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Oral history interview with Peter Anthony Stroud, 1978 May 25-June 1

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Peter Anthony Stroud on May 25 and June 1, 1978. The interview took place in New York, New York, and was conducted by Paul Cummings for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The Archives of American Art has reviewed the transcript and has made corrections and emendations. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

PAUL CUMMINGS: The date is the 25th of May, right? 1978. Paul Cummings talking to Peter Stroud, 311 Church Street, in his studio in New York City. Actually, you just had a birthday, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were born in London?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's correct.

PAUL CUMMINGS: May 23, 1921. Whereabouts in London? Tell me something about family in London.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was born in—just outside of London, in a small sub—not suburb—a small town, just outside, called Perivale.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. I don't know that one.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, the name has disappeared. It was one of those old-fashioned, Victorian, small towns, suburbs, where my whole sort of grandfather and my family were, or part of my family were.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What part—northeast, west?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was north London, northwest London. That's where I spent my childhood. I remember many—[laughs]. My grandfather, who invented the first disposable diaper.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Ah-ha, ah-ha.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] And my uncle, who was a lace designer and an architect, and designed Queen Victoria's wedding dress for [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, what a marvelous combination.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Isn't it very peculiar? [They laugh.] I lived, for my early part of my life, I remember, when I was a kid, next to George Humphreys, who was known as a hanging judge, whose son now is Christmas Humphreys, who runs the English Buddhist Society. He's now become a—taken silk and become another judge. [00:02:02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic. But now, what—are there other children? Are there brothers and sisters?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My brother is now in Australia, and he manufactures children's clothes. My family, as such, is sort of my birth—and then, you know, My family has quite long connections backwards. It goes back, I think, to about 1210, if I remember, that's the earliest gravestone I've been able to read.

PAUL CUMMINGS: My heavens. Whereabouts? It's still in—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's in Ely. But that's just part of a sort of rather vague background, but it gives one a funny sense of roots. I find it's interesting here to be able to go back and think about that, and look at it. Then you wonder what it all means.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What is your brother's name?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Michael.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And he's been in Australia for a long time or not?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, yeah. He went to New Zealand first, and then, I believe, he—was on assignment so he went to Australia, and that was it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And nobody lives in England anymore?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My aunt and her family, other family, live there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You lived there until, what, you went in the army in '39?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right, yeah. I went to school at this like—I went to school—I don't know what—you call it a British public school, but really it's a private school. It's called—it's fascinating to me, because I'm able to relive my childhood, because Graham Greene's father was headmaster, and Graham Greene went there and wrote this book called *Sort of Life*, which really brings—I can really pick it up, and somehow see all my teachers, and where I lived, described in minute detail, which is really very peculiar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's odd, isn't it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's really peculiar. [00:04:00] It's like one of my sort of bibles. I pick it up, and here I read with that one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like instant recall.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It really is. It's very peculiar if you have to do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that a boys school?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was a boys school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Big school, large school?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Reasonably large school, yes. I was there—I was in what they call the Officers' Training Corps, and then the war came along, and I was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you went.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: So I went.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was home like? Was there interest in music or—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —literature or art? What was—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My mother was a—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —the kind of ambience?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —singer and a musician. My father was a curious sort of mixture, the mixture of a dramatic critic and a singer and a musician. He used to do music and drama, but mainly he was a dramatic critic.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What, for the papers or magazines?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: For the papers, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? Which one?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it was—it was the *Daily Mail* for a time, and the *New Statesman*. Then he would—before he would take it—to go and perform in various Shakespearean festivals, particularly open-air festivals.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With Donald Wolfit?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: People like that [laughs].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I remember he used to do music—I remember going to theaters with him when he was doing reviews. My visual interests sort of matured, slightly late in a way. I was always involved visually, but never until, I think, basically, when I was taken in a prison in the desert. I was in a POW camp. Then I think the whole visual thing started to mature and develop. [00:06:04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before we get into all that, what was lifelike growing up in London through the '20s and the '30s?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I grew up out of London.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. I mean, in Perivale.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. I found it really sort of very quiet, genteel, snobbish, perfectly beautiful [ph]. Well, I'll give you a perfect example. One of the things I remember was this terrible story about a retired British Army officer called Major Jack. When people used to be invited around to tea, he would make his grandmother dress up as a maid [laughs] and would seat people and hand around the sandwiches.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How marvelous. [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's really outrageous. People would have cars they couldn't afford to run, but they would clean them, just to show they had them. So when we grew up in this atmosphere of complete petty snobbery—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Great pretense.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Great pretense.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was school like? Was it very regimented? Were you allowed to pick things you wanted, or was it a formal—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was a pretty formal school, I must say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had Latin and classics and all?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Latin, yes, but I never regret having taken Latin at all. The classics prevail as the root.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go into London, other than to the theater with your father, say?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'd go into London, the galleries, and look around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't think what London would have been like in the late '30s. As a teenager going into London—[00:08:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it was a very quiet sort of way of—one would stroll. The words—I think the strolling sort of implies the—you know. I began to see my uncle, and seeing the conservative club, and me—be taken up for lunch and things like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So your family was all involved with lots of London life?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, not a tremendous amount, but nevertheless, yes. Quietly so, you might say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you get interested in the theater because of the association?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have. In fact, I am interested in the theater, but I think I saw so much theater when I was young that I never really followed it up a great deal. I am, as such, interested, but I've never really been able to—I think I got a whole blanket of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Enough? [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Enough. Enough, you might say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm trying to think who, in the '30s, was amongst the leading lights in English theater then. I can't.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There was Priestley.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, J.B. Priestley.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And there were—there was a great interest in Oscar Wilde at the time, I remember seeing. Of course, in terms of popular theater, there was Gilbert and Sullivan.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Forever, yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were amazing, I must say. Some people don't like Gilbert and Sullivan, but I think they have an incredible facility, no matter what you call it, and are like the great decorative artists of the Victorian era.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true, in a way, isn't it? They are.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They've combined sound and light shows before anybody else did [laughs].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, I think—I used to go to—I was really very involved with a laws [ph] at that time, not in jazz, jazz music. [00:10:05] I used to play a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? What? What did you play?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I used to play clarinet. I was involved in playing in a jazz orchestra that my father objected to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who had a jazz orchestra then? That's fantastic.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Three of us at school. We used to have about four of us. We had—maybe six. We formed this. I've never been a very good musician, because I haven't got a natural ear. It was strange that one of the people who's followed me through my life has been my very, very close friend, John Middleton, who used to play with me, who, when I came over here, became chairman of anthropology at NYU. Now, on his fifth wife, has gone back to England to become chairman at the London School of Economics [laughs], NYU.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What jazz people were you interested in?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: At that time? Well, the whole lot of—you know, Jimmie Lunceford, [Count] Basie, Duke Ellington. Mainly the large band people, and also people—Fletcher Henderson, Chip [inaudible], Benny Goodman. [Phone rings.]

[Audio Break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would you just play for yourselves, or was this something you went out and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, we did both.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —played in public? Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. We used to play for ourselves, and then we used to go out and make money. My father would come, drag me off the stand. He would say it wasn't a fit thing for me to be doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] How marvelous. Did you have any sense of direction that emerged while you were in school, or were you just being a student and playing jazz?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was being a student and playing jazz. [00:12:00] There was this, I think, constant seeking for the right sort of mode of expression.

PAUL CUMMINGS: No interest in literature or—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, yes, in literature. When I was—well, yeah, very much so, because I was brought up on Jack London, H.G. Wells, and a lot of Keats and Shelley that my parents read. I remember reading—my father had some—I remember reading *The Well of Loneliness*, and Compton Mackenzie's *Extraordinary Women*, which were probably the two earliest lesbian books, at quite an early age.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Yeah, because *Well of Loneliness* came out in the '20s, didn't it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was, yeah, it was. I remember reading those at home.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very avant-garde.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, it was. When, now, I think back, it really was very avant-garde

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did your parents have any plan for you? So many parents say, "Our child will become this, that, or whatever."

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My father was, really, I think, a very, really interesting man, so far as he said that—he allowed me and my brother to find our own levels, to do what we wanted to do. He didn't push us any way. He exposed us to things we wanted to do. If I wanted to come with him to a concert, I wanted to come with him to a theater, I would come. My mother was sort of more—she was more interested, I think, in horse racing. That was what—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, yes. Which I used to like, and I still like, the horses.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah? Oh, that's fantastic.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was one of the things that, when I first met Barnett Newman, he used to love the horses in England. He was always going to the races. [They laugh.] [00:14:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: So much more relaxed there than here.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It really is.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Killer activity.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It is a killer activity.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, uh-huh [affirmative]. Just extraordinary. What happened to—because, let's see, you went in the army in '39. So you were 18. And you were still going to the same school, or—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. I just—about 18. I just graduated, and I think I had about six months off independently, and I wasn't quite—I was just pre-college. And then the thing came along, and I was just grabbed up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the name of the school you went to?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Berkhamsted. It's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've heard of that name.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In *A Sort of Life*, it's described there very specifically, the whole thing. It's a famous old school. It goes back to the War of the Roses, before.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, right, yeah. What do you think about schools like that? You've been in this country now for a while, and have seen other systems.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. I think it has a lot to offer, but I don't think—the single-sex school, I think, in a way, presents a lot of problems, particularly if it's isolating in terms of people getting a rather narrow view of life. I don't think it leads to a particularly—I think it leads to a late adjustment to the realities of existence, I would think, of course.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot of people appear at 25 and say, "Oh my goodness, I have to drive the car?" [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Something like that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It amazes me sometimes. Do you remember what the time was like between school and before you went into the army? Because people knew Europe was boiling up, and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, I remember it being very, very full—I remember my father being absolutely certain about going to war. [00:16:00] I think, at that time, too—I don't know when it was. Maybe it was earlier than that. I remember my father saying, "You might just as well. Perhaps it's going to happen for sure." I remember a friend of his, an attorney, who came out. I can remember him talking about it and making preparations for dealing with it. And everybody was sort of very, very—very worried about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there any instructors you remember from that school that—particularly interesting, or provocative, or difficult?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, there was one—well, my art instructor, probably who really impressed me, was a man called Brandon Jones, who was really a very interesting man. He used to stimulate people. It was basically a very open situation. But I think we were all very interested in the fact that he would always say he had to go and lie down in the kiln room. We knew he was going to have his nap after he had his—after a slug of whiskey or a drink. It's funny, when you come to point it out, you know, one's art instructor, and the music instructor, were the two that really stuck in my mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who was the music instructor?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There were two of them. One, a man called Forbes Milne, and another one called—nickname called "Lardy" Lubbock. He also taught me how to write, so that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: To write?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: To ride.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, to ride.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My father taught me how to write.

PAUL CUMMINGS: By giving you problems, or just—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He used to say, "What do you think"—he'd say, "Write a review." If I went out to the theater with anyone, he used to say, "Write an outline on it, a review." [Laughs.] [00:18:00] You know, we would compare them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's another way to get ideas, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. [They laugh.] That's what I was thinking of, getting—most people do that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you interested in being an artist before going in the army, or did you have no direction yet?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Certainly say that my—it's like the medium options were available to me, and I knew I wanted to be an artist, but in what medium, I had not yet firmly focused on. That's how it was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were moving generally in that direction.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was writing poetry. I was doing some sort of sketching. I was writing reviews. I was playing jazz. By—at 16. The creative thing was already there in that sense, but not focus.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have you continued writing or not?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have continued writing, but for some—I'm starting to write again seriously. For some reason, I didn't write much when I was here, but before I came from England, I wrote—in England, I wrote quite a bit, like introductions to people's shows, statements on my own work. I've done it here, on and off, statements. I've kept sort of desultory notes and jottings. I tend to agonize over writing, much more than I—and I think I'm loosening up a lot more, so I'm able to write more easily.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you still write poetry, or was that just a—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: On and off I do, but for my own very private consumption. To find a form in which to express oneself today is hard. I find the most recent book of R.D. Laing is sort of the most flexible form. [00:20:03] I've forgotten what it's called.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't seen it.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It combines lists, equations, and normal writing all together, so that you can—according to the type of content, the actual form or structure can be modified. I find I have a natural tendency to be turgid. If I [they laugh] therefore, I think, by governing before my writing, it would give it more—it would prune it to its essentials, and allow it to communicate more efficiently.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Going to 1939 with the war, you went in the army was what, because you'd had this pre-training?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A young second lieutenant.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: At the great age of 18.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was that like? What happened?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Psychologically, to be quite honest, that's a real shock, because it's like you have your youth virtually taken away from you, and you're thrust into a war situation. It's very strange. I'll tell you, Paul, it's a traumatic thing. Most of the people I know, they said they had the same thing. We already lived our youths when we came out, but it had virtually gone in a funny way. You were just put in—made to feel responsible. Virtually, you were carried by a senior NCO.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but still, there were people under you, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, so you had to work for it that way. It was quite a shock.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What branch were you in? What activity?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was actually in the Signals Corps. It was the Signals Corps, but it was called the Middlesex Yeomanry. But basically, the function was in terms of signaling. [00:22:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Where were you? You had some training there, and then—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I did some training there, and then when the Dunkirk thing came, we were on the boats ready to go, and then we didn't go. Then I went around by South Africa, dropping at Durban and Freetown, to the Suez Canal, to Cairo. And then we started to prepare for the desert. And then, after—then, being sort of—I figured I didn't want to be in too much action, so I figured I would like to be in rear division headquarters, being the natural—and there were these armored command vehicles, which went very slowly. So I figured, well, I'll be —and really didn't have causes [ph] those setups, so signals intelligence officers—junior signals intelligence officer in rear division headquarters. As unfortunately would happen, we went forward. The British forces weren't strong enough to hold back the Germans, and as they retreated, of course, the lighter armored vehicles went faster, and the slower vehicles that I was in went slower [laughs]. We were caught.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, you got cut off?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: We got cut off. We were sort of lumbering along. I ended up in a sort of tank trap, eating pineapple and chocolate, and doing a crossword puzzle, waiting to get caught [laughs].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, God, how terrible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whereabouts was that? What place?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was at Fort McKeeley in the Libyan Desert. From there, I was taken to the—to Chieti, Italy, and a place called Sumana, a village called the Fountain of Love, where I stayed for a couple of years. [00:24:09] Then when the Allies invaded Italy, the Germans retreated. We went into the mountain, and I was in the mountains, trying to get up north, for about four months.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean as a prisoner?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: As a free—as an ex-prisoner. See, I had been in the camp in Italy. I'd been involved in music and art as well. It was always—my activity continued, even as a POW. The strange thing about that is, at that time, Salstar Pitter [ph], the artist, was on the same slopes. He must have been within a mile of me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: With the partisans?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: With the partisans. Really peculiar, because we were talking, and we knew exactly the same places, the same things, and we must have been there exactly the same time. I know the dates in my head.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Opposite sides of the line.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. Just—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's fantastic.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was really peculiar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I know he talked about that a lot, yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was just there. He and I are sort of like buddies. Well, it was really peculiar to know the same—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the POW experience like? I mean, here you were in these lumbering pieces of machinery.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The POW experience was peculiar, because—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, were there a lot of people in that group, or a small number, a large number?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was quite large numbers of people. Sometimes we were fed, and sometimes we weren't. Sometimes one got food. Sometimes one got bread crumb parcels. Sometimes one went in for an orange peel, or coffee grout bowls, or porridge made of toilet paper and grass.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Good Lord.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: One has been through—well, not been through. [00:26:01] It's like—I'm here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But most of this was in Italy?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: This was in Italy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So they didn't keep you in Africa very long?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No. We had been in Benghazi for about—I think about three weeks to a month, and then they shipped us across to—and then—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had officer status? So that made it a little—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It means you had certain privileges. Which was pretty okay.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how was it in Italy?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Italy wasn't bad. It really wasn't—I mean, I'll say it's—compared with the way they treated Americans in Japan, it was pretty—let's be honest. It wasn't cheery, it wasn't pleasant, but it wasn't like in Germany, which was worse. Because I was—after I had made my way up to Balzimes [ph], hoping to get to Switzerland, and then I was caught at Bolzano again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Before we jump ahead so fast, what happened when the Allies landed in Italy and the Germans started moving back?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: We were told to stay in the camp because we were going to be freed, but we saw the Germans going through the valley. A group of us decided to go up the mountain hillside. We were warned by loudspeakers in the valley not to try and get up, but a group of us did get up, and did get up the hillside, away from the German dogs and the animals. Then we started to make our way, virtually—well, it had to be by foot, practically, and by hitching rides, and by being taken by partisans up to the north, hoping to get to Lake Como. I, unfortunately, was caught in Bolzano.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did they do to you there?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They didn't really—they put us in cattle [inaudible] where we were bombed, and then taken to Germany, where we were put in the line for camp, near Braunschweig, which was between a tank factory and the [inaudible]. [00:28:07]

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Another place to relax in, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Fantastic. Fantastic. So there I was for another couple of years. In order to get out and get sort of female company, food, and things like—I used to go around, supervising the work commander, and that helped out life a little.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But weren't—I mean, they were very difficult on people who tried to escape and things like that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were. Very difficult, yes. But there was a peculiar thing in Germany. In certain camp communes—most perverse issue, but—in other words, if you escaped and you were caught immediately, you were up like 30 days in jail. If you were away and got caught seven days, you got two days in jail. I only know this was at one camp at Moosburg in particularly. He was known for this thing. In other words, if someone managed to get away for seven days, they got minimum sentence, but those who were caught, they were—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The reward for success, maybe.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] I don't know. It's a peculiar sense of sportsmanship. Very peculiar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you got caught right away, you weren't good enough, so you really had to work?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: True. Really true.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible. Well, what—you said there were ways of meeting people and things. How did one do that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, the way I did it was that officers could volunteer to go out and be in charge, or supervise groups of soldiers and that—ORs they called them, were working. If you did that, you had a chance to meet other people who were around, barter things, come in contact with other things. [00:30:01] Get something on a German soldier he would blackmail to—so you could—it certainly made your life a little more mobile. I decided I wanted to do that, so that's what I spent a lot of the time doing, is going around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you'd have, what, a detail of soldiers who were cleaning up or doing some kind of job?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right, yes. You would go out and supervise them, or come in contact with other people. You would come in contact with civilians and people from other countries.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did the civilians treat you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The civilians treated us reasonably well. The only time they really were hostile was in that—was when I was in charge of a work command, which was repairing the railroads at a terrible—oh, God—when Bomber Harris did his blitz bombing off Dresden. There were 32,000 people killed that night, I think, and then the civilians really were hostile.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, because that was a city bombing, wasn't it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. He used to really do it. That blanket bombing was incredible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What could you do about music and art in the midst of all of this?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: At that time—I must admit, while I was in Germany, I didn't do a great deal, except I did organize—I did some drawings and things of my own, and I also organized an orchestra in camp.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But in Italy, you could do some things?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In Italy, there was a lot more. There was theater, music, a lot of drawing and sketching, and discussions. I think it was Dickie Jordan and Jonathan Maclaren Ross, who are both literary critics, who—we used to talk a lot. [00:32:04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think that that experience did? How did it effect you, in a way? Or is it—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I often ask myself about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —hard to tell?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's very hard to tell, but I'm sure it had a very terrific, profound effect upon me. I think, possibly—maybe I would say the insecurity. It's only sort of like an off-the-cuff association. Maybe the insecurity made me gravitate towards work that was more secure and structured than what was in me. I'm sort of using—I think it's Vorange's [ph] idea of, you know, in times of instability—stable work is produced in times of stability. You get sort of more open. So I think maybe in terms of its affecting my own psyche. That's the right word.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened in Germany? Who got you, the British Army, Americans, or the Russians?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's an amazing story. It's really peculiar. I'll give you two little incidents if you'd like to hear them. At the end of the war, when the Allies were advancing, the German high command decided, which they never did, to go to a roost in the Black Mountains, an underground fortress, and cover the sides of this fortress with camps appeared out [ph]. So the Allies, in order to get—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would have to go through their own people?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, would have to kill every one of them. We were all put on the march with this, which means that we virtually put our belongings in minimum on our backs, and we were on the march. [00:34:07] It was on this march that the Americans encountered us, and released us. It was a very peculiar incident, the way the Germans treated their old people, their old soldiers that were in charge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? In what way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: We had this old guy at the back, who was really like my father. He was about 65, and he would just totter along. He couldn't work, and he fell down. We lifted him up. In the end, we were helping along. On the back of this thing was this horse-drawn cart with iron wheels, and finally we were told not to help him, by this bastard of oppression, or we'd be shot. The next time he fell down, he just ordered the cart over this poor old guy's legs, broke his legs, and left him to die. Merely a typical—very peculiar example, but one that is indelible in my memory. This poor old man, under his own country, just discarded like an old rag.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was a soldier in the German Army?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But old and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Old and decrepit. We couldn't help him, although we were able to. Then, after that, I was on brief interrogation duty, because I speak German pretty well. One of the reasons I was out on camp, because I was an interpreter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you learn German?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I learned German in school, and I made several visits to Germany [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How strange, huh?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. I must say, I don't read it very well. It's really an abominable language to read. Really abominable. [00:36:00] Then I was on interrogation for about two or three—maybe even more—six months. Then my mother, at that time—oh, by the way, my father died when I was—during the war. My mother was sitting in the war office, and I got notice after—I think it was after I had done my interrogation duty and had about another couple of months recuperation, reorientation. I got notice I was going to be sent to Burma. Now, my mother said, "My God, what are you doing? What are we going to do about this?" Then, purely by chance, I ran into the colonel of a reallocation unit, called Merit Jones, who happened to have been my housemaster at school. He said, "Stroud, we can't have you going abroad again." He said, "I need an entertainments officer." He said, "How would you like that job?" [They laugh.] He said, "I'll pull a few strings," and that's how, instead of being sent to Burma, I got this job of entertainments officer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which meant doing what?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, virtually organizing art classes, music, theater. Taking care of that sort of thing. Which I did happily, until I was discharged.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was where, in England, or in—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In England.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible. An extraordinary experience you had. Every year was full.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] It certainly was. Every year was full. [00:38:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it like for you going back to England? Because you weren't there for five years or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Things had changed—I mean, obviously it had changed enormously. The place was scarred with the V-2 and everything. People were really very, very upset. I had a lot of family business to sort out as well, and my father died. Then I decided I wanted to live it up when I came out of the army. This was a period of loafing around and doing a bit of this, doing a bit of that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you went to school?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, then I went to school.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you decide what you were going to do?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Now, this is a very peculiar issue. At this time, I think it was—when was that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Forty-seven.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. I came in contact, indirectly, with Ben Nicholson, and that made a very, very—and Johnny Wells, and a group of people down at St Ives. That made—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did that come about?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Through some friends of my father's, I think, it was. Also, I think it was some Surrealist friends of my fathers, I think, from the literary world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'm trying to remember who it was. Was it Mesens, or—I think it was maybe E.L.T. Mesens. I think it was. Maybe it was Penrose. I don't know. But I remember spending a lot of time with—Ben Nicholson used to cheat at ping pong all the time. [00:40:04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He used to cheat at ping pong?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Always. He used to cheat constantly. He used to invent—he had to win, so he would invent the rules. I remember that specifically.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Marvelous.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was his great asset, to cheat. Then this somehow triggered off—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you go to St Ives, or was—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was down at St Ives.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were? What got you down there?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A friend of my—well, it was part of my bumming around. I met Hassel Smith, who was an American painter, and Terry Frost, and there was Peter Lanyon. Somehow, I got tied up with them via Adrian Heath. There was a lot of sort of bumming around. Then I started—you know. I started to produce—I started to paint. It was right at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was really the beginning of painting, then?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: For me, yes, definitely. I was like a late developer. In other words, my commitment then really began.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But now, in '47, you started going to the University of London?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: To do what?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was in PPE. I wasn't doing art, but I was doing art on the side.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Philosophy, psychology, and economics, which is a general degree.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Oh, I see, so you were doing academics, and then—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And then the other thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Next door to the art.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. But you see, in a way, I think it's a very interesting background to have. Not the economics, but the psychology and the philosophy has stood in extremely good stead, idea-wise. I think that's why I moved from, shall we say, painting, and was directly influenced more by the Abstraction-Création group, and [Jean] Hélion and Nicholson, into Constructivism. [00:42:09] You know, the Biederman type of Constructivism, because I could really sort of—then I made the whole contact with Anthony Hill, and Kenneth Martin, and Victor Pasmore, and Harry Thubron.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I saw Kenneth Martin two summers ago for the first time in 20 years.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. He was a teacher of mine.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Really?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Where was that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Goldsmiths College.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, God. You were at Goldsmiths?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: With what's his name? What was Anton Ehrenzweig when you were there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Anton Ehrenzweig. Was he teaching history there?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They must have moved to the central—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I took studio class. Had a painting class with him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: "Keep it simple." I'll never forget that. He always used to say that to me, constantly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Very funny man.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Very peculiar—a very strange man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What part of University of London were you at, in which college?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: University College.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Now, this was going to be an academic education to become a teacher or just—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I wasn't quite certain what I—it was really something—the thing was, frankly, I had this all paid for by the army, so I figured I might just as well get as much as I could out of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like the GI Bill here.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. I was having a good time in London at the time. I was involved with this girl who was a dancer, called Julie Green. I enjoyed being around—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who's Julie Green? I didn't know Julie Green. [They laugh.] Where did she dance? What kind of dancing?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Semi-stripping. She was one of the great characters in my life. [00:44:01] She was rather a big, vulgar Jewish girl, who used to really enjoy flipping around. She really enjoyed it, I must say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would she dance in Soho clubs?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, she did. She used to dance at Soho clubs. But she was really—she was a great character. She used to say, "I'm going to have an apartment block by the time I'm 30," and sure enough, she did. She was a very shrewd girl, but she was really a nice girl. I worked pretty hard. I think several of my friends, my contemporaries, we were all back in college. I think John Middleton was at London. He went up to Cambridge. Bobby Ferber, who's now taken silk. He's another judge. My friends are judges. My other friend, Ian Lee, he's now, I think, a senior officer in the air force. There were four of us who were the main core in this band. They're all—here am I, an artist. One's an air commodore, the other is a judge, and the other is an anthropologist. [Laughs.] But peculiar how we've just kept this very, very contact.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You still keep together? Here and there?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: We do write occasionally. John Middleton I used to see quite a lot. I took him through two wives. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a good line. What does that mean?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He used to do the doctoral research student thing, and unfortunately that was giving him [ph] a lot of trouble.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was London University like? Were there any outstanding professors or people there that interested you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: London was related to [inaudible] as well, so there was Coldstream, who dominated the whole scene at that time. [00:46:01] The people at the college, like Metters [ph] on sculpture, and Carol Wait [ph]. But those people were the people that interested me. I was looking for—I think it was really seeing—I can't quite—I remember reading one book, published by—I remember one article was absolutely seminal in my development, and it was by Cyril Connolly, in a magazine called *Polemic*. It was called "On Ben Nicholson's White Reliefs." I remember that really interested me a tremendous amount. And also meeting—what was her name? Oh, J.D. Bernal's wife, Margaret Gardiner, who collected Nicholson's work. Meeting her in Hampstead, and getting to know the work intimately by going around and looking at a lot of that, and a lot of Garbo's [ph] work. That really sort of began to formulate in my mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. What do you think the appeal was?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I really don't know, but it was very specific.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because Nicholson, I remember in those days, used to show at RedFern [Gallery].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. He used to show at RedFern—that's right. It's as though I was feeling around for a lot of ideas. It's like it was a process, an eclectic process, of rejecting what I didn't want, and trying to find something that I really felt was—I don't know, sort of like—I wanted a certain clarity in the work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What were the first paintings like, then?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My first paintings?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were like—well, they were influenced—I think some were influenced, mostly, by Klee and Gauguin. [00:48:04]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They weren't abstract like—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, Klee and Gauguin period. Then I went from Gauguin to Aleon, which is quite natural, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, they're similar.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: You've got a similar sort of curvilinear form, and flat color.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The color, yeah. Klee, I've still maintained a great interest in. I always think he's really a very, very intelligent, very interesting artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, extraordinary.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Incredible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredibly inventive.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I've always had a great feeling about that. Then I think it was—when did Biederman publish *Art is the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*? That was the crux of the matter, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you find that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was given to me by—the copies were circulating in London at that time. Pasmore had one, Martin had one. I remember it was given to me. I think, being a literary—having a literary background, a sort of—well, Mondrian had always interested me from the start, and Kandinsky. Writers who had supportive discourse and theories always have interested me a lot, and the Constructivists as well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, now, it was very hard to see much of this in London in those days.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, it was hard, but yet I was—through Margaret Gardiner, most of the work was available. I was able to see—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it was in collections rather than—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —in private collections, like the Garbos [ph], the Mondrians. I've forgotten the—because I saw two—there were quite a few Mondrians, and there was a guy called—what's his name? Michael—not Michael Murphy— [00:50:01]—who had two Mondrians. I can't—I think I've got the name wrong. I was able to see quite a lot of Mondrians, and Nicholsons, Garbo, [inaudible]. There were copies of *Circle* [ph] available. I remember a polemic that dealt with these Nicholson reliefs. Then I got hold of a copy of *Art is the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*, and I think, from that, the whole thing started to emerge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because you were involved with Biederman having a show at the Tate, weren't you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, indirectly, by Robin, yes, with Denny. Not directly, but I think it was out of my sort of discussions, give and take. Biederman is a very strange man. Anthony Hill, who knew him very well, said he got in such a state that he wouldn't cross the road. He would remain in his house all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's terrific.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He wrote these incredible books, like *The New Cézanne*, and *Letters to a Young Artist*. I must say, to be quite honest, Biederman influenced me a lot, because I based an introductory art history course at Bennington on Biederman's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That wasn't sort of following Mr. Greenberg, was it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Not at all. [They laugh.] No way. In no way. That was not—but the three-dimensional had priority. I remember, rightly—what was it? The basic thesis of Biederman was that the Willendorf Venus—the action of actually hand-forming the clay was the initial act, not the actual contouring.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: So sculpture kind of [inaudible] painting was really—[00:52:01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's sly. [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He was very sly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's incredible. You started going to Central School in 19—something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I started to go part-time, and then I went full-time, and then I went [inaudible]. Then I went to a teachers' training college as well, and then I maintained these too. So I got the whole—I did virtually university, plus—it was among ADD [ph] at that time, plus the teaching diploma.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was that from?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: What, the teaching diploma? That was from a college out—just north of—what was it called? I think it was called Borough College. It was an old college. Borough Road College, that's right. It was an old teachers' training college. I managed to get my—so I figured I might have my money out of the army.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had a half a dozen years of intense education.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. It really was. A lot of education.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you see? There were very few galleries showing contemporary work. The ICA started somewhere—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The ICA started then, but you have—there were a lot of strange things going on in London at that time. There was a movement—a group called the Free Painters Group, which was open to a lot of people, which was showing a lot of work. There was a gallery called the Drian Gallery, and there was a guy called Denis Bowen, who opened a gallery. A very small gallery, but nevertheless, showed a lot of very important people, like Peter Blake first, um—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's the name of the gallery? That wasn't One or A or whatever that—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was Musgrave who did that. [00:54:03] This was at the same time as [John] Kasmin was working in Victor Musgrave's. This was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Kasmin was working for him?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Kasmin was working for Victor Musgrave, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I must have known him then. I never remember seeing him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, he was working there. He was working for Ida Kar, that photographer who was married to Victor Musgrave. Oh, God, I never—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I didn't—that's very funny.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, yes. She had this incredible picture of Kasmin with—one of the first pictures for her that the bottom was reversed, so you had this picture of Kasmin with his bum showing, and he was smiling. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was a really strange thing. And Victor Musgrave—I shall never forget this story. Victor, who I like a lot, who is now married and settled down, he had another gallery. I think it was on Molton [ph] Street. This was a bit later. I saw him, and he looked terrible. His hair, his glasses. I said, "Victor, for Christ's sake, what's happened?" He said, "My wig got stuck last night." He said, "I had to cut it off." He was dressed up, and apparently got the staples stuck to his head. He'd had to cut his hair, and cut this wig off his head.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's incredible. Denis Bowen showed people like—who was that? Manzoni. He showed a whole group of Germans at this—I'm trying to remember the name of the gallery. It was in the basement. He really put—and he backed it himself with his own money, and it was a gallery that's not been very well-known, but it showed an enormous number of very—artists who have since become very important.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I can't think of it either.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'll remember it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The early '50s, how did your art change? [00:56:03] How did the paintings change?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: How my art was changing at that time, from basically—from the paintings to wooden constructions, in block, to wooden construction with suspended plane in white, and into wooden blocks with suspended—

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you move from painting into three-dimensional?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: About '54, I would think, '55. Maybe a bit earlier. Then I began to experiment with ill-fated color Plexiglas. I had a show at the A Gallery, which I really had—it all looked so tutti frutti. I smashed all of them. I really—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But Pasmore and all sorts of people were using that, weren't they?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, but I used it badly at that [laughs]. Then I managed to move on to start to use the right color Plexiglas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Perspex, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, Perspex, that's right. I began to use it with aluminum, metal, and get real control of the medium.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One of the things that's always intrigued me is, what was there about Biederman that intrigued all these people? Nobody knew him. It was the books—very little—I don't think his work has ever really been seen.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think what really intrigued people about Biederman really was the fact that Biederman virtually implied that Picasso was wrong in taking—in implying that Cubism was—in taking—that Picasso and Braque, particularly Picasso and others took the wrong turning in interpreting Cubism as being related to the third dimension. [00:58:09] Fourth, third dimension. Biederman interpreted Cubism as really being directly related to a structural mode of thinking, as epitomized, shall we say, in the pier series of Mondrian. That has a vertical—you see, that's where it comes from, and that's the bridge type of thinking this is related to.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think everybody in England—or that group of people picked up on him?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have no idea. Pasmore—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Always fascinated me.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Pasmore picked up on the book. Pasmore was influential with John Ernest, Anthony Hill, Kenneth and Mary Martin, John Weeks, the architect, and then people like myself, and others. And for some reason—

PAUL CUMMINGS: John Hale.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —there was a lot of supportive discourse, a lot of writing that went on. There was a broadsheet published related to it. I think artists gravitated towards it who felt they could—who liked the interaction between the verbal and the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's very pungent writing.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They also liked the fact that it was a semi-rational form, as opposed to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Semi-rational?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Talked about the structural process of nature. It became like a symbol, the A-A-T-E-V-O-K, *Art is the Evolution of Visual Knowledge*. People liked to be [inaudible] as back, became sort of really a very—Denny, I think, was involved writing to him, too. [01:00:07] Became, really, a significant figure in forming, I would say, a platform, either to develop from or react against. It was like he had a very significant aesthetic. It didn't appeal to a lot of people. Nevertheless, it was a very coherent body of thinking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's funny. Just talking about this, I remember that Victor Pasmore came into the ICA one day with very mechanical pieces for an exhibition. Somebody had leant it. Penrose looked at it and shook his head and said, "He's got lost in the plumbing," or some incredible comment like that. It wasn't the Victor Pasmore he was interested in.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I remember that. I remember those—what do you call it? I remember that particular change, how people really hated his work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it was like, that's the end of him. You know, well what has he done?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I mentioned Ehrenzweig at the beginning, because Ehrenzweig did this incredible piece of writing, in which he compared—he said that Pasmore's move into this very restrictive relief work enabled him to plunge into the oceanic, like the strip work now could stand for not just the hobby horse, but the soldier and the whole context. I've got the article on Victor Pasmore. It was one—I've forgotten what magazine of that era. I had it Xeroxed, because—and Pasmore—the story goes, basically, that a lot of Pasmore's ideas came out of his work with Harry Thubron basic course up. [01:02:09] I think it was at Nottingham. His use of the horizontals and the verticals came out of seeing some student line drawing, which he proceeded to develop in terms of Biederman's thinking. That's how it goes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, fantastic. It happened more than once in history, that—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —kind of stimulus.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's how the story goes of how Pasmore made that change. Then, of course, a lot of us following his work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let me turn this—

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PAUL CUMMINGS: All right, side two. The same questions here. What about Central School? What of that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was a typical British avant-garde, semi-avant-garde, school of that time. But none of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was important to them as avant-garde?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I suppose Turnbull was teaching there at the moment, at that time. There were—I think Adrian Stokes was teaching some form of history. No figures that really stuck in my mind too much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Any students that you got friendly with?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think there was Mark Varon [ph], John Plumb, and quite a few other people. Those are the two ones in particular I remember. That was really peculiar. Oh, yes, there's what's his name? Heatherly [ph], who was in charge of the department, and—oh, what's his name? God, my mind is slipping. What was his name? I think—was it either Bratby or—

PAUL CUMMINGS: John Bratby?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think he was teaching there as well at the time. I'm not certain. Several quite heavy figure painters.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That could be Bratby in that group.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In that group. I think—I've got to figure that Kenneth Martin was there as well, teaching there as well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the shift like from painting to building, or constructing? [00:02:06]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was very strange.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: How did that take place?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It took place via making flat card reliefs first, and then, from that, into wood reliefs, and then from—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean building up sort of layers of cardboard?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Flat, like mere collage extension. Then building the plane forward, so it floated, and then adding vertical elements, or horizontal elements, so you could—in a way, if you look at this painting here, which is about—you could say that this came out of Pasmore in a funny way, in a certain way, but only the thinking is entirely different. That was sort of like to clear the relief out of my head, to deal with that, because I dealt with that painting there, which is like '70, '71, in terms of the idea that what was the final essential of the relief. A light source, a horizontal projection, and a shadow, and that's what I've got on there. At that time, it was very important to me, because I was using light reflect—I was using wood, mostly with glass paint. Incidentally, at that time, I also—I've always done something, which is I've always worked with odd groups of almost oppositional type painting. At that time, I did a series of two block reliefs, some cut at angles like this, some cut like this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean wood cubes with a—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Wood cubes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —sliced, truncated—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. Strange. Which drove me completely crazy, because I hadn't got the money to have them cut. I remember going completely out of my head with these things, because they took such a long time to make. That was another side. Then I moved into these reliefs that were made with copper and aluminum foil and Plexiglas. [00:04:09] I think they probably were a bit chic-looking. These were exhibited at a show at the O'Hana Gallery that Alloway put on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, that was that gallery that you walked down into.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. Strange—

PAUL CUMMINGS: With a large Spanish courtyard or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The show was called *Dimension* or something. That was a strange title.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When was that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That must have been '58, '59, or later. It was called The New Vision Gallery, the gallery I'm trying to think of. Denis Bowen, and the New Vision Gallery. Just before—I should say, just before that, there had been a show at the American Embassy, where Kelly had shown some pieces that impressed me a lot, and I had seen some Reinhardt pieces, too, that also impressed me a great deal. Those are the dark paintings. Kelly had a whole series of black-and-white paintings, and there was very reduced sectional curve paintings, with white ground. I don't—I did the Susan [ph] pieces for the O'Hana Gallery, and then I think I had—then I had a show, I think it was somewhere at Molton. I think I put a few pieces in. Then—was it the Molton? I can't remember. Then Stefan Munson [ph] appeared on the scene, who was the cultural attaché in the new embassy building in Grosvenor Square. [00:06:02] Then the *New American Painting*, I think—I'm not quite certain of that—it was '59, I think. Then that really hit. Then I met Barney Newman about that time, when he came to London. Then that really knocked everybody completely by the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was so radical for everything that was going on, thinking of Roger Hilton, Langdon, Terry Frost, Adrian Heath, Liverson Hives [ph], the whole of the English landscape tradition. All the sudden, these paintings appeared.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure because they had never been seen there before.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It really took London completely by storm, and it really hit people a tremendous amount.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. What were the responses like? Who did the artist like or dislike, or was it just so much to handle at one time?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was very much—I would say it divided themselves in those who really honed into the expressive people, like Pollock and—what's his name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Brooke, maybe?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And Kline. Brooke Kline. And then those who honed in on the Newman people, and the large single image. Significantly, in the result of our crop of [ph] paintings and the influences that followed, nobody was really picked up on Still or Rothko for some reason. Maybe they couldn't handle it. Sort of beyond.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, the scale was so immense, too.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The scale was immense, but also I think there was probably handling—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Physical—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was difficult. [00:08:00] But there was an enormous number of—there was Taschism was rampant and Mad [Georges] Mathieu was doing his tricks. [They laugh.] There was an outcrop of—an enormous outcrop of really abstract—of Pollock-type painting, and Kline-type painting, and single-image, gestural painting, and quite a few Newman-type work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was interested in Newman?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, I was, for one. I somehow did—I figure my first major thinking in term—or my second section—was somehow a synthesis, and I must admit, to be quite honest with you, Barney Newman was really an artistic fellow to me in many ways, because mine was like the last show he came to before he died. He was really very encouraging to me. My work was somehow a synthesis of, I would say, the relief element from being among Newman's sort of scale. Not quite the large scale that he did, but the scale was the largest pieces possible I could do in terms of the material. And, to some degree, Reinhardt's color, because I was very interested in those very dark, subtle, dusk-like tones from Reinhardt. Somehow—and the relief. I was interested in the darkness in Reinhardt's color, and in the darks of the shadow that the relief element would cast. I liked this ambiguity of reality. One of the things people said, "Why did you use a straight line?" I said, "Look, the edge is not my choice. [00:10:03] It's the attribute of the material that I stick on there." Which is a fact. I could have maybe done a little bit of fuzzy bit down the center, but then I didn't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That wasn't the point.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That wasn't the point at all. Most of these pieces were really symmetrical.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did the work start becoming symmetrical?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Some of it was symmetrical, and some of it wasn't. There was no question that Newman's thinking—was it *Joshua*, the one with the two tapes down the center?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I know. The green with the—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That sort of symmetry influenced me a lot. Then there was the horizontal one. They influenced me a lot, too. I also think it was the symmetry of Reinhardt that influenced me a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Augmented by those close-valued colors [ph]?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. They really took me. I really had to do a lot of experimentation with a lot of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I never remember seeing brightly colored things by you.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, there weren't any at that time. I don't think there were any bright things. I never really did any brightly colored—I've never been a person who really moved into bright colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They've always been very close, and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know how you would call them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not really earth colors. They're—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know what you'd call the colors. Not really earth. I wanted to get a visual pulse into the colors, and I wanted to get a quality of color that—a density of color that you could almost push your finger into. [00:12:00] It's almost like a dense cloud. It made for a fragile surface. I found that it gave the colors a certain quality. You would get this ambiguity between—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How is that arrived at? By over-painting, or mixing and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Over-painting and mixing. It was a long process. It was developing a certain technique of application that was very—they look slow paintings, but actually, maybe some of the paintings had about 10, 12, 17 coats. I remember one—but there was a speed of application to get the surface that immaculate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. It really took a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's all brush, isn't it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was all brush. I never sprayed at all. If I got the spray, I tried spraying with it. It didn't work at all. No way. Some of the colors were very difficult to mix, because—I remember I used to rent this thing which used to shake the paint, and sometimes, to get the colors in suspension, they used to have to be put in—one color, particularly some of the blues, took about almost a day to get the color in suspension so it would hold and not shift. These were the large works. Then I did a series of works that weren't quite so large, but they were more related to enclosed images, with a slightly—to use a dramatic term, slight—with definite cruciform overtones. Which, of course, related back to Reinhardt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: One thing that interests me, just kind of thinking as you're saying all these things, through the 1950s in London, it was not all that receptive to non-figurative art. [00:14:03]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Not at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And particularly highly refined abstraction is—who supported it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'll tell you an interesting point. The people who supported it were really—there was John Weeks, the architect. There was a whole—Theo Crosby at *Architectural Design*. Somebody who you probably know. Ken—what's his name? The British architect who used to teach at Princeton. Ken Frampton. He was around and a group of architects around him. Margaret Gardiner, Michael Morris, and a few other similar people.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, I mean, there was no big press coverage or criticism in magazines?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was almost like a closed, esoteric group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You really wouldn't submit to the academy [laughs].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No way. No way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where are you going to show? Where would you, people—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: People had small shows here. Like, Hill showed in the ICA, in the library. I think I showed in the embassy somewhere, American Embassy. There were small shows going on of people. Then Alloway did this thing at Dimensions [ph], which included most of these people. Then there was one at the Molton, a group one. New Vision did one. And—what was his name? The Drian did another one. Most people were mostly showing peripherally at this time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who was the first critic who sort of got interested?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Alloway, without any question. Alloway was the person who got involved at this time. He was at the ICA at this time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, I know.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: You remember that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. I was working there in the mid-'50s.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, right, of course. The Hatchet Group, that murder group, with Reyner Banham, John McHale, the Independent Group, Richard Hamilton. [00:16:02] Oh, my God, I shall never—oh, that—were you present at that terrible discussion with David Sylvester on Bacon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, if it was when the Bacon show was, I must have been. Sure.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it was Banham got up and asked David Sylvester to talk about Master Bacon. [Laughs.] I remember a pun. They were having Sylvester over a barrel. That was the worst audience in the world, when you had that group just waiting, doing to do you with the Smithsons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They'd chop you up and let die.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The metal bits would turn you out as real mincemeat. But to have your mind honed with that group is quite a thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't even remember how I got involved with the ICA, but I did. It always seemed to me as the most sort of lively, prickly visual art situation in London in those days.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It absolutely was, no question.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You couldn't go into Mayfair and see anything exciting, and the museums weren't—not doing very much.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, there was nothing. Probably Gambella [ph] was showing a few interesting things, like the Carbro [ph] people were being shown there. I know I liked seeing them. I also remember the Molton show of Frank Stella's black paintings. I don't know when that was. That was '60, was it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was later, yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I remember they showed them. I remember that really—that was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But early in the mid-'50s, it was—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —nothing. Was Terry Frost and Red Fern, really. There was nothing really going on at all. I think people were sort of turning their backs on Cubism and trying to find something new. I really think it was a big reaction against Cubism. That was how I would—[00:18:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Also, there was this move against the kind of traditional gold-framed, well-made painting that you can put under your arm and—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —take it out, wrapped up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —take home. Yeah. It was a whole—and I don't know whether that came from what people saw in the magazines from American art, or general reaction, or—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have no idea, to be quite honest about that. I think a lot came from reaction to *Art International*. I think *Art International* had a lot of influence at that time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the first thing that really covered everything.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. I think that's where Greenberg got his first platform.

PAUL CUMMINGS: *International*?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'm pretty sure.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did Greenberg become there? He wasn't that well-known in the '50s there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'll tell you, I remember going to a party at the Alloway's. I think it would be in 19—I think in 1960 or just a bit earlier. I think Greenberg was there, and Alloway was very pro-Greenberg at that point. I don't know when the break occurred. And then I remember meeting Goossen there as well, who I think was also, again was in the modernist tradition. But then something happened. I don't quite know what happened. I think Alloway began to move off against Greenberg. I think he still basically accepted the whole modernist credo. Alloway is, I would say, more an information sociological type of critic than an aesthetic critic, but Goossen, I think, really was more involved. Goossen was directly involved at Bennington at that time, and Greenberg was also around there. [00:20:03] There was a whole peculiar Bennington thing with Feeley, and Frankenthaler, and Helen Fre—[Paul] Feeley advising Helen Frankenthaler to leave Greenberg for Motherwell. There's all sorts of strange—the stories are amazing about—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That sounds terrific.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was true. That's what I was told at—Helen was inside, calling Clem's shrink, trying to tell him to get—he was set to come in to murder her, because she decided to go and live with Motherwell. Then we began to see the—I think it was the Stellas and the Nolan [inaudible]. Alloway went and got his job at the Guggenheim.

PAUL CUMMINGS: We're sort of jumping ahead a little bit here. You start teaching in '52, Middlesex in place [ph].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Beg your pardon?

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Middlesex. London County Public School. Somewhere along in there, John Copeland turns up.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Ah, you want to know what John—ah, I've been waiting for that question. Well, let me just tell you, here's the Copeland story. I knew [they laugh] I'm not going to put all of this on tape. I'll give you—I'm going to edit it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was a painter, amongst other things.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: You know John's background. First of all, John came to London from South Africa, having been a professional in the South African Army and Air Force. He went into real estate and proceeded to buy short-lease houses and refurbish them. [00:22:00] This also involved doing some—I would call specific type of renovations for someone like High [ph] Amos and people of particular interests. He did specialty work, you might call it. That's what I was told. Then, all of a sudden, this silk screen press appears, run by John Copeland, and Copeland becomes a figure around the art world. One night, there was a confrontation at the RedFern, and

Copeland made some remark—I've forgotten who it was about. Alloway said, "You're not fit to lick his feet." Immediately, there was this sort of hostility that had been established. Now, Copeland, at that time, for all his—then I became acquainted with Copeland via John—via Denis Bowen of the New Vision Gallery. John Copeland somehow got hold of this large house that was going to be pulled down. Mordecai Richler was there in the talk. He was, I think, a writer. He proceeded to have his own studio, and then he proceeded to give me a studio, Denis Bowen a studio. He was very free with people. An Australian figurative painter called Bill Tuck—I think it was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Tucker?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Tucker, yes. Albert Tucker.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Albert Tucker.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] You remember him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, sure.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Here we were, all in this large stone house of Copeland. Mordecai Richler, Peter Stroud, John Copeland, Denis Bowen, Albert Tucker, and Peter Coviello.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Peter Coviello?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. Did you know him?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. [00:24:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He's somewhere out in Canada.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, is he really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. He's very sick, actually, poor bastard.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't heard that name in 20 years.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He's had a lot of—we were all there. That place was so outrageous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where was this?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was down—I think it was—not Fellows Road [ph]. That was where Turnbull lived. It was down on the road—I can't remember. There was a pub at the end. We used to go and play pool and have a drink. It was where—the road joins, I think, Short Farm, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, it was there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was on that—I've forgotten the exact road. Then Copeland was running the print shop, and hadn't started painting at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was making prints at one point.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right, prints at the time. All of a sudden, Alloway disappears from the scene, and Copeland—I think, all of a sudden—I don't know what happened. He sold everything, and then disappeared, and appeared in LA as a painter. Because one night—I think it was on New Year's Eve—I got this call from Alloway saying he was leaving Bennington to go to the Guggenheim. Alloway got—that's right. Alloway didn't go to the Guggenheim first. Goossen got him a job at Bennington. Then he was offered the job at the Guggenheim, and then he called me and offered me the job at Bennington. And I said, "Okay." When I had been at Bennington for a few months, I went to the West Coast on a non-resident term and I came in contact with John Copeland, the Hard-edge painter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. That's right. [00:26:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was absolutely amazing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He got very involved with all sorts of things in London, didn't he?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, what do you—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. He's told me various stories, and other people have told me various stories.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I can tell you practically every one that I know of. What did he say he got involved in?

PAUL CUMMINGS: He did something at the ICA or something at one point. Or he was in a show there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He was in a show. I think he did a print show, if I remember.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And there was—he hadn't started writing then, had he?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, he hadn't started writing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was in California.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He hadn't started writing that much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But there's some funny reason why he decided to leave England. He had gotten into a battle with somebody or something. I don't remember.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it was—if I remember, it was with a guy called Frank Avray Wilson, and I can't remember what it was about.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't remember.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'm pretty sure it was about—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he had a relative in Boston, which is how he got entrance here.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, and he was married to a girl called Pat, who was an architect. Oh, that's right. They went to San Francisco first, where he met Felita [ph]. Then they—I don't know what happened. Pat left him, and he and Felita went down, I think, to LA, and Copeland started—was painting there. I think he started painting in San Francisco. I think, somewhere, I've got tucked away some of his very early—he really wants to forget. But he was very proud of all his paintings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, he is? I saw one a few months ago, before he left the city, hanging in the apartment, on Central Park West. He said, "You'll never guess who did that." [Laughs.] Anyway, what—I still want to finish off the '50s in London. [00:28:07] I get the feeling that there was a small group of people just working and talking to each other.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was a very incestuous group, the people who were involved with the Biederman-type thinking. It was a really incestuous group. At the end of the '50s, that split. In other words, I split—in other words, what happened in terms of my own personal, I would say, associations, from being associated with the pure Biederman thinkers—Hill, Ernest, Martin, et cetera—I became in line with the situation people. In other words—you remember the *Situation* show? *Situation* show was a show of large paintings, which indicated a whole change of approach in thought, which was essentially American and non-École de Paris, in terms of thinking, in terms of compositional attitudes, in terms of image size, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —physical scale?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Physical scale. Everything. There was a large show put on at the AAA Galleries, which I think was called *Painting of the*—I can't remember—*Late '50s*. I'm not certain. But the crucial show was the one that was called *Situation*. No, the one at the AAA was called *Situation*, and then there was a second one called *New Situation* at the Marlborough. These were all paintings which had been influenced by the *New American Painting* show at the Tate. [00:30:03] Alloway wrote a review in English *Art News* called "Size-Wise," and the whole—it was quite a succinct appraisal of attitudes. Here, I moved—my allegiance moved towards the type of thinking associated with the American movement and its reversal, because—I say reaction to the Cubist and École de Paris. My associations had moved there, partly because I was involved with the people personally, their thinking, and my association with Alloway at the time. Also, there was a broadsheet called *Gazette*, which I was involved with, in which I wrote a personal statement, and I reviewed several other people's work, which somehow focused me in on them, and I think really confirmed my break with what I considered to be essentially Cubist-type thinking of Biederman. I'm not being negative in terms—I think we can avoid the Cubists, but in a way, I think one of the problems about a lot of the people who followed Biederman was that they didn't see clearly what Biederman saw in some of his works, was how to transcend the limitations of Cubism within the whole aesthetic overview. I think this was one of the things that made me break at that time, because a lot of the artists concerned were still very much in the clutch of Cubism, as I saw it. [00:32:04] One of the things I think that most of us who saw this show at the Tate—saw this was a way to break away from the clutch of Cubism, in both the light of St Ives and the Constructivists and the overall, general tenor of the English scene.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What happened as you started to move and shift away from this group?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I was slightly ostracized, definitely. I became no longer—was a little betrowed [ph] at meetings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I always find it very strange there that there was this sort of gentlemanly nodding that would go on in the street, but as soon as you got into a pub, they'd say, "That guy can't paint." It was really the same old tradition of, oh, yes, it's all fine, but it's not really. The modern painters, people I knew, always had a terrible time. They lived by teaching, or one thing or another, but always felt, at least until about 1960, when I had really very little contact anymore, terribly little support for their ideas. Patronage and all that sort of thing was miles away.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I tell you, I think it should go on record that someone like Ted Parr [ph], and Alan Parr [ph], were really key figures in terms of supporting younger painters and the growth of British painting at that particular stage, because they really bought, very substantially, work. [00:34:08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Lady Norton [ph] never bought from your group, did she?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, she did. Lady Norton bought.

PAUL CUMMINGS: She bought everything, that woman.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Also—what's his name? E.J. Gomey, who was—I've forgotten—another industrialist. And also Sainsbury. There was a group of four or five people who really supported most of us. Which was quite amazing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because I remember Lady Norton used to come to the ICA shows when there were young people, and she said to Penrose, usually, "Now who should I buy? Who should I buy? What should I look at?" All that energy she had.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I remember Lady Norton.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, crazy [laughs]—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Those were crazy times.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But her enthusiasm, you know. She would—and nobody spent any money on pictures.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And there was Lady Goldschmidt, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yes. I never met her.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, she was really—but the strange thing about that time, which, again, I think I meant to say is that, about this time, just before I got my contract with Marlborough, which was just before I left for America, David Gibbs became a private dealer.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He had worked there, too, for some time, hadn't he?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A little bit, I think, but not much. Then he took on myself, John Plumb, Hoyland, and about one or two others. He was acting as a private dealer at that time. Then he moved over to—then he got to know—came to New York, and he met Jerry Statz, got involved with Lee Pollock—in what way, I don't know—and got the Pollock estate. Then he joined Marlborough, and took us with him, and the Pollock estate. [00:36:04] Then new London situation, I think, went on, and then I had my show after that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's incredible how all those things moved so quickly, too.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It really was. It was really—and the number—you sort of see one's life in a peek [ph]. This was a real peek time. It was flickering constantly. That five—those two years. It was like a whole group of shows all the way around Europe and New Zealand.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I just remembered here, something Maidstone College.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Copeland had something to do with—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, right, yes, of course, of course, how right. Copeland—yes, Copeland, that's true. He was—oh, my God. This is really an interesting—yes. I was teaching in North London, and Copeland had got

into Maidstone College by some fair means or foul. I don't know what he had done. Then, when he was going to America, he said, "Do you want the job?" So really [they laugh] I came to America via Copeland and Alloway.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a pair nobody would ever believe like that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's true, though. I remember that. I had to—I took over the sort of foundation and general studies course, and I wrote a whole new program for Maidstone. It was then that Copeland disappeared to—went off to—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was '62 and '63?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were at Maidstone. How did you like teaching in these different schools? [00:38:00] What was that like in London?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: At the Central, it was horrible, because people were goofing off, and they used to have—they had a foul—this old sour porter, because teachers had to sign in. He would look at the clock, and look at your book. He was really atrocious, but at Maidstone it was very easy. There was no problem.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was an incredible period of people going down on the train, with a very peculiar pair, who I call sort of—what's their name? What is it? I'll have to try and remember. They really were like the lord of the manor and the serf. Not Darwin. Not—what were their names? He was married to—oh. He was the sort of person who looks as though he would kick the serf.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. I can't think who—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Gosh, he was a huge guy. Ironside, Robin Ironside. It was General Ironside, and there was Robin, and I've forgotten. They were huge—one was small, and the other was huge. He looked as though he had just—he would keep the serfs in their place. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right. God.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There was a very peculiar group of people down there. They would always travel first-class. Never mix with the hoi polloi. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, gosh. Now, you know the—

[Audio Break.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was the trigger of the *New American Painting*, and the whole of—like, that book of Mother—you know, modern artists and art really influenced me a lot, reading that book. [00:40:00] Seeing the Kellys and the—what do you call it? Reinhardts. And meeting Newman, and the whole thing. That sort of triggered it off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you meet Newman?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He was over here, I think, in '62. I think I met him at Alloway's or at Gibbs's. I think I met him at Gibbs's, with Fitzsimmons.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Gibbs comes from a sort of nice family or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Gibbs comes from a very good family.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He tried to be a painter. He's had a terrible—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He's tried to be—he's become a painter again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Has he again?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He started to paint again. That's really—he's dealing privately. He must have spent all his own private money. All of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Incredible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It is really strange. I'm going to see him. I dread to think what the work is going to be

like.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. I don't know. What did Paris mean in those days? Were you interested in Paris at all? Were your people?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Paris, to me, meant certainly good paintings I wanted to see, Matisse, but the rest it meant sort of like [French word] the worst sense of the word. There were people—

PAUL CUMMINGS: The post-war school of Paris? Just had nothing.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, there were a few people who interested me. For instance, like Fautrier. I always thought—and I still think he's an interesting artist. Dubuffet. Maybe Soulages and [inaudible] and that's about it. The rest of it, I wasn't really too much interested in.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Still seems to be so choppy there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's very choppy, and there isn't very much strong work around. Yves Klein, of course, I was interested in, in a peculiar way. [00:42:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was such a character.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. How could you avoid it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. But I mean, what he produced was something else.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It wasn't really interesting at all. Mattier [ph], of course, was sort of like—whether you call it tricks and treats, the whole—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Battling the canvas.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, my God, battling the canvas. That's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] His war.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There's some strange publications about that time, with Greenberg articles, and Byzantine parallels, and Mattier's statement. It was published by the *French Lion*. There were about four issues of their gazette. It had a lot of really first-class articles in it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because Mattier used to be their head of publicity.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Really? Is that what it was?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. He was their great PR guy, and then all of a sudden he emerges as an artist, squirting tubes of paint and things.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, I didn't know that. That's an interesting—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Famous PR guy.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh no wonder—what's happened to him now? Is he still alive?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know. Haven't heard a word.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I haven't heard a thing about him.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think he's still living. You came to this country, to Bennington, in '63, because of Alloway, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you had any desire to come here before that, or was this just an opportunity?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I had thought about it. I had thought about it. I wasn't certain it would happen. Then, all of a sudden, I called up, and it was sort of like [snaps]. I decided—I made some decisions to come over here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you've been here a while, working here, 15 years?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. Quite a long time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you have any idea you would linger that long?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I had no idea, frankly, when I first came. Not at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was it like leaving large London to go to small Bennington?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was a very different situation. [00:44:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's in the country, and you've got all the Bennington girls.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Bennington was very strange. Bennington was—all the girls—but it was very strange. That was the real trouble with Bennington, but apart from that trouble, it—Bennington really wasn't that cover [ph] from New York. Because, you see, Newman was there, and Olitski was there, and Greenberg was there, and Caro was there. The girls were always driving into New York, and there was always a ride if you wanted it, and there were always places to stay, and people and alumni to visit, and people I knew in New York to visit, like—who I knew well at that time, like Dore Ashton and others who I had met. So I really wasn't that cut off.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where did you meet Dore, from England?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't think it was England, and I met her here, through James Rosati, who I still know, and knew very well.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Had you been in this country before '63?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was the first—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: This was a complete jump. My brother did the same, going to Australia.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. He sort of just took the plunge and went to New Zealand, and then went to Australia. We sort of did it, and that was it. The whole family—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everything happened at once here, didn't it?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It really did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how did you—because Bennington was a different kind of school from Maidstone.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, very different.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had different ambitions on the part of the students, and backgrounds and everything. How did you like that sort of new cultural situation?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I found the liberal arts thing a little permissive and self-indulgent, I must admit. But I found, of the serious students, those who were serious were really very good, and I still meet those who were involved there [ph]. [00:46:00] Of the good ones—those that were good, and the others were just sort of like jerking it through. The interesting thing about Bennington was that they had the non-resident term, and I always used to go to the West Coast, where I would stay in Pasadena, where I met Walter Hopps and got the Pasadena fellowship. It was Copeland—I think—I can't quite remember. I think he either had—I think he was either ready to move into Pasadena at that time, or he might have just stopped coming—oh, no. When I met him first, he was an artist in LA. Then he went to Irvine and became director of the gallery at Irvine. Then he went from Irvine to Pasadena. [Laughs.] You know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Amazing.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's just really, truly amazing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many students would you have at Benny? What was it like teaching there?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was peculiar, because we had very small classes. The students were very demanding in a funny way. They became sort of like young vampires. They were constantly after you for information, for sympathy. You became like a surrogate therapist in a funny way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But do you think the fact there were all those well-entrenched art figures there provoked those students more and more and more?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think a lot of them—it became a copy thing. It really became, particularly in the '65 and '60, and Michael Fried and all the Boston crowd, they were all around now. It really became like a Greenberg haven, and Longo and myself were the only ones to stick out. We just wouldn't give up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How could you do it? You know, there's Vinnie [ph] drawing straight lines [laughs]. [00:48:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Inaudible.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how did the students respond to your being so different?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They liked it. They seemed to assume it was good to have opposing—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Contrast. Did you get to know Greenberg in those days? Was he—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, I got to know Greenberg.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —of interest to you, or was he—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He would always criticize my work, I think in terms of taste, with that notorious Latham incident in mind. [Laughs.] No, he would criticize my thing in terms of taste, in terms of its linearity, in terms of it wasn't flat, it was relief. And it wasn't painterly, in terms of his sense. And I would disagree, and we would argue. There was Feeley there, in the background. It was a strange scene, because there were like—then there was David Smith there, who I always—who I got to know very well, who I really cared a lot about, and who, to my mind, was probably—I think he was—he had a real perverse streak in him. I don't think Greenberg ever forgave him for those wheels [ph] or some of those terrible [laughs] some of those pieces he did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah, but he was also bright as blazes.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, I know, he really was. He was so bright. He really was. He used to come and talk, and he was always around there, talking to people. Caro was there, and it was sort of like a trial of strength beginning. It was interesting to see what was going on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You went back there a couple years later to teach. [00:50:01]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had a breather in the middle, at Hunter.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. But really, I was teaching at both places. I took over—what was his name?—Bill Rubin's seminar.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, that's what I did at Hunter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It wasn't a studio course?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, it wasn't a studio course at all. It was an advanced critical course. Next door to me—that's how I got to know Ad Reinhardt. Next door was Ad Reinhardt, doing his famous art history courses, where he would give the assignment to learn three pages by heart by [laughs] those were so outrageous.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, yes. He was really an incredible teacher. The students—there was a strange sort of—can you imagine being told to learn so many pages by heart?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, some schools do that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's what he did.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I got to know him pretty well, because we used to go out every night. He had this perverse thing with Preveer at the new club. He used to say, "Come along," and he said, "and watch Preveer's face when he sees me in the door." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's right, because they were trying to start up the [inaudible].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Preveer used to think that—had this paranoia thing about Reinhardt, maybe from the old days. He used to think that Reinhard would come along or send new people as students. He would always investigate their connections with Reinhardt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, that's funny. How did you like—what was it like coming to Bennington? A new country. Some people you knew, some people you didn't know. [00:52:00] What did it look like to you? What did it feel like?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It seemed pretty—I must say it was okay. I didn't find a great difference. I found that people were not so well-informed specifically, except in terms of one single art theory. I found that it was sort of like being—became—it was really the center of modernism in the '60s. Art form reflected the whole of the modernist aesthetic, and the modernist aesthetic really was basically centered around Olitski, Caro, and—the triumvirate—and Olitski. So this was something we had to deal with. That's where it was focused. In other words, American painting, at this time, was really based at this particular point. That's where I found myself, in the hub of this particular situation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How influential do you think the artists were on Greenberg? From—or couldn't you tell really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I couldn't tell, but I know, in my opinion, Clem's decision—they were always asking Clem questions. Always. I really think Clem had—Clem's sensibility had a great deal to do with decisions people made, although he would deny it, I'm sure, 100 percent. But I'm—maybe in terms of—I know Tony Caro related a great deal to Clem.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. [00:54:00] What kind of questions, though? In terms of just working or ideas?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Greenberg would come and give a whole series of seminars at Bennington, which were taped, and then I think were developed into seminars he gave—was it *Art International*?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. They became magazine pieces.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think they did. I think he developed—out of the pieces he did at Bennington, he developed these seminars for publication. I don't know, but it really looked like it. Here was this situation evolving, and the curious thing, I had left Bennington in '68, which was about the time that the Minimalist thinking started to develop. As I see it, the most curious thing was—the most significant thing was that, possibly, of all the artists involved, I would say—I don't know. Newman's history, one of the most independent thinkers, in a funny way. I cannot quite—I cannot pin down—I know that Greenberg's opinion was very, very closely sought by the artists concerned. That's all I can say. One doesn't know what went on.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you were never part of his group directly enough to get that kind of feedback?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, because I wouldn't follow the party line. Put it that way. I think one of the things, too, that really kept me was the fact that, having been involved in Constructivism, one had a very solid core of thought against which to react, and so I couldn't quite accept, 100 percent, what Greenberg [inaudible]. [00:56:08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean? That's a curious differentiation. The Constructivist background being strong—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In other words, I was used to working. In other words, I was used to making work that had supportive discourse involved. I think there's a parallel case in Modernism, and therefore I evaluated it very carefully in terms of my own thinking, and that's related to Modernism as relating to Abstract Expressionism. You see? And I decided I—one of the things about Abstract Expressionism that I found was most important to me was that it did admit to sources outside of art itself, whereas the sort of Kantian Modernism of Greenberg said art purely came from art itself. To my mind, one of the strengths of Minimalism was it went—its sources came from outside art, in terms of going to phenomenology and Gestalt psychology. So therefore, about this time, my own work began to move into finding sort of minimal, flat way from the illusionistic-type pieces, single-image-type pieces I was doing, which foddered upon the Newman pieces, the fetal [ph] pieces. These minimal, flat-type pieces, which were in the show at the Marlborough, which was sort of reduced rectangles, in which illusion was implied, where there was an ambiguity of dimension. [00:58:05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm curious about—I've better save that for tape two. What about Longo? Did you take up with him?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Longo and I were good friends, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Find a sympathetic spirit there?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: A sympathetic spirit?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Longo and I were pretty sympathetic, yeah, because he and I both had feelings about art should not be—I think—should have sources outside of art, in the same way that Surrealism had sources outside, came to sources outside of art. Because it seemed to me that, in a way, to evaluate Modernism, it's really very much art about art. I think one of the problems in the present is that people are looking around for new sources which to convert into art thinking or art ideas, and there just are not the sources around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why is that, do you think?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. I mean, a [inaudible] mix admits that someone like Erving Goffman really influenced this transfer—his movement from poetry into body [ph] art. You get the whole of the ritual situation from Levi-Strauss. These are sources outside of art that really should go off art developments.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's also sometimes other culture activities that people shift out of, African or Australian or Chinese, and feed it through Europe, and add a little something else.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. [01:00:00] I don't know. I think we're in a peculiar impasse at the moment, and I think it takes a lot of—an impasse sort of period of quiet.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Saturation or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Saturation, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Or even maturation.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Maturation. I don't know, saturation or maturation. Whatever you want to call it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Oh, great. Okay, why don't we—

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PAUL CUMMINGS: It's June 1, 1978. Paul Cummings talking to Peter Stroud. This is side three.

[Audio Break.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Alloway left when I came. I took Alloway's job.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And then he went to the Guggenheim?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. That was at the time of the Guggenheim International—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, that big—whatever they did.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And the *Responsive Eye*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right. Now, you know, it's interesting, because I was thinking about this yesterday. How was that whole business of setting up in Bennington? You were in the country, in green grass, and attractive students.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, of course. One knows the whole history of the place. It was sort of—there was no women's lib. One was an unpaid therapist in terms of [inaudible] father fixations and trying not to have—there to be too many faculty-student relationships. [They laugh.] Which was a tradition there, because it seems that Bennington was this sort of continual clearance, clear out like—previously Goossen, Tony Smith, [Lyman] Kipp, all left—I think possibly a few others—because of the same sort of upheaval. The fact that—I think Goossen got very frightened, the whole issue. But it was very—it was an interesting situation, because it was like, here were these self-indulgent, talented young women, able to assimilate stylistically, tricks and treats, and turn out a very accomplished-looking exhibit, in terms of what was going on around them, in terms of Greenberg-type pictures. [00:02:02]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how did you like them? Because it seems that leaving England and going to Bennington was quite a shift in terms of the type of art person and art people that you were around.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I would say that was a very—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was much more open, diversified.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In London, definitely.

PAUL CUMMINGS: London was more diversified?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. Bennington was really a closed shop.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had to be a Greenberger, or you were stuck. Pretty much.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Longo and I—Longo was a printmaker, and I was a relief-maker, so we were in forbidden territory. No, really. Virtually, I can remember Greenberg coming out to my studio and talking about, well, if you left the pencil marks on, and why did you have to have the relief, the linear element? Then the process would come forward. Fried came down. I remember him saying, "The next problem to be resolved is that of the diagonal." Only sort of indications, when Nolan invited me up to his place, and Olitski was—you know, "You should be one of us." But for some pigheaded reason, I didn't want to join it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What didn't appeal to you? It was just the wrong aesthetic?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I can't quite explain to you what it was. I could see a sort of coherent development in my work, and yet because I wanted to attain the relief, because I—and I said, "Look, the linear element is not a specific decision. It's an attribute of the material I choose to use to make the ambiguity of dimension." Now, this ambiguity of dimension, which you get with a shallow relief, was something which didn't appeal to the Greenberg—[00:04:08]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it moved all the time.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Because it moved constantly, and the opticality of the work between two and three dimensions was—you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They couldn't deal with change, then. It had to be a simple, specific statement.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. I remember Olitski was doing this single image, sort of semi-immediate-type forms.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the big round—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. I know he was dealing with the prep—then he started to think about the spray gun. Then I remember telling him about this peculiar gun from Germany called the Cayron [ph], which apparently he got, and it enabled him to control his droplets, because it was a low-pressure gun that they used a lot in underground tunnels. I know he used this gun for quite a time. I don't know whether he still uses it. But it enabled him to get a control he could not get—there were two guns. The Mistral [ph]—he used two guns, which I recommended to him. One is the Mistral, but I think it was the Cayron, which was a low-pressure gun, like a vacuum, with a large hose.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it puh-puh-puh—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Splattered.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Then you can control the actual paint much more than you can with other guns. Nolan was always a strange person anyway. He constantly had to have people around. In a way, I've never—I don't know if Ken ever really, except for the early pictures, painted any paintings himself, because he always had his brother, Neil, around, and I think he would do small drawings, mix the colors, and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It was about that time that Neil started working for him?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. In a way, my own work moved from, shall we say, an open sort of image to a closed sort of image, and it had a lot of optical ambiguity about it, which I think disturbed the concept of flatness that a lot of—is associated with modernist aesthetics. [00:06:15] Longo was always concerned with complexity and symmetry, which again didn't agree with—so there were sort of two outcasts, you might say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you think Alloway recommended you for it, then? Why? Was he being perverse, which he was wont to do on occasion? Or did he just like you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, I think he generally thought it might be a chance for me to come and see what

America was like. At that time, he was pretty much involved, I think, in support of Greenberg's ideas, but then I think he broke, very shortly after I came, in '63.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You wouldn't have been supporting Greenberg ideas before that anyway, would you? What with the Biederman ideas.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I couldn't be involved with it. The only idea would be the concept of a color field, and that was about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which is pretty open.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's not Greenberg's prerogative. And I certainly didn't agree. There are many times out there when Greenberg would give his critiques, and there would be a lot of disagreement. Like Pat Adams [ph] would never agree with—she was another distant, you might say. It wasn't entirely—

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were there a year, then you went to Hunter for a year.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Maryland Institute, then back.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: For a couple of years.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Maryland Institute was after.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sixty-eight, right. Why the Hunter in the middle?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The Hunter was—I cut down my load at Bennington, and I took over Bill Rubens's class at Hunter. [00:08:01] I was studying a lot of criticism.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I liked that a lot, because Ad Reinhardt was teaching next door, and we always used to go to the club afterwards. Ad, in his perverse way, used to say, "Watch Preveer's face when I come in." He said, "He thinks I really want to sabotage the club whenever I'm around." He said, "He even suspects students I send him a lot."

PAUL CUMMINGS: So really, in a couple of years, you had a very good introduction to American art life, and people, and everything.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Practically everything, yeah, I would say. Caro came over, and David—see, the other thing that really interested me about Bennington, I think, was this peculiar love/hate relationship of David Smith —

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? In what way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —and Greenberg. Because a lot of—see, David Smith would stand up to Greenberg. Although he started off a painter but became a sculptor, he was not—although Greenberg backed him for a certain time, one got the feeling that David Smith was perverse in many ways. He would take these old tanks. He would put wheels on sculpture. When he died, Goossen was collecting whole bulldozers to make sculptures out of. Those things he did at Spoleto [ph]. There was a sort of strange feeling, and I heard people say Greenberg was constantly looking for success for David Smith.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Just before he died, I remember being at a party in Bennington, where David Smith had his book on Persian gates, and he thought—he was talking about the structure of the gate, and the door, as being something that is sort of like an armature on which one could hang forms. [00:10:09] Rather than—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous idea.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He was so obsessed by it, but I've never seen this book. He had it around him like a pet dog, this magnificent book on gates.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, terrific. But Greenberg ended up involved with the estate anyway. Finishing sculpture and [inaudible].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was very peculiar. I also became very close, at this time, to a Cubist sculptor called James Rosati, who really, I think, although he wouldn't admit it—he tends to underestimate—he doesn't publicize the fact that he is probably, I think, one of the best portrait sculptors alive today.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He did this head of Tillich down in—and of several other people. In fact, Philip Johnson is constantly asking him, when I talked to him last, to work more on portraiture, or to work as much on portraiture, because he really is an incredibly—he does three oversized heads, magnificent.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Really? Amazing.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. I don't know why he keeps it so quiet, but he does.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He likes to have another image, maybe.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He really does, but the fact is, he shouldn't be ashamed of both sides of his work. I don't think he is, but—anyways.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Prefers one to the other in public terms.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. At that time, I also became quite close to Dore Ashton. Who didn't like Greenberg either. So there was a sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That was when you were at Hunter, though, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, that was before. I met Dore early, very early on. The Alloways were then—I didn't know where they were. Sort of in a flighty stage. [00:12:00] Lawrence was in the process of offending a lot of people, I think. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Didn't do very much for him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, I'm afraid not. They're still hanging on, with the knives ready.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like—you hadn't taught art history or criticism before, had you? That was—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, I had done it in England, briefly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On the same kind of level?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, I hadn't. I had done some writing in England, and I taught a criticism seminar at Bennington when I came because I had to take it [inaudible]. And unlike this blood bath of two years. I emerged capable.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of anything. [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's what Goossen thought, anyway, and apparently students thought so, because it turned out pretty well. I came in contact with quite a lot of interesting people who subsequently come upon the scene, and some disappeared. But Reinhardt was the—contact with—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Reinhardt seemed to intrigue you, as a character or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, he did, because there were so many things like—for instance—as I said, I'll let you have a copy of this very strange letter. He intrigued me, because his classes consisted of sharing this sort of visual blitz, sort of slides, and then telling students to learn—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —three pages.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: By heart. [Laughs.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But did you get to know him outside of Hunter?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, I got to know him outside of Hunter, and I found him a very intriguing character. Somewhat perverse. When he came to give this lecture at Bennington, he drove everybody completely crazy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In the beginning, he said, "I will only answer questions within this frame of reference. [00:14:03] Please don't ask me to respond to your frame of reference." [They laugh.] Which was like—that's what Greenberg says, precisely. "I'm going to talk about my ideas of quality and my subjective reactions, and this is what we're going to"—any time [inaudible] asks a question, he would say, "I'll answer this within my frame of reference. I do not consider so-and-so a good artist." This enraged people. About half past eleven, or about 11:00, people began to drift out, and the student representative sort of put their hand up and said, "Well, Mr. Reinhardt, don't you think this should be the last question?" He looked around and he said, "Really?" He said, "There's still people left here."

PAUL CUMMINGS: How long had he been going on?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He'd been going on, apparently, from about eight o'clock or 7:30. Then he said, "I always feel a lecture is only complete when I'm the only one left in the room." [They laugh.] I mean, this sort of remark—

PAUL CUMMINGS: He had to drive them away.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was constant. Apparently, he used to do lectures that would start at 2:30 or 3:30, and then they would go on and on and on, and he was capable of handling this stuff. This remarkable—and I found, too, that again, in certain ways, also his influence upon Conceptual art, later on, really—the influence he had upon Kosuth, it was like the way Larry Poons used to hang around Barney Newman's studio, like Kosuth used to hang around Ad Reinhardt's studio.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, and Lucy Lippard, too. Terribly influenced by him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I didn't know she was that influenced by Rein—I knew she was very influenced, but not that much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Quite a bit, yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Because it was—well, I mean, his ideas about work, about why one should work. [00:16:05] Ultimately, was curiously—the thing about the idea of ritual and repetition. I always used to talk about—I said to him, "Well, you're going to say—" what's the Catholic, paternoster, is it? "Are you going to say your rosary this morning, are you, instead of going to the studio?" Because that's what it was. It was a constant ritual of making one image all the time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Don't you think there's the ritual of working, though, that he was talking about?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Led him to it. He fascinated me, because there was no sort of religious overtones or non-formal overtones. His very close friend was Thomas Merton, and he became a—what was it? A lay brother or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He became a monk with some—I've forgotten—yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He was a poet, and he was involved with Middle Eastern thinking. Very interesting.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Later in life, yeah. Both of them later in life.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. He went to do all his photographs of the mosques and the minarets. Also, his knowledge, I think, of Far East philosophy, religious philosophy, was quite considerable, though he wouldn't admit it. The man was—just any manner of contradiction was always fascinating. He managed to hold his own consistently within the art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was so—when everybody was doing wild things, he was doing quiet things, and visible and invisible, and always contradicting.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was the thing that fascinated me, was the contradiction in the work. It's interested to think about who you remember in terms of providing supportive discourse for your understanding. [00:18:03] I don't know what's happened to this man, Martin James, who wrote a very interesting article, very early on, in the early '60s, on Reinhardt. The best I've—practically the best I ever read. Lucy Lippard quotes it in that article, in *Art in America*. Reinhardt influenced me a lot.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But mostly in terms of thinking and ideas, rather than in sort of art things.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In some of my early work, there was definitely a period when I was very strongly influenced. I would say prior to about '62, there was a period when there were certain images that were similar to him in a way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they weren't relief?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They weren't relief, but they were sort of the image structure. Semi-cruciform, or open.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Of a central hierarchic image?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, hierarchic image, central. Everybody thought—you know, I think quite considerably influenced by him. I'm sure that the idea of the light and darkness in the color came—or the shadow in the color—came from a certain concern I felt—I looked at his work. He had a very interesting tone of mind. The thing that always interested me, too, is—I don't know. I remember when I got to the end of my '60s-type picture, paintings, I felt, what should I do next? Then I remember a conversation I had with Bob Smithson. I think it was in Max's. He said, "One of the things that fascinated him, he always asked himself the question, if Reinhardt had gone on painting, what would have been the next painting he would have done?" [00:20:08] One knows he was interested in film, but if he hadn't gone to film, what would he have done? That's the thing that I started to think about again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's true. I remember, one day, running into Ruth Kligman on the street, 10 years after Pollock died. She said, "It's really funny. Nobody ever thinks what he would have been 10 years later, if he kept painting, Pollock."

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. No one could have known at all. If anyone knows, it's like de Kooning. "I see the canvas, and I begin." [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How have you found teaching and working? Have you found them a difficult combination, or do they aid each other?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That really is—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are they sort of parallel or separate?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think complementary in a way. In some ways, I find that there's a curious—if you're not careful, there can be too much of an energy drain.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Teaching?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. So maybe it's better to teach—graduate students sound nice. Gives you sort of a feeling of being superior, but maybe it drains too much out of you. I don't know. Sometimes—I think you have to learn how to handle teaching itself, at each particular stage of your life as an artist. In some cases, you'll put a lot in. In other cases, you'll let them put something back. That's [inaudible]. [00:22:00] But at Bennington, it was a bit flighty at times.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had studio classes, too, though, right?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, right. The studio classes I liked quite a lot. Because they weren't too hard. They were sort of amusing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about Maryland Institute and Rutgers? Was that all studio, or are there other—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were all studio. Rutgers, I have a seminar, a critical seminar, which is called Sources and Concepts of Recent Art, which I like.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you start that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: About three or four years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it's really new? New-ish.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's new-ish, yes. But I've always been involved with some form of self—some form of critical relationship, or self-critical relationship, with the student to the work, because I really think that most art, since Minimalism, really, the act of the student is needed to develop a sort of a conceptual ability to handle the ideas from which you know, a person [inaudible] works [inaudible]. Because one of the great problems I see among the whole of the '60s, like the stranglehold of modernist thinking via Phil Needer [ph] and—he wouldn't admit it, but I mean—*Artforum*, and Michael Fried, and Hudson, the whole lot—is there's a very—there are two very interesting things that I find that are hidden, and very frequently neglected. You might hate Greenberg, but you have to ask yourself, how would recent art move without Greenberg to react to it? [00:24:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: I think there are a lot of things that Greenberg ignored, and when the next generation of critics, who will be called revisionists, come in, they will make all sorts of discoveries, because that's a very historical tradition in this country. As a critic leaves, there's a whole new school that says, "You missed the point."

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I found this sort of thing—what really interested me is the other thing that's implied, very specifically, I think, in Modernism, is that art must come out of art. The sources of art are art. Really, one of the great strengths, I think, of Minimalism was it was able to move and find a source for art outside of art, in terms of phenomenology and Malaponte [ph] and—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think that it succeeded in doing that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it succeeded in making a break from the exclusivism of minimalist thinking—of modernist thinking—upon the art world.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But don't you think they've often ended up making illustrations for philosophical ideas?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Very much. I think Minimalism, in particular, was actually a reaction. But it enabled the range of options for people who were involved in art-making to be much wider afterwards. Modernism was going rapidly down a cul-de-sac.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did minimal artists react to you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, strange as though it may seem, when I had that show at Marlborough, which was really very reductive at that time—it was a very strange, sort of flat, leave [ph] plane reliefs, in monochrome. Apparently, Bob Morris, he thought they were the best things in the show. [00:26:02] I never—they really looked sort of very—they really were very minimal, very strange pieces. The only thing that they had were color, which they shouldn't have had.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you say that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They had oranges and greens, really sort of whimsical choices.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Arbitrary? Amusing?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, I just felt I wanted a change, but they really didn't need the color at all. I think they can be white or gray very easily. I chose to—and those pieces, I think, very peculiar, because I never really followed on after. I was doing pieces at that time which were still involved, to some degree, with some illusionism, mainly on the edges and on the surround of the image. As soon as I had done that, I think I went to a whole series of shaped canvasses, or shaped reliefs, which I think were probably a result of being within the whole ambience here of Stella's concern with shaped work. There was a lot spent looking at other people. So in a way, I reflected my own concern in being—asking myself, well, did I need the ground? Why couldn't the figure itself be the actual work? Then I went, after this period, when I was involved with preparing the simple [ph] elongated hexagonal shapes, I went back to England, and in the summer, I did what I call my vulgar streak show. [00:28:02] Where the work was very emblematic and high-key. Very strange pieces, really bizarre pieces.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I don't know what those are.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, they're sort of hidden away. Well, I'll show you. I'll let you have a copy of the slides. They're really very strange pieces. The Arts Council has some [ph]. I worked on these pieces in the summer. I had the show in England, at the Molton. Then I came back, and I think I reacted against these vulgar streaks, and I went back to sort of what I would call the reduced rectangle, with the corner cut off, each corner, within the square again.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You know, there's something that I always think runs through your work, and maybe it doesn't. And that's the sort of building activity—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's true, yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —that goes on, in that kind of low relief, as opposed to the painting, which of course is [inaudible].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: At this time—now I'm painting, but when I was doing reliefs, there was a very great concern with the actual act of fabrication, the stability of the supports, and other issues involved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the interest in that? Was that out of the Biederman, in a way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think Biederman, you can't—Biederman is very much concerned with the permanency. He used aluminum in the end. I was concerned—actually, I liked the act of putting things together. [00:30:03] Sometimes I often think about it again. Early on, I did, in the '60s, some very primitive sculpture, which wasn't very good. But still, I have thought about certain types of sculpture, and environmental work. But then, I think after the show at Marlborough, I really began to question what was the essential of the relief, and did I need to go on with it. Then Marlborough and I parted company for various reasons, namely—the same way that [inaudible] and other people have suffered, is that there they would sell the most expensive piece rather than somebody else, and I happened to sell something at the studio, because frankly I was a bit annoyed, and then there'd be sort of [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: How were they as a dealer for you, though, while you were—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They really weren't too—they didn't push my work. They could have done more.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody says that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Everybody says that. Motherwell was with them for eight or nine years, and he said the first year he was out, he sold more than all the years he was there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Sure. I don't know what it was. There's a peculiar attitude there. Sometimes I think the whole thing was really—I think most of it was done off Lloyd's private estate, maybe, rather than the gallery. He may have really dealt with the Old Masters. But I don't really know that secret. He was a very peculiar man. [00:32:00] I think when I came to New York, after leaving Bennington, and I was faced with a show at Max Hutchinson, I really was concerned very much with—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's later now.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's later, yes. But there was a period, a sort of latency period, when I was really working with developing ideas I had in the Marlborough show, and thinking very much about why was I thinking of reliefs. Eventually, it came down to—I came to this decision, well, the real essential relief was the relationship of the light source to the projection and the shadow, and then using a sort of simplistic frame of reference, reductive Modernism—modernistic frame of reference. If a painting just could be like a piece of canvas, then a pure—then a relief could be just like a projection, a light source, and a plane surface. This is where these came from.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you're paring it down, paring it down, paring it down.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Paring it down. When I got to this particular—and what was a simple division. Really used to divide it into two.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you relate the left and the right sides? Is there a special relationship?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That depends upon whether you're right-eye-dominant or left-eye-dominant. How you track it, you know. It's definitely—because of the container of the continuous drip, top to bottom, it's contained, so you have to track, really, up and down. You can't move out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If you go sideways, it doesn't—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: You can't really go up that one, and then down this one, or down that one, et cetera. You have to go sideways, so it makes you really—it creates almost an implied axis in the center, that these four points of the bottom two—of the top line and the bottom line. [00:34:06]

PAUL CUMMINGS: But I mean the relationship of this side, that side, this side, that side.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. You see, I have to sort of—if I decided I wanted to do this series, which incidentally, first of all, were in color—and I made the same mistake that I did when I did those flat pieces for the Marlborough show. I put color on them. This one used to be, I think, red or something, but recently I've changed it down to what I call shadow colors, or light colors. They're all the same. I feel that this particular copy really is —which is like a final statement I made in terms of a relief.

PAUL CUMMINGS: When did you repaint that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: About a year ago, or two years ago.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And it was made several years ago?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, made several years ago. I'd probably do them all if I—because I feel that—you know. What I was doing was really projecting color field thinking onto something which was not related to it at all. It took me quite a time to find out about it. Then after I did these, there was a sort of period of evaluation of what—an experimentation as to what sort of thing I should be doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting. You say applying color field to the wrong matrix. What do you think led you to that discovery, that it was the wrong move? Just looking at it, having it around?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In many ways, it's like seeing a projection on a building and the shadow underneath it. [00:36:03] Maybe it's sort of like purist influence. Going right back to the very beginning, like in Nicholson's white reliefs, and the interest in the shadow there.

PAUL CUMMINGS: The sort of taupe coloring.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: You see, it was like—I wanted the color really to be basically as simple as possible. In a way, very much with [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's totally different than what so many of the Europeans did, to build up things and have it red, blue, green, and white, and all of this.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, that I have to get rid of. That was one of the things that I think—in a way, you could say Rauschenberg made the all-white and all-black paintings, and Reinhardt made the all-black paintings. In a way, I think that sort of monochromatic type of thinking indirectly influenced me, no question about it. If Reinhardt could work in all black, then I can work in all white.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the Russian Constructivists, who did—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Of course. They're always—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That whole tradition, then.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That whole Malevich and the Constructivist tradition is there all the way through. I think it's influenced American art a great deal. Like, I mean Bachner [ph] and the influence, I think, they all feel it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's interesting that those things were influencing, and yet there was very little discussion about those art [phone rings]—

[Audio Break.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The Russian Constructivists.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. People didn't really talk about them in the '60s very much.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No. I think it was very interesting, because I always remember being fascinated by seeing a German edition of the non-objective world around, and those drawings of Malevich, which virtually were—if they were enlarged in scale, would become like a John McLaughlin, a Barnett Newman, or an Ad Reinhardt. [00:38:07] The influences were there in basic, seminal images.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right, because you had seen McLaughlin in that [inaudible] in London, the Hard-edge show.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. *West Coast Hard-Edge*. I was influenced by a lot, and McLaughlin definitely was. There was no question. I'm sorry I omitted him. He deserves that respect, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's fascinating. That show—those people have interested me a lot over the years, mostly, I guess, because nobody ever liked them in New York.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Hammersley and Feitelson, and who were the—there's another one I've forgotten. McLaughlin, Hammersley, Feitelson, and there was another one.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A younger one whose name I've forgotten. It always intrigued me why it grew up in California the way it did. McLaughlin's things grew out of collage. Have you done that, used collage ever, or not?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I've used collage, yes. In very early pieces, I used to use collage quite a bit. I was doing my sort of Aleon-cum-Nicholson painting. I think one has to move to colla—I think if one moves into relief, it's generally through college, particularly if it's a shallow space relief, more in depth. I think that's one of the

differences I had with Biederman. Really didn't like to depart from, shall we say, a humble idle [ph] attachment to the picture plane.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Your colors have always interested me, because I have—when you talked about the bright paintings, I really don't remember those.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I've always had this—I've always tried to—I am very essentially—I use an essential range of colors. [00:40:07] But sometimes I get driven to use a perverse sense—to do a really vulgar and unpleasant painting, like in a series of prints. I did this atrocious painting in oranges and grays, this print. Abominable. It really was. But I decided I was going to do it no matter what.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then you got done with it, and it was finished.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: So there you are. It was done. You learn how to handle these particular sorts of—you realize what colors belong with you and what don't. In a certain way, I must say that—see, color-wise, Rothko and Reinhardt probably influenced me almost more than Newman, but Newman structurally [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: How well did you know him? Because you mentioned him before.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Newman?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I knew him quite a long time. From about '61 until he died. He was always very supportive of me, which was very nice to have.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of relationship do you have with a painter like that? Older.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In a way, he was very—Newman was always very supportive of younger painters, always. He really was. He was very, very supportive, and he really did a lot for me in terms of encouraging, in terms of believing in myself as an artist. [00:42:05] That was, I think, his most important contribution, was his support.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How was that manifest, though? In what—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He would talk to you seriously about your work. He would come to your exhibitions regularly. Any painter he was seriously interested in, he would always come to exhibitions, and he would always talk seriously about—you could always call him up. That was very, very important to young artists. At least that's what—if you hadn't got the whole Greenberg support system behind you, to have someone like Barney being okay [ph], it made a lot of difference to you. He was, to my mind, an extremely important person in my life.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were there other older artists that were key figures like that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, like [inaudible] who I didn't know terribly well, was a sort of peripheral influence.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was in California.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Reinhardt, when I was in New York, definitely, for that period, was—on and off afterwards. Definitely was. There's no question. If you can put them together, it's like Nicholson, Newman, and Reinhardt, no question about it. And possibly, I would say, maybe Victor Pasmore.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But earlier?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Earlier. You had that whole group.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What would Newman say? Would he come to the studio?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He would come to the studio and talk to you about your involvement with your work, commitment to your work, why you were doing it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what kind of terms, though?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Sometimes they were formal, but more often they were in terms, I would say, of values, your own reason for making a painting. [00:44:01] In a way, he would not—his criticism was essentially non-formal as compared to Greenberg, more formalistic type of approach.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But can you really explain that? Why you make a painting?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Why he did that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: I mean, if he would ask those kind of questions, could you answer them?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were hard, because they always put you on the spot. In other words, what his work—he would say if he liked the work or if he didn't. But he would also—in a way, he was testing you, I think, which, in a way, made you either—tends to make one think an awful lot. You would [inaudible] more verbally. But it made you reconsider what the act of making a picture was for you, and that was very crucial. He really was an important figure. Not many people understand that. I think—this was his—I think probably Reinhardt was the same. They would both deal, like Reinhardt [inaudible] other people, it was what was art about? Why did you make it?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Do you find that Newman would bring particular ideas that you know, [inaudible] styles, or was he really pulling things out of you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, he would tend to bring—he was very committed to a certain idea, which, I think, began with the stripe paintings. Then I think it culminated in the idea of moving from the less contrast colors to the high contrast primaries, like, and who's afraid of red, yellow, and blue? [00:46:09] In other words, I think the last set of paintings were very much challenge pictures. I must mention, too, that I think that the last paintings of his—dealing with the primaries, I think, became almost an obsession with him, so far as I understand it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why do you think?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. I'm not certain, to me, how well they work. He obviously felt he had to use those colors, because they presented radically—real issues in terms of dealing with pure color, rather than putting the color in the shadow, or diminishing the intensity of it. Here, he was dealing with color, optimal intensity, and within his own particular frame of reference.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I've always found his painting too thin, in a funny way.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think, in a funny way, as you say, it did stretch itself just a little bit too thin, and it didn't move—it didn't move beyond what he was doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Would he take you places, or would you go—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He'd take me out to dinner.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Move around the art world? [00:48:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Opening—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I would see him at parties with Annalee.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are you friendly with her?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I know her pretty well, yes, but I don't see her too much anymore. She's sort of, I think, very tied up. She's a nice woman, but she's very tied up.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I was curious about how you came to move to Rutgers. Was it Bennington gave out, or Hunter didn't continue?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Bennington really gave out, and I decided it was time to move into the city. Rutgers provided the opportunity, and Mike Todd, who was at Bennington with me, left and went to the West Coast for a year, so I had a studio to go to straight away, so there was none of the tremendous hassle of finding a place and so forth. I could just take over his place, and that was it. So that gave me a year's leeway to find another place and sort things out. That was the disruption. That's why, I think, the change from making a relief into a painting. It took such a considerable time.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But you had other outside activities?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was really upheaval. It really was.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's hard to work then.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Very hard to work. Distracted.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have a regular working pattern? Certain days, certain hours, certain times of the day?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It depends upon how I am, really.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because some people seem to have very tight rituals, and then other people just work morning, noon, or night, depending what—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I tend to work—when I have an assistant, I work a pretty regular set of hours. But otherwise, it can be erratic. A lot of people I know, for instance, just go and paint until they have a show, or others say, "I must go back and do my five hours." [00:50:08] I know it's a pack of lies. They're going to have a beer and look at the wall films [ph]. A lot of artists are very dishonest about their work. Very dishonest. I don't really have an answer there. I'm inconsistent, and yet I'm consistent. But the move into painting is a big thing. I have to make a whole series of trials and errors until, ultimately, I think it was—I evolved upon—oh, it was a really peculiar sort of image. It did come out of one strange sort of thinking. I took the last Ad Reinhardt, that sort of over cross, and I worked out he was using basically an overlap form. What was the simplest way to divide a rectangle? I came up with the idea of the interlock, like that shape. Out of that, this whole series evolved. Once the interlock developed, the idea of the interlock developed, I had a show of the paintings at Max's. Radcliffe wrote a very interesting article and review on it. Really one of those sort of things which made you think very seriously of the whole possibilities of what you were doing. He wrote a very interesting comparison between my work as language, and Bolotowsky's style, which was very—although he gets a little heavy in his language. It was an article which I still go back to and think about. It provided a whole point of departure and direction for what I'm doing now. Out of that series of work, the subsequent shows came, and the new work developed out of an idea that this was the last of this interlock—[00:52:12]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's that painting called? The title?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I've forgotten. I think it's called, um—I think it's called *One at the Centre*. I don't know if that's—or *Two at the Centre*. Which is a key painting, because after that, I was looking at this painting. I began to feel this was really—I was still dealing with problems and issues in the '60s, and I decided, again, I wanted to make a move to deal with issues that are more relevant to both me and—you know.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Was that an obvious decision, just based on looking and thinking?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, not so much an obvious decision, but just a feeling decision. I could go on producing these in grant [ph] more or less variant for the next five years, but I didn't want to do it, and I decided that the one thing I did want was to have—to go on making single-image paintings that I felt that exhausted—didn't renew themselves.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a term you used, or has been used, back and forth, the single-image business. What do you mean exactly by that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's like a painting that presents itself all at once. It's like an all-at-once quality. Whereas a Mondrian or a Pollock, you can read it in a multiplicity of ways.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. So it really has to do with the responses rather than what it is, particularly.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. [00:54:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You said something a minute ago, when you said moving into painting. Is that away from the relief?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. In other words—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Into regular flat surface?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: This was the giving up of the relief element in my work, and moving on to canvas and a stretcher and paint, because I felt it offered more opportunities for me to work. I felt the relief situation restricted what I wanted to say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It became restricting?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It became very restricting. I decided, then and there, that I really wanted to make complex work, work that would have a multiplicity of readings, a multiplicity of possibilities of readings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But, you know, that particular painting is you know, of the group that always makes me wonder about, how do you evolve that image? Is it drawn out and then measured, or figured out?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's drawn out, and it's measured, and then it's transferred, and then it's adjusted. It's a very tight program of—although it looks like its end state, there's a whole tremendous process that's lying underneath the surface here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So there's over-painting, over-painting.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A tremendous amount. And adjustment, and elimination—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Color shifts.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —and shaping down, and color changes. It's not just a simple, one-shop thing. It tends to take a long period of adjustment.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So it takes a long time to make a painting?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It does. Sometimes it doesn't, sometimes it does. It depends.

PAUL CUMMINGS: If it works or if it just goes on and on.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Sometimes the work will just go on like that [snaps] and sometimes it will take a month or so.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What was the feeling like when you left the relief and finally got going—[00:56:04]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. I felt I wasn't in my own territory, on my own. I was in somebody—I was in the territory with everybody else.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. Although I felt that what I was doing was particularly unique. I didn't feel that there was anybody else working the way I was working, and that was—and I couldn't refer to anyone else with my problems, which, to me, was a good way to feel. I couldn't just say, well—

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Someone else was working similar—when I started, very early, I could ask myself, what would Barnett Newman have done in terms of handling this sort of distribution of areas? Recent work, I'm on my own. I don't think I have any frame of reference.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You had indicated that you were interested in the problems of the '70s. What do you mean by that? What are the—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: For me, I think one of the problems is getting away from the dominance of the field in the painting. Field painting, Color Field painting, has been an issue, I think. One can't, obviously, discard it. It's part of the whole history of recent—but one has to somehow integrate it in a different way, and use the field, yet use the field in a way that it doesn't—it provides opportunities for newer varieties of reading it. I found that this was—for me, to see a large expanse of color became a real problem.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In what way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Unmodulated color. Because—well, for instance, one can meditate on a painting, and some paintings are demanding. [00:58:11] I like paintings that are demanding.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paintings that are what again?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Paintings that are what?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Demanding. In other words, you have to put some effort. The spectator has to put some effort. I really think that one of the main issues about painting today, except for, shall we say, some of the pattern painting, is that they tend to be demanding upon the spectator. Even the pattern painting is that complex and makes demand. I felt that, to make—complexity was an issue and a concern I was very much interested in, in terms of picture-making. The other is the problem of size or scale. I didn't feel that the large size or scale was really any necessary—if one was really not involved with the field primarily, one was no longer involved with scale as such, that one could go on a smaller scale, but not the immense scale that so many paintings of the '60s, you know, really demanded.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you see that as a breaking down of something or a building up of something, this working away from the color field?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it's a breaking down, and also it's finding a new viewpoint. In a way, it's sort of like leap-frogging back to Abstract Expressionism, and then coming back again, because a lot of the Abstract Expressionists [inaudible], Pollock in particular, handled complexity, and it has always interested me. [01:00:00] And Tomlin, and early Reinhardt. They had a certain love of complexity, which goes back to Mondrian, of course, which interested me, too.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you relate contemporary English painting to what you're doing? Or do you feel somewhat removed from that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I feel somewhat removed from English painting, because I think a lot of English painting is really five years or so behind, in terms of ideas. I also think that a lot of it is still tied up in the '60s, and if it's not tied up in the '60s, it's tied up with a certain eccentricity, which I don't mind.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who's involved with the '70s, then, would you say?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think most of the English painters were really involved with the '70s. There's people like, possibly like, to some degree, like John Plumb and Mark Varen, possibly. I'm not quite certain about Hoyland, but—I don't know. I talked particularly with Plumb and Varen. I know that they were very much involved with ideas of the '70s, although they were associated with Greenberg-type artists. I think their work is not really [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: But he's championed all sorts of people, sometimes very briefly.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Very briefly, right.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They didn't work out a mature whatever.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Or toe the line, you might say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've never had any real involvement with them, have you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Greenberg? No. Not really. I mean, we were on good—fair speaking terms, but never much—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Nothing beyond that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Nothing beyond that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are there any critics who write about your work provocatively?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think Radcliffe and Alloway wrote [inaudible] in here, but in particular, I think Radcliffe and Dore Ashton. [01:02:02] Ashton did the introduction to my Marlborough catalog. Alloway, Ashton, and Radcliffe are really the people, I think, really the most insightful about it.

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PAUL CUMMINGS: This is side four. I don't think we ever—

[Audio Break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: —particularly from your point of view. I mean, now that we're almost done with them.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: As I said, I really felt the problems were of how to get rid of the '60s. In other words, particularly if you've been—I don't think one could avoid developing a modernist sect, or a formalist sect, to picture-making, if one had been in New York, or anywhere near New York or [inaudible]. This was one of the crucial problems of dealing with it, like the whole reductive sensibility, the idea of linearism and illusion being forbidden. All these issues that were involved with Modernism. I think it took a long time for people to cut through, or to realize that they were preconditioned, visually, to think within this frame of reference. Somehow, it's almost like Hofmann saying he took 15 years to draw Cubism out of his system. I think this is what happened with [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think there are any critics emerging these days of interest, or who have new points of view or new theories?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: This is a very difficult point. I am really—it's a very difficult thing to say, because I honestly don't. One can see—Alan Sondheim is very young. He writes pretty well. [00:02:01] Lucy Depaul [ph], I think, has made an almost too firm a commitment to film. She's a very strong critic, nevertheless. Lizzie Borden gave up and became a filmmaker. I think Robert Pincus-Witten, he has a lot of potential. He's written some good pieces. Radcliffe, I think, is an excellent critic, but sometimes his language gets a little overextended. I think he's potentially still a very strong critic. Rosalind Krauss, with her post-formalist, is, I think, a highly articulate, well-organized critic. But as for critics with a new approach—you may not like it, but Doug Davis, I think, although he's an artist, has a sort of critical point of view that I respect in terms of content. Basically, he's saying that the subject matter should return.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, is that what's he saying now?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: So far as I understand.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Must be because he's been doing all the video.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which, without subject, gets lost, usually.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It becomes like [inaudible] Pike, which is really atrocious.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] I know.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He can earn his money any time at [inaudible] but it's not that easy. I think it's not—if you start to look at the contemporary situation of painting, what's happened—Marcia Tucker, I think, has possibly something to say, but she hasn't written too much about painting. [00:04:01] A critic who I think has possibilities, very strong possibilities, probably—I would put him and Radcliffe together as having possibly, for me, the greatest potentiality, but they have to somehow learn to prune and chop their language, and that's Donald Kuspit—and Radcliffe. Those two I would put together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Who do you use in your classes at Rutgers? What kind of literature do you use or assign?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Apart from the inevitable Gregory Battcock—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —anthologies.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] I mean, that last one, *Why Art?*, some essays—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I haven't gone through that one yet.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it's joy. You can almost feel the wine spilling on the pages. [They laugh.] Do you remember that number he did on—when he was *Art* news editor for a short time? Or was it *Arts*? He wrote this article on wine.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, I'll never forget that. That was just sort of outrageous. No, I tend to set people—it depends upon the level. Certain—people find Bob Morris hard enough to deal with, but particularly since Minimalism—you might not like Morris. Morris is a good—Morris's writings are good points to react against, or to disagree with, or agree with. I find that Morris, selected articles, tend to be a good framework of reference. [00:06:05] But when you begin to get to the whole area of performance and Conceptual work, and Post-conceptual art, and Folk art, then I start to deal with it in terms of personal. I start to go back to the whole idea of the innovator, developer, and elaborator. Art becomes craft, or art becomes decoration, like the painter and the picture-maker. It so happens, you can have the book artist and the book-maker, even though—I really think, if one is to look—because the extraordinary enlargement in the number of artists, you had a whole situation where there were not that number of people—not that increase in number of artists with substance, but an enormous increase in the number of people who call themselves artists, you see, art as a way of life, and people who are really becoming like—I would say that a great deal of art is so permissive now, particularly, I think, in areas like performance and video, and book art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mindless. It's become mindless.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's become decoration of a low order. And I stand by that. I think part of it—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's not even up to window decoration.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, it's not. I think it's so self-indulgent and narcissistic, like sitting on a seesaw, singing a song that you made up. I mean, really. And expecting it to be this romantic story about encounters in railway stations. That, to my mind, is not—[00:08:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's like Dick and Jane.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, it is like Dick and Jane. I think we're in that sort of Dick and Jane era. Partly, I think because a lot of painting has become—partly because painting did, for a time, become a second-rate citizen, in some people's mind. I think painters are now increasingly serious about what they're doing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I think so, too. I think that the public image of the painter, and the flack, and all the other stuff that happens, isn't as disturbing as it was seven, eight years ago.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No. I think it's like Ron Gorchov said. We were talking about we both knew Newman and Rothko, particularly with Rothko taught at Hunter with Gorchov. It allows you the greatest opportunity of expression within a certain situation. I don't believe in any aesthetic overture, and I think that's what's happening in a lot of these pieces.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What kind of pieces?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A lot of performance pieces have become so much. You've got so many multimedia presentations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean with the sound and the lights and the din?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Sound and lights and the performance and the bodies.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Adds up to nothing.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It adds up to—unless you've got the quality of Robert Wilson, or—what's his name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Taylor Mead.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Taylor Mead. Who's the Ontological-Hysteric group—Theater? What's his name?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I don't remember. I find so much of that stuff, and I've ceased going to it, because I find that it is bad theater in any terms of theater. It is not entertaining. Some of Wilson's music can sort of have something, but not enough for me. [00:10:00] And I'm not interested in highly activated collage, with a lot of noise jumping around in front of me. It's boring. It's pretty boring.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I can't take that, I'll tell you, to be quite honest. It really sort of—it's a little bananas. I really can't, Paul. It's not that I'm not able to do conceptual pieces, because in 1969, 1970, I had this idea, and I think conceptual work was then beginning. I had a kidney stone that was blocking my urine. I had this idea, I wanted at least painting [ph]—I had this perverse idea I wanted to do this conceptual piece, whereby I would present—the surgeon involved was perfectly prepared to go along with this. They had my whole operation recorded. The documentation of many occasions, etc. But the point was, the art—I was going to take the Duchampian thing to its extreme. I wouldn't present this as my artwork. I would present this as an exhibition by the surgeon, who would be the artist. I would stand at the door—I planned to stand at the door and introduce—and the operating table would be declared the studio for the time, as a process. But nobody would present this. They would present it if I would present this, an artwork, I was the artist. But the fact that I would declare someone who was a non-artist to be an artist for this period while they were working, they could not take this.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Found a line of conservatism.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was the line of conservatism that I broke down. The fact that I would—the card would say "Peter Stroud presents so-and-so and so-and-so exhibition," that they couldn't take. [00:12:05]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Too bad.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That was really too bad, because I think—I'm glad this is going on tape, because this, I think—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Marvelous. That was another work, you see. That's the whole point.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It was another work. You really found the deadline where they would not budge. You could do anything, like Duchamp—I don't know if Duchamp ever declared anybody else to be an artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Not in that way, I don't think.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: But I think it's perfectly within the whole continuum of his—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Does he interest you, Duchamp?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Duchamp, in certain ways, has always interested me, yes, because I've always felt there's been a hidden area of Duchamp that I'm interested in. One never knows quite what's underneath. Duchamp is a very layered artist. He is like a cocoon that's very difficult to get out, essentially. It's really difficult.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder if there's anything in the center, though.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, apart from a chess player and astute businessman—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Connoisseur of rich women.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Connoisseur of what?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rich women.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, a connoisseur of rich women, right. He had that, which I think was a very—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Absolutely. Brilliant.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He knew how to handle situations, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, he was always kept by rich women, by 1920 until he died.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: From what I understand, yeah.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Then he was Brancusi's agent in this country for decades.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That is another thing that really interests me in a funny way, is this idea of the hyphenate, which Duchamp was really—Duchamp really prefigured the idea of the hyphenate, which has only just come into public notion [ph] in relationship to the films. [00:14:04] What it used to be like, you used to have the director, the producer, and the actor. Now you have the whole—the actor will produce and direct and perform. Duchamp was involved.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That goes back for a long—there's a great theater tradition of that. And the actor-managers in England, who were actors, managers, directors, sometimes. Produced and put the whole thing together.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: But now, you see, the point is, is this pointed—where are we moving in terms of the overall social-cultural situation, in terms of galleries? I think we're moving—presentation of shows.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's changing a lot. I don't know where it's going.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think the thing is so pluralistic, and has so many possibilities.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I want to get back to the painting a little bit here. You painted on Masonite for a while, didn't you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you still? No. Why did you, and why did you stop?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I had so much trouble with [laughs]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's diabolical. You really have to know—it's a very tricky medium to handle, and you have to know exactly how to handle it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it chips, and it does all sorts of things.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And you also—the corners, your chips. You have to know how to—I'm a lazy person sometimes. To handle—the what do you call it? The tempered Masonite chips. The ordinary Masonite, you have to really go around the edges with epoxy, and then sand it down, so you get a hard edge so it won't chip. [00:16:00] Then, if you back it up, unless you get perfect wood, it's going to warp. So you've got reinforce it

another way. You've got a lot of problems, and then you've got the problems of storage, because it's that rigid.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It ends up weighing a ton.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: And it ends up weighing a ton. So I've had a lot of trouble with it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But what did you like, that surface or the—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I liked the surface, and I liked the fact that I could really put the wood down on it. It was sort of like a resistance surface. I could really push against.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you like going back to canvas, then?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I like going back to canvas, in a way, because it allows me a certain flexibility. I think it was also a challenge of what I could do with painting, what I could do with canvas again, after a period of many, many years. To come back and see what could be done.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So in a way, it's simplified materials, and more ideas.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's sort of like simple-minded thinking.

PAUL CUMMINGS: On painting, going back to this one that we were talking about before here—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's about '72, I think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you start? Do you make sketches, drawings? Enlarge them, figure them out, work with certain sizes? What kind of working procedure?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: My working procedure is almost a constant one of obsessive drawing on eight-inch square paper. Sometimes sections, sometimes not. And compiling these sections in a folder. Sometimes I spread them around, and sometimes I'll think about them. [00:18:01] Then, all of a sudden, a certain idea will become clearer. Then I'll work on a run of drawings very quickly, and after those I'll pick three or four, which I'll develop. Then, from the line drawing, which I have a certain color feeling about, I will enlarge that drawing to another size, and then that will be enlarged on the canvas. Then, once it gets on canvas, it will be modified again. Then the color will be applied, and then further modifications will take place. Then, finally, I will say, well, I think this is the—obviously, it's going to be an operation insofar it can be changed again and again, but I—this is as far as I can take it. I can make final adjustments. I don't want to readjust it that much, to make it a really firm change.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean when you say the color comes in in a line drawing area? How does—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, you get—colors have a certain quality of expansion or contraction. They have a certain sense of advancement or recession. So you get—see, my things tend to have a certain overall color quality about them, and therefore it's concerned with that—in other words, the format is possibly—relationship of vertical to horizontal, horizontal to vertical, is in terms the way it compresses the overall color quality, something that's involved with me. I get this feeling, generally, when I start very small drawings. [00:20:02] They can be about that size.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Three, four inches.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. I begin to get a sense of what I want. Then I get perverse, and I do perverse colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Let's make it orange and red.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, yeah. [They laugh.] I never really brought off a really successful painting in those colors.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'm just thinking a perverse combination.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Sometimes I've done tutti frutti paintings, and they've always been bad. I don't like them.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So that by the time one gets to one painting, it would be preceded by a dozen or more drawings?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Probably. At least, I would think.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Different sizes, different scales?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. In many ways, an exhibition of 10 paintings could come out of 200 drawings.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You've never shown the drawings.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I tend to keep those hidden away.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But they're not presentation-type drawings, are they?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They're sort of like schematics in many ways. Maybe I'll only draw a quarter of them. If they're four-way symmetrical like this, I maybe only draw a quarter.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see, so that if you get that, then flip, flip, flip, flip.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I get very angry about it and say, no, that's no good. The things I'm doing now, I can't do four ways. They're really very asymmetrical.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They've become much more complicated.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They have become really complicated. Whether they'll go back—having done a series—I've done, now, about 12 paintings, and I think I really should show them now, because I think they're interesting enough to show. I'm beginning to feel like, how can I really combine an area of complexity with an area of simplicity, so one moves to a single substance or quality in the paintings, sort of like a dialectic, which I think is important. [00:22:11] In other words, this is what I see. This is the way I can begin to sense my work is going—I'm going to be involved with—not an overall quality, but an interacting tension between—or dialectic between two qualities within the work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But the colors still stay in those—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Colors and the lines will always stay. That is me. There's certain things I'm not going to change and I won't give up. That is me. You choose to—you are what you are. You cannot help what sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: How intellectual are the choices when you're making drawings?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In terms of—intuitive, always. Always. No question about it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the intellectual choice is after you've started painting?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, always. In fact, I would say the intellectual choice is really only in terms of setting up the system, or matrix, within which to work. The rest of it is really intuitive, because I'm a very intuitive, feeling person, within that sort of intellectual framework or matrix.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That sort of intellectualized framework, then, is general enough to allow for each specific thing to—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right, for all these things—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —to happen.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, right. In the moment, I feel that I've got—I've established a situation where I can—all these issues can operate. They operate simultaneously, on a simultaneous level of quality, whereas I would like to have this opposition coming in. [00:24:13]

PAUL CUMMINGS: What about the sculpture? Because somewhere, somebody had written, and you just mentioned, that you want—had made some. Is that an idea of—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it relates to a certain idea, a certain continuity of interests, that comes out of Constructivism, which relates to my interest in public artworks.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does that mean now? You mean art in public places, like squares?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Art in public places. For instance, in England, I did this piece for a school in [inaudible] and I did this piece for the international—

PAUL CUMMINGS: So you've had several commissions of public projects.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I got this piece on Wall Street Plaza. There's possibly another one coming up. I also have other ideas in terms of—I don't quite know how to—working with water, which has interested me. I have this sort of—

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does that mean?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Not fountains. I don't like fountains. I don't quite know how to explain this, idea that —it's something I don't—do you cut all these out of the tape?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sure. Well, they sit there, but you know.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know really how to say it. I can only describe them as sort of like watered walls. I've always been interested in the idea of making pieces that would be involved with an art that would not be too private. [00:26:01] In other words, to gain the dialectic of interest—

PAUL CUMMINGS: But how do you differentiate? When is art private and when is it public?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think, when art makes—I would say—I would go very definite. I would go back to a quote I made years ago. I feel that when art looks at you, it's public, and when you have to look at art, it's private.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: [Laughs.] How do you take that?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Where does architecture fit into that?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, architecture, I think, fits in as an ambience, or a situation within which this happens.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Hmm. But you know, you did something for Royal Festival Hall in London?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, that was part of the piece there. Yeah, that's right. That was with Rupert Spas [ph] and [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you get involved with them?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There was this mad woman called [inaudible]. We had this thing in the Festival Hall exhibition, and she was constantly—that was Andrea Blockin [ph], the whole of that integration. Post-Mondrian idea of the integration of art.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did you do other things with them, or was that just that one?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, that was that one. I couldn't get on with how she drove me completely crazy. She was really beyond all—beyond.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That fell apart a few years after that, didn't it? That group fell apart, didn't it, a few years later?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That felt apart.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were you involved with any of them for a while, or was it—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Just for a short time. The woman called Marlo [inaudible] was like a follower of Mondrian. But it was really a very, very difficult set of people to be around.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Why?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'm not saying that any group is easy, but that was a particularly bad one. [00:28:00]

PAUL CUMMINGS: For what reason?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were always in-fighting. Paul Vasling [ph] was always trying to get control of the group and dominate them, and so it sort of variously fell to pieces. It was unfortunate.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How did you come to do some of the murals in England?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, they came through Theo Crosby and the *Architectural*—was is the *Architectural Review*—not the *Architectural Review*. Kent Fountain's [ph].

PAUL CUMMINGS: *Digest* or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: *Architectural Design*.

PAUL CUMMINGS: *Design*, yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I can't remember the title. It came through, mostly, Theo Crosby, and I think Alloway, and the shows I had. So it came out of that, and certain—I think but in particular the piece I did for the International Union of Architects Congress on the South Bank. I think that's where the [inaudible] piece and the other piece came from.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Did that get you interested in public activities?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It got me interested, but there's always been a sneaking interest in Indians [ph].

PAUL CUMMINGS: What did you do up in Watertown, New York?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I didn't do any art there. It was only a project. I didn't go—that was a project for a large banquet, but because of local pressure, they have to give it to a local artist.

PAUL CUMMINGS: In Watertown?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, in Watertown. Believe it or not. You have no idea how this is a problem, in many, many situations.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, the politics is horrendous. [00:30:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They really are.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Because it's going to launch their local artists into the big blue yonder or something.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It won't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Never happens.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Never.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Never happens. I want to talk for a bit about the exhibitions. Your first big show was the ICA in London. How did that happen? Through Alloway again?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Through Alloway, yes. Got them all in there. That really worked out very well. It was a very nice presentation.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Were they still on Dover Street then?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right, they were on Dover Street. I was writing a lot. I don't know why I stopped writing. Well, I didn't stop entirely. I was quite political at that time. I was writing introductions to New Vision Gallery.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you like this, writing about other people's work? Has that been—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: It's never been a chore for me if I don't have to make them too long. But if they're too long—I'm serious—then it becomes—I feel very responsible for what I'm saying.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What's too long? Over how many pages?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Probably two. But I've written—but that show at the ICA, it really worked out very well, because it provided me with a sort of substantial platform for new work. It got my work into the Tate. It got me work around Europe. It got me shows [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, lots of things came out of it.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Hmm?

PAUL CUMMINGS: A lot came out of that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A lot. That show at [inaudible] and the commission at [inaudible]. A whole lot came out of that show. Then, of course [inaudible] who was the—what do you call it? [00:32:00] The ubiquitous [inaudible]. He produced all these incredible books on every new movement.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right, instantaneously.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Instantaneously. Now he's—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Gregory Battcock's hero, maybe. Or competitor. [They laugh.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That sounds terrific. Really. Gregory Battcock's hero. Somebody should do that, have a photograph of the two taken together.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That would be marvelous.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Wouldn't it be?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Which came first?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's an incredible pair, those two. Gregory Battcock would be saying, "I wish I were you. I only have paperbacks" or something.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. Great big books. [They laugh.] Oh, God. Did the exhibitions add up to very much to you, except in terms of they get the work out and people see it and it sells and that sort of thing?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Exhibitions—well, I must say, initially, at the beginning, one becomes very concerned with exhibition. But after that, I'm not certain that they become that important. It's now becoming important that I want to get the new body of work seen, but that's about all. I think, finally, enough that you become—the work itself, the actual doing of the work itself, becomes a byproduct. Doing the work itself becomes more important, always, than the work, in a funny way.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So then when it's finished—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —it's not so interesting that it's done, but that experience has been terminated, you might say.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think maybe it's a question of one's—how long he's lived, and his attitude toward his work. But I feel pretty good, because not everyone can be a superstar, but to have been around the international scene as long as I've been, on the level I've been, and had the peaks I've had, I feel pretty happy about it. [00:34:10] I feel that I have my own sense of integrity and what I'm doing now, and it's moving. It's not static. I can honestly look at it—in fact, I feel pretty good about it, because, really, when you look at 20 years of being around, it's not bad.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's true.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: A lot of people pass under the—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Under the same [inaudible]. That's true.

[Audio Break.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: You were in a famous George Rickey Constructivist—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, I was going to say, he was—George Rickey was also an influence upon me in relationship to reinforcing my interest in public work. He was another encouraging influence to me, particularly when I was at Bennington, and also early part of Rutgers. He helped me quite a lot in many ways.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you think of that book he did on Constructivism?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Well, I liked it, because I was in it, but I mean, the British Constructivists hated it, because a lot of them were left out.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, yes. George Rickey is a sort of arch enemy.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's why he spends his time in Germany and never goes to England anymore. [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That's right. I mean, he would be [inaudible] but I think Kenneth Martin would probably knife him if he saw him. I really feel very bad about it. Because if you look at that book, there's very

few mentions. Anthony Hill, I think, was particularly angry, because he wasn't mentioned. I think he felt sufficiently [inaudible]—

PAUL CUMMINGS: I wonder why.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have no idea about that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Rickey must have known about him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He must have, because he did substantial research on it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, tremendous. Very thorough. [00:36:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know whether they were antagonized or personal animosity or what. You know?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you keep in touch with people in England much?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: On and off. A few people, like Dick Smith, and Robyn Denny, and Hoyland. I still feel a certain sympathy with certain people. There's a strange tradition of—I think, culturally, the reception that an artist like James Collins, who's an Englishman who came over here, had when he went back to England, it's very typical. Over here, he's accepted in many ways, but over there, he's seen as being a great philistine exploiter. In other words—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? In what way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He said, "I love pretty women." He said, "I like to enjoy life." He said, "And I want to be an artist, too."

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, I see. There's no way around.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. In other words, there's a very moralistic tradition in England in terms of—it's here, but it's not nearly so much.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's more flexible.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it's more, in a way—over there, to make money is a sin.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's because nobody can figure out how to do it. If you make too much, they take it all in taxes.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Of course. It's impossible. It's absolutely impossible.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Have there been any—you've talked so much about various contemporary artists. Are there older artists that interest you? Eighteenth-century, earlier? [00:38:01] Do you have any interest in—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Giotto.

PAUL CUMMINGS: —historical?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I'm very interested in the whole miniature tradition. Indian and Persian. And of course the whole of the illuminated manuscript tradition in England. That really interests me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How does that fall into things?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think the linearism, precision. I don't know. A certain—not illustrative, but a certain—the strange sense of abstraction. The fact that you have—maybe this is purely my projection, but the fact that a text—you have relationship with the text and the image. It's something that has always fascinated me.

PAUL CUMMINGS: You mean illuminated letters and what they'll put inside, and running down a page?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. An artist who I like, who I admire a great deal, someone who probably very few people have heard of, is a Scottish artist called Ian Hamilton Finlay.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, yeah, sure. I know him.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: His farm, with his strange ponds and his—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Stone AD.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That, for me, is really first-class, really original work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He was a great friend of Reinhardt's.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Was he?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I didn't know that.

PAUL CUMMINGS: And Merton.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Really? Now that really interests me. It's funny that I should really figure on to that particular sense of it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I'll send you a journal. There's a whole piece I had written about his relationship with these people.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I would really like to have that, Paul. I would appreciate it a lot. [00:40:00] Because that must be a very special sort of relationship they had. A very similar sort of sensibility.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you know Finlay? You've been up there.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I've been up there, yes, but I don't know him that well. I've always liked the work.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's very contentious, I hear. Litigious. He's suing somebody now.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He probably got that from Reinhardt.

PAUL CUMMINGS: He's got a big lawsuit on now, but for something very strange. Somebody's sheep walked across the corner, putting a path in the grass. It's a whole incredible thing he's done [laughs].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Right. That's a sort of thing. If there existed a footpath in ancient England—English bridle laws. You have to walk through it once a year to maintain the rights. He could be suing people because they sent the sheep instead of human beings. How I know about this, this was my father's and attorney friends of his, their Sunday afternoon activity, to reestablish bridle paths. All you had to do was to give a penny for the farmer. Of course, they used to hate to see people walking through the corn, establishing the bridle path.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Fantastic. It's like the ancient lights rule.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Absolutely. Exactly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's incredible. I want to go back to Rutgers a little bit, because you've been 10 years with Rutgers. You began with the studio class, and then the criticism?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What does the studio class consist of? What level is it, and what kind of program do you have?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I have two-thirds graduates, and one-third seniors, undergraduates. I don't really deal with any lower class groups at all.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you have a teaching method, or a system, or have you evolved, like so many people do? [00:42:06]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: With undergraduates, it's on one level, which is more like a critical, analytical level. With the graduates, who are developed, it's more of an encouraging—developing and maintaining a commitment, in a funny way, or the same way, that—

PAUL CUMMINGS: —Newman was to you.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: —Newman was to me. And being able to give them the shock, to make them jump and move to realize their own potentialities as an artist, because I think those are the two most important things. The rest, if they want to, they can always get themselves.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you do that, though?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I don't know. It's a funny sort of thing. It's like timing. You sense if someone has a potentiality, if they're ready for it, and all of a sudden you—I don't know, you give them a shock, and they start thinking, and they follow through what you've said, and then they come and talk to you for a lot, and then they leave you alone for eight or 10 weeks, and then they'll produce something which shows a change in their work. That's something which really develops with time. It's almost, I suppose, like therapy in a way. You have to know—you develop a real sensibility to it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are you interested in therapy? Because it's a word you've used several times.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think therapy—art—therapy is [inaudible]. One can go from [inaudible] rational emotive therapy to Est [ph]to pure Freudian to Jungian, and God knows what.

PAUL CUMMINGS: New flavors every week.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: What do you want? The only one they don't want is—what do you call it? Mandarin chocolate sludge, from Baskin and Robbins, guaranteed to drag you down to hell.

PAUL CUMMINGS: [Laughs.] Or [inaudible]. [00:44:01] Look how many art people go into that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Is that the deviant West Side [inaudible]?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Right.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That, I would say, is another bad one. That was a Greenberg thing.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They were all in there, weren't they?

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's right.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Everyone was admiring—was—

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's a sort of stick together, support everybody.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They really did. They used to buy each other's work. It was really a supportive system.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It's incredible. We keep getting away from Rutgers. I'm interested in the contrast between the studio and the criticism.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The criticism is not really what I would call criticism, because criticism comes in the studio. The seminar is related to relevant ideas and context within which ideas about art can emerge.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How does that function?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Really it consists with a lot of book reports, a lot of source books. Seeing how other artists have used sources. For instance, Acconci admits that he moved from poetry into performance through reading a book by Erving Goffman. I think it was *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. And then talking about the relationship of a contemporary performance in terms of ritual and Levi-Strauss.

PAUL CUMMINGS: They go back to classic anthropology.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They do, like the whole Bing Crosby thing, accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it's fascinating. Levi-Strauss comes up all the time. They never take any of the more radical people. It's always the most conservative people in the disciplines they go to. [00:46:00]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think it's interesting the way artists take these tasty morsels, just take them for themselves, and they use it in a particular way. It's not as though the artist really—like the art and language people understand philosophy. They don't.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, no. They use bricks to make a round house out of square bricks. [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They'd be demolished if they argued with any philosophy. They just use core ideas to form structural frameworks for art thinking. That's what I would say.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do your students do, then? They read things and you discuss? Write papers?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They read them, and then we discuss things.

PAUL CUMMINGS: But it sounds very literary. Do they go to works of art, too?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Oh, yes. They're always in the city, all of them. That's [inaudible]. We have quite an annex of about eight students here.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What do you mean here?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: They live here—they work here. They have their studios.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, in Manhattan?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. A lot of them go and they evaluate—they go to certain performances. A lot of them are interested in contemporary music. A lot of them go to Philip Glass or [inaudible] and we discuss the concert.

PAUL CUMMINGS: These are people who want to be what, artists?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Artists. They're still interested in this overview.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I see. So you're really bringing some culture to them, in a way.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: In general, yes. You might call it, to use that phrase, enrichment, which I really don't like. But in a way, at that level, you do get a feedback. You do get a feedback in terms of ideas.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you find their ideas stimulating, from your point of view?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Some of them are very stimulating, and some of them are very, very intelligent. Very intelligent. [00:48:00] Are really capable of really lateral thinking, or high level. But others, no.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Sometimes that has to do with articulation, too.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, that's true. Some of them really haven't developed the verbal means of expression, and that takes time. Some don't want to. Simple as that. My own work wouldn't [ph] have developed, possibly, without the interaction between, shall we say, a concern with—a reaction to the '60s. I couldn't have moved my own work where it is at present without the '60s having existed, and my involvement, my understanding of the '60s. In a way, not indirect dialogue with the students, but looking at students' work, and the way their heads worked, and the way it forced me to reevaluate myself. So in a way, it has been a co-creative dialogue.

PAUL CUMMINGS: What are those qualities that they brought that were questioning to you?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Kicking me in the ass. Making me think, are you complacent in doing what you're doing? And then making me think, what are the alternatives? What are the dead weights that—what do you need?

PAUL CUMMINGS: So the students were provocative, really.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah. They were provocative, because I was pretty open about myself. I would discuss with them the problems—most of them would say that painting is no longer viable. One of the issues that I made was we had to discuss the problems of painting as a viable enterprise in the late '70s. Which was my own problem, so I used the—so the students—[00:50:01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How many of them paint? Percentage-wise. As opposed to performers.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Filmmakers, or photographers.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Whatever.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I would say about 35 to 40. Even more, 50. They still maintain some form of contact with, basically, painterly ideas. Because one of the things you have to explain to them is most of the ideas that were used in other media still come out of painting. You cannot avoid that painting is a source.

PAUL CUMMINGS: It fascinates me that that's still true. People hate to observe it, though.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: But it's there, and you cannot—the last discussion that we had, really, was Morris wrote this whole thing about—it came out, this article, some time ago, called "The Line [inaudible]" and then he wrote a recent article in—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Morris?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Bob Morris. He really put down two-dimensionality. [inaudible] as a result of my own thinking and discussions, I'm sort of preparing my own response to his statement, basically that the art of the late '70s—a viable art of the late '70s can only be concerned with three and four dimensions. In other words, an environment which involves actual situation and time. I'm saying, well, okay, that's all right in terms of a certain type of space. Maybe even Acconci, with body art, in terms of a certain psychological space. But in terms of philosophical or ethical space, and even metaphysical, if you want to use that term—in terms of metaphysical, philosophical, or ethical space, the two dimensions is possibly the only area in which those concepts can be expressed. [00:52:06] That's where I stand at present, at that particular point.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Who teaches over there now?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There's John Goodyear, Bob Wallace, Geoff Hendricks, Leon Golub, Dan Newman, Barry Pritchard. Amos Thompson, a photographer. What's his name? Steven Pecuniar. I think Ted Victoria.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Gosh, it's quite a crew.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: John—yeah, it's quite a crew.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Are you friendly with any of them particularly?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Most of them, yeah. Leon Golub, I'm pretty friendly with, although—

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? [Laughs.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes. Leon is a strange man.

PAUL CUMMINGS: That's a different sensibility from what you do.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: He's really a different sensibility, but he has a great sense of humor, which is really good. A very formidable man to run up against. [They laugh.]

PAUL CUMMINGS: Like his great stone figures.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: No, he's not doing those anymore. He's doing those portraits of Mao Zedong.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Oh, really? I haven't seen them.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Had this show of portraits, of Picasso, Mao Zedong. Very interesting portraits.

PAUL CUMMINGS: I didn't hear about that.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yeah, it was a small show. He shows at these offbeat galleries. Which, in a funny way, is almost just where Greenberg—it's a similar sort of thing to Greenberg, always showing in—or publishing in small magazines that are not quite known.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Well, that's a certain attitude.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: That gets known pretty quickly.

PAUL CUMMINGS: About 10 minutes after it's published. Let's go back to the color again for a bit, because I'm running towards the end here. [00:54:02]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Do you re-edit and put these things in different orders?

PAUL CUMMINGS: No, less [inaudible].

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Just sort of stream of consciousness?

PAUL CUMMINGS: Yeah. But what about the color? Have you evolved with theory about using color, your use of color, or don't you—

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I do. I have a theory about my own particular use of color, and that's very much

related to—fundamentally, it's really related to nature, and it's related to both in a nature and out of nature.

PAUL CUMMINGS: How does one get out of nature?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Out in nature—in many ways, these are sort of like earth colors, shadow colors, sky colors, elemental colors I tend to use. Blues and browns. Also, there's a certain sort of identity, I feel, between certain colors and my own inner state of being. That's all I can say. It is not a color rationale based in an objective system like Albers at all. It's, again, very intuitive. It looks very precise, but it's not. It's really very you know, [inaudible].

PAUL CUMMINGS: Do you think your attitude towards color has changed a lot, or does it just evolve slowly?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: I think my attitude towards color has changed quite a bit. I think, in essence, certain attitudes towards what I would call the shadow in color has been persistent from the very beginning. The color field element came in and then disappeared, and then the elemental and the idea of the light in the color came in. [00:56:00] At present, I'm really working with the concept of the light, the nature of light, within a color, and the shadow element in color, in relationship to my own inner identification about color substance.

PAUL CUMMINGS: So different colors have sort of different meanings or values, in a way?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: There are certain colors I don't use.

[Audio Break.]

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: The only topic that I'm concerned with is, I think, the ethical status of art-making, and painting in particular. I think this really separates the idea of the painter from the picture-maker. I think it's very easy to be confused in the situation at present, with being—becoming a master picture-maker. The strategy dominating style with the outer—the other situation being the governing factor. Letting it come from the inside out. Maybe this is a matter of living. Maybe you start, initially, the outside dominating, and move towards the inside dominating. To me, all the painters I really respect in terms of substance are those who really are involved with a great act of self-scrutiny, withdrawal, and to find a recommitment, concern, with their own ethics of painting. [00:58:01]

PAUL CUMMINGS: How do you—there's something interesting about the picture-maker and the painter.

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: With the picture-maker, I would say the means are the end. With a painter, the painter finds means to express his own particular personal end or goal concept, idea, whatever you want to call it.

PAUL CUMMINGS: A picture-maker is more decorative?

PETER ANTHONY STROUD: Yes, you could equate those two very easily.

PAUL CUMMINGS: Okay, well why don't we—

[END OF TRACK AAA_stroud78_7223_r.]

[END OF INTERVIEW.]