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Oral history interview with Walker Hancock,  
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# Transcript

## Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Walker Hancock on July 22, 1977. The interview was conducted in Gloucester, Massachusetts by Robert Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

## Interview

ROBERT BROWN: I'd like to ask you first to perhaps discuss your growing up in St. Louis and some of your education, your family, or the early influences on you, particularly those that may have led to your later career as a sculptor.

WALKER HANCOCK: My father was a lawyer, and my mother a very talented artist. She would have been a very good professional artist if in those days ladies had been allowed to go on with their education. As it was she was allowed to attend the St. Louis School of Fine Arts until she reached the point where she should have gone into the life class, and that was where she had to stop. Her father was an ear, nose, and throat specialist; he was in fact, the first such specialist west of the Mississippi River. It was the kind of family that clung to conventions, and it was very easy to see why my mother's career was stopped at that point.

I began to model in kindergarten and kept it up. I think all through grammar school I must have been making a great nuisance of myself with my sculpture because it made enough of a stir for me to be called to stay after school one day by a teacher. I was something like eleven years old, possibly twelve. She said, "Walker I want to talk with you, seriously I think you are a very intelligent boy." Of course, being called intelligent I was immediately so flattered and receptive that when she said, "I know that you are intelligent enough to realize that you could never make a living as a sculptor." Then, I was convinced. But I think I was only convinced for about twenty-four hours because I'm sure I was back at it two days later.

ROBERT BROWN: What were you doing?

WALKER HANCOCK: I was doing animals largely, and in the eighth grade I remember doing a masterful model of the Parthenon, for which I used fluted curtain rods for the columns and supplied all the sculpture in the pediments. Completely restored and colored. So, I was in very deep, before I finished grammar school.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, this was not only sculpture. Did you have an interest in Greek culture, or classical culture?

WALKER HANCOCK: The subject fascinated me, of course, mythology and all of that, but in the superficial way that it would a youngster. Then I went on to high school and took an art course there, which in the public schools in St. Louis, in those days, was extraordinarily good. I had a teacher in high school that really taught me most of what I know about design, and all that I know about lettering, and that kind of thing, and gave me the impetus to go on and learn what she didn't give me.

ROBERT BROWN: How was the approach? Was this a recognized system that she used?

WALKER HANCOCK: It was apparently the system that was commonly used by all the teachers of art in that day. We were taught the elements of design, rhythm, theory of color. We didn't do very much in three dimensions but it was all very, very sound, and as I look back on it, I can't find any fault in the approach.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, did this approach lock you or suggest that certain styles in art were better than others or was it much freer and more open than that?

WALKER HANCOCK: I have a feeling that there was nothing in it that locked us into anything at all. It simply opened our eyes to the fact that there were rules of composition that worked, and certain rhythms that worked, certain colors that went well together, and there was nothing in it that was in the least limiting: in fact, it was liberating. I was really in debt to the public school system in St. Louis.

And, with all that, there were very few boys, at that time, who took the art course. Those were the days when they taught Greek and Latin in high school, and I wished I had studied Greek but I didn't, I studied some Latin. What I missed by taking the art course rather than some scientific course, it is hard for me to say. It was a great gain certainly.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your parents back you in your wish to take the art course?

WALKER HANCOCK: It was a very interesting situation with my parents. Father, who was originally a Virginian and had worked his way through the University of Virginia—I think graduated having done the law course there in half the time that anybody else had ever done it—was, of course, eager for me to be a lawyer. He made no attempt to conceal that but he was interested, though I think uneasy, at the thought of having an artist in the family. It was going to be a problem to him, I could see that. And, my mother was simply very happy to see me doing it.

And by the greatest good luck, when I was in my second year of high school—I was about fifteen years old—I won a prize, in a national competition, for a medal for the St. Louis Art League. This was an anonymous arrangement so that nobody knew who was getting the prize. And, when I got the second prize I think my father really began to take me seriously, at that point, and he was clearly pleased about it, proud and never did anything to dissuade me from going on, never. He hoped that I would spend four years in college, at Washington University. I managed to make myself spend a year there, mostly in art school, and some of it in some English classes. I did go to the University of Wisconsin for two summer courses in languages. So that was the extent of my college career.

ROBERT BROWN: You did go right after high school, into Washington University?

WALKER HANCOCK: For a year, yes. Of course, I had had an interval at the very close of the war, as a summer cadet at the Virginia Military Institute, which had also been my father's school. It was a very brief, and to me, very disagreeable experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Your father wanted you to do this?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and it was a very sensible thing to do, because the war was still on, the First World War, and if it had continued it would have given me a great advantage. I could have gone in as an officer, not as a rookie but the war ended, and then I came—then I went into the art school there.

ROBERT BROWN: Well now, when you went to Art School at Washington University were you ahead of your fellow students having done all of this work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I was, because I had had the advantage of going to the art school Wednesday afternoon while I was in high school, or Wednesday evening I think it was, and all day Saturday during the whole high school experience. So that I had already pretty much of a head start by the time I gave my whole time to the Art School.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go in then primarily to study sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you also required to take drawing?

WALKER HANCOCK: I was required to draw, and I drew, and drew from the antique, and then finally, I applied to be admitted to the life class, and was. And that went on for a while as I continued to model. Then I had the very good experience of helping as an apprentice my teacher Victor Holm, for a summer. Victor Holm had been one of Augustus St. Gauden's apprentices. He was an extremely skilled modeler, and so, I suppose I got at second-hand a great deal of the St. Gauden's attitude toward technique, actual technique, I think.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you characterize any of that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I can. There was a great deal more use of the toothed loop-tool than I later thought to feel the best way. When I went to the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts I dropped a good deal of that. But, that apparently—the use of the tool—and a great deal of reliance on light and shadow, not dependence on it but extreme amount of interest in it; color, so-called color, produced by light and shadow.

ROBERT BROWN: As a way of conveying appearance as well as expressions? This as opposed to what in sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: This as opposed to using both eyes wide open, seeing the form as truly in the round, without much regard to the shadow, and letting the shadow result. I think that there is a real difference there, I think that under Charles Grafly we began to think of light and shade as the result of form, whereas under Victor Holm I'm sure I was persuaded that light and shade had a great deal to do with producing the form. That's the main difference.

ROBERT BROWN: You set up light and shade arrangements in your sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and in those days, we were taught drawing in a way that I am sure is passé at the

present, which was to draw the shapes as shadows. You would outline the figure, lay in the shadows, according to the shape, and we saw the form result, and that was very persuasive, sometimes.

ROBERT BROWN: And was outline kept to a minimum in the drawings?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but I remember under Carpenter, one of our very skilled draftsmen there, actually outlining the shadows, and filling them in. Very different.

ROBERT BROWN: At that point, were both the sculptural version and the drawing very appealing to you, or were you a bit uneasy with it even then?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, I wasn't uneasy with it, I was enormously interested in it. I was always impatient to get into modeling class, but I had plenty of patience to stay with the drawing.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned what you sculptors call 'color,' in terms of light and shade, but what about hue as in painting, you know, were you ever very much trained or involved in painting?

WALKER HANCOCK: We left the word 'hue' behind us when we left high school! There was a great deal of discussion of color and hue there. But actually color—I began to lose interest in for its own sake—after I left high school.

ROBERT BROWN: And you were able, at Washington University, to concentrate particularly in sculpture and drawing.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, by that time almost entirely sculpture.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you a pretty gregarious student, I mean did you mix a lot with your fellow students, discuss these things?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes, oh, yes. We had ... It was very congenial, and in those days congenial in a way which I think is fairly rare these days, because the pull of all the different directions was not being felt in the art school. It was generally accepted that there were standards that were to be observed. You wanted your work to be good, and that the main difference between work was good and bad, and you were all trying to do good work. As I taught later on I could see it developing: the tensions between students who had been influenced in this direction in one exhibition and that direction at another exhibition, and who really at sometimes were almost at sword's point with each other because they were so persuaded that the other one was wrong. We had nothing of that kind. It was a very happy time to be in art school, actually.

ROBERT BROWN: Would you say that there was, generally accepted, one standard?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes, there was.

ROBERT BROWN: And that the difference, say, between the St. Gauden's school of shadow and that which you learned from Grafly, was, comparatively speaking, minor?

WALKER HANCOCK: Actually, it was so minor that when I mentioned it to Grafly, I said, "You know, in St. Louis I got the habit of working with wire tools scraping over the surface," which, by the way, was in imitation of the treatment of stone: the wire tool in modeling was the equivalent of the gradine in stone—I think that is how it came about. And I told Grafly that I was a little worried because his students and he himself used mostly the hand, the fingers, but mostly the palm of the hand to push the clay around. He smiled, and said, "Well, the thing is to get the shape right, isn't it?" That was about all that it amounted to. The technique was the superficial consideration.

ROBERT BROWN: By this point, was your father's esteem for what you were doing quite high?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, he began to enter into the thing with great enthusiasm, and was very much pleased when I went to Rome. Father—I had four sisters—and my father, although he was a very prominent lawyer in St. Louis, felt it quite a struggle to educate a whole family.

ROBERT BROWN: Were most of the students at Washington University still women, in the arts?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, actually in modeling class there were more men than women, at that time. But, of course, in high school this would have been the thing that boys didn't go in for very much. But in art school the majority of the students, I would say, fully half of them, at least, were men.

ROBERT BROWN: At this point you had—in terms of say, your peers, your friends, same age or roughly the same age—you're wanting to be an artist had prestige with them? What was the male attitude, at that time, toward

say, going on to be an artist?

WALKER HANCOCK: By that time you are in. I was in art school, of course, surrounded by people who wanted to do the same thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go directly then from Washington University to the Pennsylvania Academy?

WALKER HANCOCK: I went—

ROBERT BROWN: You had the summer schooling in Wisconsin, but that was just a brief interlude. How did happen that you went to Philadelphia?

WALKER HANCOCK: I went to Philadelphia because at that time Grafly was considered the instructor of sculpture in this country. He was considered without any question the greatest teacher. And there wasn't very much question as to where one should go if you could go to Philadelphia. And I came—

ROBERT BROWN: Was it about 1921?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think 1920, but I would have to look up the date. I told you about my first visit here, didn't I?

ROBERT BROWN: Well I'd like to hear—that's what I'd like to. So you knew that Grafly, [you] wanted to go there because he was the preeminent teacher, you were already accepted in the school?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And then you came east. Had you ever been east before?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, I had never been this far east before, and I came to his studio with the thought of calling on him before going to the class in Philadelphia.

ROBERT BROWN: His studio here in Gloucester?

WALKER HANCOCK: That was the summer in which I had worked as an apprentice in St. Louis, to help save up money to bring me east, so I couldn't spend the summer in his studio as he invited me to, very kindly, having seen some photographs of my work. When I came, I fell in love with Folly Cove, as it was in those days, very primitive and beautiful, and found the way to his house, and suddenly was very timid about going to see the great man. I hadn't foreseen that I would be embarrassed, but I was, and as I waited to have courage, I walked up and down the side street past his orchard, came around in front again and saw him sitting on the porch, by that time, and that made matters worse because I couldn't confront the thought of those steps, and introducing myself. So, I walked back, and pulled an apple from his tree, and in the end, went back to Philadelphia without seeing him here.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet he had welcomed your coming?

WALKER HANCOCK: He had asked me to come, he had invited me, yes, it was very stupid. You go through an age where you are like that I guess.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you heard at all what he was like?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I had heard that he was rather formidable, he was a taciturn man, and not easy, not very easy. And I think that frightened me a little bit. So I—there I was in the class in Philadelphia when he came in for the first time, and he came straight to the stand, where I was working, and said, "What is your name?" and I said, "Hancock," and he said, "Oh, you're the chap from St. Louis," and I said, "Yes, sir," and he said, "Well, Hancock just look at this figure, and look at the model, remember that the neck belongs to the back and that the line of the spine, reaches over the shoulders like a boy reaching over the fence for apples." Of course, this staggered me (Hancock laughs) and I was unable to answer, but I've never forgotten that. He hadn't seen me; it was just characteristic of the way that he would give criticism, some homely little simile that would make you remember.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you blend into his teaching very easily then?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you describe his approach? You mentioned that he said do the form and then let the light and shadow follow.

WALKER HANCOCK: His approach was always from the inside out. And I think there is in that, to a degree, some explanation of the difference between the St. Gauden's approach, as I inherited it, and his. Because we were very much engaged with how the surface affected the form, in St. Louis. Whereas in Philadelphia we were taught that the body consists of three solids: the head, the thorax and the pelvis; and there were other solids attached to those solids. The word "solid" was so much used, and we began to think of form as material added solids, solids added to solids. If you cut in you did it almost apologetically, you know. You were cutting into a solid. I think that was the basis of the approach.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you see fairly soon differences in your own work? As a result?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, very quickly.

ROBERT BROWN: What were they, can you remember?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think that probably expressed them. I think my work gained a certain ....

ROBERT BROWN: A solidity? (laughter)

WALKER HANCOCK: Regard for volume that it didn't have, wouldn't have had if I had gone on that way. And, in fact I suppose, it has been a lasting influence, because I am still much more interested in sculpture that expresses weight and the value of the solid material than I am in some of the expressionists which make the most of the voids. As interesting as I find them, and as greatly as I enjoy, oh, for instance the early work of Calder, I wouldn't want to have done them myself. I like to look at them, but it's not my feeling about how I would like to work, so.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find this—that you thought more in those terms of solid?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. And in composition as a result we thought more in terms of moving around a spiral, rather than purely frontal conception.

ROBERT BROWN: The works could be seen with equal interest from any angle. Was this something you grasped and could achieve right away?

WALKER HANCOCK: It was something we worked very hard for, very consciously, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Always from a model, or most of the time?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, we depended a great deal upon models and I still do, to quite an extent, because my own experience had been that, when I discard the model and I work from my own inventiveness, such as it is, I drop into a kind of stereotype that the presence of life seems to help avoid. The — just the suggestion of the movement of the human being does something for you—it helps spark your work in a way that the conventional or remembered anatomy doesn't do.

ROBERT BROWN: What role do you think the very physical—the expressiveness of a living model—has in your work? Does that have an effect on you also as you work? The fact that it is a living and breathing thing, it's not static?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. To a degree that has an effect. I find that if you invent what you think is a perfectly wonderful pose, and then try to get a model into the pose, he or she can't get into it to begin with. What the model does may be so much more interesting in some respect that you in the end give your original composition a little fillip, a little something, that it wouldn't have had. These figures for instance I could have done perfectly well from memory or even from photographs, but I did them here, in the studio, just outside with the actual player going through those motions again and again, so that I could see what the authentic fall was, and what the authentic jump was, and what the natural way for one to affect another might be. The result is really much more lively than a thing that you'd just sit down and make up.

ROBERT BROWN: I am wondering in the approach of Grafly, building up solids, was there a danger of perhaps, not for you, but for others, in creating rather lumpy, dead figures?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't think so because, he too, was so enormously interested in movement and in the expression of the figure. He had a great deal always to say about the expression of a pose. I don't recall the work of any students of my day that became lumpy or dead.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, at the Pennsylvania Academy, did you—was this your principal course, the modeling course with Grafly, was there other work?

WALKER HANCOCK: There was other work. Well, there was the anatomy class and for that I was lucky enough to

be under George Bridgeman for a while. That was quite a fascinating experience.

RG: Was he a very marvelous teacher?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, very exciting, and amusing, made everybody have a good time. I had of course studied anatomy in St. Louis, and done a little dissecting, very little, watched it, and then there was perspective, which we all had to pass examinations in. And, we weren't required to do any drawing except a Saturday morning sketch class. The rest of it was all modeling, and he would come weekly, and later on once every fortnight to criticize everything that we had done in the meantime, including compositions.

ROBERT BROWN: This was Grafly?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, he liked to assign subjects, and later on he brought in John Harbison, the architect from Paul Cret's office who assigned us architectural problems, and would lecture to us on the requirements, the architectural requirements, of the situation, and then criticize our efforts at solving the problem. Very, very good experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you had that experience at all before?

WALKER HANCOCK: No.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find it difficult initially, or did you—judging from your later career you must have found it quite fascinating?

WALKER HANCOCK: I found it fascinating, and not difficult, because I could see at once the reasonableness of everything in it. Harbison was very good at explaining why.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, how would he do it, what for example?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, he did it in part by example, by bringing in photographs of similar problems, successfully solved. And, explaining why they were successfully solved. And, I think that we were very quickly enlightened. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: Now, of course the photographs can exaggerate, or call attention, did he also then take you out to look in Philadelphia, to look at a few examples, from the street?

WALKER HANCOCK: We didn't do that, I wish we had. Often, though, they were buildings that we were familiar with.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort of problems would Grafly set up?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, his were much more likely to be expressive of abstract ideas. You know, the Joy of Spring, I don't mean that that was one of them, but that was the kind of subject that he might have thought of giving to us, whereas Harbison's problems were always very specific: place given, the meaning of the thing prescribed, the material, the size, all those things went into it. Much better disciplined, of course.

ROBERT BROWN: Which, the latter?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: The other practically would make you into a sculptor who would just go down to a gallery or something, with his work, I suppose?

WALKER HANCOCK: Exactly, and of course there never could be a perfect resolution of the other problem, because it left both instructor and student still feeling the way he felt originally. I remember (laughs) I think one subject that he assigned us was "the storm," and one young woman brought in a composition which Grafly didn't think expressed "storm," and he said, "Is that the way a storm strikes you?" And she said, "I've never been struck by a storm," and so there they were. (laughter) He couldn't tell her how she would feel if she had been struck by a storm, and it ended simply by a discussion of the arrangement of the masses. Not very satisfactory.

ROBERT BROWN: But, he did continue it with her on it, on a kind of formalistic basis, the theme, the expressiveness, was hopeless there?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, hopeless.

ROBERT BROWN: This was all done in terms of the human figure?

WALKER HANCOCK: Always. We did animals too. But it was always figures. We had never any exercise in abstract design. I tried to introduce it while I was an instructor there, and I found it very hard going. They weren't interested.

ROBERT BROWN: You were there through 1925; summers you were up here near Grafly's studio, here in Folly Cove, Gloucester.

WALKER HANCOCK: Then in 1925 I went to Rome, and spent three years there.

ROBERT BROWN: Back to your summers. How were they different from the winters? Were you working pretty steadily summers as well on your sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I worked in his studio here.

ROBERT BROWN: And he welcomed that, he invited you to come, various students?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, he was perfectly wonderful. He invited me and sometimes one other student, but I was usually there alone. He had an assistant, Clyde Bathurst, a middle-aged man, rather sad, disappointed individual who had wanted to be a sculptor, but had never accomplished very much. He did a good deal of the work like making armatures and keeping the place clean and developing photographs and that kind of thing. But, at that time, he was working on the Mead Memorial, so I had the experience of doing my own work, and watching him do his. And, also had the fun of listening in on conversations with such people as Paul Wayland Bartlett who would drop in, that kind of thing; it was very nice.

ROBERT BROWN: He would leave you to your own work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Entirely my own work.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he give you formal critiques from time to time?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, once in a while he would stop and suggest something. Very seldom. He preferred to let me see the thing through.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you set up your own problems, as they call it today?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, they were simply figures. I had titles for them of course, I modeled figures; I modeled one head. One of the things I did was a problem that was put to me by Ralph Adams Cram.

ROBERT BROWN: Whom you knew, or you met?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I knew him by that time very well. I don't remember just how I first met him, but he was interested in finding a young sculptor who would do ecclesiastical work. And, he was making—he was overhauling St. James Church in New York. One of the things that he planned to do was to design a reredos with an ornate, Christ and two adoring angels, Christ in the vesica. So he assigned me this as a problem to see what I would do with it, and so I spent one summer working pretty much on that.

ROBERT BROWN: Up here, in Grafly's studio?

WALKER HANCOCK: Grafly was away most of that time, or I think he would have frowned on my doing a thing as archeologically-oriented as that, because, after all, it was to fit into a Gothic church. Cram wasn't going to let it be anything but Gothic.

ROBERT BROWN: And Grafly was no antiquarian?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, he was rather the opposite. He was very suspicious of interest in historic styles. Very. He wanted sculpture to be American, not to be like anything that had been done in Europe, if possible, to get away from it. But Cram—this was a summer after I had been on a traveling scholarship to Europe, after my second trip to Europe, that's what it was. I had come back loaded with postcards of all the great sculpture of the cathedrals of France. I had plenty to steal from while I was doing this thing. When it was finished I took it to Cram and I was really astonished at the interview I had with him. I brought it out and, when I took it to Mr. Cram's office, he looked at it and he said, "Well, the vesica is wrong. They are never dishd; they are always flat. Now what you should have done before you got to work on this was to refer to some such work as this." He turned to Kingsley Porter's Romanesque Sculpture of the Pilgrimage Trail and brought down a copy, and thumbd it through, and by the greatest good luck turned to the very sculpture that I had been stealing from, which was the Christ of Cahors, with a very deeply dishd vesica. And he said, "See, there you are, you were exactly right, just right, that's just the way it should have been," and (laughs) I was amazed. (laughs again)



ROBERT BROWN: So, did you finally tell him that that was your source?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't remember, but I think I was trying hard to be polite as possible then. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: But, he was a very outspoken man, very decisive?

WALKER HANCOCK: He said that very day, I remember him saying, "Two things I hate, Protestantism and paganism." (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: What did he mean by that exactly?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think he meant Protestantism in the form that is common in this country. He still liked the trappings of Catholicism in his Protestantism, and of course he—and as far as paganism was concerned, he really was upset at my going to Rome. He said, "You'll come back a pagan." Then he thought a little while and said, "Well, there's Donatello anyway, isn't there?" (laughs) This was the way he reconciled himself to my going to Europe.

ROBERT BROWN: That was as far forward as he could go?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, exactly.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you see Cram, at various times through the years?

WALKER HANCOCK: I saw him after I came back from Rome, here, occasionally. I didn't see him in his office. By that time, John Angel had come from England, and he was, of course, just the answer to Cram's problem. He was experienced.

ROBERT BROWN: From what you could see was Cram's very—oversaw every last detail of his work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Would he—would you like ever to have worked for him as an architectural sculptor?

WALKER HANCOCK: No. No. It would have been very limiting, I could see. And very archaeological. It would have been founded on the books.

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas you at this point, ascribed to Grafly's idea of the—to work from the model ...

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, yes. I wanted to be—to be freer, from tradition and that.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned a bit earlier that during your time at the Pennsylvania Academy from 1921 to '25 or so, you were given summer scholarships to travel to Europe.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, twice.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you describe a bit those two times?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, indeed I can. They were traveling scholarships, they were given to us to cover as many miles and see as much art as was possible. And the money was a very small fund, but it was enough to see us through, three or even four months if we were careful. So the first trip I began by landing in Scotland, and going down that wonderful row of cathedrals on the east side of England, and London, Oxford, and Cambridge, and the obvious places, and across France.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you sketching as you went along?

WALKER HANCOCK: I did, because in those days we hadn't got the camera habit, as we have now, which I think is—So the things that I saw and sketched in those days I remember better than the things that I photographed even five or six years ago.

ROBERT BROWN: More time absorbing?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. And we sketched in museums and oddly enough that was an advantage, because in those days you weren't allowed to photograph in museums. And, you had to leave your camera at the door, and if you wanted to remember the thing, you had to draw it, and you were allowed to do that. And, so then through France and the cathedrals within reach of Paris, through Dijon, Switzerland, and down as far as Naples, Paestum actually, I went all the way to Paestum that first year, and then—

ROBERT BROWN: Why did you want to go there, to see the buildings?

WALKER HANCOCK: To see the temples, yes, and I went out to do the Great Amalfi Drive, and I'm glad I did it in those days rather than now, and then—

ROBERT BROWN: You were hard working you'd say, during these tours?

WALKER HANCOCK: We worked hard, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You worked, particularly looking at one period or another, is that it?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, no. No, I think that was the wonderful thing, it was a period of discovery. We did our share of reading beforehand, and we knew a bit what to look for.

ROBERT BROWN: You traveled with fellow students?

WALKER HANCOCK: On and off, I did most of it alone, as a matter of fact, but we would meet, the friends would meet along the way, and go to museums together, have meals together, and then separate, and—

ROBERT BROWN: Did you run into your European counterparts?

WALKER HANCOCK: On the second trip, I did. The first was a rather lonely trip. It didn't feel lonely, I was only too glad to be free. The second trip, I took the loop, I went from—the first trip I came back by way of Provence and saw something of Provence before coming home, and then the second trip, I went to England again, but the loop was in the other direction, and went into Germany, and back into Italy, and then to Spain, and back to Paris through Spain. So I had two ovals that covered the situation.

ROBERT BROWN: And then on the second trip you did meet some European sculptors.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. On the way. Well for instance, on one trip, must have been the second, I had an awfully nice encounter with the Bourdelle—Antoine Bourdelle was away but I had the courage to go to his apartment where Mrs.—Madame Bourdelle was perfectly charming. It was astonishing to see the wife of a great sculptor like that, who must be besieged by students constantly, take the time to be as charming to me as she was. And, then I had also the fascinating experience of presenting a letter to Marcel Dupree, I think it was that year ... [a blank interval occurs here in tape] ... Experiences like that that were just—I think it must be fairly rare nowadays, I don't know—

ROBERT BROWN: Now, had Grafly suggested that you look up Bourdelle?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, oh no. He made no suggestions whatsoever, about our trips. None. And when the time came for me to compete for the Rome prize, he was quite against my going, which was—made me sad, because I admired him so much, and I didn't want to offend him. But, he said, "If you go to Rome you will come back a stylist, you will be just like the rest of them," so he didn't give me a letter of recommendation.

ROBERT BROWN: Were his warnings well-founded, perhaps not in your case, but—

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, what he saw was students of his like Paulanship who went over modelers, and came back carvers. Now not literally carvers, in the sense that they change from clay to marble, but their style looked as though they had, their treatment of the material was hardened up to correspond to the material, it was a new interest just beginning in this country of adapting one's work to the material that it was in. I think—

ROBERT BROWN: There hadn't been much regard for that before?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, and in fact, it was simply accepted among the sculptors who did larger work that they would produce the plaster model and somebody else would produce the clay. Or they would produce a large model for a medal, and somebody else would make a mechanical reduction of it. And the result was the marble sculpture began to look a bit soft, and the medallic work began to look rather out of scale, rather too fine, and people like Manship, he was—Karl Bitter was the first of the men who perhaps experimented with the idea of making a stone monument look as if it had been carved in stone, and Manship at the same time, or nearly, in Europe, the Academy in Rome, Greece picked up the idea from Archaic art, obviously, of making bronze look as if it had been chased and making marble look as if it had been carved and not modeled and brought about a certain simplification of form, a certain sharpness of detail. In medals, it meant working in very small models so that the amount of reduction was after all, not too much taken advantage of. That your scale was nearly adapted to the final size, and that of course had so many ramifications, and when then the men like John Flanagan and all of them—Zorach, everybody, began to just take stones, boulders carve them. That was I think logical conclusion, logical development of these first very discrete suggestions that bronze is a hard material, and so is stone.

ROBERT BROWN: And yet a different kind of material. Now, was this one of the things that Grafly feared that you would—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, Grafly didn't see it that way, Grafly himself had been a tombstone carver. He had carved before he had modeled, and I suppose to him modeling was a kind of a—a graduation, a progression from carving, because to him it represented it the fact that he was a sculptor, and not a tombstone carver. He was always very prejudiced against—

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think it was perhaps because in modeling you could be extremely manipulative?

WALKER HANCOCK: Grafly was frankly fascinated by the quality of French clay, by the beautiful fluidity of the—fluidity almost more than plasticity. It had this lovely sensitive response to anything your hand could suggest, and I think, I think that fascinated him. I had a wart here once, we used to use this part of the hand, the palm, a great deal, and I said, "Mr. Grafly, look at this," and he said, "Oh, fine, cultivate that, you could do something with that." (laughs) That is just as far a cry as you could imagine from the sort of thing that the so-called stylists were doing at that time.

ROBERT BROWN: He called them stylists, and you are now. Do you think that is because of the fact, for example Manship very distinctly developed stylizing didn't he?

WALKER HANCOCK: He you see was under suspicion as far as Grafly was concerned, because he based his style quite frankly on the archaic Greek examples and the Indian, East Indian sculpture, that he saw. I think to Manship the first trip to Greece was the moment of revelation for him, when he saw all these wonderful, wonderful direct developments of—using hard materials, with the tools that they had.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, you did in fact go to Rome then, in '25?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: And were you pretty much on your own when you got to the academy?

WALKER HANCOCK: You were entirely on your own except that in those days you were required to spend one month of the year doing a collaborative problem, which brought together a painter, a sculptor, an architect, and a landscape architect. Three teams they had, and we competed with each other in the solution of a given problem.

ROBERT BROWN: Which would be of what sort? Generally.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I can show you one here.

ROBERT BROWN: The projects were of the type that were in the [a blank occurs here in the original transcript] tradition. Generally of classical structures?

WALKER HANCOCK: They were always classical, at that time, there was a very strong influence at the American Academy in Rome. Nothing exactly prescribed, nothing said, it was simply a matter of atmosphere, it was in the air, what was approved generally, and that produced in the case of one or two of the architects, abetted by their painters and sculptors, a modest rebellion once in a while. An architect would suddenly be brave enough to leave off a molding, and that was practically a revolution. We were given to feel Baroque, the wonderful Baroque painting and sculpture in Rome, was perhaps not the best thing, and even Hellenistic sculpture, Hellenistic Greek sculpture was not the best Greek sculpture.

ROBERT BROWN: It was decadent, or... ?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it was a little too.

ROBERT BROWN: The people who gave you this feeling, were what the director of the Academy? Who was then the director?

WALKER HANCOCK: Wonderful man he was too, Gorham Philip Stevens, who had been in McKim White's office. He felt strongly of course that Greek architecture was the great architecture and he himself was such a fascinating lecturer on the subject of Greek architecture and the wonderful examples of Roman architecture such as the Hadrian Villa.

[Brown flips tape]

WALKER HANCOCK: Such enthusiasms can be very contagious after all, and also such lack of interest as he showed, but there was, as I say, no coercion, and as far as our own individual work which occupied the other eleven months of the year, as far as that was concerned it was no direct effort to persuade us to do one sort of thing or another. We were required to do a certain amount of work.

ROBERT BROWN: They would check to see—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that you were busy, and that you were there for three years. It wasn't a case of your having to prove to them that you were good enough to be allowed to stay on as is the case now.

ROBERT BROWN: What kind of work were you doing on your own at that point? Did you begin to change from what you had been doing in Philadelphia?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I began by doing a head in marble carving it directly, I carved a [a blank occurs here in the original transcript] in marble, I did a certain amount of carving really seriously for the first time in my life, and then I did a seven foot figure. I did small decorated figures, I did quite a number of things, all pretty much—something that came pretty near the Pompeian tradition. (laughs) But—

ROBERT BROWN: You mean lively figures these were?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but one thing that we had which was invaluable, and I think people don't understand it now who send youngsters abroad, or even middle-aged people abroad except something to be shown as a result from there sojourn there. We weren't pushed into solving a specific thing. I was doing a very large figure, I did that little tondo I showed you, and at the same time I did the head of a daughter, son or daughter of the local American consul in marble. At the end of that first year, that was the only thing that was done and ready for exhibition, and the Italian papers had a great deal to say about that. I remember that it said, Mr. [blank in transcript] said, "Il busto e abbastanza carino pero e possibile que questo sia il frutto di avano di lavoro." And it did seem a little strange that the fruit of a year's work, would be just this little marble bust, but I had been working very hard—

ROBERT BROWN: The others were just in the preparatory stages—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but the next year when the tondo was shown I had a fascinating conversation with the King about that, which was in the end a criticism that has served me well for the rest of my life. You were very inclined to produce fairly eclectic looking things when you were surrounded by all these influences and fascinating styles, and the mood to experiment, you know. And, I had brought together in this revision of the tondo that I had done for Cram, quite a number of influences, and the King that year, always opened, he always opened the exhibition, it was a ceremonial affair, and he often went around with the Queen and ambassador and their retinue and said very little. But, this year he had expressed a desire to talk with some of the men and initiated, and—and when he came to this piece that I had done, he said, "I see you are fond of Romanesque art," and I said that I was. And he said, "Have you ever been to Toscanella?" They called it Toscanella in those days, and I said that I had been there. And he said that "There are two Romanesque churches there, and I have asked to have the roofs restored, they were leaking, can you tell me if they have been?" And of course I couldn't. Then he said, "What stone will this be executed in?" and I said, "I thought I would like to have it in the Pietri di Triani," a lovely cream-colored stone. He said, "I don't know that stone, but I know the Cathedral of Triani very well, and that has a beautiful Romanesque door, (laughs) and"—Then he said, "Now this Gloria that you have, those Serus heads are they not a Renaissance motif?" And I thought perhaps they were I wasn't sure, and he said, "There is in St. Mark's in Venice a Gloria in which stars have been used." I have never been able to find that, but he did say that. And then he said, "I think the hair of those angels is Gothic, would you say it's Gothic? And the [blank in transcript] certainly are Gothic, and the Christ's drapery is where I see that you are fond of Romanesque." And then he said, "And the clouds that the angels are leaning on, are they not Chinese?" (laughs) At that point I suppose I was blushing. (laughs) Noticeably at any rate. And he said, "But you have combined it all very harmoniously, and that is what matters." And of course I realized that wasn't all that mattered, but it turned out to be a very useful criticism, a very important point.

ROBERT BROWN: Golly, you must have been quite flabbergasted.

WALKER HANCOCK: I was, I was. Because he was known after all as an artillery officer who was interested in [blank in transcript] matics.

ROBERT BROWN: So that was perhaps one of the most important criticisms that you got while you were in Rome.

WALKER HANCOCK: It is very interesting how you do use criticisms that you come by very unexpectedly, accidentally, that was of course an extraordinary example. But, I remember having, hearing other artists quoted, and getting pointers secondhand, for instance I knew, Jean de Savage quite well, and I liked him immensely, but it was one of his assistants who said to me, "You know Jean said to me something once about background space, that I've always found useful," and I said, "What was it?" And he said, "He says that a good background space almost invariably has two or more bodies connected by necks," and then he showed me what that meant. It is kind of hard to put in works, but if you draw areas that are connected by narrow, narrower widths, you get much more interesting shapes, and simply open triangles or circles or bladder shapes, or what not.

ROBERT BROWN: In the end it helps to coalesce the whole thing too, doesn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and it is always almost invariably true if you look at the wonderful design of the Greek vases, almost always you will find the background spaces have that characteristic. Little things like that, that your friends let drop, long after you should have discovered them for yourself, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: But, you were meanwhile discovering an awful lot on your own.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, I think you do, and I think there is a great deal that you should discover for yourself, you never actually get into words, you just find yourself doing certain things almost unconsciously.

ROBERT BROWN: By this time were you feeling very confident, and confident in yourself? Perhaps you always have.

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't think I ever did. I think that is one of the things that is a problem with some people, I always, this is a terrible thing to confess, but even when I was having the best time with what I was doing, happiest about it, almost one might say proudest of it, had the feeling that somebody else could do it better. I think that had to do perhaps with the way [we] were instructed in our day, we very seldom were told that we were doing well. We were told what mistakes we were making. Once in a while your instructor would say, "Not bad, that's really not bad," and I think the greatest compliment I ever got from Grafly was when I had done a little figure up here and he said, "Well, you won't ever be ashamed of that." But there was never any real encouragement in the form of patting on the back, and saying, "You know you did that better than anybody I know," none of that kind of thing, it was always a search for mistakes. And, in fact I remember Sidney Waugh, my great friend, describing art school as a place where you went to make mistakes and have them discovered and eliminated. The idea of inspiring a student I think developed later.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think it was the times, also—

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it was the generation, I think it was the way of looking at things, there was after all a time, as you know, a generation or two before Grafly's perhaps, where the teacher would almost accomplish everything he had to do by his presence. They were so in awe of him that he could say almost nothing and they would get what they needed from it. If the master came into the room and came up to you and said, "Cherchez les plans," something of that kind, you would ask yourself what he meant, and you would find out, and learn to do it. There was always this, and it goes back I suppose to Sir Joshua Reynolds' answer to the lady who wanted her son to be a great painter, you remember that, and he said, "Madame if you want your son to be a great painter put every possible obstacle in his way." And it was that attitude that—you see, the student had to be tough, he had to have the stamina the kind of grilling criticism that a good teacher would give him, and then he might go on—but that left its marks. Suppose you did have the stamina to go on you also had in the back of your mind, "Am I doing this as well as I might be," so I think—

ROBERT BROWN: You were in great self-doubt.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, did this have dire effects on some people?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't know, I don't know if the effects were dire in my case, but I felt the difficulty.

ROBERT BROWN: Take a case like John Flanagan who—didn't he go to pieces—or perhaps for other reasons. Were there any other—or conversely were there some artists, or sculptors particularly who were boastful, and extremely self-confident?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, actually the most self-confident artists I ever came in contact with were some of the poorest students I ever had. They didn't need any encouragement. Nothing ever came of them either, but regarding them as artists, which by definition I suppose they were at the time.

ROBERT BROWN: This is a very interesting point you have made is an interesting conclusion to—

WALKER HANCOCK: I think people are variously affected. I think one attitude toward criticism is apt to be first of all apprehensive, you are afraid that you are going to have to change something that you think is all right and I'll never forget I was discussing with John Gregory this thing about exchanging criticisms, which I have done with such marvelous and encouraging results with other sculptors. Manship and I were back and forth in each other's studios constantly, as he put it, "saving each other time, but pointing out things." But, John Gregory talked about this, he said there is only one kind of person I can ever stand having in my studio, and I said, "What kind of person is that?" And he said, "It's the kind of person I can count on, when he comes in the studio saying, 'God isn't that beautiful.'" (laughs) Well, there you are, he needed that kind of a boost, and he would do better for it. And I think all of us do better for having a boost of that sort, some from perhaps, not necessarily a great critic.

ROBERT BROWN: But, you were by this time, even in the Rome years, and when you came back, beginning to get some boosts weren't you? You were, by then you've mentioned Manship, were you getting to know him pretty well?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh yes, I knew him very well, yes, yes. And I had of course a great many other sculptors, say more specifically encouraging things about my work, and Grafly never would, although he showed it, he showed it in many ways, he wouldn't say it, but, for instance when he was dying after that terrible motor accident.

ROBERT BROWN: When was this?

WALKER HANCOCK: 1929.

ROBERT BROWN: You were back by then?

WALKER HANCOCK: I had just arrived. I was in New York when it happened. When I got to Philadelphia, after having spoken to him on the telephone from New York, and he was perfectly all right, found him in the hospital, slowing dying from having been hit while he was standing on the curb. A runaway, hit and run driver, stolen car, he—before he died asked the director of the Academy to make me his successor. He never would have said any such thing to me, you see this went on behind—with him it was a kind of reticence, he was a very taciturn man—which meant that everything he said you paid attention to. He [had] that great advantage as a teacher.

ROBERT BROWN: Who were some of the other senior sculptors that you got to meet and know to some degree in the '20s? You mentioned going out to—to meeting Daniel Chester French, and visiting him, how did you come to meet him?

WALKER HANCOCK: I met him because he was on the committee that awarded the American Academy in Rome Prize. I met him, I had to call on him, I had to go call on James Earle Fraser, and Herbert Adams was another one. That's how I happened to meet those men. And French was most cordial to me, and asked me to visit them, which I did for several days before I went abroad.

ROBERT BROWN: What was that experience like?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it was a wonderful experience, he let me sit in his studio while he was working, and I enjoyed that, and I enjoyed the walks with him after the working day, and while he was working it was very amusing. He said nothing of any consequence having to do with the technique, having to do with what really matters in sculpture, his theory about sculpture, but had a great many little tricks like getting your foot out in time to catch a falling tool before it hit the floor. And, keeping the shellac bottle covered with a piece of cardboard with the brush stuck through it, and he used, I thought this was amusing, cheese cloth on this thumb while he modeled to keep the plastering from shining, little things like that, and then here again a criticism comes in an unexpected way. He asked me to look at the photographs that he was working from, he was doing a bust of Westinghouse at the time, and he said, "Do you see anything in these photographs that I have missed?" Well, I did see a certain wrinkle or two which I pointed out, and he said, "Oh, yes they are there, but they wouldn't make good sculpture." And, I don't think that it had ever occurred to me even as late as that, that a thing that didn't make good sculpture should be left out of a likeness. I thought that if you were going to produce a likeness, well, that was—

ROBERT BROWN: It should be pretty literal.

WALKER HANCOCK: He was so generous with his time, and stayed with me in off hours, walked and had a great deal of joy obviously in showing me the place, saying how surprised he was after all these years to find himself a country squire, he had never thought that would happen, and—

ROBERT BROWN: This was the grand place in the Berkshires, Chesterwood?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. And he said, "This is contrary to the biblical idea of how to build a house, because this house is built on sand, and it has stood very well," (laughs) and he said too isn't it a pity that you have to be walking in this lovely place, with an old man like me, instead of a beautiful young woman. He was very apologetic about that. But, we had happy times, at meals his daughter Mrs. Crescent was there at the time with her husband, and all together it was a perfectly lovely little visit. And my last of the kind before I went over to Rome.

ROBERT BROWN: You also knew Cecile Beaux?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and I think that I hadn't met her before she broke her hip. At the time when I first knew her she was painting, but she was painting much less, and it was a great trial to her, and so she began to be

more and more interested in the work of other artists, particularly the young artists. And, she loved to come to the studio here in Lanesville, and I loved to go there to the Green Alley in East Gloucester. And our talk was largely about music, and that sort of thing, and she gave me quite a collection of records, and we would play these together, I have them still here.

ROBERT BROWN: What was her taste chiefly?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well of course Bach was at the very top, and I think the others, there were Mozart, and the rest, but I think that Bach was her great hero, and he was mine at the time, still is. And, so—looking over her correspondence too, I see a great deal of reference to concerts that we mustn't miss. Concerts in New York as well as here, because it so happened that in New York, my studio was very near hers, and I lived on Grammercy Park, which was just a block away from her studio, she was 19th Street. So, it became a very close friendship, and she appeared often when work was going [blank in transcript] and when she left I always felt that it was going in the right direction, and that things weren't so hopeless after all. She was a great inspirer, she had that gift of—her own enthusiasm was so intense that it was impossible for her to leave a person down, she would always give a lift by her—even though she was physically suffering at the time, and sad about not being productive, she was, and of course her stories were perfectly marvelous experiences, and I have here letters showing that she followed my trips abroad very carefully, being interested in what I was seeing just at that moment, and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: Did she, was she teaching then as well?

WALKER HANCOCK: At that time she wasn't teaching, she had taught at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, just before I got there.

ROBERT BROWN: Through her did you meet other artists, people you hadn't known?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I met people where who were her friends, that I would have missed otherwise, but her criticisms were quite remarkable. They weren't criticisms of a sculptor, she saw things always in terms of how the light fell on what you were doing, and how to make it fall the right way. And, she was—

ROBERT BROWN: It sounds not unlike what you said was St. Gauden's approach to sculpture, concern about light and shadow.

WALKER HANCOCK: I think, I hadn't really connected it, but as you suggest it may have been in a way related, perhaps having something to do with the generation, with the way things were looked at, with the generation before us.

ROBERT BROWN: Were these other painters that you knew up here in Lanesville and New York? You lived in New York through the 30s didn't you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes, there were a number of painters, of course I knew, here I knew Leon Kroll very well, Barry Faulkner, and—

ROBERT BROWN: You would have known him in New York wouldn't you have?

WALKER HANCOCK: I could have known him in New York, but actually I knew Barry Faulkner best because of his annual visits to Lanesville. He came every year to see Paul Manship, and in fact Paul Manship wouldn't have been here at all if it wasn't for that pool that you see outside there.

ROBERT BROWN: A quarry pool.

WALKER HANCOCK: He came to call one day, we were old friends by that time that he did come, and he sat down there and looked out and said, "I have to have a quarry pool, where can I get one?" And I didn't know where and the war was coming on, and things looked not very hopeful for him, but he managed to buy one down in Lanesville, and despite the prohibition against building, was able to get a house torn down, and rebuilt and in fact he brought over a great barn from Rockport, and made that his studio. Eric Gugler was his architect, and so we became neighbors as well as friends, and it was very useful to us because we were back and forth constantly, to each other's studio.

ROBERT BROWN: And you frequently gave each other critiques. What did you think of his work, he is an example of what Grafly would say was a stylist, isn't he?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think what matters now about Manship's work isn't superficially his style, or any other movement that he was interested in, it is the fact that I honestly believe that he was the most talented designer that ever worked in this country. Even now, after all these years, looking back, all of his early works straight through to the end, it seemed that he had an infallible sense of design, I think perhaps it was all summed up in

one sentence that [blank in transcript] spoke of him one day, we were talking about Manship's work. And [blank] said, "Yes, he knows what to do." And he did know what to do, on that medal behind you I had a very difficult problem squeezing those two figures into a triangle in a circle, and with all the foreshortening that I did everything, I seemed to have managed it, but there was one corner that just wouldn't work, I couldn't fill it with anything that seemed to act correctly with the lines of the figures. And one day he came in and I said, "Paul, there isn't anything that will go in this corner, I have tried everything," and he picked up a pencil and he said, "Have you tried this?" And he drew that and the design was finished. It was just as easy as that, and he was just as quick as that. No problem at all.

ROBERT BROWN: An innate ability, essentially to compose.

WALKER HANCOCK: And that was his forte, I think all the business of style and subject and period, anything else that has interested people in his work, is secondary to that. An amazing native sense of composition.

ROBERT BROWN: What did he like to talk about beside—apart from critiquing each other's work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, he liked to talk about eating, and about the trips that he had made, and he didn't like to talk about art, and he never read art criticisms, and he made a great point of the fact that that was all a great waste of time. And, it was [blank in transcript], the joys of life, that he talked about.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he enjoy life a great deal?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes. He enjoyed life a great deal. It was on the other hand a very serious, a number of very serious subjects that he would talk about, he was concerned with art education, the Academy in Rome, he was enormously interested in that; represented his happiest days, to him, and to most of us. He could be very serious about those things, but largely it was good humor, and the joy of life pretty much. And especially travel to Italy.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his personality like?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, he was a very, very, congenial person. He could be quite abrupt if he felt somebody was perhaps on the point of flattering him, or leading him into something he didn't want to talk about. I remember one day, this was repeated to him, but it was so characteristic of him, he sat next to a lady at dinner, a lady unknown to him before that evening, and she was I think a little embarrassed to find the right subject to start talking about. She said, "Oh, Mr. Manship your Prometheus at the Rockefeller Center is ..." "Oh," he said, "can't you find something interesting to speak of?" (laughs) That was the kind of thing he always would do.

ROBERT BROWN: He felt it was a talked-out subject or something. He would just switch it off. Was he very hard working, very productive?

WALKER HANCOCK: He had a perfectly phenomenal power of concentration. When I first saw him in Paris he was working on a huge plaster of "Europa and the Bull," and in a big studio down in the Latin Quarter.

ROBERT BROWN: This was on one of your trips?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, one of my trips, actually at that time I think I was a fellow at the Academy in Rome, and I had gone north to Paris in the summertime. And there he was hard at work with his rasps breaking down one side of the thing, while numbers of children were crawling all over the rest of it. He only had what four or five children, but there were all there, all crawling over this thing, all shouting at each other and making the biggest possible rumpus, and he apparently was unaware of this. (laughs) It was such a funny picture. But, he did have that power, he was noted for it, power of concentration, when he once was absorbed by—

ROBERT BROWN: Well at least today, he secured some of the nicest commissions in this country.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, he came along just at the time for that, it was a time before they had begun to use the stripped architecture, and he—every building that was worthy of the name building, had to be decorated, and if it was a public building, it was a foregone conclusion that it would be decorated with sculpture, and there was an enormous demand for it. And, because of his training at the Academy, his self-training, you may say, because a good deal of it was a result of his own travels, and his own observation. He was able to do the right things for the place, and I think in the end those of us who had that feeling about the pleasure of collaborating with architects of doing something for architectural settings, a pleasure which is very greatly diminished these days, but still a very, very great one. I think that the idea of doing the fitting thing is the foundation of one satisfaction, that you feel that you have solved the problem, by doing, but that place, or that building, or that symbolic opportunity requires, then you have done a good job, and I think that is the thing that you work for, certainly in his case. It was not—of course he was not unique in that, the whole generation of sculptors who worked for architects, felt the same way.



ROBERT BROWN: They didn't place great store by the autonomy of a piece of sculpture.

WALKER HANCOCK: No, no. This may be, this has suddenly occurred to me, we were talking about Daniel Chester French, this may be a very fine point, that marks Manship's generation from French's generation. Because I remember in our conversations at Lenox something that French said about a piece that he had done, for a chapel. It was a war memorial of a young man holding up a torch and it was to be in the chapel of one of the schools here in New England, St. Mark's or St. Paul's, one of them I've forgotten which. And, I said I admired the figure, and he said, "Yes, and I think it will dominate the building although the architects don't know it." And you see that would not have been the attitude of the next generation. We would have tried I think, to make it find its place in the chapel, to live up to its requirements, but not to be the center of interest.

ROBERT BROWN: That is well put, that capsulizes [sic] pretty well. Were there other sculptors with whom you were pretty close, in the 20s and 30s of your own generation?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, my own generation, we were, for instance Sidney Waugh and I were very great friends, [blank in transcript], who is still working bravely.

ROBERT BROWN: Another sculptor, although I guess he was somewhat older, who you worked with at one time or another was Adolph Weinman.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and I have always been so grateful for that experience. He was the sculptor in charge of the decoration of the Post Office Department building in Washington, and he chose two sculptors to work with him, and I was one of them, and he made a little sketch, which I have in the basement, it is only about that big, showing his idea for the composition for the pediment of the Pennsylvania Avenue side. And, so I made from that the scale model, in my studio in New York, and had the great pleasure and benefit of his coming in and looking at it, criticizing it, and looking at it, commenting. His criticisms were valuable because they were entirely those of a man experienced in how to make sculpture carry on a building. This was something that I didn't know very much about at the time, and yet—

ROBERT BROWN: This was the early 30s.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. And yet, he was always so appreciative that you felt quite set up when he left, you felt this is really working. He had a great sense of humor, but the thing that I admired about it was that he was clearly the disciplined Germanic sculptor of the old school. I could just imagine them all having been like Weinman in one way or another. In looks too, with his pointed beard, he looked the part very much, and beards weren't as common in those days as they are now, and they meant something. And, so that—well I will tell you a little story that will show you how meticulous he was about these things as they developed. We were working from the same model. The name was Carl, Carl Sary, and he was an excellent model, very, very strong man, and he went to Weinman in the afternoon after having worked for me in the morning, and one day Mr. Weinman called up and said, "Hancock, Sary is a very fine model, but he had one fault and you will have to be very careful or you will be misled by it, his pectorals are too low, now just be sure about your proportions." That's the way he talked. Imagine sculpture these days, being regarded in those terms. It is such a different world from the way that we think now. So, I went back to my work and to Sary and his pectorals didn't look too low to me but I put them where I thought they should be, and one day we shifted, and Sary went to him in the afternoon, no, no went to him in the morning, and came to me in the afternoon. Immediately there was a call from Mr. Weinman, "Hancock, Sary's pectorals are all right in the morning, must be because he is tired in the afternoon." And this of course is true, that's what happens to a person, but the fact that he followed him as closely as that, and was in a way so completely influenced by this live model, I think in terms of today is very interesting to look back.

ROBERT BROWN: Also via the preconception of what should be the correct formula—

WALKER HANCOCK: Indeed it did, there was a classic canon there, that he wanted to see respected.

ROBERT BROWN: Even if the live model couldn't.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: You collaborated with him on this one project.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, just that one. I of course, I then afterwards knew him very well, and saw a great deal of him, and liked him immensely, and he had a lovely sense of humor too. But, it was that kind of thing, that very happy relationship that you could only have with a person that you were collaborating with on the same job.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, can you give an example of his sense of humor.  
[blank interval on tape]

ROBERT BROWN: Then was it in the 30s that you began—you got to know the author Booth Tarkington, did you get to meet him up here or in New York?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I met him first in Philadelphia, because he was a great friend of very dear friends of mine, and we used to come to Kennebunkport in the summertime, but I saw him mostly in Philadelphia and Indianapolis. I went out there to visit him more than once. And, the head that I did from him, did of him, I did in Philadelphia at the house of my friends, it took me four and one-half days, and I didn't work on it afterwards.

ROBERT BROWN: And that's pretty quick working isn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well it was for me, Grafly could do a head oh, in less time than that, but I don't think I ever beat four and one-half days for a finished portrait.

ROBERT BROWN: What led to your friendship, yours and Tarkington?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it was a mutual friendship, he was enormously interested to talk about sculpture, he was of course a great enthusiast on the subject of painting, and sculpture too and he had his theories about it, and he was glad to have some young man to discuss these things with. And, when he posed he was just as entertaining as his stories, matter of fact he was very much like his stories, in the way in which he would recount his experiences. When the thing—while it was being done we were talking, with these friends who were with me about the projection of this and how this receded and how this was varied from the other side, after a while he said, "This is the first time in my life that I have been regarded as a mere object," and then when he saw the head being cast covered with the blue coating of plaster, which is the first coat that goes on, he said, "Now, for the first time I looked like something from the nursery," it was just like that, that kind of thing. But, he talked a great deal, and very seriously too, about the relation of painting and sculpture and writing, and he gave me some pointers about composing in sculpture, that I wish I had had a little earlier, because as I mentioned before I think that a part of our training that was perhaps detrimental was this constant self-criticism as you worked, "Am I doing the right thing, is this going to work," that kind of questioning. And he said, "When you write don't criticize yourself, just write, get it out, if you can't think of the right work leave a dash, and when it is all down, then you can go back and look it all over and see where you can improve it, and fit in the words that you missed," and so on. That of course, applied to composition in painting and sculpture is invaluable. And it is the way to do it. Not to mistrust any idea that comes to your head, but to get it out, and have a record of it and then you can go back and if it doesn't work then you've lost nothing, and if it does work, you're launched. He was a very conservative person in his critical judgment. He was very suspicious of all modern painting and sculpture, but more suspicious of the critics, and he had in fact a collection of clippings from the newspaper critics, that demonstrated to him two things; first of all, that they didn't know their own medium, which was writing; and second, that they deliberately avoided saying what they meant, in order to sound erudite, and perhaps gain a few extra pennies from the amount of news—

ROBERT BROWN: Additional lines.

WALKER HANCOCK: The additional lines it would take, and I wish I knew what had become of that collection, he showed it to me, his real one, it was a scrapbook.

ROBERT BROWN: Was he quite obsessed with critics? They were quite important to him in his career weren't they, even though he couldn't respect them.

WALKER HANCOCK: He didn't speak to me ever of literary critics, these were art critics, that he was talking about, and all his collection had to do with art criticism.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, did he have quite a large acquaintance among artists, or were you one of his closest artist friends?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, he knew quite a number of artists, yes. Paulanship he knew later very well, and he was painted of course, I forgot about that, now—I think he knew quite a number of painters and sculptors, talked about them a great deal. His personal acquaintance with the Silverman brothers who sold him his own collection of first of all eighteenth century British portraits, and later some old Italian masters, was the basis of his book, The [blank in transcript, probably meant to be Rumbin] Galleries. And he really knew their tricks and he learned them from the dealers, first-hand, who were very good friends and were perfectly free to tell him how they lured people into buying things that they had for sale. The most roundabout method.

ROBERT BROWN: But, he was a man who could laugh at his own mistakes or his own being used.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. He said, "When I finish this," he looked at it as if it had been [blank in transcript] of somebody else. And he said, "I think you would know that he was a writer, I think you would know that he was a comedian, and I think you would know that he was fond of observing human nature, and that he

had simply decided that because it was human nature the best thing to do would be just to laugh about it.” (laughs) And, he said it in just the way that he had been writing about his own eighteenth century portraits, analyzing the character of those people, it was very much in that vein.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, that was quite a compliment to you wasn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I was amused by it.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, by this time you were getting, as we say today, feedback of a very nice sort, weren't you? From friends like that.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes, it was very encouraging. By that time I think I had gotten over this constant questioning, maybe this is the wrong thing. Actually in modeling a head you don't have it because the head is right there, the man is right there, and you completely forget yourself, you have only the form to reproduce and the character of the man as it comes out in his changing expressions, and his conversation, so it is the least self-conscious thing that you could possibly do I think, modeling a quick portrait of another person.

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas something that is thematic or to be expressing an idea—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, if it is your own idea and your own composition, then there is room for all kinds of questions.

[end of first interview with Walter Hancock]

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH WALKER HANCOCK, August 8, 1977

At Gloucester, Massachusetts, by Robert Brown

ROBERT BROWN: We could begin today's session by perhaps talking about some of the colleagues and at least other sculptors that you have known. I think you met at least Lorado Taft when you were quite a young person. Could you explain that, describe it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think Lorado Taft was the first professional sculptor that I ever met. We had summers near Chicago, and the great thing was to take a trip into the Art Institute, and some friend gave me a letter of introduction to Lorado Taft. And, he was so kind, he took me to his studio and showed me the Fountain of Time that he was working on and he also introduced me to the enlarging machine. And, that was the first of course that I had ever seen. And I really remember very little of him, except for his extreme kindness to a young boy whose work he didn't know, but who showed interest in sculpture.

ROBERT BROWN: This was before you went to the Pennsylvania Academy?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes. Long before. I was a young kid.

ROBERT BROWN: As you look back, do you admire his work as you look back at it now?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I'm not sure that the piece I admire most isn't the very thing that I saw him working on, The Fountain of Time. That great imagination. I don't know what ever became of it, I don't know that it was ever executed, but it was to me a great wonder to see this vast thing in this studio.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned when we first talked about going out to the Berkshires, to Chesterwood to stay with Daniel Chester French. Is there anything else or other times that you met him, anything else you can tell us about him?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, he was so full of very wise little remarks that it is very hard to sit down and try to think of them all together, they come to you from time to time. One thing I do remember his saying, which I haven't been very good about obeying, was an admonition [to] never criticize your own work to anybody. "People will quote you, but forget to quote the source." I loved that. And then there was a time when I was visiting them, he had just gone through this great struggle with lighting the Lincoln Memorial. And it had been accomplished very successfully, and he gave me these two now very famous photographs taken one in the reflected light before the overhead light was turned on correctly, and the other with the present proper lighting. And I have been able to use these to good effect, in arguing for light, for the right light, very often. But, I remember his saying, shaking his head, "Sculpture is at the mercy of the light." And it is perfectly true. And while lighting out of doors can be very—that relentless business of the artificial light turned on your piece from the wrong direction. It is a very disheartening thing.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you not been as sensitive to that, till you met him?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think that every student is sensitive to it, but I think you've got to be a professional and must have been exposed to the anguish of seeing your finished work badly lighted to fully realize what a serious

thing it is.

ROBERT BROWN: Did your teacher at Pennsylvania Academy in architectural sculpture stress how sculpture must relate to its surroundings?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but I think that, I think I never heard him mention light. In fact I wonder some time whether architects do think as much about lighting as they should. I can think of some good examples where they haven't. Very good architects, too. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: That you tried to deal with?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. Think of the difficulty presented to the sculptor for instance by the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, where you have the light coming from below, and from all around, not to mention the moving lights of the traffic at night. It is an impossible situation, for a portrait statue.

ROBERT BROWN: Is that one—or something like that you ever had to deal with?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, as a matter of fact, I had to deal with that particular statue because dear old Evans, Rudolph Evans, was finishing that at the end of his active life, he was suffering at the time.

ROBERT BROWN: This was in the 1930s?

WALKER HANCOCK: Just before the war; actually the war had started. And they weren't able to cast it in bronze at once because of the war. But, he sent for me to go down to New York, and work by the day to simply give him the physical strength to pull it through. He was a delightful man, another very, very gentle person. I think, isn't it interesting that whole group of—that whole generation of sculptors were very gentle, kindly people. So different from some that (laughs) we can think of that have come along since. When you think of Herbert Adams who was like him in a way, French of course, and then a little later Fraser and his wife, the same kind of people exactly. Eager to do anything to help younger sculptors.

ROBERT BROWN: When did you meet the Frasers? In the 20s or—did you work closely with them?

WALKER HANCOCK: I didn't work closely with them. I knew them quite well. I think that I must have met both of them shortly after—oh, as a matter of fact I first met James Earl Fraser while I was competing for the Rome prize. We had to go and call on the members of the jury, who awarded the prize, make ourselves known and talk with them. And, that took me to his studio among others, I suppose Adams was another one, French another. I think that was the way I met all those men.

ROBERT BROWN: They were all very giving to a younger artist.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. To jump for a moment, almost a generation, apropos of that same business of going to call on members of the jury. There is a friendship that resulted from such a call between John Gregory and Sidney Waugh, that started because Gregory was likely to be less giving than the others had been. He was a—Gregory was English of course, perhaps Irish, and had great wit, very little patience with people at times, and Sidney had to go and ring his doorbell, and ask if he might come to see him to talk about the Rome prize. He had made an appointment properly, and Gregory expected him, but when he came to the door, he said, "Now, you've come to talk about the Pris de Rome haven't you." And Sidney said, "Yes." And Gregory said, "Are you going to come into my studio and talk about sculpture? Because I don't want to talk about sculpture." And so Sidney said, "Well, what would you like to talk about Mr. Gregory?" And he said, "Well, let me see, I'm interested in ...."

[tape ends and Brown inserts new tape]

WALKER HANCOCK: So Sidney said, "Well what would you like to talk about?" And John Gregory said, "Well, I'm interested in eighteenth century poetry, I collect first editions of eighteenth century romantic poetry." And Sidney said, "Well, I have a first edition of Endymion that I bought in Como for three lire." "Oh," John said, "Come right in." (laughs) And he went in, and they spent the rest of the afternoon writing poetry, writing sonnets, and Sidney got the Rome prize. (laughs) It was the kind of friendship that resulted from another kind of personality.

ROBERT BROWN: Was Gregory a rather eccentric man? Did you get to know him?

WALKER HANCOCK: Not really eccentric. He was unexpected, he always had a little unexpected twist to his humor, and he had a great sense of humor. He very frankly said that John Flaxman was his inspiration, and that when he did those, I think, splendid reliefs on the Folger Library, he had derived his sense of drama and composition from the Flaxman drawings, but of course not the treatment. I think it was Flaxman's engravings, and not his sculpture that inspired him. But, I remember him as a very humorous and wise man, he knew a great

deal, a great deal about things other than sculpture.

ROBERT BROWN: What about Sidney Waugh, did you get to know him?

WALKER HANCOCK: I got to know Sidney Waugh very well, because he came to me in Rome, with a letter of introduction from Daniel Chester French, and we became very good friends, rather on the same terms that he had become the friend of John Gregory. He wouldn't ever show me anything that he was doing. He was studying in Rome in an anatomy class taught by [a blank occurs here in original transcript] an expatriate refugee, a Russian sculptor. And, as warm as our friendship was, he would never let me see a thing that he had done. The first I knew of his work was actually that he had won the Rome prize, and was going to go over as a fellow. But, he as you know did a great—he was an extremely clever designer, and did a great deal of work for the—for glass, for glass engravings, and Corning Glass. And, I'm not sure that his greatest talent didn't lie in that. We had this pleasant kind of association. He was working with the figures on the opposite side of the triangle in Washington, while I was doing the pediment for the Post Office Department, and one of the figures that he was carrying out was the figure of the Guardian Ship which is on the entrance of the Archives building. One day he called me up and said, "Walker, I can't model feet, come down and model feet for me." (laughs) So, I went down and here is this superb figure, beautifully done with great monumental hands, and he could perfectly well have done the feet, but I modeled the feet. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: Did he lack a little confidence in certain areas?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well he had the feeling that his hands weren't as good as his feet. (laughs)  
Robert Brown; Well, particularly then was Waugh more or less your age, was he?

WALKER HANCOCK: He was a little younger, just a little bit younger.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there others of your type, or your age that you were pretty close with? In the 30s?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, Charles Rudy was a little younger than I am, a little younger. Bruce Moore studied with me in Grafly's class, he was a little younger, and we never worked together although I was associated with him on a few projects. I got to know them very well, and I liked them both very much.

ROBERT BROWN: Others that you mentioned ... You talked about Adolph Weinman last time, what about Albin Polasek?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, Albin Polasek was a student of Grafly's long before my day, and he in fact had been the prize student at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in his time, and had become practically a legend by the time I got there, and I had all this in mind when I first met him, and in fact, when I met him in Chicago all the stories that I had heard about him became suddenly true, because I could see that they really were in character. For instance, he was a cripple, I suppose he had had polio as a child, he limped very badly, but was enormously powerful, and an extremely modest and considerate person. He would never swear; they said that the worst thing that anybody ever heard him say, when he was absolutely enraged by something that one of the other students had done, was "You fellow." (laughs) That was as far as his profanity ever went. But, another thing that I am sure is true that they used to tell, was that he came in late one day while Grafly was criticizing the class, and not wishing to interrupt the criticism or disturb anybody, he picked up his modeling stand with the heavy clay figure on it, which must have weighed some three hundred pounds, and held it up in the air and walked across the room with it, and set it down, so that it wouldn't make the noise of scraping wheels. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to know him when you were on your own later?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I did. I talked with him in Chicago, and I verified some of these stories. Perhaps one of these would be interesting to you because it has a bearing on the way that he worked, eventually. He was born in Czechoslovakia, and as a boy had become so accustomed to carving wood, which was of course the tradition of that country, that by the time he came to Philadelphia to study, clay was a strange and rather difficult material to him. And we had to bring in compositions to be criticized once a month, and these compositions of course were developed by experiment, a great many changes as you could imagine, and it was all we could do to put them together in clay. But, he asked permission to bring in his wood, because it was easier for him to do them in wood than in clay, and I'm sure that's true. I remember walking under the L in Chicago with him, and when the noise had got to the point where he could be heard again, we stopped, and he said, "You know, when the bridge of St. John of Nepomuk in Prague was built, the citizens almost had the work stopped because of their complaints of the noise of the hammer on a chisel, they didn't like it. What would they have done here?" (laughs) Well, he was a charming, charming man. Very strong work.

ROBERT BROWN: The others that you could talk about now, that you have mentioned before.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I knew some of them much better than I did for instance Lipchitz, but I have a much

stronger impression of Lipchitz than I have of some of the people that I actually had more to do with simply because our encounters were rather intense always. He was, as you know, a very strong personality, had enormous charm, he could make people feel that he was perfectly angelic, and he really could be so, at times. And then he could be very overbearing, and he would dominate a jury to such an extent that if he were on a jury there was really no use of anyone else being there.

ROBERT BROWN: Can you give us some examples of his—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I can give you a very good—his action on a jury—I can give you a very specific one. We were called to judge, or to find a sculptor to execute a piece for the United Nations. And on the jury were, let me see, Zorach, David Smith, Manship originally, but he retired, and there was another. At any rate, the idea was to choose fifty sculptors, of whom we would request photographs and then with these photographs choose a number, say perhaps seven or ten, to submit models, which would be paid for. And, then one of these models would be chosen to be executed for the United Nations. And, the choice of the fifty went fairly easily, but when it came down to picking the few from that number of entries, invariably any suggestion that any of us would make Lipchitz would counter by saying, “No, no, we know what he would do, I would rather have this person whose work we don’t know. He might surprise us. He might do something.” This was repeated, to the point where I think the only really known sculptor who was invited was Naguchi, I think. I didn’t know the names of any of the others, and that seemed to be the point. Well, the result was what one would expect, we went to see the models that were exhibited at the Museum of Modern Art, and there they were. Perfectly ludicrous, and Lipchitz was the first to speak, and he said, “See what we have done. Our crime, see what we have done.” Well, I think an award was made, but it was clear that none of them would be carried out. That was the kind of thing—

ROBERT BROWN: What he got you into was picking people who weren’t reliable, or hadn’t—

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, well we were looking for people whose work showed that they had the experience to do this very large piece that was proposed.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you speak out very much in this?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, we did, but oddly enough, the people—we were all fairly (laughs) vocal and yet somehow it came to nothing. It was just curious, a very strong personality, curiously dominant in the case of a jury.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, some more on David Smith, how was he?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don’t remember his saying very much.

ROBERT BROWN: Did Zorach speak out very much?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but quietly. Zorach was not a vociferous person at all, he had a kind of pleasant headiness about him, in a good sense, you know. It was a curious experience .... And, then another example of the kind of thing that you could run into with Lipchitz. I used to have various sculptors come to my class in the Pennsylvania Academy, and criticize the students, and then talk with them afterwards, particularly after a competition. And he was very kind, and very glad to come and gave them very generous criticism, very much to the point, quite traditional criticism, just what any other good instructor would have given, which was what they needed to be reassured that they weren’t missing something very far out, by not having people like that around.

ROBERT BROWN: And then he gave them traditional criticism, which surprised them I suppose.

WALKER HANCOCK: One very sweet little girl went up to him afterwards, and said that she was so glad to meet him, because she had studied with Mestrovich at Syracuse and Mestrovich had spoken very so often of Lipchitz. And Lipchitz bridled and said, “What did he say, did he like my work?” And she said, “Oh, yes, oh yes he did.” “Well, I’m very glad because I don’t like him, I don’t like his work. His work is bombastic, and no one has the right to be bombastic.” And this rather amazed me. He had a way of being so generous with artists whose work was traditional, tame, if it was good, if it was well done. But, being tremendously impatient with people who did certain kinds of sculpture that weren’t his. For instance, the time I was seeing something of him, he was absolutely down on everything that was abstract. He pointed at a piece of abstract sculpture at the Guggenheim Museum once, and said, “Look, nobody has the right to do abstractions.” And of course he had done them himself, at a time. Which again amused me because there again—and this was true with most of the sculptors who I’ve served with on juries in that way—all sculptors are out of patience with work that isn’t dated as of today in their opinion. I remember Bill Zorach once at the Academy of Fine Arts, we were about to give a medal to a piece which was rather abstract, very much more abstract than anything Zorach ever attempted. And he said, “Well, you could do that sort of thing fifteen years ago, but you can’t do that now.” But they were after all doing such work, and more extremely, in the few years later, it was just every man seemed to have his idea of the proper dating for a thing. That entered so much into his estimate of the work, in awarding prizes.

ROBERT BROWN: So Zorach thought that this would have been avant-garde fifteen years before. You might have given a medal then, but not now. Whereas your attitude is a bit broader do you think? You try to look at it on its own merit?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I try. I haven't the ability, I'm sorry to say, to look at myself critically enough, and see what I, what ridiculous things I may have said and done on juries. But, I've tried to put aside that question of what belongs in what year, as much as possible. Because I really do enjoy so many different kinds of sculpture, and it doesn't really make a great deal of difference to me what year the thing was done in.

ROBERT BROWN: Including abstract sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, indeed. Yes, yes. Not all of it either, by any means, I have my own choices, but they aren't based on dates.

ROBERT BROWN: Were there any sculptor friends, who were abstract sculptors?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. I have had very good friends who became abstract sculptors. I found that the best of them were all grounded as we were, in the traditional thing. I remember once Archipenko saying to me really very seriously about learning to draw, and learning to model, and he said, "If you can't draw what you see, how can you hope to draw what you feel?" He said it with such emphasis, you know.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you meet him fairly early on, Archipenko, when did you—

WALKER HANCOCK: I knew him during my teaching days. I had a great deal to do with other sculptors at that time, and [we] were collecting work to go into the annual exhibitions. And, we visited all the sculptors that we possibly could, and we—it was the way for instance that I first heard of Sandy Calder, I think I told you this before—but we went through his father's studio, Sterling Calder, to get some of his work. He was not interested in showing us what he was doing, he wanted to tell us about his son, who was doing these wonderful things in wire, and he was so proud of them.

ROBERT BROWN: There was really no great [blank in transcript] then. In a way, here is a father who is a very successful, traditional sculptor, proud of his son who is moving into abstraction, really, at least with untraditional materials.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. Well, I think Sterling Calder was a man of great imagination and with a keen interest in everything going on in life, and this was one of the great things that was going on—happening in his family.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you get to meet—get to know either of the Calders very well?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I felt that I knew Sterling Calder fairly well, I don't think—I may just have met Sandy Calder. He by the way was one of the fifty invited to send photographs of his work, the only one who didn't send photographs. He sent instead a letter, which I thought was delightful. It said, "Gentlemen, if by this time you don't know what my work looks like, it's just too damn bad." (laughs) And if he had sent a piece, photographs, he wouldn't have been selected obviously.

ROBERT BROWN: Is Zorach somebody you knew over a number of years?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I saw him on and off over a number of years.

ROBERT BROWN: What was he like? You characterized him at the U.N. jury, but what was he—in general, any other aspects of him that—

WALKER HANCOCK: He is hard to describe, he was always, he—I think affected the peasant. He enjoyed saying slightly vulgar things, with the hope that he might shock somebody. The man wasn't really like that.

ROBERT BROWN: Sort of barnyard humor.

WALKER HANCOCK: But, he loved that kind of humor, yes. And he would bring it out in unexpected places. But, he was a person with great understanding of sculpture. Of all of sculpture. I used to love to hear him talk about the work in these exhibitions, as he went around looking for somebody to give a prize to. And, he began after all as a watercolorist. His sculpture grew out of his experiments with boulders in Maine. And, he kept some of that character of the boulder even when it was modeled. Even to the end when he did fairly free figures. Which I think weren't his best. I think his forte was in sculpture, that still somehow related to the rock, to the—but he wrote a superb book on stone carving. And a book which sculptors like Herbert Adams, more old-fashioned people respected as perhaps the best that had been done. And it came from really his own experiments and experience, self-taught.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever go into this, stone carving? Many people did in the thirties.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that was a time when I really couldn't go in—I've carved marble but I have never carved direct [blank in transcript], I've taken a rock and tried—I just know a little bit what those problems would be, but not as the result of any real discipline in the thing. I'm sorry to say, because I would have loved to do it. I enjoy carving more than I do modeling.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, your initial course with Grafly was mainly the modeling as well.

WALKER HANCOCK: It was clay, all together.

ROBERT BROWN: You also got to know, I don't know just when, Carl Millis. Where did you meet him?

WALKER HANCOCK: Millis I met in New York after he had come to [blank]. And he used to come to the sculpture society meetings there. I didn't know him personally very well, although I feel that I knew him. We were friends, and it was always in a very happy jovial way. He believed in the happiness of life, and the pleasures, the beauty of things around him. He was—I think that he was a great spirit, I think that his contribution was immense in this country. He came along at a very good time too. We were so concerned with the help of the galleries and museums, with the doctrinaire approach to art, especially sculpture. And, to have this blithe spirit come in from, wherever it happened to be, Sweden, it might have been from anywhere, and do these beautiful lively things not committed to any doctrine or any theory, but just for charm and beauty of—

ROBERT BROWN: Many of you American sculptors of the 30s were getting very, very serious with political overtones.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh yes. Political overtones, not necessarily, but I think that people had begun to preach about sculpture so much and read so much, I mean everybody from [blank] down as—telling what sculpture was, and very rightly so much of it was. We needed to be brought back to a respect for the medium itself. We needed it very much, but at the same time it involved a very serious point of view, and the light-hearted attitude that the Germans, even, were so easily capable of and their out-of-doors sculpture did so much to enrich and rejoice life.

ROBERT BROWN: Who do you mean, Lanebrook or Caldwell?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, not Lanebrook, not that kind of sculpture. But people like, well, let me see, people such as the minor sculptors, a great many of them unknown, who decorated the cities with fountains with half humorous subjects, and things that would make people smile as they went by.

ROBERT BROWN: In your career you've almost entirely, or at least your most important work has been on commission, as opposed to working on your own rather speculatively, for sale in a gallery, or for private people who would buy what you had already made.

WALKER HANCOCK: Right.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you comment a bit on what this has meant, in terms of your life and also in terms of perhaps what sort of sculpture you have done, when you have been working for clients, on commission?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it has made all the difference. It is perhaps not what I would have chosen as one—as a situation that one fell into, rather easily, coming back from Rome in 1929. While sculpture was still being used in connection with architecture, the commissions were there waiting for us thanks largely to the patronage of such architects as Dedannow, Aldrich, Cross, men like that. And, we were confronted with problems. And, it began to be to me a very fascinating thing to be given a problem, a situation, requirements of setting, subject matter, scale, and so on. And, to solve it as a problem. To try to reach a fitting solution. And I think the word fitting occurred to me again and again, is this the right thing for this place, and I believe that is a very different attitude from that of people who work more freely. Whether I continued in this by force of habit or by limitation of natural talent I don't know. Perhaps the latter has a lot to do with it. Because I don't know what I would do now if I were given free flight to do a great work of fantasy. At any rate it has always been fascinating to me, to try to find the right solution to the problem, to try to bring one's clients into agreement to accept the right thing, which is always very hard to do, or often very hard to do. And, then sometimes the problem of getting the thing executed properly is another phase of the problem that is interesting. As far as educating the clients is concerned Mr. French used to tell me that was a very important part of what the sculptor had to learn to do. And he said, "I have always been able to do it. I have been patient, and in the end I have been allowed to do what I thought was right." So, I tried to follow that.

ROBERT BROWN: You found that generally true.



WALKER HANCOCK: That is generally true. Sometimes it takes a bit of doing. There was one situation which for a time seemed almost hopeless, and yet it was a very, very simple problem. The family of the chairman of the board, the late chairman of the board, of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company came to get a statue of Mr. Litchfield and they said, "First of all Father had polio when he was young, we want him to stand so that it shows that he had polio. He also was a very tall man with a very large head." Well, I agreed that the polio could be taken care of somehow, but I said, "There is one choice that you will have to make: do you want him to be tall, or do you want him to have a big head? Because you can't have both."

ROBERT BROWN: They didn't understand that.

WALKER HANCOCK: They didn't understand that. I said, "Invariably this is a large piece of sculpture unrelated to the man's actual size, unrelated to human scale. If you give him a big head he will look like a small man." They really didn't understand it, they came back and forth from Akron, looked at the model, and when they looked at the model they seemed very happy, then when I sent them photographs of the same model and they saw it at home, they were unhappy. They thought the head looked too large or too small, I forgot just exactly what we went through but it had to come eventually to an issue and I saw that the only way to do it was to make three heads fit this nine foot statue. It wasn't too difficult, because I made the head as large as they wanted it at first. Then I made a mold, a piece mold over that, made a clay squeeze, let that shrink, made another clay squeeze, let that shrink, and fired it. So, I had a head in three sizes. And, I put hooks in the top of each, and we got the family here. The family was always in disagreement with each other about details too. But I realized I was going to have to get them together once and for all. So, they came in and the large head was on it, and they said, but you know, it doesn't look as tall as father did, and I said no it doesn't. We can make it look taller by putting on a somewhat smaller head, so I hoisted that head off and dropped another head in place. And, they said well, that looks better, but it still isn't as tall as father. And, so I lifted that off and put the smallest head in place and then they agreed that it looked like a tall man, but, I said, "Now the head is much too small isn't it?" "Well," they said, "I guess we'll just have to leave it that way." (laughs) It does take patience in a way, when you know the easy answer at the outset, an axiomatic thing, and have to go through all that to prove it to a person who—

ROBERT BROWN: And this was axiomatic in terms of figural sculpture?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: When was that, about when was that commission? In the 40s—

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it was later than that. Oh, it was after the war.

ROBERT BROWN: But, you found, generally speaking, that you were able to accommodate your pursuit of what you thought was best in the end, with what they could accept, with what the clients could accept.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it promised to be most difficult in the case of the Pennsylvania Railroad War Memorial.

ROBERT BROWN: That was made in 1948.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, 1948. Because there the president of the railroad had seen a monument that he liked, and wanted something almost exactly like it for the Pennsylvania Railroad.

ROBERT BROWN: What sort of thing did he want?

WALKER HANCOCK: He had seen a statue of a charming lady angel lifting up a dead soldier. And he said, "We would like exactly this, but we can improve on it I think, by making the soldier's shirt a little more torn, and adding some grenades to his belt. That would make it more realistic." The question then and there was will I be able to undertake this honestly, knowing that I am not going to do just what this gentleman is determined to have me do.

ROBERT BROWN: You right away had an aversion to—

WALKER HANCOCK: Right away I knew that I couldn't do that.

ROBERT BROWN: You didn't like sentimental?

WALKER HANCOCK: There was the question of whether I could do a soldier being lifted up by an angel, and keep it from being too sentimental, and sweet. But, I decided the thing to do was to try it, and so I had a model made of the end of the great room of the 30th Street Station, and in it tried two sketch models in the round. One of them carrying out as well I could the president's suggestion. The other taking the angel and lifting the soldier as a motif for something almost resembling a column, another architectural element in the room.

ROBERT BROWN: Which has columns?

WALKER HANCOCK: Which has columns, exactly. This would be seen against columns, and by the way, they gave me the choice of the setting, which I was very happy for. So, having produced these two sketches, I went to the vice-president for operations—in the railroads like the army, there is a chain of command and you don't go back to the president, you go back to the particular vice-president who has to do with the project at hand. And, this was the vice-president of operations, and I explained to him that Mr. Clement the president had wanted one thing, I had tried another. I didn't tell him which was which, showed him the sketches, and I said, "Which do you prefer?" And he looked at me quite a while, and said, "Well, I don't know anything about sculpture, but I can tell you how these make me feel. This one," pointing to the first, "makes me think of a man who has had a fainting fit and this nice young girl is helping him up, and this one"—this is what surprised me—he said, "This one make me think of a soul being conducted to Heaven." Those were his exact words, and I could hardly believe my ears. (laughs) And I said, "This is exactly the way I feel about it, but Mr. Clement I'm sure will prefer the first. What do you think should be done?" And he said, "Well, just leave it with me," and eight months later I was getting the order to go on with the second scheme.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you ever learn how—

WALKER HANCOCK: I never learned what went on behind the scenes, what marvelous diplomacy must have been put into effect.

ROBERT BROWN: Working further then with the vice-president was easy.

WALKER HANCOCK: Very easy, and from that moment on there wasn't a word either of criticism or of arbitration. They paid their bills as the various stages were completed. I couldn't get any word from them, and after having worked in this vacuum for two years, I said to the vice-president, "This has been a very strange experience for me to have no comment from the clients at all." He said, "Oh no, the railroad works like the old army, a man is given an assignment, and if he carries it out he doesn't hear anything. If he doesn't carry it out he does." (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: This was not typical, was it? Most of the time you do hear.

WALKER HANCOCK: Most of the time you are, I won't say "swords' points," but some kind of conflict with your clients. And, they usually end in the greatest friendships, the harder the time you have, the greater the friendship seems to result.

ROBERT BROWN: Would you want to talk about any somewhat earlier commissions?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I can tell you, at some length, if you don't mind, about one of my early experiences, my largest early experience, which was the St. Louis Soldiers' Memorial. The architect came to me with a design for a building, done in the style of the day, which was a kind of Art Deco, but a very ponderous architectural mass. Very good, I think for its kind. And they said, "Now we want winged horses on both sides of these entrances. What do winged horses mean?" And I said, "Well, the only winged horse that I know of was Pegasus, and that meant poetic inspiration." And they said, "Well, it can't mean that on this building. What can we make a winged horse mean?" And I thought, "Well, if you put figures beside the winged horses you might suggest that they have a certain meaning." So, that idea was agreed upon, and I made the models and they were approved by the architect, the sketch models, then the scale model, and we had finished three, there were to have been four altogether, a male and a female figure on each side of the building. I had reached the last one, which in my sketch was female figure shown bearing a floral offering of some kind, a wreath. And, they said don't bother submitting the scale model, we're in a hurry, just go ahead, it will be approved, everything is all right, and we'll get it out as fast as we can. So I did this figure of the woman, in which I changed what had been in the sketch to a figure of a child. This I had in my studio in New York, at the time I was living in my studio on 20th Street.

And, early in the morning, well two o'clock to be exact, I was awakened by a voice that said, "This is the New York Times, we want to know about the fight you're in in St. Louis." And I was a bit sleepy, and I said, "I'm not in any fight in St. Louis," and they said, "Oh, yes you are, the fight about the baby." And I said, "I don't know anything about a fight about a baby." And they said, "Would you like me to read you the dispatch?" And I said, "If you let me hear the dispatch I can clear it up." Well, this was the dispatch: "Director of Public Works, amazed to find the woman has a baby. Will cost one thousand dollars extra to carve, and will be rejected." And I said, "Well this is the first that I have heard of it, a very distinct thank you for letting me know." Then in a few minutes another newspaper called up, and said, "What about the baby?" And by that time I knew where I was and I said that I had nothing to say until I had corresponded with the architects, and so when the third newspaper had called, this was still before six o'clock, I realized that the thing for me to do was to get out of town, because I was going to be forced to say something that might be difficult to deal with later, so I came up here to Gloucester, and then telephoned the architects from here. And Mr. Crowell, the architect with whom I dealt, said, "Well, Hancock, I don't know what we can do for you. Brown, the Director of Public Works, is up in arms, we can't deal with him, and if you want that baby you better come out here and deal with him yourself."

So, I went out there, and went into Mr. Brown's office. It was a great big office in City Hall, and he saw me at the door, and he stood up at his desk and before I had a chance to say anything he held onto his desk and said, "I don't want that baby!" (laughs) And I said, "Well, Mr. Brown I certainly don't want you to take a baby that you don't want, but before I know what to do next, I will have to know why you don't want the baby, and what you suggest, what is our next step. I must know what is in your mind." Well he said, "You're trying to get another one thousand dollars out of us and they're using that baby, and you can take it out." And I said, "Well, as a matter of fact it would cost a good deal more than a thousand dollars to change it, would like me to pay the extra carving?" "No, no, no. You can't do that, that is entirely irregular, the city has a contract with these people for doing a certain thing, you can't get into anything like that." So, he wouldn't hear that, so my next step was to call the carver, and this man was a very difficult one to deal with, because he had been the lowest bidder, being a government financed project. He was a tombstone maker, and had no idea what the carving involved and he had already made a very bad mistake carving one of the wings, and I had redesigned the wings in that group so that it would fit into the remaining stone. And, so I had really a very ignorant man to deal with and said, "Well, Mr. Muchari, why are you charging a thousand dollars extra for the baby? You know perfectly well that that floral decoration that the sketch showed, that you figured on, would be a very much more complicated thing to carve than the simple figure of the child." Well, his answer was what you might expect, and I could see that what was behind it was simply this, that he had realized after the first bad mistake that he couldn't go through with the job, and he'd have to send out for good carvers to come from New York, and carry it out. This was costing him a great deal more, and he was having to find some excuse to get more money. So after a conference with him, I realized his aim was to get me to get the Pichirelli brothers, the great carvers in New York, to testify that because my model was a slightly different fraction smaller or larger than one third size, the cost of carving it would be so vastly increased that they were entitled to much more money. Of course, there was no difference in the work at all, and the Pichirellis wouldn't have thought of testifying to such a thing, and I wouldn't have thought of asking them. But, it was clear that they were after something from me that was going to get them out of this scrape, and so one day, they said, "We are going to give you that baby, Mr. Hancock. We are going to give you that baby." And I said, (laughs) "I don't want the baby as a present." "Oh yes, we are going to give you that baby, we are going to meet at the mayor's office, and we are going to sign an agreement and we'll go ahead with the baby."

So we met and the Director of Public Works was there, everybody was there, and the arrangement was made that they would carve the baby at no extra cost. Then the papers were brought out to sign, and they wouldn't sign. And their lawyer, who was a [blank in transcript] if there ever was one, oh what a character he was, said they wished to sign but felt they couldn't until the bonding company's lawyer was present. Well, the bonding company's lawyer couldn't be located, so the agreement remained unsigned. Two or three days later, I was about ready to come back east, and things were still in the air, and I was standing with my sister in front of the building when Mr. Sanders, the carvers' lawyer came by. He really did act the part, he was the humblest, most groveling little kind of fellow, and I said after a while, "Mr. Sanders, when are we going to have that paper about the baby ready to sign? I'd like to go back east." And he said, "Oh, Mr. Hancock, when we are trading horses we like to know what our horses are worth." So I turned to my sister and pointed to the wing that had been carved, and I said, "Laura, Mr. Sanders' client ruined two stones that had been supplied to him to carve that group, and I redesigned the wing in order that they might be fitted into the stone that was left. But, they don't know about that at the city hall." Well, he seemed a little taken aback and said, "Well, that is the kind of thing that we keep in the family isn't, Mr. Hancock?" (laughs) And I said, "Mr. Sanders, from your trading horses" but then I left, Laura and I walked off. The paper was signed, and the carving was done, by good New York carvers, they did get more money, but I don't know how they did it, but they didn't get it with my help.

ROBERT BROWN: So that's an example of sub-contractors not up to the task, and resorting to various means. Do you very often come up against that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, you are more often up against other things. You are often, of course, put to great difficulty in dealing with foundries, carvers. I've had other cases that aren't very interesting that we pulled through. The pleasant things I think outweigh them, such as the experience I had in carving the Madison statue, I think I told you.

ROBERT BROWN: That very recent one. Among your earliest commissions was a fountain in the zoo. Wasn't it at St. Louis also?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that interested me very much, and it gave me tremendous pleasure. To begin with it was in a beautiful setting at the end of the great aviary, through which one walked along a covered walkway, an arched walkway, and this fountain was to be seen within the lunette of the opposite end of the aviary. And I thought that I would do a bird charmer, preferably an Indian. And it turned out to be a Zuni Indian, and he was kneeling with birds on his arms, and I had never been out in that country; I didn't know Zuni Indians, or any Indians for that matter, very well. So, I steeped myself, as well as possible in information that I could get at the Museum of the American Indian in New York. And, I had excellent photographs of Zuni costume, and headdress, and the figure was something like a seven foot figure and I was doing it in Grafly's studio here in Folly Cove

while he was in California. And—no, it was after his death. At any rate, I was working—

ROBERT BROWN: In the 1930s?

WALKER HANCOCK: 1930s, yes, right after his death. And I was working there and things were going very smoothly until I came to the head, and the position of the head with the curious headdress of the Zuni Indians gave me extraordinary difficulties. The knot at the back of the head as it lay on the neck seemed all wrong to me, despite everything that I could do to follow the photographs faithfully, the rest of the hair somehow seemed not a part of the figure, and I finally became desperate. And when you reach that point there is just one thing to do, which is to tear the piece apart, at least a good part of the piece, and start over. So, I resolved to destroy the head and make an entirely new one. And when you make a decision like that you learn to wait just a little bit before you carry it out.

So, I took my bicycle and went out on the main road for a little ride. I had gone a very short distance when a large open car drove by, and a voice called out, "Walker, what are you doing here?" And I turned and saw a somewhat familiar face, somebody who had stayed at the pensione in Florence where I had been a few years before. Ordinarily in such a situation you would say, "I'd rather not show you what I am doing," but I said, come and see it, I will show you what I am doing. So, I brought them into the studio—there were about six of them—and we looked for a while, and they said nothing. And finally I said, "I'm having such a terrible time with this head, I'm going to tear it off. You've come just in time to see it before it goes." And they said, "What is the trouble?" And I said, "Well, I can't make the hair look right, it just won't work. I have these photographs here, and all the information I need, but I still can't do it." And then a young woman who was with them said, "I think if you cut this bang back here, a little farther, it would help." Well of course I was willing to [try] anything at that moment for anybody, so [I] dashed up and cut the bang off and it did help some. And then she said, "Now it should come back a little more here." So I cut it a little more there, and it looked better. And I said, "But you know the real trouble is this knot, it is never going to be ..." "No," she said, "the knot isn't right, it should go this way." Then she came up to the statue and pointed here and there, and said now it should go this way, and I did that, and now she said it should go that way, and I did that. And before long, she and I were almost working on it together, and in about three quarters of an hour it was done. And I knew that it was right, and it wasn't going to have to be destroyed, and I said, "How did you know all this?" And she said, "Oh, I live in Zuni, New Mexico."

And that was the end of it. They disappeared, and I sent her a photograph of the finished statue but it came back undelivered. I never knew how she was or how it happened. One of those wonderful coincidences.  
[Brown flips tape]

ROBERT BROWN: Another large commission you said presented interesting problems is one finished in 1972, the figure of Christ in Majesty for the high altar of the Episcopal Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Would you discuss a bit that commission?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, because a commission like that does present problems quite different from the ordinary. One after all has to make one's work harmonious, in this case with a Gothic background. There are traditions that must be observed, traditions of pose and dress, and at the same time, it mustn't look like a piece of thirteenth century sculpture, it must be archaeological to that extent. So, it involves—

ROBERT BROWN: It mustn't or it must look?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it shouldn't. I believe it shouldn't have a look of a forgery. So it involves a great many questions that are enormously interesting. In this case there had been at least three attempts to find the right solution for that figure, and in each case they had been taken down. I was simply told that this was another try, and that the thing would be put up in plaster, and lived with for a while, before any decision would be made to carve it. And I thought that this was very wise, of course, but of course I wanted to live with it myself for a bit.

ROBERT BROWN: Who were you working with, the bishop?

WALKER HANCOCK: I was working with primarily with Dean Sayer, with the Clerk of Works Richard Fuller, the architect Mr. Froman, ostensibly the authority in this case but at that time so old that he didn't give it the close attention that he surely would have done twenty years before. This may have been a mercy for both of us. Because it gave me more freedom, and I know that he would have been inclined to wish something to be more definitely archaeological in its treatment. He made one very good suggestion, which was the figure should have its feet on the clouds instead of the conventional world city that is shown in such sculptures as that at Chartres where you get architectural base for the feet. I did like that suggestion and we did use it. And in the end Mr. Froman I am glad to say was very much pleased with it, he did live long enough to see it up, and approve it. But, things had been expected of that great central panel that were simply impossible to fulfill. The Clerk of Works wanted the figure to be completely readable, let's say, from one entrance at the farthest end of the great nave, at once. Well, this is clearly impossible, at that distance.

ROBERT BROWN: What is the distance, several hundred feet?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it is one of the greatest cathedrals in the world actually. And he wanted the expression of the face to read from very much farther than any sculpture could be made to do. Things of that kind. So, it came to an enormously interesting exchange of ideas between him, and the Dean, and myself. And, it made me do some pretty serious thinking and—

ROBERT BROWN: A good deal of it new for you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think that was the fascinating thing about all of these commissions is that each one is new; you never feel that you are really experienced when you are confronting something that you haven't confronted before.

ROBERT BROWN: What were the main things that they were puzzled about?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, the thing that was puzzling was first of all, the carrying power of form unaided by painting. And, I had to prove to them that to make the thing as visible as they wished it would be it would have to be polychromed, and that is what would have been done in the thirteenth century. I gave them examples of why, and that of course they hadn't even confronted the possibility of.

So, we gave that a good deal of consideration in connection with the light. Here is where I am glad that the architect didn't have to enter in, because the position of the figure, the conventional pose, the benediction necessarily with the right hand, cast a grotesque shadow like a hook against the vesica behind it. The light had been consistently—all of it artificial by the way—consistently on the south side because Mr. Froman said that is where the sun is, so that is where the light must come from. So I said the only thing to do is to turn the world around and have the sun come from the north, which they agreed to do. And as soon as we brought the lights from the north the shadows fell in the right place, the face itself was properly illuminated and we had nothing but the carrying power of the unaided, uncolored form to worry about. That I am sure they were reconciled to. The figure does show itself for what it is at a considerable distance.

The problem from then on was simply to exert authority sufficient to keep the lights where they were. Everybody who had anything to do with a service, a television show, a this, a that, wanted to change the lights and put them either below or above or on the side. For a moment it is very satisfactorily handled because the lights that turn on normally are the lights on the north side, not too bright. The nave for economy's sake is kept as dark as it should be, and the effect I think is really very good.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you consider polychrome?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, well, yes. I would have done it.

ROBERT BROWN: Had you done that before, with other things?

WALKER HANCOCK: I have considered doing it. And this again presents a very interesting problem. I have talked about polychrome with Paul Genoiau, at the time when I was thinking of polychroming a similar composition, the one that I had done for Cram. And, Genoiau said, "You know, if you are going to polychrome an architectural composition you have to design the color at the same time you design your sculpture. You can't just model it and then paint it." Those were very wise words, and they were the results of his experience at the Pennsylvania Museum, the Philadelphia Museum, where he did the one pediment that was carried out in polychrome. And, he had worked with [blank in transcript] in polychroming that, and it had I think turned out very successfully, and to their great surprise they discovered that the colors that would have to be used in order to count were the rawest pure colors right out of the box, there was no room for subtlety at all in that use of color. I learned a great deal about it just listening to him, but I think we could have redesigned this in a way to make polychroming feasible, although that would have meant using the color over the whole [blank] and that would never have been heard of by the committee.

ROBERT BROWN: They wanted something white and clean, comparatively speaking. Did you mean by what Genoiau told you was that your texture, your surfaces, everything has to be planned with the kind of color you are going to use?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. Well, my point in all of this was that the color carries very much farther than any form can, so that what you get at a distance is not the design of your form, it's the design of your color.

ROBERT BROWN: Which should though read as form—?

WALKER HANCOCK: And that should read as form, but it has to read as design, it has to be satisfying in every way without the help of the form. Very interesting. It makes me wonder of course what the method of the Greeks

was when they used color for more than simply accentuating figures.

ROBERT BROWN: They used it for—

WALKER HANCOCK: They colored them fully, in many cases.

ROBERT BROWN: When you were trained, and the kind of work that you do, by and large, is uncolored, isn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I've never really done polychrome pieces.

ROBERT BROWN: One of your largest and most important recent commissions, the seated figure of James Madison, has been finished in the last year, in 1976. By the new Library of Congress building, the Madison Building in Washington. Can you describe that a bit, that project, what you were asked to do and what you tried to do?

WALKER HANCOCK: What I was asked to do was exactly what I would have wanted to do for that situation.

ROBERT BROWN: It was a happy coincidence.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. It was in the contract I was required to do a seated figure of Madison in a chair of appropriate design, and was quickly agreed that the period in which he should be represented was that in which he really became the father of the Constitution. Long before he was president. After all, it was he who at the age of thirty-two drew up the list of books which established the Library of Congress, even though they couldn't afford to buy them at the time. And, so he was also father of the Library of Congress. I didn't know enough about Madison when I started, I needed to do a great deal of reading and I spent as much time as possible at the beginning making up for the reading I should have done earlier. I found him to be an absolutely fascinating character, who with Jefferson was responsible for the—largely responsible for the Constitution and responsible too for the practicability of many of Jefferson's ideas which to Jefferson came simply as flashes of inspiration, but needed the discipline and intellect of Madison to bring to reality. He was of course the great intellect of the day, with the possible exception of Franklin.

ROBERT BROWN: All of this you then translate into your conception of the figure.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that is what I am [blank] to do. He was a little man, he was regarded as a stiff, unprepossessing, all that, his voice was weak, but when he spoke he demolished his opponents' arguments, and I wanted to have him sitting there with his book in hand—because after all this is the Library of Congress—listening intently, and ready to leap up at any moment and take over, when he spotted a weakness that needed to be dealt with.

ROBERT BROWN: You couldn't make a statue of him though [life] size could you, you had to—

WALKER HANCOCK: It was required that the statue should be a nine foot figure.

ROBERT BROWN: That required a good deal of enlargement, didn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. He was five foot six, and some say five foot four, it's hard to tell which is right. But, being a sculptor, I chose five foot six, it made it a little easier, and then of course, having that information and that wonderful life mask of him by Brouair, which is in the New York Historical Association, I was able to piece the dimensions of the head with dimensions of a five foot six figure, and get a man of Madison's proportions. Which were described in his days as being very good, well proportioned, and well muscled, despite the fact that he had poor health a great deal of the time.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you work initially from a model?

WALKER HANCOCK: I worked constantly from a model. I had even to go to some pains to find a model the right size, two or three models I could piece together, so to speak, to get a figure the right proportion, the right size. I was determined that though this figure might sit rigid and attentive, rather than relaxed as the usual seated figure is, that it should have a certain flow of life through it. And I think that came much more easily having the actual human being there. I made the first sketch in a costume that I got from photographs. I changed it in the third-sized model, which was the one in which all of the important details have to be solved. There, following the normal procedure, I made the study very carefully worked out in the nude, and then dressed it up in the costume which I had got from a costumer in New York and very carefully authenticated as to the period and so on.

ROBERT BROWN: And you worked on this with three separate models?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, we usually do that. The first model is the one in which you easily make experiments and changes, push the head around, move the arms. That's a very difficult thing to do by the time you get to the

third-sized.

ROBERT BROWN: Each one is larger, is that right?

WALKER HANCOCK: Each one's larger, yes. Normally, it works very well in a figure of monumental size, which is something around nine feet, to do a one-sixth size model, then a one-third size, and then a full-size. The full-size is an absolute necessity these days. There were times when one could give a half-size model to the carver, and have the carver do the enlarging. The Lincoln Memorial for instance was enlarged from a smaller model, there was no full sized model of that. But that simply can't be done anymore, the craftsmanship isn't good enough.

ROBERT BROWN: Was the model then of yours done in Italy?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, the full size model was done here in this room, and then shipped in plaster to Italy.

ROBERT BROWN: And this is a traditional practice, for the American sculptors to send a large piece to be carved in—

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it isn't necessarily the traditional practice, because until recently there were very fine carvers in this country. And when the Pichielli brothers were active in New York, there was no reason to send anything abroad. They could carve anything, and they—I had a very happy experience. They carved the first life-sized statue that I did when I came back from Rome. So I got to know some of the family, and that wonderfully Tuscan existence that they brought to New York, living in a great house, eating at a refectory table with quantities of spaghetti and wine, and all that. And their paper hats every day. It was a great life that one hates to see it disappear. It's gone from this country, but one finds it still in Pietro Santa, and that is where this work was done. And where my present bust is being carved.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you describe what was involved, at least for you when you went over to the shop in Pietro Santa? What was done there, and what did you do?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. The first trip was to find, the first trip was to see, a piece of marble which they had discovered. The great quarries—originally opened by the way by Michelangelo—had been nearly worked out of pure white marble, and to find a large piece without dark veins in it is nearly impossible, and they spent a winter looking for this piece. And having found it in the early spring, I went over to see it in the quarry before it was cut out, and it looked promising so he got to work on it. And then I went over two or three times while it was being done, and in the end stayed with it to finish little details such as the face, hands and a few other things that really required my own hand.

ROBERT BROWN: They are able to carry it virtually to completion with their pointing machine.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, they can do very, very well; very, very far.

ROBERT BROWN: Have you preferred to use that method of having a craftsman carry it through to nearly the finish, or have you sometimes yourself wanted to—

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I'd rather not surrender any of it to anybody else, if it weren't an absolute necessity, but economically it would be impossible. These days to carve a figure like that requires a crew of four men to do it in a couple of years, and each man is a specialist in his own part of the work. The pointer does nothing but point, the man who does the architectural details of the chair does nothing but that kind of thing, the man who finishes the face and hair does nothing but that, and that—the efficiency that you get from that combination of craftsmen is a necessity now that the costs are so great. The bust in the Library of Congress I carved from the block myself, because at that time, I was able to do it from the economic standpoint, and I enjoyed it immensely.

ROBERT BROWN: When was this? Was this the bust of Stephen Foster?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. The other thing for the Library of Congress.

ROBERT BROWN: This other project is even a little more recent, the bust of the late Chief Justice Earl Warren, that is being finished now in Italy.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, by the same people, except for the fact that the father Dita Fernando Polla died. So that his sons are carrying on. And this was a rather touching side to the whole thing, because it was clear that when I took the Madison over that the old Mr. Polla, who was then in his nineties, looked upon this as his last great job. This was very clear, and he was there every day in close supervision of his men, and he lived to see it finished and to get a note from me thanking him for it all, and then died four days later. But, I understand, that even without him the work is going very well at present. I got a report two weeks ago saying that the head was beautifully carried out, so I expect to see it in less than a month now, and finish it.

ROBERT BROWN: But on this—here with Earl Warren you don't have a distant historical figure, instead you have people who are immediate family. How did the commission come about, and what was it like dealing with people such as family?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it was much harder than dealing with Madison's family. (laughs) Much harder. In fact I'm not sure even now that I haven't a better idea of Madison than I do of Earl Warren.

ROBERT BROWN: Why is that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Depending on photographs can be so terribly deceptive. All photographs distort. You can never tell exactly what the proportions are from the photograph, unless you know exactly how far the lens was from the subject. Exactly the angle, and how can you tell? You can't ever tell exactly where that camera was held in relation to the subject. Whereas a painter, Peale or any of the great men of that day, they had two eyes. They first solved the problem of proportion in their drawings, before they got down to details. You could rely on what you see in the painting done by a great painter.

ROBERT BROWN: Whereas with a photograph, no, and you had to work in the Warren's case entirely from photographs.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I learned this in a way when I was doing the Eisenhower medal. That was so vivid that I must tell you about it, because it really proves that what I am saying isn't just silly. I had a splendid profile portrait of General Eisenhower, and I knew that I was going to have almost no time to do the thing.

ROBERT BROWN: This was an inaugural medal, wasn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: The inaugural first [blank] medal. And this is a digression, but it proves the thing that I am saying about photographs. So that despite the fact that I knew that we were going to have to experiment with a three-quarter view—because the president wanted it, the president-elect wanted that—I was pretty sure that we would come to a profile in the end, and we did. I took this from a photograph, meticulously measured every bit of the proportion, and began to feel that I knew exactly what his head looked like. And, when he came into the room, and sat down in front of me, the relief that I had started from the photograph was a travesty of the man's head. The size of the cranium had nothing to do with the size of Eisenhower's cranium in relation to the rest of his head, to the proportion. It was all out. And yet, that is the first essential in a head, the size of the cranium in relation to the face. So that having had that example in mind, I was very suspicious of all these photographs that were taken [of Warren]. Another thing, he was never photographed without glasses, very seldom photographed when he wasn't smiling or laughing, and his face changed its whole shape when he laughed, his jaw drew back and made it very different. So the complications of working from a photograph and that sort of thing made it a very difficult assignment.

ROBERT BROWN: It is that one that was thrown your way or were you—

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, the Chief Justice wrote, and said he wanted me to do it.

ROBERT BROWN: This is the Eisenhower now or the Warren?

WALKER HANCOCK: The Warren. The Eisenhower, I didn't—that was apparently decided by the inaugural committee, in connection with the Fine Arts Commission.

ROBERT BROWN: The problems—I asked you about the medal, isn't there a problem with scale, in the reduction in size?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think that is the very first thing a good medalist must keep in mind. That he is working for a certain size, and it is really a great temptation not to keep it in mind when you are free to make a model twenty-four inches in diameter to be reduced to one three inches in diameter. It is very easy to forget that. It has been a practice by some very good medalists to model the medal small, and then enlarge it and reduce it again, that being to give the sense of the final scale, in the original design.

ROBERT BROWN: How did you work? From the twenty-four inch model and the reduction?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I use as small a model as possible, that's about eleven inches perhaps. And to do that requires a great deal of looking at it with a reducing glass to make sure that you aren't putting in too much detail. That will look trivial because it all comes out. I mean you can hardly model anything that the Janvier machine won't reproduce in the die, and that is of course the great danger. To some sculptors it has been a fascination to put in as much as possible, to see it come out smaller. Well, I think makes for very bad medallic work.

ROBERT BROWN: Is the main problem too much clutter?



WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that is just the word, too much clutter. I think the idea conception of the medal goes back to the ancient Greek coins that were cut in the die. And I think that where you have any medallic work cut directly in the die, you get a quality of relief as well as of scale that somehow is peculiar to the medal, and seems right for it. Whereas this trash that is being put on the market at such great extravagant scale in this country at present, by these so-called commercial mints, degrading the art of the medal, and [is] getting us all accustomed to thinking that that is what a medal should look like. It is one of the great tragedies I think that has taken place in art.

ROBERT BROWN: I think one of your most involved commissions was the one to finish the figures at the Confederate Memorial in Stone Mountain, Georgia. This was quite a long involvement, wasn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it was. It didn't begin at all as a commission to finish those figures. It went back to a competition which was extremely well organized by very skillful people to find a solution for a Confederate Memorial. The memorial carving that had been begun on the mountain, and had weathered so that it was hardly visible, would be abandoned and a memorial group or figure set in front of it with an appropriate landscape setting. In 1962, in addition to Lamar Dodd, who was the chairman, the committee to choose a sculptor consisted of Lloyd Goodrich, Paul Manship, Henri Marsout, John Walker, and William Zorach. Each of the jurors, as the paper said, "occupies in his own right a unique position in the field of art." It was a very good committee. They agreed that the nine sculptors who were selected to compete should choose their own landscape architects, and the themes would be judged as a whole. I happened to be at the Academy in Rome, in residence as the resident sculptor, when I was told that we had won the competition and that I was to appear at once in Atlanta. Which I did. And, the moment I arrived I was told that contrary to the program of the competition these carvings would have to be finished. The people of Georgia would not stand for not having the carving finished. So, I immediately had to revise my scheme to allow for the carving to be the central motif, and our monumental sculpture to be in a sense accessory to that. This was done, and we got a very good plan which involved a reflecting pool under the carving, two ziggurats at the side on which there would be two bronze towers, sixty-five feet high, with rather light flame-like shapes decorated with figures representing the Southern ideal and the Southern way of life. As much as possible, the attitude of the culture—that after all was such a powerful motive that these people fought for four years against insuperable odds—all this I wanted to get into the idea of a Confederate Memorial.

ROBERT BROWN: You were quite excited at the prospect.

WALKER HANCOCK: I thought it had enormous possibilities, and it did have. I assure you I was not content to call three portraits on a mountainside the Confederate Memorial. They agreed very readily and despite some local opposition of art groups and newspapers and so on, it looked as if the work would go ahead. And, on strength of that hope, I undertook to direct the finishing of the carving as consultant. I was very careful to call myself the consultant of the carving and not the sculptor.

ROBERT BROWN: Why was that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Because the carving after all had been begun from a model by Augustus Ludeman, and it was clear that the only way that it could be carried out was to continue with Ludeman's model. So I felt that I was simply a consultant and not the sculptor, in that case certainly not the sculptor. But, despite the fact that I wasn't to be the sculptor I did have to take a very strange sculptural project, because Ludeman, although an extremely competent sculptor, had made some enormous mistakes in proportion in his scale model. The model was handsome, it had motion to it. It had a kind of fine monumental quality, but the heads of the figures were large enough to be those of six-year old boys, and they couldn't have been made to look like dignified leaders of the Confederacy. This was Davis, Jackson and Robert E. Lee in the middle. Unfortunately, it had been carried so far that there was no going back. Davis' head had been finished by Ludeman's carvers and it had been finished very well. It is a very handsome piece of portraiture and carving. The Lee head was almost finished, the Jackson head not at all. I had to saw up the cast of Ludeman's model, fill in the missing pieces, lengthen the arms, lengthen the torsos, lower the bodies of the horses in order to give the men enough room, enough presence to live up to their heads. This brought the horses down to below the line which had been cut by the original carvers. There were deep channels cutting right through what we would have liked to have as the material for the large horse and their legs. So, it was clear that the legs of the horses could never be carved. My thought was, and I still think it's a good one, that if the carving were left with the rugged, jagged shapes of the rock around it, it could partake somewhat of that out-of-door character, the granite. It could terminate the lower section, in a very roughly hewn technique, that would suggest its having been partly brought out of the rock but not entirely.

ROBERT BROWN: Something on the order of Michelangelo's Slaves.

WALKER HANCOCK: That was the exact example that I used in my arguments. I took down photographs of those slaves and said this is what we want, but the trouble with such an idea was that I had no choice of the carver. I was designated as the person to have complete authority on every aesthetic matter having to do with the

memorial. This was an empty appointment I soon discovered, but it sounded hopeful to me at the time. Still, having no carver who was good enough for the job presented unforeseen difficulties of such enormous proportions that I will never be able to describe them all to you. There was one professional carver, hired by the contractor. But a large part of the work had to be undertaken by a rigger, a man who was an ex-marine, who very quickly learned the technique of handling the torches and taking measurements. And in short order [the rigger] took over the work of carving to the point where the professional carver was got rid of.

ROBERT BROWN: And that was done because he was cheaper maybe?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't know what went on, it was very mysterious. It was a very mysterious thing. The showdown came very near the beginning on the head of Stonewall Jackson. The professional carver had worked on this, but so did the other. The result was that before long too much stone had been taken away to allow for the head to be carved as designed by Ludeman. So, I had to have a model of the head brought here with the dimensions of the stone given to me, so that I could make another head of Jackson, in a different pose, somewhat turned toward the spectator, in order that it might fit into the remaining stone. So not only did I lack enough stone for the horse's legs but I didn't have enough stone for Jackson's head.

ROBERT BROWN: His head would recede too in comparison to the other two.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, his head was fairly on the same plane, it was as high as ... I simply turned his head toward the spectators so the nose, the silhouette of the nose, would disappear behind the jawbone, and we got it into the remaining stone. Well, I was told I really couldn't have any communication with this carver, somehow kept from him and before long he disappeared from the scene. So we had only the rigger to do the actual carving. He was a very bright man, a young man, the most deplorable egoist that I have met in my life. This I'm sure is what made it possible for him to do his work to begin with. He could hardly have dealt with those heights and the kind of dangerous situation that he was in so constantly in he had been an ordinary person, but it made the sculptor-carver relationship very complicated.

ROBERT BROWN: You couldn't explain things? He wouldn't listen to you?

WALKER HANCOCK: He listened, but he pretty much went his own way. Although I must say during the course of the main part of the carving of the figures he tried his very best to carry out my wishes and always very respectful, and very pleasant to me. But, his trouble was with people around him.

ROBERT BROWN: Was your model up there on his rig, or how did they transfer?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. It was a small model; it might have been one-quarter scale, something of that kind. I believe it was one-quarter scale. And they were taken up there and measurements were taken and he was very careful about them, and the main measurements were faithfully recorded. And, they used torches, which flaked off the granite very speedily so that the work was reduced to a fraction of what it would have been if it had been normally carved, by the old method. He was unable, of course, to do anything that had any refinement connected with it. I mean you can imagine that a perfectly untrained man couldn't have taken the model that I [had given him] and enlarged it four times that size and seen in it the subtleties of rhythm and form that would have been required to make a good eye. All this had to be dealt with at great length, and we used a walkie-talkie. I stayed at times at the end of the long [blank in transcript] that leads up to the mountain, talked back and forth with him, and gave direction. At other times, I went up with him, onto the mountain and was able to point out things actually on the granite itself. I must say a good deal of this was rewarding, there was some real exhilaration in going up there at that height and dealing with a thing that size in that really awe-inspiring setting. Before I realized how perfectly frustrating the whole thing was going to be in the end, I had my happy moments, you can imagine.

To conclude the story of the carving itself, I might say that I was called less and less often to Stone Mountain, and I began to be uneasy about what might be going on. I would telephone Thomas Eliot, the manager of Stone Mountain Park, and say I'm worried, what's going on with the carving, don't you need me down there. And he would say, "No, no, not yet. Roy's gainfully employed." And I'd say, "Well, what's Roy doing?" "Well, he's working on the background." Well, this went on so long, the background seemed to be taking so much time that finally I just went down there on my own and found he had indeed been working on the background. And instead of leaving the jagged edges that I had made such a point of he had neatly smoothed out the whole thing and lined it with a kind of sharp edge like a frame, all except one end. And in my report I suppose I rather wistfully suggested that what was left at the other end (laughs) of the roughness should be left, but that was also smoothed away. So my feeling of perhaps having reached a solution for the carving that might be aesthetically acceptable was pretty well dashed, and from there on I had to deal with what was left of the idea with as good spirit as possible. Actually this had been fourteen years of practice in holding our temper, and there were times when I came fairly close to losing it. (laughs) I've managed so far.

ROBERT BROWN: The idea and the physical scale were very appealing to you, weren't they?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, very. And the possibility of giving these towers real meaning. I made a long study of quotations from Southern statesmen, writers, military leaders, that I thought expressed the ideals of the Confederacy. We were going to use that at the base of the towers as inscriptions. We are still going to make a little use of these things.

What happened with the rest of the scheme is simply this. The towers were well along at full size. It was time to select the foundry and start shipping the pieces. This was done, the commission to do the cast was given to an English foundry, the Singer Foundry, and the business of writing a contract was undertaken. Ordinarily a contract of this kind is a very simple matter: a sculptor makes a contract with a foundry on a printed form that it is so accepted that very little in the way of detail has to be brought up. I have the feeling that such contracts could easily be worked out in an afternoon—they worked on it for four years. I would call down occasionally and say “How’s it going?” And Mr. Eliot would say, “Well, it’s the legal people. The legal people are still at it. The legal people haven’t reached an agreement.” They did reach an agreement at the end of four years. I was told that the contract was ready to sign, and then immediately after that told that the money was all gone, that there could be no bronze towers. I don’t know what the foundry did, I understand that they sued them, but I know nothing more about it.

We had at that time the two main figures that were to be the central motif of decoration at the base of each tower already cast by an American foundry. The question then arose what to do with these. They were twelve foot figures. They were designed to take their part in a certain design, but to remain subordinate to a larger scheme. These suddenly were to become the central motifs of two circular terraces that were being designed to take the place of the original ziggurat scheme. There you see the solution of it; I think architecturally it is very good. I was blessed with perfectly wonderful landscape architects who saw the thing through, and saw possibilities in dealing with the landscaping despite all the limitations. But the sad question is now, will these figures look as good as the central motif in these terraces when they were designed to be just subordinate details in a larger scheme. No one will be able to stand by and explain why the sculpture had failed to live up to the possibilities of that particular site.

ROBERT BROWN: And you think they won’t stand well on their own.

WALKER HANCOCK: I’m sure they won’t. My hope is that they will be presentable. But, if I had been thrown that situation and been given the challenge of doing something powerful enough to really terminate these walks down from Memorial Hall, you can imagine how different I would have approached the thing.

ROBERT BROWN: As it is they were designed as subordinate rather than subdued figures.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: In the original tower scene the flame-like elements are perhaps the most dynamic aspect.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that was what was intended.

ROBERT BROWN: Here they will be just in the wall enclosures to signify the pool, not down flanking, but below the carving. Was this probably the most difficult case of your relationship, as an artist, with a client? Certainly it was the longest, wasn’t it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it was the longest, and most frustrating, and by far the most difficult, because it wasn’t one client or even one group. Because despite the fact that I had been guaranteed a committee of three to work with from the beginning, the committee, the personnel of the committee, was changed from time to time. I had to deal with a committee composed mostly of local politicians—an automobile salesman, for instance, was one of the members and that kind of thing. So, it did make it very, very difficult.

ROBERT BROWN: And were your telephone calls to the superintendent of the park, was he often your only link with what was going on?

WALKER HANCOCK: He was my only official link. Actually the man in whom I had greatest faith, who I think feels as badly about the way things have gone as I do, was the secretary of state. He was on and off chairman of the commission. And everything was on and off, that was part of the problem.

ROBERT BROWN: What was his name?

WALKER HANCOCK: Ben Fortsen. He lived in a wheelchair, having been shot accidentally by himself in a hunting accident when he was twenty, and had he has lived in a wheelchair ever since. And he was as active and enthusiastic about this as he could possibly be. Seemed to me, [he was] my great champion in all these difficult relations that I have had with the private individuals, the committees, the unsympathetic press, everybody. Ben Fortsen was there to ... I think his disappointment at seeing the scheme abbreviated as it was was really quite intense.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think your work in any way grew during this? Despite the adversity, do you think you learned a great deal from it or not? Aesthetically speaking.

WALKER HANCOCK: I doubt if I learned very much aesthetically. I think it was an experience that made me understand, perhaps as every sculptor should, be brought to understand the kind of frustration that comes to other sculptors. Take Michelangelo for instance. His four years thrown away for the façade of St. Lorenzo, which was never done. It's easy enough to read about that and pass it by.

ROBERT BROWN: This makes you understand perhaps.

WALKER HANCOCK: One thing that I regret enormously is that in order to leave leeway to do this vast number of reliefs that would have been required by the towers I had to decline some tremendously interesting commissions that would have been splendid opportunities, and I do regret that. What I learned—I think I learned a great deal from my landscape architects. One always does learn a great deal on the aesthetic side with one's fellow designers, and we did so much of this together that I know that I am better off for that experience. Yes. [end of interview]

TAPE RECORDED INTERVIEW WITH WALKER HANCOCK, August 15, 1977

At Gloucester, Massachusetts, by Robert Brown

Robert Brown: We talked last about the Stone Mountain, Georgia project. I wanted to ask you one more thing, did you have any assistants in your work there as a sculptor?

WALKER HANCOCK: There were assistants. First of all the carver did have an assistant for part of the time, who was responsible in part for laying out the position of the big channels that were cut around the forms. There were also of course the workmen who helped with the scaffolding and various mechanical things involved. Two of them were killed in the course of the carving, accidentally falling from the staging. For my part, I had the assistance for a while of my friend Charles Rudy, a very competent sculptor, who I thought would be able to relieve me of some of the really grueling experience of going back and forth to Stone Mountain for these short visits of supervision. He did come a number of times, took my place two or three times, perhaps more, but there was a personality conflict because I think Roy Faulkner the carver with his tremendous ego felt that somehow Charles Rudy was talking down to him a little. I always talked with Roy as if he was an equal and he would understand without any elaborate explanation just what I meant. Which was in fact quite true, he was very intelligent. Charlie I think used his teaching technique, and asked several times whether he understood whether he got the point, and I think that was just too much for Roy. So he announced he couldn't go on with Rudy. That was the end of our assistants.

ROBERT BROWN: When was that? Fairly far into the project?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, far into the project, yes. When it was quite well along.

ROBERT BROWN: When were you last involved with the project?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, of course I still am, because the terraces are now being built.

ROBERT BROWN: In that revised form?

WALKER HANCOCK: In that revised form. I haven't been there for a very long time. I haven't seen any of the landscaping development which I understand is going very well. But, I have on my desk today a request for information about the lugs in the back of the cast, the position of them, and so there is that kind of chore continuing, and I suppose will continue for another year.

ROBERT BROWN: Are you fairly happy with the way the stone carving and the way the face of the mountain looks?

WALKER HANCOCK: No. But, when one considers what we had to begin with—carving that was incorrectly begun, and no professional carver to carry out what the models showed to be done—it is rather remarkable. But, from that point of view only I think. I don't think that in perhaps thirty or forty years when it has weathered and hasn't that detached look that it now has. It looks like something very separate from the mountain, but when it is pulled in by the action of the weather I think it won't be offensive. And, in a way maybe even effective, because I think a great deal of gigantic sculpture in the world is effective without being very perfect. There is something in the very quality of volume that is impressive.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, that was your most gargantuan, literally, longest drawn-out commission. You wanted to get into some other topics now. You have been living now off and on here in Gloucester, in the Lanesville district of Gloucester, Massachusetts, since the early thirties. Of course you first came before that, but when did you

decide to make this at least a part-time residence and working place? And why did you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think it goes back to my first arrival on Cape Anne. I hopped off the little trolley that was running for its last year in Folly Cove, and so completely fell in love with the place at that first sight that I thought to myself then, if I could only live here I would be happy. And that was always in the back of my mind. When I came back from Rome in 1929, it was clear that my studio would have to be in New York, every sculptor's studio had to be in New York.

ROBERT BROWN: Why was that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it was where the architects were. First of all, very interesting thing that I think that should be mentioned here—made a great difference in the lives of a number of painters and sculptors when one came back as a fellow of the American Academy in Rome—he was given an exhibition of his three years' work at the Architectural League Exhibition in the Grand Central Palace. That was a great thing. And you had your three years of work in Rome seen by all the architects and people who might influence others to perhaps commission you, and this led almost inevitably to your settling there where this had happened. And so I was offered Chester Beach's studio temporarily on 17th Street because he was in Rome. So I changed places with him, and occupied his very pleasant house and his studio until he came back. Then I got another on 20th Street which was conveniently located over a modeling shop. So, that my casting and running of plaster models and that sort of thing was no problem at all, and for nine years, I think something like that, New York was my home and my studio as well. But of course during that time I had been able to acquire a few acres here and in 1930—which was almost at once, wasn't it?—built a little summer room, which was this. I came up here and worked during the summer. And, the summers got longer and longer and sometimes almost touched at both ends, but I kept the studio in New York until the war, when I went into the Army. I had to give it up and after four years in the Army I came back, and the studio was actually gone, it had been torn down. And nothing was for rent in that city at that moment. So, there was nothing to do but come here, where I had a pied a terre and my wife and I lived in the studio for a few months while the house was being built, out of secondhand lumber, anything that could be acquired that soon after the hostilities.

ROBERT BROWN: What did you lose by giving up the studio in New York, would you say? What were the particular advantages of having your studio and residence there as well as here?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think there were great advantages in being there. I think that I missed a certain amount of association with my colleagues. I missed to a certain degree seeing exhibitions, theater that I would have liked so much to see. It wasn't a complete deprivation though, because I was back and forth to New York a great deal. I attended meetings, served on committees, and kept generally in touch so that it was more the pleasures of the city that I missed rather than the professional association. I never found, curiously enough, that my not living in New York seemed to make much difference to the architects that I had to deal with. They were just as happy to come here as they were to go down to 20th Street from 42nd Street or 40th Street where the offices all were. They were quite pleased in fact to have the excuse to come here.

ROBERT BROWN: Like an excursion or something. And you depended of course a great deal upon the architects.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh very much, oh yes. Almost altogether.

ROBERT BROWN: It was through them that you got almost all of your commissions. Well, in Gloucester itself or in this area, you mentioned some colleagues, some people who became good friends, like Manship. But, there weren't that many, were there?

WALKER HANCOCK: I had very little contact with artists in Rockport. Very little of the artists in Gloucester. Somehow this wasn't an important artists' colony, contrary to general opinion, as far as numbers went. There were a few very splendid painters here. Breckinridge, Hugh Breckinridge, had a summer school here, and I saw him during the winter anyway, a great deal, when we both taught in Philadelphia. I think the artists that I had most to do with here were two elderly ladies in Folly Cove, and Charles Grafly. Of course Charles Grafly was here before I moved here. After I moved here I think Ellen Day Hale and Gabriel Clements were the artists that I saw. Two remarkable ladies whose studios overlooked Folly Cove, fine painters and etchers.

ROBERT BROWN: Now you began teaching that year you returned from Rome, didn't you? In '29?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I began that October.

ROBERT BROWN: With Grafly's untimely death.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I took his class.

ROBERT BROWN: Why did you continue teaching? Did you immediately like it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I first questioned the idea of going on teaching. I talked to several sculptors about it. One of them was Ivan Polachek, who was teaching at the Art Institute of Chicago at the time. Polachek said, "By all means teach, we need to teach. It keeps bringing us back to fundamentals." And—but—I think in a sense I really taught then from a sense of duty because I had work to do in New York. I had to commute to Philadelphia to the classes, and this was always much more of an interruption. Leaving one's work for a day to an artist was like leaving a studio for a week sometime. And from that point of view it was a considerable sacrifice. I didn't teach ever because I needed to from the financial standpoint. The salary at the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts was very, very small, and when I moved to Gloucester my traveling expenses exactly canceled out my salary from the Academy, until about 1950. I believe then they began to pay my railroad fare.

ROBERT BROWN: So what duty was it that made you continue to teach?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it was ... it began to be then natural, an interest in the students, and interest in the department, an interest in the Academy. I felt an increasing loyalty to the Academy, and then I think simply habit. I had gotten to the point where I was simply used to doing it, and I think I should have stopped long before I did.

ROBERT BROWN: The department particularly, because of the incursion into your in time.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, for both reasons. That and from the point of view of the student. I think it is very hard to keep coming back to fundamentals as Polachek put it, without being repetitive, without feeling that, "Oh, I've said this so many times before, why won't this young person believe it?" (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you must have seen quite a change from 1929 to when you retired in the late sixties, I think. In the interests of the student, their attitudes.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it was that that finally brought me to the point where I realized I shouldn't go on. It goes in cycles, this thing of groups of good students, and a group of poor students, and I am sure that there were times when I couldn't have been torn away from the class because I was so excited about how some of the students were doing, and how their work was progressing, and how their imaginations were working. At other times I simply had to force myself to face a class of seemingly indifferent young people, and it had reached a point where I didn't feel there were students enough in the class who were particularly interested in learning. I had one—this is an illustration not typical, but in a way it does show what a teacher might be up against, and you can imagine how a teacher would feel in such cases. I had always insisted on the beginners going straight into the class with the advanced people—I believed in that, and I still do—and to begin modeling at once, and to begin modeling from life without any preliminary drawing or work from still life or antique. There was a young man working in the life class with a great pile of formless globs of clay on his stand, having no relation whatsoever to the model or to anything else I could see. So, I went to the director, to the curator, and asked about him. I said, "Has he studied anywhere else?" I wondered where he had gotten these ideas that seemed to be expressed in the strange manifestation that he had produced. And apparently he had studied nowhere else at all. He was brand new. So I went back, and thought a long time of something I could say gently that was so axiomatic that there could be no question about its being useful to a real beginner. And I brought this bit of information out gently and politely and he threw back his head and said, "Oh, I don't accept that at all." Well, then how do you deal with that, you know? Do you just pass him by next time, or do you make fun of him a little bit? Oh, no, you don't do that. Do you argue with him? No, you can't do that. So, you give up.

ROBERT BROWN: These were people that were just going to go their own way regardless. Was this a reflection of a certain time, of the preponderance of one fashion over another, or what?

WALKER HANCOCK: It was a preponderance of confusion. By the way, it was an interesting thing that while the annual exhibitions were being held at the Academy, which brought together all kinds of sculpture, there was a definite reflection in the work of the student of what had been shown upstairs. Every year, we had to go through that. And, this was perfectly natural of course, a student would see this or that, and it would inspire him, and that is the sort of thing that he would chose to do in the class. Of course you allow for that sort of thing, and try to make the most of it in fact, because piece in that exhibition upstairs was in its way supposed to be a good piece. However, I think it was something much deeper than the confusion of what they were seeing around them. There was a general feeling of confusion in this country, a general feeling that the old disciplines, any discipline at all in fact, didn't really produce very much.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this in the late 1960s?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I've forgotten the date when I stopped, but it was in the sixties.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, it was true enough at that time.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I suppose that these youngsters were suffering from that and I might have been

sympathetic with them analyzing the cause but that didn't make them any easier to teach, and for that reason I thought there was no reason going on, trying to do it.

ROBERT BROWN: Because you did attempt to teach with a method, didn't you? I mean you had a certain way you went about it. Could you describe that a bit, can you generalize—

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think you could generalize it by saying that what I was trying to do was to get them to see nature, life, in a—I don't like to use the word "analytical," it's in a way what I mean—but get them to see nature keenly enough with enough awareness of underlying cause of the forms, to use that perception in almost in anything. In saying underlying cause, I don't mean by that in terms of anatomy. We dealt with anatomy but I always tried to keep anatomy quite secondary. I tried to make a student aware of the relation of volumes, the flow of form, the feeling of growth, one part leading into another, which could be true of the human figure as well as a plant or an animal, to awaken him as much as possible to seeing things in every way except the perfectly literal photographic way. Into that of course came the question of anatomy, and for that instead of subjecting the students to the study of charts alone, I did something that Charles Grafly had suggested but had never been able to accomplish. I used slow motion pictures in the class, and I encouraged the students to watch the models as they moved. I found a very curious thing happens in the class: the students pay very close attention, if they are good students, to the model while she is posing, but the moment she gets down off the stand and moves around the room and really becomes interesting to watch they are busy wetting down their clay and doing something else. And so I did everything I could to interest them in the motion of the human form, and the use of slow motion pictures in the class, while the class was an attentive, productive, imaginative group, was apparently a great asset. They lost interest in that when they began losing interest in the [other] things.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, some of your earlier training had been studying things in motion, hadn't it? I think you mentioned something of that sort before, where not merely the posed model or the fixed pose, but to know what it could become, or what it had been.

WALKER HANCOCK: I think that it was something that I did develop for myself, I hadn't been taught that way. We had always been taught—

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned that I think in regard to your recent small figures here.

WALKER HANCOCK: Ah, yes, that was it. Well, I think I was perhaps applying my own teaching to that. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: This is an outcome beyond what Grafly really knew. And you found that with the best students at the Academy this had very productive effects.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it did. It kept them aware of—

ROBERT BROWN: Could you detect improvement even in their work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was it more invigorated or organic?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, organic is a good word for it. I think I should have used that word.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you were mentioning it in so many other words a few moments ago, the comparability of the plant and the animal and the human form. To see that rather than the anatomical designation. Anatomy was simply brought in to explain.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, exactly, to explain the thing, when explanation became necessary.

ROBERT BROWN: Did they at all work with abstract forms, with you?

WALKER HANCOCK: I tried to get them to work with abstract forms. In fact, I even at one time assigned abstract compositions to be brought in and criticized, and I had a very hard time getting them interested. I don't why. They were seeing abstractions all around them, it was a fashionable thing at that time, much more than it is now. And yet somehow they didn't seem to want to do them.

ROBERT BROWN: Was there an effort? You were a part of a group of teachers of sculpture at the Academy.

WALKER HANCOCK: No, for a while I was the only one at the Academy. I think until the war. Albert Lesley taught at the summer school at Chester Springs, and I taught the winter school at Philadelphia. And, at the time of the war when I had given up the class, temporarily Paul Manship took the class, and then Harry Rosen. And Harry Rosen then stayed on after the war, so that there were two of us.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you find there was a change, a difference in what you could do as a teacher, when you had a colleague?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, I think not. I think that Harry offered them something different from what I was hoping to. I think it was very good for them. He was a great raconteur, he used to tell stories about the painters and sculptors that he knew in Paris and so on, and the students would love that. And, what he did was in every way in harmony with what I was trying to do with the students. His training had been mine actually, he was a student of Grafly's as I was, and so he was inclined to see form in the same way that I saw it.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you have outsiders come in and teach? You mentioned last time that during the jurying for some of the annual shows you would have people like Lipchitz in. But this was a fairly regular thing?

WALKER HANCOCK: This was fairly regular, yes. To begin with there were student competitions for modeling figures, and we tried to get the very best sculptors to come and act on juries. And they were always very generous about doing it. And, they always gave individual criticism to each one of the students afterwards. Then, at other times between the competitions we did get sculptors to come down and criticize individually. Not really lecture, it was done all pretty much individually. It was a very good thing, because oddly enough although we all have different approaches, when you come down to dealing with students you do come down to fundamentals, everybody does, and we all say pretty much the same thing in different words. And that I think was very reassuring to the students.

ROBERT BROWN: What would you say, in a few words, were the fundamentals?

WALKER HANCOCK: I don't think that you can put them in a few words. It is a matter—it has to be done by demonstration. It is ... no, I don't think I am capable of putting it in a few words. It has to be done in terms of the actual forms.

ROBERT BROWN: There were several colleagues in other areas of the Academy that I guess you were fairly close to over the years. You mentioned already the painter Hugh Breckinridge, who has been there some time.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oddly enough Hugh Breckinridge had taught my mother when she was a very young girl at Springside School in Philadelphia. And, then he was a member of the faculty while I was a student at the Pennsylvania Academy, and then we were on the faculty together and I got to know him quite well. He in his day was regarded as quite an experimentalist. His brilliant colors astonished some people. And then there was Henry Macarter, another painter, who was the modernist of his day. Oh, he was considered very, very advanced, and he spent a great deal of his time talking about the people who in that day were the ones that students thought of leading the way: Cezanne, Picasso, and so on. He was very plump, great sense of humor, he had a funny little cracked voice, but had a manner that somehow the students found very stimulating. He could say almost anything and the results of the most extraordinary kind would be shown. For instance, I remember once he was giving a lecture, showing a slide one day, and I was there in the audience wondering at it all. He said, "This is Matisse—no, no, this not Matisse, this is Cezanne. No, this is Matisse. No, this slide is upside down—no, the slide is not upside down, no. And of course it makes no difference whether it is upside down or not." (laughs) And then he went on from there. Oh, this was a perfectly common thing in his lectures, (laughs) but somehow he got them. He had a tremendous following, great loyalty, and he did a great deal for his students, in his very strange manner.

George Harding was just the opposite. He was a mural painter of great skill and inventiveness, and unfortunately much of his work has gone or went to places where it wasn't preserved. So [Harding's work] being mural decoration entirely, a good deal of it has been lost. But, he had a superb sense of composition, and as I think I told you before was an enormous help to me, more so I think after my student days when we became friends. I saw a great deal of him in his studio, and hearing him discussing his compositions opened my eyes to a great many things. I think he was a remarkable and not fully appreciated artist. And then who else was there?

ROBERT BROWN: Was he a mural painter of much prominence? He was in the 30s, or through the 30s, right?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, he belonged to the Howard Pyle group, he was a student of Howard Pyle's. And so I suppose actually some of this did filter down from Howard Pyle.

ROBERT BROWN: Did he live in New York, too? Or Philadelphia?

WALKER HANCOCK: He lived in Philadelphia.

ROBERT BROWN: What do you have to say about Philadelphia as an art community? You commuted there, and then you left after teaching.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, well I always felt—of course, I did love Philadelphia for some reason. I was very, very



fond of Philadelphia. And they seemed active. It was too near New York in some ways. If it had been a little farther, I think the same people would have done a little more, but there was quite a group of Philadelphians interested in art, and of course an enormous amount of sculpture was done in Philadelphia, as you know, as compared with other cities. The artists who lived there were always—they really showed considerable dismay sometime at the lack of response to art. I remember somebody said to Grafly, about something that had gone on that had unfortunately come to nothing, and this young artist said, “I think this is Hell.” And Grafly said, “It’s worse, it’s Philadelphia.” (laughs) That shows how some of them felt. But I don’t think that was justified.

ROBERT BROWN: There was in fact an interested public.

WALKER HANCOCK: There was an interested public, yes indeed there was. And of course Philadelphia was a wonderful city for music. I somehow feel that there is a connection there that was important. That we were all very lucky that way.

ROBERT BROWN: You’ve always had a considerable interest in music, have you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, yes. I love music. I’m not a performer, but I’m a very good listener. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: All these years that you were teaching, you have said already that this was something of an interruption in your own work. What was it like then to come back from a day of teaching, and a long commute, say, back up here to Gloucester?

WALKER HANCOCK: It was very fatiguing, even to go to New York after a day of teaching. Because at times I taught all day and taught a night class too, and then took a ten o’clock train back, sometimes so exhausted. I remember once I was so tired when I got to Pennsylvania Station that I didn’t know where I was going. I didn’t know which bus to take, or how to get home, I was just all in. And, that of course takes its toll, if you do that kind of thing year after year. There were times during the Depression when, to save money, I traveled to Philadelphia first by bus to Gloucester, then train to Boston, train again to Providence, boat to New York, and train to Philadelphia, and got there in time for my nine o’clock class. I was young enough then to stay fresh for the day of teaching, and at that time actually I spent two days at a time there, so that the second day I perhaps did better than the first. But it was quite a sacrifice of time and energy.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, also you had been giving of yourself, and then the next morning after teaching you had to get into your own work. Was there a bit of inertia to overcome, and sort of readjustment each time?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, I think whenever one leaves studio for a day to go anywhere, there is an adjustment, and if you are away on a difficult trip of, say, two days, it takes more than a day to get over it. It really does.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you find that you work best when you are fairly tranquil and totally focused on your work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it takes tranquility. It takes being away from the telephone, if you can possibly imagine it. That is one reason why I have this arrangement here. And, yes, you must have uninterrupted time. I remember Saint-Gaudens, the sculptor of the Victor Emmanuel monument in Rome, saying that he didn’t make engagements even. He said, “If I make an engagement for three weeks from today it changes that whole three weeks.” That hanging over him, and I can understand that.

ROBERT BROWN: And by and large you’ve been able, despite the fact that you taught so many years, to section out this time for yourself?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it’s necessary.

ROBERT BROWN: You did have one major interruption, and that you have alluded to already. I mean, you went in the Army. When was this?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I went in 1941, ’42. Yes, it was ’42. And I got out four years later.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you give us some idea of what you did at that time? I know you’ve written a bit about it.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I would like to tell you. It was a time of course when everybody who was able-bodied tried to get into the service. I was of draft age, because the age hadn’t been revised. I was just barely draft age. So I saw that it was up to me to do something, so I joined the Navy. Passed my examinations and told that I would be given a full lieutenancy in the Navy. And just after that, I began to get letters from the draft board telling me to report for induction. So I said the Navy, what shall I do? And the Navy said, just allow yourself to be inducted because it is a very complicated business to get a deferment in ten days, so your orders will come through and you will be transferred to the Navy.

ROBERT BROWN: They didn’t know that you were already in the Navy, the Army didn’t?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, they didn't. There was not that kind of communication. It would have had to be done by an elaborate filling out of forms, which they felt was more complicated than a week's discomfort, as they put it, that I might suffer at Fort Devons. Well, I was inducted and I went to Fort Devons and after sometime there, no orders having come through, I was shipped to Alexandria, Camp Alexandria in Louisiana, where I was put in the medical corps. I spent most of my time picking up pine needles because we weren't allowed any time to ourselves. If you had a free moment you had to pick up pine needles. And the rest of it of course was close order drill, and KP and that sort of thing. Well, this went on for a very long time—weeks, many weeks. I felt sure that my orders from the Navy had got lost and that I never would hear from them. And one day the sergeant came out while we were having close order drill and said, "Private Hancock, report to headquarters." So I stepped out, and on the way to the headquarters he said, "Well, you're off." And I said, "Where to?" And he said, "Washington, D.C." And I thought, here are the Navy orders, my life is changing at this moment. So I went to the captain to get my orders and, instead of Navy orders, there were Army orders to report to the chief of staff, G1 [department for personnel matters], in Washington for temporary duty in connection with the Air Medal. Then it all came back to me: before I had joined the Navy, I had competed for the Air Medal. Paul Genoa and I were the competitors. We had been chosen from a number of others who had been considered.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the medal for, by the way?

WALKER HANCOCK: The medal was to be given to both Army and Navy fliers for courage in aerial flight, or something of that kind. Actually it was given to almost everybody who flew a certain number of missions. Well, what had happened was that I had won the competition, and they hadn't been able to find me here [in Folly Cove, Gloucester] and they finally caught up with me in the Army. So, I was given orders to report to Washington to the general, chief of staff G1. I was treated, I must say, royally. They put me up at the Army War College, and for three months I worked in the quartermaster general's office on the Air Medal. When the medal was finished my orders for the Navy came through, but by that time I was somehow so interested and involved in the Army matters, that I didn't accept them. The sergeant came up to me in the mess room, and he said, "Private Hancock, would you be willing to sign your honorable discharge from the Army in order to accept a full lieutenancy in the Navy?" And very quickly I said no. He was the most astonished man I ever saw. He said, "Well, maybe you know what you are doing."

ROBERT BROWN: What were you doing?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it was pretty blind of me at the time. And I undergo some very uncomfortable moments afterward. But, as it turned out of course it was a very fortunate thing because if I had remained in the Navy it would simply have been to teach somewhere in this country. I never would have gotten overseas. Very shortly after that they found a spot for me in the military intelligence. I was commissioned after being given my basic training by a master sergeant who was assigned solely to me. I had him all to myself, all day every day, until I finished by basic training. Then I was commissioned overnight, and made a lieutenant.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the basic training? Specialized basic training?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, just the basic. You see, I had been so busy, things had been so slow in Camp Alexandria I hadn't finished my basic training. And once you were in the Army at that time, you couldn't be commissioned without your basic training. They could have taken you and put you right in and make a colonel out of you if you weren't in the Army, but they couldn't take me because I was already in. I had to go through the basic training.

ROBERT BROWN: Why were you selected for intelligence?

WALKER HANCOCK: Because of my Italian. They were at that moment looking for an American-born Italian speaking officer. I seemed to fill the bill, and so I was put in the Pentagon. And, after seven months in the Pentagon I managed to get out and get into the Monuments and Fine Arts and Archives.

ROBERT BROWN: The Pentagon work was pretty dreary?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, it was in an office, and very routine. Some of it was quite exciting. I mean, the intelligence at that time was a very fascinating thing to be a part of. But it was office work, all day every day, and never a sight out-of-doors, and never a sight of action, or a change of scene.

ROBERT BROWN: You obviously weren't able to do any drawing or sculpture.

WALKER HANCOCK: No, none at all.

ROBERT BROWN: Then how did you get to the Fine Arts and Monuments?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, of course I knew of the commission, the Roberts commission.

ROBERT BROWN: What was the Roberts commission.

WALKER HANCOCK: The Roberts commission was a commission formed, I suppose, at the instigation of Justice Roberts, because it had his name, but also by the president and others, to look after and protect as much as possible the works of art, science, and architecture in battle areas. And knowing that this commission existed of course I was very eager to get into it. But when they requested me, I wasn't allowed to go until I had found a replacement for myself, which wasn't so easy to do. But it was accomplished, and I got overseas fortunately. I spent two years in Europe.

ROBERT BROWN: Could you describe why did you want to go into this? Because it stood to try to preserve things that you had loved?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, that was of course the reason, yes. And when one saw what was happening, and what was bound to happen further in the war, it made you more eager than ever to have a hand in it.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you go first to England? Was this before D-Day?

WALKER HANCOCK: Before D-Day, seven months or so. We were sent to England first to be with the gathering army and at the same time write the handbooks that the soldiers would use on the Continent. Handbooks for the monuments and fine arts activities, and also to frame a directive that would be signed by General Eisenhower that would give officers, all officers, the authority to protect certain monuments of art and architecture, and scientific collections and other cultural collections.

ROBERT BROWN: Because without that, in the order of priorities, an officer wouldn't have paid any attention to those things, right?

WALKER HANCOCK: No, no. There would have been no hope at all.

ROBERT BROWN: How did fine arts eventually loom so high on the list of priorities? What do you think accounted for that, that Eisenhower would sign a directive?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think by that time there was general awareness among all intelligent people, Army officers included, that this was going to be the most destructive war in history, and that something of that kind had to be done to save a fraction of the endangered objects of our culture.

ROBERT BROWN: The account that you wrote for the College Art Journal in 1946 of your activities, particularly in Germany, seemed to indicate that the officers in general were behind this, weren't they? They had real regard for the treasures of Europe.

WALKER HANCOCK: The regular Army officers? You can't generalize. The Army was wonderful and it was awful. Some of the officers were touchingly eager to do everything that they could, and that is really the right word for it. It was really touching to see the extent of their interest. Others were barbarians. I could show you here today a thing we used to call a buck slip. You would make a recommendation and this would go up through headquarters, with the signatures of the officers through whose authority it had to pass. This particular thing that I have saved is a request that a certain professor's house in Weimar should not be occupied because it contained his life's work as an art historian. It couldn't be got out in time for the troops to move in, it was physically impossible. The buck slip was signed by a few officers on its way up to the proper authority, but this man whose name was Colonel Seneff signed it, "What is so important about these professors' houses?" Then it came down, so the house was unprotected and everything that the man had written in his life was destroyed within the week by the soldiers.

ROBERT BROWN: This was because they were billeted there?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, yes. It was all it took. So there was that side, and when you are up against that kind of thing, it was so emotionally undermining that sometimes at the end of a day you wondered how you could go on. Yet I think in that little article which you read I spoke of two or three instances where the officers behaved magnificently, and when it came to assigning soldiers, the common soldier, a responsibility of guarding a work of art, somehow there was pride in this thing that was manifested in what they said, and how they did it, and in the end of course it was the common soldier who saved these things. We were only there to show where they were and ask to have them protected, but the actual protection was in the hands of the soldiers.

ROBERT BROWN: Were you quite surprised at the pride that they took in this work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, surprised, and at times amused. In the case of the great salt mine—it was not a salt mine, it was a surface copper mine at Zegan, where most of the best of the art treasures of the Rhineland had been stored. The Eighth Infantry division advertised all over the area that they were running an art museum. (laughs) And, when we got there, there everything was intact, but there was a huge signboard outside

enumerating certain of the objects that they were protecting.

ROBERT BROWN: You were so concerned to preserve Europe's treasures and you were so interested in art yourself. Did you, were you ever slightly sheepish about this in the face of war and carnage, and military needs?

WALKER HANCOCK: Not at all. We were treated at times in such a way that it perhaps should have made us sheepish, but you had a wonderful response. When you had an assignment that had to do with the preservation of, say, a large cache of works of art, you used the word treasure. And when you spoke to any officer about treasure it seemed to open all kinds of possibilities that speaking of works of art wouldn't have. I remember once I spoke of a certain treasure that we had uncovered at [blank in transcript], and an officer said, "What are these things worth?" and I said hundreds of millions. "Oh," he said, "that's a lot of money, Hancock." I said, "Yes, it is, isn't it?" And it made a difference. We didn't always get what we needed in the way of transportation, in fact we almost never did, but we got a certain amount of respect and attention.

ROBERT BROWN: And you felt that this was very important. True, you weren't able to do your sculpture, your career was halted. Could you think of work there as a continuation of your work, your spirit as an artist?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I think it was much more important than anything I could have been doing at home. Of course.

ROBERT BROWN: But, I mean apart from the importance, can you see it as a continuation of your role as an artist, I mean with this saving of the treasures?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I do. I think it was very much a part of it. Actually it was particularly so because it almost had to be done by artists or people very closely associated with the study of art, and that was the reason that it was successful to the degree that it was. We had not only artists, and architects, but we had men like George Stout, Sheldon Keck, art historians who were really expert in dealing with these objects, and I'm sure that the fact that I was a sculptor did make certain things possible that otherwise wouldn't have been. Including the attitude of the people with whom we worked. In Germany, for instance, the fact that I was a sculptor made a great deal of difference with the civilian museum people, and that sort of thing with whom I had to work.

ROBERT BROWN: How did that affect them?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I wasn't just another army officer, coming in to give orders. I was a kindred spirit you might say, and we treated each other that way. When we finally got into Germany and had the great problems of locating and evacuating the repositories of these works—

ROBERT BROWN: Temporary repositories.

WALKER HANCOCK: Temporary repositories. We were dependent on them, and they were dependent on us. There had to be a great deal of really congenial working together.

ROBERT BROWN: But I was curious, you were virtually the only artist doing this. The others were art historians, weren't they? Or technicians, or conservators. Why were you, as a sculptor and an artist? Because of your linguistic ability? And familiarity with—

WALKER HANCOCK: No, because I was in Germany, and I spoke very little German. Of course I was assigned to French sections but changed.

ROBERT BROWN: You were quite learned in European art, weren't you?

WALKER HANCOCK: I was a good amateur art historian, yes. (laughs) And, I think partly they knew me, Professor Sachs at Harvard knew me, we'd met in Rome. He knew who I was, and Francis Taylor who was on the commission knew who I was, and others I suppose. I think that was how my name was suggested.

ROBERT BROWN: These men on the commission, were they out in Europe as well then?

WALKER HANCOCK: No. Well, Francis Taylor came over for a visit. Dinsmore, Professor Dinsmore was one of them, an archeologist. He came over for a visit, very brief, and this was just a very brief visit of inspection, after things more or less had quieted down. But Professor Sachs never went over.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, speaking of something like that. The time you left, it was what early in '46 or something like that?

WALKER HANCOCK: Late '46, winter. In the winter, yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Did things look pretty hopeful, being reassembled?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, by that time there was very considerable organization, the civilians were working well and there was a great deal still to be done, but it was under control certainly.

ROBERT BROWN: In both France and in Germany, did civilians throw themselves into the work willingly?

WALKER HANCOCK: In Germany the ones I had to work with were perfectly splendid.

ROBERT BROWN: So I suppose it was a chance to be constructive after those years of destruction.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, but it was their art that they were working to save, they realized that. In the First Army, I had very little to do with the loot that the Nazis had taken. That was the Third Army.

ROBERT BROWN: You mean the stuff that they had gotten from France and all?  
[Robert Brown flips tape]

ROBERT BROWN: You dealt then mainly with things that had been controlled by the German Army as opposed to the Nazi Party?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, almost altogether. The German army had acted on the whole quite honorably. It was the Nazi organization that was responsible for the official looting. Not that all soldiers aren't looters. Americans and Germans both did their share. But the official looting was done by Nazis, not by the German army. And in the First Army where I was we dealt with very little looted work. It was German property, and Belgian property, that we had to protect as much as possible.

ROBERT BROWN: You described in your article going to Turingia. Is that the salt mines? The great Prussian military tradition that was bombed.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, that was a Nazi activity. Putting those objects into that mine, but they were all German-owned works.

ROBERT BROWN: You suppose the [blank in transcript] over the great electors[?] was from Adolf Hitler. Do you suppose that was an attempt to give some posthumous legitimacy to Hitler?

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, I'm sure it was. I'm sure that that was expected to remain walled up for generations, and it was done with an air of display, not simply a way of preserving these things.

ROBERT BROWN: You were there through '46, mainly Germany?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: By then the carving up [of Germany] into various zones of occupation was occurring. What did you—what were you able to do with the Russian area?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, that was the reason that we had to hurry so at one moment. This mine at Turingia, it was going to be very shortly in the Russian zone so we had to hurry and get everything out and get it over to what was going to be the American zone.

ROBERT BROWN: Because you didn't think the Russians were going to handle it right?

WALKER HANCOCK: We had every reason to believe at that time that they wouldn't, because we had had contact with some Russian so-called Fine Arts Officers. It was perfectly clear that at that time they regarded everything as booties of war, spoils of war, and they weren't going to return it. They later had to, it was clear that things had to go back to Dresden and also to Berlin for political reasons. But, at that time there was no thought of returning anything. So we had to hurry and get out everything that we wanted to see.

ROBERT BROWN: So such things as those you just kept in the western zone through the time you were there, at least.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Now, you also worked in Marburg.

WALKER HANCOCK: We made Marburg more or less our headquarters because the Kunst historische Institute [was there], and also the fact that Marburg hadn't been bombed except for the railroad station. Well, I say it hadn't been bombed but actually the building that we used most for our repository had been either bombed or shot at because it was in a very bad condition. But we were able to restore it enough for our chief collecting point in Marburg. And then of course the great collecting point was at [blank] where the treasures found in

Murkers mine were taken. And that was the Kaiser Fredrik. But we found that Marburg was a very conveniently located place, very congenial city and university, and it has the Kunst historische Institute as well as this great archives building which we could use. They had a staff of beautifully trained art historians, who cooperated with us splendidly, and without whom I don't know what would have happened.

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned earlier to me the [blank] Decree, what was that?

WALKER HANCOCK: (laughs) [blank] we called it [blank] Manifesto. This came about at the moment when it was decided by the President that two hundred of the best paintings in Germany should be brought to this country. And, the points of view about that operation differed so from the different sides of the Atlantic that I think that it will never be reconciled, the history of this thing. The Americans saw it as a promise by the United States government to take care of two hundred German paintings. We in Germany first of all didn't think it was the way to take care of two hundred paintings. We felt there was more risk in taking them over and bringing them back than there was in leaving them in the very safe places that by that time were available in Germany. However, the thing that worried us most stemmed from a remark that was overheard in Murker's Mine, by one of our officers, one of the MFA&A officers, immediately after the discovery of the mine, in which all of the collections of the Kaiser [blank] Museum and all of the gold reserves of Germany were hidden. A representative of the United States Treasury was going through with the generals who were looking things over. And, after looking at all the gold, they came to look at the pictures and the sculpture. This representative of the Treasury Department said, "These things are assets, too." This terrified the officers, our officers who overheard. It seemed to indicate the possibility that they were being regarded as spoils of war. So when shortly after that the order came to send over two hundred paintings, the connection seemed to us to be quite clear. The thing that worried us most was that we knew that no German would ever believe that those were being taken to America for protection. And it did hamper our work terribly, because we had established this wonderful relationship of great confidence.

ROBERT BROWN: If this had happened they would have become more secretive?

WALKER HANCOCK: We were afraid that they were going to be as a result. Professor [blank] was the man who we regarded as the saint of them all. He was an elderly art historian who had done everything to make our work easy, and had given us every possible help. When I first saw him after the news had been made public in the German papers, he looked at me as though he had never looked at me before, and he said, "Well, if they take our old art we must produce a fine new art." That was his only comment, but it meant of course that he didn't believe that they were ever—he said that they were taking it, you know, everybody thought that they were taking it. So, the [blank] Manifesto was drawn up in [blank] which was the chief collecting point of the American Army, by Parker Lesley—yes I am sure he was the author of it. It was signed by all of us in the area, except for James Ronimer, he refused to sign it.

ROBERT BROWN: Why?

WALKER HANCOCK: He gave no reasons. But, he just didn't sign it. And then of course it had the inevitable effect in this country. They regarded it as an act of insubordination, couldn't believe we would have done such a thing and questioned the word of the President of the United States. But there it was, and we were left with these unbelieving Germans. In fact on the German side, the atmosphere was so different, I remember John Nicholas Brown coming to Weimar with the [blank] la Farge, I think it was when the news first came out, and Mr. Brown said, "If they do take those pictures, we'll never be able to raise our head from the pillow." I remember his exact words: "We'll never be able to raise our head from the pillow." Well, they took them. So there you were, two sides and—

ROBERT BROWN: They took them for display here?

WALKER HANCOCK: They took them for display, and they were exhibited around the country. They showed them in Washington first.

ROBERT BROWN: The Germans first and then some of you thought they were going to keep them here as some sort of booty.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, we weren't sure, but we hoped not. The Germans were sure that they were going to keep them.

ROBERT BROWN: Your manifesto said what, that they shouldn't be treated as—

WALKER HANCOCK: That they shouldn't be taken at all, which I still believe. I think there was no reason to take them at all. However, I still see it from the German standpoint, from our trans-Atlantic standpoint.

ROBERT BROWN: There was some question as to what constitutes booty of war, if coinage constitutes—

WALKER HANCOCK: No, there was no question. We spent our time in that service, Monuments and Fine Arts and Archives, getting the army to draw by letter of the Geneva Convention, [the law of] land warfare, and it states very specifically that works of art, government or otherwise, are regarded as private property. They can't be touched, they can't become considered spoils of war. And we were so strict with the Belgians who tried to take a few little German objects that we felt really very uncomfortable about ourselves.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, this wartime service then—would you summarize it as a high point for you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, it was a very great experience, and I think this thing of going back last year, or the year before, at the invitation of the city of [blank] brought it all to the forefront of my memory again. I'd been able to let it drop back and forget about it, but to go over that ground and see those places that you'd had such a keen responsibility, interest and responsibility for and then to be again with some of the people who had helped in the preservation was really a very moving experience.

ROBERT BROWN: Well there was an interlude at 1946. You came back to your teaching and resumed your regular work. You always, before the war and after, fairly regularly served on the jury.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Was this expected of a prominent sculptor to do so?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, at first it was part of the duty of teaching in Philadelphia. It was a tradition that the head of the department of sculpture of the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts would be the chairman, at least a member, of the sculpture jury so that every year, as long as I taught, I was a member of the jury of the annual exhibition. That involved not only judging work that was submitted, but also visiting the studios of sculptors in New York and other cities and inviting work, and it was a superb experience. It kept me aware of what was going on, I met through that most of the important sculptors of the time, and as always in matters of that kind these associations lead to other pleasant and interesting ones. So to the jury duty I owe a great deal.

I served too for quite a while on the—I think they called it—the art committee of the Institute of Arts and Letters, and we had there to award fellowships, grants and occasional prizes. That of course was a splendid experience.

ROBERT BROWN: In general, you believe, or did you believe, in the process of jurying as a means of selection? What about the open exhibition, as opposed to the selective ones?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think they both have their faults. I don't think the juries by any means always make the right decisions. In fact, one might almost say that the right decisions are the exception. But it also means that by and large a worthy work of art is recognized, even if some worthy works are not. And by and large, I believe it encourages quality, workmanship, originality and the other qualities that we look for in a work of art. I think that an open exhibition is a splendid thing for a young, inexperienced sculptor or painter, to see how his work stacks up with other artists. By the way, I think that's one of the most valuable things about exhibitions, in any case, to see one's work alongside the work of one's fellow artists. But I think you could just say that exhibitions are a great thing whether they are juried or not, and they have different functions. I think there is a wonderful incentive in a juried show, or at least this was true in the days in which I taught, in which I studied. Wonderful incentive to a young artist to try to get into one of the big shows. And if you were accepted in the Academy Annual or the National Academy of Design Annual or the Chicago, this was a great thing and you were very proud of it. It was an incentive, this kind of incentive that having something to be proud of can be.

ROBERT BROWN: The criteria for selection were broad enough and varied enough that you didn't feel one [blank] was predominating over the other, at least in these large national exhibitions.

WALKER HANCOCK: I think that the Pennsylvania Academy and that the—well, that's the annual exhibition that I have the most and widest knowledge of. Those exhibitions really were freed of that kind of cant. A piece of one kind was just as likely to get a prize as a piece of another. They tried of course to balance the jury. There was no such thing as balancing a jury, but they tried to and very often surprising results came about.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, you have by extension similar experience in your collaborative work. You did some of that too.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Where compromise is necessary, and perhaps you surprise each other in the role each other plays.

WALKER HANCOCK: Where compromise is always necessary. To some extent you have to adjust your ideas, you have to limit them very often. Or if you are not going to limit them, you have to make sure your [partner] or your

collaborating architect sees your point of view. It's all part of the very interesting business of being a sculptor.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you feel that by and large you were able to protect for yourself some measure of inventiveness in your work?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, as I look back on the sketches that I had done for a number of small things particularly, I have the feeling that the best ideas weren't chosen. Very often my little sketches somehow I feel were better ideas than those that we finally settled on. On the other hand, there's a great deal to be said for the stimulation of working with a person of opposing view or somewhat different view. In a way, it keeps one alive to possibilities that perhaps one would miss if the way were free to do anything. I find that, as a matter of fact, I enjoy a certain amount of restriction and limitation. I always go back to that wonderful poem that is called "Art," I think, that compares the restrictions put upon an artist to the buskin worn by the actor—do you remember?—that made him walk straight? There's a great deal in that, you know. He is speaking there of course of the limitations of material but there are other limitations too. Some of them are more interesting than the limitations of the material.

ROBERT BROWN: You found that they sharpened and focused.

WALKER HANCOCK: I think so, yes. And they do, if you win in the end. You have a certain conviction about what you've done you wouldn't have if you had your free way.

ROBERT BROWN: Have you ever thought what it would have been like to have produced for the market place, to the whims of a dealer first and then those of his clients?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I've thought of it. Particularly since in recent years, the opportunity has been there to cut loose and do something. And this may be result of circumstance, result of habit, that I think that if I had my choice at this moment to just do anything I wanted to regardless of anybody who might ever want to look at it—I still would feel, how I wish I had a problem to solve. I suppose [I might] face that possibility by setting myself a problem in a way that a perfectly imaginative and original sculptor might not.

ROBERT BROWN: But they usually will talk of problems, won't they? Things they are working out on their own in their mind.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. This is a problem in a little different sense though. Of course you can't touch clay or marble without facing a problem of some kind, and as you go from one to another, very often the problems increase. No, it's not a problem in that sense. I mean a problem, rather of specific requirements, external requirements which I enjoy to try to solve.

ROBERT BROWN: The internal ones you've also been able to wrestle with.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: But you also like the external constraints as well.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. As I look back, I think that there are regrets that I haven't been able to be more inventive and creative of new directions. Whether I would have been capable of taking advantage of perfect freedom at any time in my career is a question to me. The sort of thing that I really would have responded to, did respond to most, was a very large opportunity such as the Stone Mountain was originally. I was really fired by that, and I think that something might have come out of it.

ROBERT BROWN: But there were all those unfortunate compromises that were beyond your control.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. They were beyond my control. I could control almost everything except politics.

ROBERT BROWN: Well you mentioned sometime ago that when you were a student that there was very seldom any praise, at best, [blank] or someone might have said, "That's not bad."

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes.

ROBERT BROWN: Do you think that's had its effect on you?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think ...

ROBERT BROWN: You mentioned self-doubt.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I do think that there was a great deal of questioning as one worked, constant questioning of the wisdom of the very step at hand. However, one should outgrow that and certainly many



artists who were trained the same way have outgrown it.

ROBERT BROWN: Of course you got into your career and you too had firm convictions, didn't you? With which you then persuaded the client one way or the other.

WALKER HANCOCK: I think perhaps one of my debts to George Harding is just apropos of that thing. I had been working along in school. [blank] had told me to cast something in bronze. He told me, as I mentioned before, about one piece that I would never be ashamed of it, but that was about the limit of his enthusiasm as it was expressed in words. But George Harding came into the student exhibition once when he was on the faculty of the Academy and I was still a student, and he looked at my exhibition, and he said, "Hancock, your stuff is handsome." Well, I was a different man suddenly, don't you know. I had never been told that by a teacher there, or any teacher in fact. He wasn't my teacher but he was a teacher at the Academy, and his saying that really did a great deal for me.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you think about it all? Do you feel you accomplished a great deal?

WALKER HANCOCK: You mean as I look back?

ROBERT BROWN: As you think about your work.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, I don't know. I'd like to have a chance to start all over again.

ROBERT BROWN: Why? Because you'd do a lot of things differently?

WALKER HANCOCK: Of course you'd do them differently. Yes, they would be different—just how, I don't know. But I'm sure that there would have been ... You have to work so many years before you mature. How strange that is, isn't it? You can be thirty or forty years old and not be grown up really in your work. And this is true of so many of us. I think that if you asked any sculptor how he'd feel if he had the chance to start over again, his answer might be just about the same as mine. No matter what kind of work he's done.

ROBERT BROWN: There was a point when you felt you were mature, or maturing.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, I think I began to forget that I wasn't. It's very important. But the sad thing is that we can't live twice in our lifetime. Then we'd really do well.

ROBERT BROWN: But what do you look forward to as your program now? You're finishing up the Chief Justice Warren bust.

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I fortunately have the project to do for Philadelphia. It will be one of the things that I enjoy—sculpture out-of-doors, decorative, with a lovely landscape. A motif of my own choice and a very congenial landscape architect. Now this is very nice. It may be just more of the same, but I hope it will be better.

ROBERT BROWN: What about the little figures you do? You work from certain models in action. What role will that play in the future with you?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, perhaps a continuing diversion. They've always given me a chance to work off steam when I was doing a very formal architectural piece. It was nice to do something violent in action and perhaps a little silly. These little basketball things have given me a chance to do that. I think I would like to keep on doing them. Also, I enjoy tremendously working in that quite difficult medium of wax.

ROBERT BROWN: Did you enjoy it?

WALKER HANCOCK: I enjoy it most of all because despite the surface difficulty there is a freedom connected with it. There is no armature, and you can bend things here and there, fly things out, and if they don't work, why make something else out of it! There's no effort on that score at all. That lends itself to a great freedom that immediately disappears somehow in your mind the moment you have a stiff armature inside your work.

ROBERT BROWN: But it's also an exercise going back to fundamentals, isn't it?

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes it is.

ROBERT BROWN: Just as those various portrait heads must have been something of the same. Most of these I gather were studies you made more or less for yourself. For the most part, some were commissions.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. Most of them were done for the fun of having one's hand in. And the pleasure of constructing a head is tremendous—if you think of a head as a composition of solids and not as a result of an outline or something of that kind. The head has its own action just as truly as the rest of the body has. Within the head there are compositions of solids that result in what you can only term as action.

ROBERT BROWN: Well, then you've kept yourself pretty resilient then, haven't you, throughout your career? In terms of doing your own things a few years ago and also those things which other people require. I mean you were always able to keep both going.

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh I think so. I think that if you settle down to doing just metals or just architectural reliefs or just portraits it can be very [blank]. I always was amazed by Joe Davidson and his ability to stay with portrait heads and particularly be interested in them chiefly because of the fame of the subject, quite aside from his sculptural qualities. How a man could do that and keep as lively and keen as he did, it is a miracle to me.

ROBERT BROWN: Yes, what would have happened to you had you been doing that? Do you think that—

WALKER HANCOCK: Oh, I think I would have dried up. (laughs) Don't think I could have done it.

ROBERT BROWN: If you look at yourself, I mean, don't you see yourself as very prominent among what we would call, I guess, the Realist School of sculptors?

WALKER HANCOCK: Well, I hadn't really thought so until you wrote me that you wanted my papers, and then I began to wonder why. (laughs)

ROBERT BROWN: No, but I mean if you look at yourself and our country, isn't that so?

WALKER HANCOCK: No—well, somehow I hadn't done that. I just worked along. I hadn't—oddly enough, to be perfectly honest, it isn't the thing that I've given much thought to, as to where I stood.

ROBERT BROWN: What about realist sculpture in general? Do you think it stands at the end of the line?

WALKER HANCOCK: I think it's going through a very critical and interesting age, and this is why. To begin with, the impatience of young students who are in schools and eager to follow some new trend, or make a new direction, forestalls the long study that it takes them to become a real master of realistic sculpture. You have to use that term. I wish there were a better one, but you know what we mean. Another tremendously important thing is that the newspaper critics, the people who write about work they've seen in exhibitions, haven't themselves the knowledge of the art to distinguish between realistic work of depth and the shallowest, most tasteless, sort of superficial work. They lump the whole thing together. And to a one, these men—and this means most of the ones who are writing now—if a work of, let's say, Chapeux or [blank], or even Dubois, any of those, any of those men were put along side a similar piece done by a half-trained modern sculptor, except for the costume, it would all be the same kind of sculpture.

And that's a very hard thing on a young man who is half-baked, sees his work treated exactly as if it were the work of a master, but of the wrong period. Something of that kind. It's all very upsetting, so that I think before you have good realistic sculpture, if indeed you will, because the question is how things are moving—if it will ever be of interest again I suppose. A great question to some people. Assuming that it will become of interest again, there will have to be a good deal of education, not only of the young sculptors themselves but the observers, critics. It's astonishing, it's astonishing to me to see what a habit there is of putting all work of a certain kind, realistic or otherwise—all of it into a category. And whether or not you like that category, you're treated as if there were no distinctions within the category. I put that pretty awkwardly, but it's rather hard to explain what I think is going on.

ROBERT BROWN: You would rather people look at sculpture whether or not they liked that category, but they do at least try to make distinctions of quality.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes, and be able to—it takes a certain knowledge to be able to make the distinction. And a knowledge which at the moment is rather rare.

ROBERT BROWN: A knowledge which was possibly acquired more or less the way you acquired your own.

WALKER HANCOCK: Yes. I suppose knowledge of that kind has to come through discipline, and this is true of the people who write about it as well as the people who make it.

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