And if they're indeterminate, they're not fastened and so forth. They have that kind of indeterminacy about them. So it's allowed me to put all different kinds of stuff together. Theoretically I thought I could put anything together. But as it turns out, if you get a material that is so dominating like that thread, it's a little bit hard. Other things are easier. I mean each material has its own weight and its own domination or kind of threshold or focus or whatever you want to call it. So it's not really that openended. I mean you can't say abstractly you can use anything because, when you get something, that has a quality. And still I was interested in that piece in using more than one material. Most of the early felt pieces were just felt. At the most several different kinds. But still felt. The piece in the back room is felt and lead. I forgot the question you were asking me about the thread thing.

PC: I was just curious about the use of the mirrors in it. Because that seems to be a different kind of mood, or different kind of step.

RM: Well, that goes back to those four mirrored boxes I made. Which were very low. And I didn't know at the time I made them that they would disappear the way they did. But they're so far below your eye level that you don't get into the mirrors at all and it reflects the floor in such a way that they tend to . . . it just does right on through them. Well, in the thread piece, when I set it up here in the studio, there was much less thread. There was just two hundred pounds of thread. And it was so flat on the floor. I wanted something up more into space. But to build anything up would have been to make a structure. And I didn't want that. So a mirror was something that would disappear and yet give some kind of edge, get into the space in some way and yet not be an object. And also I liked the whole kind of I guess perverse idea of putting illusionism into something that was so absolutely there. So there is that element of really liking the illusionism in that situation. Because so much of it is literal, it's an element of illusionism coming in, and sort of denying the whole thing. And I like that. I like the mirrors for different reasons. I also like them because it's reclaiming something that's so corny. Like mirrors are so surreal and so loaded. I like when I can use something that is so loaded and declaiming something that is so forbidden or something. So there are various reasons for using mirrors.

PC: How do you locate the materials you use? You know, the one up in the warehouse there has numerous kinds of materials in it, I think. Are they all felts? Or are they different kinds of felt? Different fabrics?

RM: Well, there's felt of different thicknesses and different colors and different densities. And also rubber. And then there's metal, steel, aluminum, stainless steel, copper, copper plated, zinc plated, nickel plated. Well, all that was done by chance. A whole series of parameters was set up for getting sizes and thicknesses and bends and

PC: But I mean you would decide beforehand that you were going to use something that had metal pieces in it?

RM: Yes. And I was going to have a complement of metal and a complement of soft materials. That was decided. Maybe we talked about this before. There was no image involved; it was a series of calculations, and then it occurred.

PC: Right. Do you use I Ching or anything like that?

RM: No. No. Telephone book, dice, things like that. That's the only piece I've ever made that just directly

PC: Chance.

RM: There again is a situation where all the information is outside the piece. You know, there are all these different pieces of metal, some of them are bent, some are little, some are huge. But how you got that is irrelevant.

PC: Yes. How about the one with the tables with the trestles and the clay?

RM: That's the piece that I work on every day. I just arbitrarily decided that I would have a piece that I would change every day; that again here is a process coming into the thing. And so that what I have done is like a studio situation. What is done at the end of the day is the piece. And it doesn't go toward any kind of finalization.

PC: But how did you arrive at making x number of those tables? Or how much clay?

RM: Well, I got a ton of clay. You know, it's priced by the ton. So I bought a ton of it. I didn't know how much that

would be. I thought it would be more than it was. Wet clay weighs a lot.

PC: It's pretty heavy. It's very condensed.

RM: Yes. So I put that out on the floor. And I had other materials around that I'd used before, grease; and I wanted to use more grease, cut grease, and heavy chassis grease; thread; there was some felt in it. Then I wanted it on another level. Again it was a little bit like the mirror situation. Everything was on the floor. And I wanted to change that. And I wanted to make another level. Well, build platforms is one way. And that's what I did. I built seven. And that seemed to completely cover the thing up so much that I took one out. So I have six. So it just goes that way. I have no image of what the piece will go toward or become, or even have very much interest in it. I'm interested in the changes and seeing what happens as you change.

PC: At the end of the exhibition, you will have, what? A series of twenty photographs or something?

RM: Yes.

PC: That will be what?

RM: That will be the record of the piece. Just as a record.

PC: So there no longer will be any piece? There'll just be the record of the piece?

RM: That's all.

PC: Information of a kind?

RM: Yes.

PC: And an image of a kind?

RM: Right.

PC: But it's an image of an image in a way?

RM: Yes, seen very differently. I mean it's spectacular whereas you don't see rectangularly. So it's very removed from the piece. I'm doing a piece in California. Did we talk about this one -- the heat, hot and cold air?

PC: No.

RM: I'm working with a company that produces refrigeration and heating units for missiles and aircraft ground support, computers and things that have to be cooled, huge devices. And I'll bury all these things in the ground over the distance of about a square mile in any landscape so that nothing will be visible. And the output will be wherever the heat comes out. It may be under the ground so it's radiant. It may come out of rocks or cracks. I want none of the technology to be visible. But I'll take a lot of photographs, infra-red, from the air and so forth. So that again you'll have a situation where this piece may be permanent but what you'll see will only be some kind of strange record. Infra-red photography would be one way of doing it. So that there's always that thing in art, it seems to me. There's information and there's the object; there's the sensing of it; there's the thinking that connects to process. It's on different levels. And I like using those different levels. I'm not interested in reducing art to one level and that's it. Because that's not the way I think about things. And I don't think the artisan icon is very interesting anymore. There are just too many things in the world to deal with. And what's interesting about art right now for me is that you can deal with so many different kinds of things.

PC: You're involved with E.A.T., aren't you?

RM: No.

PC: You're not? You were in the Nine Evenings though?

RM: No, I wasn't.

PC: Weren't you? I thought you had an interest in that?

RM: No, I was not in that.

PC: I don't know where I got that idea. Do you have any interest in what E.A.T. is doing?

RM: Well, I can't say that much about it at this point. I don't know what they've done lately. I find other ways of working with technology a little bit more interesting. I mean there are some people around Yale, the Pulsa

Group, who are doing some things which are interesting. That whole collaboration is an interesting idea but, so far, I haven't really seen anything that has come out of it that makes any sense to me.

PC: Did you see any of the Nine Evenings?

RM: Oh, yes, yes. I was involved in . . . I had to direct a piece of Yvonne's when she got sick. So I was there. I saw a lot of it. I thought it was a noble failure in some way. It was good to have done. Certainly there was no real collaboration between . . . the engineering turned out to be a facts phenomenon. They made this elaborate switching system that involved thousands of feet of wire and it got so complicated and so burdensome that at the end you can just turn switches off and on. I mean they wanted to automate the whole thing and it was like the control room at Houston or something. It was just too complex. Horrible, actually.

PC: Yes. Let me go on to some other things here. Have you had any interest in politics? Or doesn't it really interest you?

RM: No. I don't think so. Not in terms of my art.

PC: Have you been active in politics? Or doesn't it really interest you?

RM: No.

PC: Did you have any hobbies along the way?

RM: I don't think so. No.

PC: You've had four shows in Europe. Have you traveled there?

RM: Yes. To Germany, to Paris.

PC: And you've traveled this country quite a bit back and forth.

RM: Yes.

PC: Does that interest you? Does it have any effect in a way? You talked about the landscape earlier.

RM: Europe doesn't interest me very much. But this summer I'm going to go to Yucatan. I'm interested in seeing South America more than Europe.

PC: What interests you there?

RM: Partly the Mayan architecture which I will see. I guess the primitive nature of the place. I think I like going to countries that deal with things -- their structures are so different. I've never really been to a very primitive country. Mexico I've been to and I find that very interesting because when I come back I see things in a different way. I see the environment that always disappears when you're here. The way people deal with things. Especially machines and so forth. It's so completely different there. I see more differences in going to some place like Mexico than I do to England or Paris. I haven't traveled very much in Europe. I've never been to the Middle East. I'd like to do that.

PC: Do you notice great differences in this country when you go from one place to another?

RM: Yes. It's hard to say what they are.

PC: Have you any interest in the criticism that you've received? Or the writing that your pieces have provoked? Does it interest you? Or don't you read it?

RM: Yes, I read it. I always like to be informed on the response to the work. And I'm interested in it.

PC: Are there any critics that are particularly interesting to you?

RM: Right now there are not very many that seem interesting to me. I guess the kind of writing that seems more interesting to me is on a much more theoretical level that has certain implications for the arts. Maybe writing in other fields of perception, philosophy and so forth. I don't see any criticism today that seems to be revealing any kind of new . . . it's not bringing a dimension of perception to the work that one isn't aware of by encountering. Or it seems to me there is not any kind of criticism that today seems to me to be very deep. Most of it unfortunately seems to be reduced to journalism, or even worse than that, if not journalism, highly defensive in terms of one point of view or another.

PC: That's very interesting. Ivan Karp said almost the same thing last night; that critics are setting up arbitrary

groups and arbitrary situations and then acting as someone to defend that which they have developed and the artist may not see any relationship and no one else is involved.

RM: Yes. Well, I think that's very sad that you get this kind of partisan criticism. It's just another form of journalism.

PC: I see a Science Journal here. Do you read scientific magazines?

RM: Yes, I take Science Journal and Science News and Scientific American.

PC: I have a friend who once dropped all his art periodicals subscriptions and got three science magazines.

RM: Well, I have too.

PC: Are there any areas that I have missed or a point that you think we should bring up or talk about?

RM: Well, I can't think of any now. I mean after an hour and a half I'm always pretty . . . I don't think I can do anything more than an hour and a half.

PC: Everything stops. You start again.

RM: But there may be other things.

PC: Do you want to stop, then?

RM: Yes.

END OF INTERVIEW

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