



Smithsonian  
*Archives of American Art*

Oral history interview with Josephine Marie  
Caruso Castano regarding Giovanni (John)  
Castano, 1991 May 17

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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Josephine Marie Caruso Castano on May 17, 1991. The interview took place in Needham, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose. This is a rough transcription that may include typographical errors.

## Interview

ROBERT BROWN: - 9 in Needham, Massachusetts, an interview with Mrs. Giovanni or John Castano and Robert Brown the interviewer. Mrs. Castano you were born in Cincinnati, is that right?

MARIE CARUSO CASTANO: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

RB: And your - how - what did your family - how did they happen to be in Cincinnati? Had they been there long?

MC: Oh, yes, my mother and father were in Cincinnati many years. My father and mother came over. My father was only 18 years old and my mother was 22.

RB: Where had they come from?

MC: From Italy.

RB: From what part?

MC: In Naples.

RB: Oh, in Naples? Naples.

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative].

RB: And he'd come to Cincinnati to do what there?

MC: Ovalino [inaudible].

RB: Ovalino?

MC: Yeah, my father was a contractor, a railroad contractor and in Cincinnati he built all these streets, you know railroads. He had - he used to get - he brought over all these men from Italy and in those days they were only \$7 a piece to bring in - over all these immigrants.

RB: Yeah.

MC: And he had all these, what they called freight cars. I don't know how many he had but - and they made them into sleeping quarters.

RB: Oh, really?

MC: And one of them had a - one of them they made into like a grocery store -

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative].

MC: So the men - and then they had one with pulleys. If they finished one job they could go onto another job. They could pull it - the cars, you know.

RB: Oh, yes.

MC: But they all - they all slept in those cars. He - and [inaudible]. And they say they built all these railroads.

RB: Well, had your father had some experience in building?

MC: He didn't build himself. He was the boss.

RB: He was the boss who picked out the labor -

MC: Yeah.

RB: Or the labor that did the work?

MC: Yeah, and they went and supplied all the supplies.

RB: Yeah. Do you remember that at all?

MC: When I was little -

RB: Do you remember when they were doing that?

MC: I was thrilled because he had one of those things that would make a pulley that you could go up and down on a - on the railroad tracks. You know we used to go on that all the time.

RB: [Laughs.]

MC: Yeah, we got a kick out of that.

RB: Cincinnati was a - did you like it? It was a very interesting city when you were a little girl?

MC: Very nice; very, very, very interesting. I was born and raised there.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: All my children were born there.

RB: In Cincinnati?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: Did you - what interest did you have as a young girl? What were you -

MC: Well, I -

RB: Were you particularly interested in certain things?

MC: I went - conservatory music. I was studying voice.

RB: Oh, you went to study voice?

MC: Yes, mm-hmm.

RB: Now, how old would you be when you went there?

MC: I was out of high school. I don't know how old I was; just out of high school.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And -

RB: What did you want -

MC: And then we used to put on little plays, you know, little plays. We had like a little company, little club -

RB: Yeah.

MC: - and we used to put on musical plays.

RB: Was this while you were in school or -

MC: Yeah, while I was in school and after school, after I graduated school.

RB: Were you thinking of being a concert singer or an opera singer?

MC: No, no, I went to conservatory and studied voice.

RB: Yeah, mm-hmm.

MC: No, I didn't think I - I was always looking forward to my daughter, Elvira, she had a beautiful voice and I always looked forward to her being -

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: - and she went to Italy.

RB: But the con - the conservatory in Cincinnati was a very good school, wasn't it?

MC: Very, very good. We had two - we had the college of music and then we had the conservatory of music and both - both very good.

RB: And there were some well-known teachers?

MC: Yes, and then we had these - we had the opera -

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: - it was in our little - they called it the zoo - the zoological park where all the animals are in the zoological park, but they had beautiful big plays out there. They used to give operas in the summer - in the summer, outdoor operas.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And my husband was the scenic artist there and he had - he had a repertoire of 86 operas.

RB: Really? So he did scenes for them?

MC: Yes, he painted all the scenes for them.

RB: Now you sang in the opera company.

MC: Yeah, I sang. I sang in the opera company. I had small parts.

RB: Is that how you met him?

MC: Of course - no, I knew of him. He lived with a - he lived with a family next to an aunt of mine and I used to go to my aunt's, and he used to go visit there. They were friends and that's how I met him, and then we started going together. He had a small studio. He was just painting me then. You know he had - was doing the operas.

RB: So he was painting, doing easel painting as well as -

MC: Yes.

RB: - some scene painting for the opera?

MC: As well as the opera.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: We lived there I guess - all three of my children were born there and that -

RB: Mm-hmm, you told me that - that Mr. Castano had been sent to Cincinnati by Ralph Lyford [composer, 1882-1927]?

MC: Yeah, Ralph Lyford from the Boston Museum and Ralph was - he was sent there and he was a scenic artist there. And then when the - Ralph Lyford was a conductor. And then when the Depression came, I don't know how many - my husband had a studio there, too. They built a studio there for him where he would build the scenery and he used to go up on these high scaffolds, and make all these beautiful scenes. And then when the Depression came, they fired Ralph Lyford.

RB: And Lyford had come from Boston, too; is that right?

MC: Yeah, he had come from - so that - when they fired him my husband left the job, too because they were good friends. So he left the job.

RB: Yeah.

MC: And then after that we -

RB: You came to Boston?

MC: - came back to Boston.

RB: What I wanted to ask, you said that the man in charge of the opera was a Mr. Beck?

MC: Oh, Mr. Beck was in charge of the studio, the art - the studio where he built the scenery, Mr. Beck.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And he had - he paid him rent and he built all the scenery. But then after that, no - they -

RB: The opera had a large following in Cincinnati?

MC: Oh, yes, it went on as - it went on for years after that.

RB: Was it - there were a number of Italians there. I guess there were a lot of Germans, as well and -

MC: Yeah, a lot of Germans -

RB: - you had said in Cincinnati.

MC: - in Cincinnati.

RB: And both would love opera, wouldn't they?

MC: Mm-hmm, a lot of Germans, yeah.

RB: A natural audience for opera.

MC: Yeah, oh they loved opera and they had beautiful operas. We would [inaudible].

RB: Mm-hmm, so about 1930 then you came to Boston.

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: Had you ever been to Boston before, yourself?

MC: No, no, no.

RB: You hadn't?

MC: No, never.

RB: And you had three children?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: And what was Mr. Castano going to do? Did he have any idea of what he might do?

MC: No, he opened up a - he opened up a little studio.

RB: Yeah.

MC: He opened up a little studio and he thought he was going to paint pictures and sell pictures, sell his own pictures, and paint them. And then he - he met a very prominent woman, Mrs. Potten [phonetic].

RB: Oh, Mrs. Potten?

MC: Yeah, and he met - she said she had heard of my husband and she wanted a room painted, music room painted. So she called my husband and my husband went there and he painted a music room for her.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And when he was painting he got acquainted with her and she had beautiful paintings in her home and she

said she wanted to sell off some of her paintings. And my husband - she gave them to my husband and my husband started selling her paintings, very, very fine paintings, Corots. And then that's how he got into painting - selling paintings, and then she told her friend, and another friend, and he'd get work with all the 400, all the rich people, and they all had beautiful paintings.

RB: And this being the Depression, some of them were anxious to sell I guess?

MC: Mm-hmm, that's how he got started selling paintings.

RB: Who would he try to sell them to because since this was the Depression, who was the - who were the customers likely to be?

MC: Oh, people came in. Different people would come in and - and then he went - he went to all the museums, too. He went to all the museums. He had a secretary. He wrote to all the museums about the paintings that they had and -

RB: Mm-hmm, you mean to see if they would buy paintings or -

MC: Yeah, if they'd buy them or if they were interested.

RB: Were you involved in his business?

MC: No.

RB: And what were you - your children were still pretty small.

MC: No, I wasn't. The children were small.

RB: You were too busy?

MC: He always had a secretary. I used to go in occasionally but I wasn't involved.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: Oh, and -

RB: Well, how would you compare living in Boston with -

MC: We bought a beautiful home. We bought a home - this home here.

RB: The home in Needham?

MC: But we lived in another home first but then we bought we bought this home. But how would I compare what?

RB: How would you compare living in Boston with living in Cincinnati?

MC: Well, at first - at first I didn't like it because I didn't know anyone and the people were very strange, very odd.

RB: Oh, were they?

MC: They were.

RB: And what do you mean?

MC: They weren't friendly. Like Cincinnati, you know was very friendly and the people here were - I always - I thought at first they were snobbish. But then after I got acquainted with them, I liked it, you know, and I like Boston now. I used to go home every summer to visit my family. I'd take the three children and go home every summer. But when he had the studio there and he - then he opened up a larger studio, and he went in selling all kinds of painting he - everybody used to come to him. And then he started restoring paintings. People had pictures that had to be restored and he was restored them.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And then he - he had a secretary, but he had another man working for him. Then this other man went back to Europe and built a friends staying house and his family lived in Cincinnati.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: His aunt, not his mother and father, but his aunt and so he came here with his mother and brother.

RB: His mother and brother?

MC: Yeah.

RB: And they came from Cincinnati to Boston?

MC: Yeah, and she was - his mother was a school teacher. I think she was schooling in Roxbury. But they lived there in Roxbury and his brother worked I don't know where.

RB: Did -

MC: But he came in the gallery and he didn't have a job.

RB: Had Franz - had your husband known him in Cincinnati?

MC: Yes, and -

RB: Oh.

MC: - and - and his mother was teaching. Then later his father got very sick and she - before she got sick though, they used to come out here almost every Sunday, his mother and brother.

RB: You lived out here in Needham by then?

MC: Yes, they used to come out for dinner or even if they weren't invited they would come anyway. They used to love to come here and we had them every holiday. They didn't know anybody and they didn't have much money, so we had many a dinners for them. And he was looking for a job and so John said, "Well, Franz, you come in the gallery." He said, "You come in and help me." He said, "I can't pay you much, but I'll" - I'm going to say it was \$25 a week and he worked in the gallery. He didn't do much but he worked in the gallery.

RB: Was he a very energetic young fellow or -

MC: No.

RB: No?

MC: He never was.

RB: Oh.

MC: And he always looked like he dying on his feet, between you and I.

RB: Oh, he was very thin, too?

MC: Yeah, but then my husband had several students. He had this one student in particular. Her name was Ms. Leland and very well-to-do society girl, and she loved to paint. She had a studio in the Fenway and she had a little studio, so she turned to my husband. She came to my husband. She wanted private lessons, which my husband gave her. He was giving her private lessons and she was painting well, but they became very, very good friends. She loved my husband.

RB: Was your husband's studio - where was his studio at this point, in the Fenway Studios?

MC: No, he was on Newbury Street.

RB: On Newbury Street?

MC: She was on -

RB: She was in the Fenway Studios?

MC: She had one in Fenway. And then they - she - she used to come in and seemed to come around, and they used to go to exhibits together, and they always were interested in everything pertaining to art. And then one day he said to Franz, he said, "You know, Franz, I'm going to introduce you to little Ms. Leland." He said, "She loves art, too." But Franz was a sculptor. He was - he was trying to struggle and he was - he was helping. In the

meantime, oh, his mother had died and he - and she - my husband had to give him - he didn't have money to bury her. My husband had to give him the money to bury their mother and then the brother went off in a different town. I don't know where, but Franz was left alone in a little room, and so my husband made the job. He used to come in every week and then he finally told him about Ms. Leland. He said, "I want you to meet this wonderful woman. She loves art." And so - is that hers?

[AUDIO BREAK]

RB: Van Hausen was utterly - nearly penniless and your husband paid for the burial of his mother?

MC: Yes.

RB: And then -

MC: He worked for my husband.

RB: Yes, and then your husband suggested he meet Ms. Leland?

MC: Yeah.

RB: Yeah, and what happened?

MC: And he started taking her to the museums, the exhibits, and they became very friendly and then he finally got - they got married. But he said this to my husband, he said, "You know, John," he said, "that's a good catch." He said, "If I marry her," he said, "you won't have to worry the rest of your life." He said, "I'll take good care of you," he said.

RB: Did he - was he ever generous?

MC: Never.

RB: Never? Oh.

MC: Hardly ever seen him after that.

RB: Oh, huh.

MC: No, he just - they had a home in Gloucester. He had a studio and she put up a studio for him, and she bought him a car, you know and they invited us one time to their home, just one time, and that [inaudible]. They had a beautiful home but he never - so she never bought any paintings from my husband.

RB: She never bought any paintings?

MC: Not after that. He did before. I mean I she had bought a lot of paintings.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: She had bought a lot of paintings.

RB: Do you think it was something that Van Hausen said that he -

MC: No, we don't know. He just - he never - he even kept her away from my husband because she didn't even come in to see my husband anymore. They just - well, the two of them, they didn't go to see anyone. They just buried themselves together. They lived together just the two of them like two hermits. And they have a beautiful home down in Gloucester but -

RB: No, I saw the house once myself.

MC: Did you? It was beautiful. So we never - never seen her or heard from her. And then we never - we - I know he - she was sick for a while and then she passed. I didn't even know she passed away and then we - I didn't even know he passed away. We didn't even know he passed away. If I had known he was sick, I would have - I would have tackled him. I really would have. I would have approached him and I would have told him all of the things that my husband did, and I would tell him that - I would have told him what he had promised, but I didn't know it. And he passed away and never seen or heard from them and finally just - he passed away and he left how many millions?

RB: Oh, seven or so.



MC: To the -

RB: Yeah.

MC: - the [inaudible].

RB: So this is an example of a friendship that went very, very sour?

MC: Yes.

RB: So you know -

MC: Too bad because he - my husband was so good to him and his mother, too. Oh, his mother adored my husband.

RB: So your husband tended to be generous that way, didn't he, with people?

MC: Oh, my husband was the most generous man in the world. And I think my husband even bought him a suit of clothes once.

RB: Huh?

MC: He didn't have no clothes.

RB: And you told me that various artists would stop by the gallery on Newbury Street. He got - he became quite good friends with some of the artists?

MC: Yes, all of them. Yes, he used to go to see them all and then tell them that he worked with John and he told him - John had helped him with his sculpturing.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: You know John taught him a lot and but they all used to go back to John and ridicule him. They would say, "Hey, oh, John he dresses like a millionaire and he doesn't come to see you." They thought it was terrible that he didn't come to see him because before that he was in the gallery every day, and after that, he never came in.

RB: Now you and your - husband became good friends with some of the other artists here in Boston.

MC: Oh, yes, he did.

RB: You mentioned, I think, Mrs. Phillip Hale [Lilian Wescott Hale, artist, 1881-1963]?

MC: Oh, yeah, she -

RB: Do you remember her?

MC: Yes, and she gave - she gave my husband a lot of her paintings to sell.

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: My husband sold a lot of her paintings. She used to come to the gallery all the time.

RB: What was she like?

MC: She was very sweet.

RB: Do you remember?

MC: I don't remember exactly. I don't remember exactly. She was - I know she was nice.

RB: So were there other artists at the time?

MC: Winslow Homer [painter and printmaker, 1836-1910] used to come in -

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: - [inaudible] Phillip [Leslie] Hale [painter, 1865-1931] they used to all come in the gallery.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And did you get to meet some of them when you were in there?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] He - and he knew when they were coming and he would tell me, and I would go in town to meet them.

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: And a lot of times we had lunch together. We went to Winslow Homer's - we used to go out there all the time out there. Then his - actually he died and his nephew ran the place.

RB: Oh, yeah.

MC: His studio out there.

RB: I've been in there, in Maine, you know.

MC: And then he had a niece, too. We used to go out there a lot.

RB: What were they like? Were they interesting people?

MC: Very interesting and very nice, very lovely. In fact, my husband used to go down there a lot and he'd stay overnight in his studio, after he died, with his nephew. He was very friendly with his nephew.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] You mentioned also - you - Knew various other art dealers like some of the people at Doll and Richards, which was a very old gallery.

MC: Doll and Richards, yeah and [inaudible].

RB: Do you remember some of the people there -

MC: Yeah.

RB: - at Doll and Richards?

MC: Yeah, I guess about in those galleries, in those galleries, like Donikian.

RB: Donikian, that was somewhat later, right?

MC: Yeah, Donikian and I forget the name of the women. There were a couple of women. I don't know their names.

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: Very fine woman artist, I forget her name.

RB: And you knew also Charles Childs [painter, 1902-1983], I guess?

MC: Oh, Charlie Childs, yes.

RB: What was he like?

MC: You know he didn't have a studio and my husband had a very - at that time he had a very large studio. It had three or four rooms and he came into the gallery. And he used to come in all the time. He didn't have a studio, so he asked John, he said, "Could I rent one of your rooms from you?" And I told John at the time, I said, "John, don't rent that room to him. I wouldn't take him in." No, he went ahead and rented the room and that was bad for him.

RB: Why? Why?

MC: Because he tried to take all my husband's customers.

RB: Oh.

MC: But he really did my husband in. They were supposed to be friends, but they weren't.

RB: So in later years they never spoke together much?

MC: They spoke but they were never friends.

RB: Were never friends again, no, no.

MC: They spoke, mm-hmm. He was terrible.

RB: Now you mentioned -

MC: You know being a blue-blood, you know he -

RB: Yeah.

MC: - he thought he was -

RB: Or at least he pretended he was a blue-blood?

MC: Yeah.

RB: Yeah. There were a couple of auctioneers. You mentioned someone named Little and -

MC: Tory, Tory Little.

RB: - Charles Hale, and your husband had his -

MC: - and Charlie Hale. My husband used to get - through meeting all those millionaires, you know, he sold their paintings, a lot of them had - sometimes had estates. They were selling their estates and he gave them to my husband. My husband wasn't the auctioneer but he would hire these auctioneers and they would take over, and so we knew Charles Hale and -

RB: What was Little's first name?

MC: Tory.

RB: Tory, Tory Little and Charles Hale, mm-hmm.

MC: They used to run some big old - he had some big auctions, and my husband, he acquired a lot of beautiful things from all over, which is my home was full of beautiful things that he bought from them. But over the years I had to sell everything.

RB: Were these big auctions mostly in the 1930s, 1940s?

MC: Yeah, around that time.

RB: About that time? Yeah.

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: You also - he the great Italian writer, Lionello Venturi [1885-1961].

MC: Oh, yeah.

RB: How did your husband get to know him?

MC: Somebody from Italy sent him to my husband and then the - my husband - they became very good friends, and then they discovered - they're the ones who discovered A.C. Goodwin's [1864-1929] paintings. He liked him, too so that's when my husband - my husband pushed him. You know nobody knew of anything by A.C. Goodwin.

RB: Hmm.

MC: In fact, my husband had a lot of good - I had so many. I used to give them for wedding presents. Now I don't even have one.

RB: Hmm. Hmm.

MC: So my husband -

RB: Did you get to know -

MC: My husband helped all those - when all those young artists would come in the gallery, he would give them - he would give hours of his time. He would tell them what to do and what not to do and how to do this and how to do that. They used to come to the house here and he'd sit in that chair, and they'd come here with paintings, and for his advice. Oh, he helped so many people, my goodness. And he pushed everybody else's paintings but

his own. He never pushed his own paintings; too bad.

RB: Did you ever get to meet Goodwin?

MC: I didn't, no, but my husband did.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: But I never did.

RB: You did meet Venturi though, didn't you?

MC: Oh, he came to my house for dinner many times.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And I met his son.

RB: What was Venturi -

MC: And I -

RB: What was Venturi like?

MC: Oh, he was very elegant. He was a very elegant person, and a handsome man, too with a beard; a very, very wonderful man.

RB: Had your husband kept up some connections with Italy? Is that how he got to know him?

MC: Yeah, a little bit I think. But they became very, very good friends.

RB: So your husband enjoyed being an art dealer, would you say?

MC: Yeah.

RB: He enjoyed that?

MC: Yes, he did because he used to meet a lot of people, you know.

RB: Yeah.

MC: And everybody used to just - oh, everybody used to just fall all over him. They just loved him, you know.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: They really, you know appreciated his knowledge. They knew he had so much knowledge and you know he always gave free advice. He never charged. They would come here and you go to Voces and he charges you just to look at a picture. My husband never charged anybody. Every night people would come.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: He was always very generous with everybody.

RB: And this would be after a long day at the gallery in Boston?

MC: Yep.

RB: He was for a time an agent for [Daniel] Wildenstein [1917-2001] and Dardley [phonetic]?

MC: Oh, [inaudible], yes. He sold many a painting for them and I don't think they treated him very good either.

RB: No? Oh, you mean he would find paintings and then sell it to him - to them?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Yeah, he used to get paintings on consignment and then he would sell them to them and they'd give him a commission. They took advantage of my husband, though.

RB: Your husband's own customers you said included people like Walter Chrysler [machinist, 1875-1940]?

MC: Oh, yeah he sold him a lot of paintings, and Howard Johnson's [entrepreneur, 1897-1972].

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: He sold them a lot of paintings.

RB: Did you get to know either of those guys?

MC: Yeah, I knew them. Yeah, I knew both of them. Howard Johnson we knew very, very well. He went to get - show them to him - we went to his summer home. He had a summer home and we went to his summer home. We knew his children and his wife. My husband painted a picture of his mother, Howard Johnson's mother. He liked it so well he had him do six of them. Then he painted six and he gave them to each one of his relatives. He didn't know anything about painting. My husband taught him everything, but he was the most insulting man.

RB: Really?

MC: Very insulting, very cruel.

RB: Huh?

MC: My husband was trying to teach him art and he would always insult him, "Oh, that looks like a poster. Who wants that?" you know and things like that.

RB: Huh?

MC: He had a lot of beautiful paintings. I don't know what happened to them.

RB: Huh. You said, I think, in the 1940s that your husband did murals again, something like scene painting but this time murals, this time for friends.

MC: Yes, he did.

RB: Did he -

MC: My dining room.

RB: Uh-huh.

MC: A lot of people wanted their dining rooms painted like that, so he did that for people, too. And he did a lot of church decorations.

RB: Really?

MC: Like the cathedrals, St. Peter's Cathedral, Father Haberon, Monsignor Haberon.

RB: And this was in Boston?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: You know right on Roxbury, mm-hmm. He did a lot of churches. And he did a lot of theaters, too here.

RB: Oh, he did?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] He was with several companies. Some of them did summer stock.

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: And then he used to paint the scenery for them every week.

RB: So would he have to travel in the summer to do this summer stock work?

MC: No, he didn't; no, in Boston.

RB: He would do it here and then ship it down to the -

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: - to the - hmm.

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: Did you ever get involved when he was doing some of this work? Did you ever help him out?

MC: No.

RB: No?

MC: No, he never wanted me to. I used to go to all the affairs, you know, but I never -

RB: That - he - in his work as an art dealer got to know various museum people. You said, for example, at the Museum of Fine Art he knew several of the notable curators and directors.

MC: Oh, yeah, he knew them all.

RB: Can you talk about them a little bit?

MC: No, I don't remember them really.

RB: Oh, you said that Perry Rathbone [museum director, 1911-2000] -

MC: Perry Rathbone, I knew him well.

RB: He visited you here a while back?

MC: He came here.

RB: Yeah.

MC: And I forget that girl with him - her name - that girl from the musical.

RB: Who was - what in American - in paintings?

MC: No, she worked at the museum.

RB: Uh-huh, but she did painting?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: It wasn't Laura Lucky?

MC: Laura Lucky, yeah.

RB: Yeah.

MC: She loved my husband. They learned so much from him and I thought he gave so much free knowledge, boy.

RB: Did the curator - did W.G. Constable [art historian, 1887-1976] ever - did you ever get to meet him?

MC: Yes, I met him.

RB: Englishman with Paintings Direct?

MC: Yeah, had different - different exhibits.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: My husband had some beautiful exhibits, too; just beautiful and that's when - when I would get involved, you know, these beautiful exhibits.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] Well, yes, I'll showed something at a Winslow Homer exhibition that he gave. Do you remember?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: You would help out at the gallery during openings, for example, right?

MC: Yeah, opening, yeah and exhibitions.

RB: Was that usually in the evenings or in the afternoon or - the openings?

MC: Sometimes - mostly in the evening; sometimes in the afternoon.

RB: What would they have, tea or did they have sherry or -

MC: Yes, tea and sherry and all kinds of things, fancy little things.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: So I mean everything. I remember one time we had music. [Inaudible] and now I can't remember. [Inaudible].

RB: Now where was the gallery on Newbury Street? It was four rooms you said or even bigger. It was a fairly large place?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: What was the address?

MC: Gee, I don't know. Way in - oh, no that was the first place. He was way down on Newbury Street, down almost to - almost down to what is that, Clarendon Street?

RB: Clarendon?

MC: Yeah, almost there.

RB: Uh-huh. [Affirmative.]

MC: Yeah, he had a gallery in there. That's when he took - that's when he took in Charlie Chow.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And he came down.

RB: You said that Robert Vose, Sr. [art dealer, 1873-1964] was a good friend.

MC: Yeah.

RB: Did you get to - did you get to know him a bit?

MC: The old man?

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: Yeah, I knew him. You know I used - my husband used to bring me in and to see the - when they did exhibits we'd go, yeah. We were invited and he was a wonderful person.

RB: Wow.

MC: I don't know. They had a nice big showing and lately they didn't invite Elvira.

RB: No?

MC: Do you know about that?

RB: No, I - yeah, but the Vose's are celebrating 150.

MC: I know my sister-in-law came from California.

RB: Huh.

MC: She buys - she did a lot of business with him. She's the one who has the art gallery in Carmel.

RB: Hmm. He was also a good friend of Morton - Bob Bradley.

MC: Oh, they still are -

RB: It was -

MC: - and Elvira still is. He's wonderful; a very good friend. Morton Bradley [sculptor, 1912-2004] says all the time, he says, "Everything I know I learned from Mr. Castano." He said that all the time.

RB: Did he train with him or sort of get -

MC: Yeah, he came in. He came in and my husband helped him. He taught him everything; taught him alone.

RB: Well, what - you husband, did he ever really retire? He did sort of. When did he give up the gallery, about 19 - the early 1970s?

MC: I don't really remember. You know, dear, I don't remember years now.

RB: But he had more time then to paint, didn't he?

MC: Then he painted at home, his own paintings, and he painted all these types of pastels and as fast as he painted them he sold them.

RB: Really?

MC: He sold them all so I don't have any left. I only had a couple here left. He sold an awful lot of them, mm-hmm. We had two or three big exhibits after that. We had one at the library in Needham.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And he had one Dow, one in Verizon.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

MC: And he was from [inaudible], you know?

RB: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] And he also continued to give advice to the - on works of art? He'd give people advice.

MC: Appraisals, yeah, and he also did appraisals. You know people would come in with paintings and he would appraise their painting and he charged a fee, you know.

RB: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] So you found that this life was generally speaking a very good life?

MC: Yes, it was.

RB: This life as the wife of an art dealer?

MC: Yes, it was.

RB: Yeah, and he was happy in that life?

MC: He was. Yes, he was. He did too much.

RB: Yeah. Did you either - did you ever go to Europe and look at things there? Did he travel there?

MC: I never went to Europe with him. He went himself twice and I went. I didn't go with him either time because we didn't have enough money. But I went after he died. Well, I went once when he was living. Yes, I did and I went three times altogether. You know I went with him and he had a lot of friends there. When he went - he went though. The first time he went he was gone quite a while.

RB: Was this when he was fairly young?

MC: Yeah.

RB: Did he find paintings over there that he would bring over here?

MC: No.

RB: No, he mainly found the paintings here?

MC: Yes, mm-hmm, you know here in the city.

RB: And he covered a whole - a very broad range of paintings, didn't he?



MC: Oh.

RB: European and American?

MC: Oh, yes, and German, yes, he did.

RB: He - did he - would he call -

MC: He was really - he loved American art.

RB: Oh, he did?

MC: Oh, yes.

RB: Oh. He must have drawn upon various experts for advice now and then, didn't he? Would he talk with people at the [inaudible] Museum?

MC: Oh, yeah, they all came to him.

RB: They'd come to him?

MC: Do you remember Anges Munion?

RB: Sure.

MC: My goodness, yeah. She used to call him every other day looking for advice. And there was [inaudible].

RB: How had he - how do you suppose he acquired that, that expertise because he hadn't traveled much.

MC: He read a lot. He read.

RB: He read?

MC: He read a lot.

RB: Oh, did he?

MC: He read a lot, you know, studied, read. I mean he -

RB: Then he must have lucked upon it.

MC: - had every book. He had a beautiful library. He bought every book and read every - kept up on everything, just like his daughter does. She does the same thing.

RB: How did the sister then, Mrs. Hunter, when - eventually became an art dealer, too; is that right?

MC: Yeah, he taught her everything.

RB: And when did she do that?

MC: He told her to go out to California and start a gallery, so she did. She went out there and she started a little gallery. She got in with all those Texas - and would buy a little. She got a big gallery and she made lots of money. She's still making money.

RB: And so how long has she been out there, maybe 40 years, 50?

MC: Oh, yeah.

RB: She's now in Carmel, right?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.] She's old. She's only about four years younger than me. Yeah, but she's still going.

RB: Yeah?

MC: Mm-hmm. [Affirmative.]

RB: So you feel it's been a pretty good career that he went into?

MC: Oh, yes it was wonderful. It was wonderful.

RB: Did he ever express disappointment at not being able to continue as a scene painter?

MC: No.

RB: Was he ever disappointed about that?

MC: No, he didn't. No, but he - as I say, after the scenery then he went right into selling paintings.

RB: Yeah.

MC: And it was a different - different life. But painting scenery was hard work.

RB: Yeah.

MC: He had to get up on the scaffold and do it up way up in the air. That was hard work.

RB: Yeah, it wasn't always that pleasant with [inaudible].

MC: No, and he just was working on the scene - salary then. He wasn't working on -

RB: When he did his own painting, did he often go outdoors and paint out in the garden?

MC: He did a lot of paintings out of doors.

RB: Right out - he had a garden, magnificent garden?

MC: Yes, he did. He painted a lot of paintings.

RB: He painted a lot out there.

MC: He sold them.

RB: Hmm.

MC: Yeah.

RB: Well, who bought them? Was it old friends, people who -

MC: Old friends, yeah. A lot of friends would come in the house and they would see him painting, and he had a studio upstairs, you know? And they would watch him painting and before he'd even finish the painting it was sold, so a lot of - all his paintings. Too bad he didn't do more.

RB: Did he continue to teach later in life? Did he have anybody who came to study with him?

MC: A lot of people came just for private like little lessons, you know.

RB: Do you - did any of them go on to become painters professionally, to you think?

MC: I don't know. I think so. You know Angelo Valenti [printmaker and author, 1897-1982]?

RB: I've heard of him.

MC: Did you ever hear of him?

RB: Barely.

MC: He taught him a lot. I don't know whatever happened to him. I don't know. I'm just lucky I can remember all of that.

RB: No, that's very good. Thank you.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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