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Oral history interview with Marston Dean
Hodgin, 1998 Aug. 25

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Transcript

Preface

The following oral history transcript is the result of a recorded interview with Marston Dean Hodgkin on August 25, 1998. The interview took place in Hodgkin's studio in North Truro, Massachusetts, and was conducted by Robert F. Brown for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This transcript has been lightly edited for readability by the Archives of American Art. The reader should bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

Interview

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's 1998. Marston Hodgkin, at his home in—actually we're in his studio in North Truro, MA. It's Robert Brown, the interviewer. I thought we could, uh, pursue a biographical sequence. You were born, uh, in December, 1903. Cambridge, in Ohio. What had brought your family there? What was their background? Can you tell me a bit about—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: My father was with the Pennsylvania Railroad. And, uh, they sent him there as a chief engineer. And it was kind of fortunate for the family, because there were five of us, and we got an annual pass on any railroad. And so when I came out here on the Cape from Indiana—Richmond, IN—to study art, it didn't cost anything. I came on the railroad and got on in Richmond and came in to Provincetown—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, was your father, uh, where was he from originally?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Indiana.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. He was.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Richmond, IN. He was a birthright Quaker.

ROBERT F. BROWN: I see.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And so I inherited that background.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And he was an engineer with the railroad.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Civil engineer, yeah—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Civil engineer.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did that mean—did he travel a lot or was he—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. They sent him to Chicago; my brother, I think, was born in Chicago, and I had a sister, and she was born in Pittsburgh, I think it was. [00:02:00] [They laugh.] And we traveled around quite a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you did live in Cambridge, OH, for quite a while.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Not—not a long time, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: He was a—he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: No particular ties to Cambridge, OH.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. Richmond, IN—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —was the main spot.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And where—what about your mother's family? What was her name and her family?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Uh, Dean was her name. And my grandmother, her name was Molly Dean. Marysville, CA's named after her. Her father went out with the Gold Rush and started a mine—a gold mine—and named this

little town that they started after his young daughter.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really. Your grandmother.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Molly Dean.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Molly Dean.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did she and your father meet in Richmond, IN?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Uh, Lafayette.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So she also was from there.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes, she was from that area. Yes, she came originally from Southern Ohio, and lived down near where Ulysses S. Grant was born. Did you ever see his birthplace?

ROBERT F. BROWN: No.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: [Laughs.] Well, it's up the river a little ways from Cincinnati, and she was there—and she—her hands always shook, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your mother.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: My grandmother.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your grandmother.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Molly Dean, yeah. Uh, Morgan's Raiders—it was a Southern outfit rounding up horses for the Southern cavalry, and they came up through Ohio across—near Cincinnati, and they stopped at her place and they frightened her—this little girl—so that it made her hands shake. [00:04:02] And they shook the rest of their—her life. So it was quite frightening.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was your mother—was your mother's family—were they also Quakers?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. No, father's side was the Quakers.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did your—and did your family beco—were you raised as a Quaker?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, if you know what Quakers do, they—your church was in you. You're—you don't have to have a minister and all that. In fact, we were married by our geology prof—Dr. Hole—and he was a Quaker. We went to Earlham College, which is a Quaker school in Indiana, in Richmond. Earlham College.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you were there, uh—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: We both went to Earlham College; that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You and who?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Lucille.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. Lucille, your wife—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —to be. And her last name was Loofbourrow.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Loofbourrow. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: L-O-O-F-B-O-U-R-R-O-W.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And she was also from Richmond, IN—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —and you'd known you were—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —sweethearts more or less since—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yes. We went to grade school together, and—I remember when I first saw her, in the school as the doors for the classrooms had glass in them, and I saw—as I was going down the hall one day—I saw this beautiful head, and a pug nose. [00:06:01] So it was love at first sight.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Ah. And about how old were you then?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, I was about 10 or 12 years old. So we went together all our lives.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now you, uh—what were your interests? Do you recall? As a young boy?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I had—I liked Frost's poems. "The Road Not Taken." Because I—I took the road less traveled by, and that's made all the difference. The, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And even as a young boy, you liked Frost's poems?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, yes. I heard him—he was going around the country, then, reading his poetry. I was in graduate school in Chicago, and he came there, and I heard him. And he came to Richmond to read his poems several times. We had him at the house, and—and—I asked him once why he didn't recite one poem that—it's a love poem. "Love at the lips was touch / As sweet as I could bear," [Frost, Robert. "To Earthward." *New Hampshire*. New York City: Henry Holt and Company, 1923.] and so on. I can recite the whole thing, but—I asked him why he didn't read that when he was giving his talks, and he said it was too personal. And—but—

ROBERT F. BROWN: He didn't elaborate on that.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you didn't press.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, no.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. Um, did you—in your school in Richmond, did you have art courses, or what was—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: That was it, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —your particular interest in school?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Uh, the wife of a doctor in town in Richmond had a man from Indianapolis—John Herron Art School over there—come over; Randy Coats is his name. [00:08:09] And he gave art classes—on Saturdays. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And about how old were you when you started taking them?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I was in high school.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did you—you were already interested in drawing or painting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, the way I got interested was that Mrs. Johnson arranged with the school to use the study hall for an exhibition hall.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mrs. Johnson was—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah, she's the doctor's wife in Richmond.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And she would come to New York and visit the studios of painters that she liked: William Joyce—Chase for example. And he painted a self-portrait—they have it hanging in their gallery in Richmond now; it's one of his good portraits—and Chase thought that artists should—"It's a regular profession,"

he said, and they should dress up when they paint. So he had on a—a swallowtail coat and a stiff white collar, and he looked the part.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So this Mrs. Johnson, was she even a founder of the—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: The Artists'—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the art gallery or the art—association in Richmond?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Art. Yeah. Yeah. And she used their study hall to hang pictures in. And I was in the study hall, and I watched her, um, create these pictures, and—so she wanted to know if I'd help her, and the next thing I knew, I was hanging pictures there. [00:10:07] And I didn't get much studying done, but I did see a lot of—very good for the day—paintings. And that's how I got interested.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And she would arrange for things to be sent over from New York, and—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: She didn't go to galleries, but she went to the artists' studios—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Including, uh, Chase—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And—yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: William Merritt Chase.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And then shortly after that came Randolph Coats, to teach?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah, she had him come over to teach on Saturdays—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was he like? Was this your first teacher—of art?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What did he start you out with?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Whole lot of landscape painting. In fact, he came—he and, uh—oh, what was his name?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, there's another name you use—you've mentioned Francis Brown.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, yes. Francis Brown was a—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was that later?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But Randolph Coats was your first teacher, and then there was another one. What would they do? Would they take you out into the countryside and you'd paint landscapes?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Mm, no, I don't think so. I don't know what we did, but—it's long ago—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: But, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he a pretty good teacher?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I thought he was good. He was—he didn't know much besides painting because he came from an art school. I wanted to teach, but I—I thought a painter should know something besides painting, and so the teacher, I tried—I majored in geology in college. [00:12:03] Got straight A's in geology, and I—I had a chance to go into that as a profession. But I did always like to sketch and paint, and, uh, I got to wondering what does a geologist do when he gets old? I knew that, uh—well, some of the painters got to be pretty old. Titian, for example—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yep.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —lived to be 99, I think, when he died. And he was still painting. His assistants would, uh—he said when he got old that he could improve on some of those paintings he did in his younger years. And then he'd paint on them, but they'd mixed his colors with olive oil so it didn't dry. And soon as he was through that day, uh, [laughs] they'd wipe it all off.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.] So you determined that it was probably something that you could do for—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —all your life.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: That's right. Well Renoir, they'd used to say, yeah, how they'd tied a paintbrush in his hand because he had arthritis, and—and so, I thought, well, that's for me. I'd rather do that—then I'll have something to do when I get old—and it payed—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. And you were thinking that even when—even when you were a teenager, you were thinking about how it would be useful.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. That's right. Yes. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now was Francis F. Brown also a teacher of yours at that time?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: He taught art as a regular art teacher in the school, yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh—at the—in Richmond.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. There in Richmond, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But he did—he—I've looked both of these men up, now; Coats lived in Indianapolis. [00:14:02] By the way, I noticed he was a mem—he must have come to Provincetown now and then, because he was listed as a member of the Beachcombers' Social Club down there.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I—I joined the Beachcombers' Club, too.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, Coats could tell you about Provincetown, I guess. Did he—he—evidently—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —came here, huh?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —I think—he hadn't been coming many years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Before you started.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: What about Frank—Francis F. Brown—as a teacher? How—was he quite a good teacher? Or what was he like? How was he different from Coats?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, he was older for one thing. [Laughs.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: But—oh, there was a painter at Ohio State. When these universities started putting in artists to teach, Iowa had—oh, I'm missing his name.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You want me to stop a minute?

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you go then to Indiana University—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: One year is all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —after Earlham? After you finished in geology at Earlham?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, I, uh—for my freshman year, I went to Indiana University.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see. Before you went to Earlham.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. And, uh—I hated to be away from Lucy, so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, I see.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —I went to Earlham then after that—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, can we talk a bit about—you did have—you did study art at Indiana during that period.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I went up to watch T.C. Steele paint.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, now, he was quite an old—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: He—yeah, he was—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —man, then.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —from the German background.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:16:03] That's right. He trained in Munich, I think.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Did you look him up?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: He was born in Indiana in 1847, so he was up in years by the time, uh—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Well, he smoked cigars and you could—you could tell when he came in through the front door, to the third floor in this building there was [inaudible] coming. He just reeked.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you watched him paint. You didn't paint with him.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, I watched him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. Was he—what was he like? Was he rather formal, or—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, they had him as artist in residence, and they kept it that way. He didn't have classes. Who was that rather famous painter who came there? He did murals. I can't think of his name right—it's —

ROBERT F. BROWN: —it's Robert Burke—was another teacher.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: He had a course yeah, which I took, but I didn't learn anything from him.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. And now you also, then, went to the University of Chicago for a time and studied—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —with Walter Sergeant.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. So I went down to the art school, there, and I didn't—they didn't give me any job that I could make a little money at to go to school; I needed something to help pay the way. So I went out to the university. And Walter Sergeant was out there—not John Singer. [00:18:01] But—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And how long were you there?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: One year.

ROBERT F. BROWN: One year.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And I took art education there, which consisted mainly of lecture courses on how to teach art.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you find those very useful?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I thought so that since I was going to teach.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were pretty certain that you were going to teach.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Yeah, so I knew I wanted to get married, and I knew artists who tried to make a living selling their pictures sometimes have a hard time. And I didn't want to rely on selling pictures to make a living, and so I got this job at Miami to teach there, and they have a good retirement. They—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. So that was a good idea.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —so—

ROBERT F. BROWN: But you—you, uh—you studied at Chicago with Walter Sargeant and took these art education courses after you'd finished at Earlham College.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. Yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you finished at Earlham about 1923—'25? Something like that? Is that right?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I guess so. I started teaching at Miami in '27, and I taught there for 36 years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now even before that, I think I read that, uh, you came down to Cape Cod as early as, uh—to Provincetown, I think, 1924.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: That's right.

ROBERT F. BROWN: How did you happen to come down here? I noticed one or two of your teachers were familiar with Provincetown, but what led you to come down here?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I, uh, heard there were art studios, and—and Randy Coats, along with James R. Hopkins from Ohio State—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:20:02] Now was he someone else you'd studied with?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Well, he and Randy had an art school. I have photographs of—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —me, there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They had an art school here in Provincetown?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. Yeah. Down on one of the old wharves, there. I have photographs of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And so you'd been taught by both of those men.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you come out to—go to Provincetown with some of—with friends? Or just on your own?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, I came on my own. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And when you came here, was that for—like, for the summer I suppose, was it?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was their approach to teaching? Did they take you—did you go out and paint the beach or—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the water?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I painted figures that—they hired models, and—Autumn Simms [ph] was the name of one girl; they called her Autumn because she had red hair, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [Laughs.]

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —she later married some millionaire and gave up modeling then. But I painted her several times.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And did these men—did Hopkins and Coats, did they talk quite a lot? Or did they just set up the model and then come around and talk—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, they—they came around and talked. Hopkins had studied in Paris with somebody and—and so it was sort of impressionism. But they were good. In fact, Randy won the only prize the art association in Provincetown gave—a prize, \$100—and that was the year that he got the prize. Well, I have a copy of the *Lorelei*—it's an art magazine that came out in Provincetown—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:22:08] *Lorelei*.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I have a copy of it that's—only one I know that's in existence. But they—they didn't like his picture—and this article says that the *Wee Mite Moggish*—it was a picture of the harbor in Provincetown on a foggy day. Just a typical harbor scene.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And they said—what did they say?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: They said, "It's a remarkable picture"—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —"remarkable in that it won the prize." And, uh—[They laugh.] Oh, they just panned it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did that bother Coats?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I don't—it didn't make him happy, but then I didn't hear any results of that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah. Well, was that—do you feel that first summer here, was that time—time well spent?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yes. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you begin making some—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And then next year, I—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did you make some friends—begin to make some friends down here?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh. Oh yes.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Who—can you recall some of who they were?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, was—Dick Miller was the skipper of the Beachcombers' Club.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, yeah. Richard Miller. He was from—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Richard Miller.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —St. Louis, I think.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, but he lived in Provincetown, he had a place on Bradford Street. Beautiful yard with fountains. And when he died, the place went up for sale, and Lucy and I looked at it to see whether we would want to buy it or not. I'm glad we didn't now; I like it here better. Provincetown isn't what it used to be.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So Miller is somebody you got to know—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —early on—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in those early years.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: [00:24:05] Well, I—I went to Hawthorne's criticism classes—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, you did?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And, uh, so I—I was influenced by him. Hawthorne—in those days the artist's surprise

were hard to get, and Hawthorne concocted some kind of a—a, uh, juice to mix the colors with. And I have a bottle of that around here. He says it's the kind that the Dutch Masters used, and, uh, Verheyden—a fellow named Verheyden—made his own oil paint, and he stuffed them in a—with a sausage stuffer—stuffed the tubes of paint. I have some of those around here someplace here.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was he also somebody who was studying or painting down here?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, Verheyden just made artists' colors.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, Verheyden, yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Verheyden.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You didn't study with Hawthorne, but you went to his critiques. Is that right?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You—people were allowed to come in when he—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yeah. In fact, Hans Hofmann—did you ever hear of him?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh sure.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I lived next door to his monitor one year—can't think of his name right now. But he invited me to go to one of Hofmann's criticism classes. And I went. [00:26:08] And—he, uh—Hofmann would have him line up their pictures that they'd done that week, and then uh, the artists would go sit on some bleachers and watch and listen. And Hans started out with his broken English, and he picked out one, and said, "The worst picture in the show." And he just panned it to pieces. And then he stopped and said, "By the way, who painted that?" And it was his monitor—his prized student. And Hans said, "Well, now that I know who did it, I can see what you were trying to do." And it turned out to be one of the best pictures there. Now that to me is dishonest, and, uh, I lost faith in that. I think he did more damage for Provincetown than any painter I ever heard.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Really.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Well, he influenced a lot of people—Hans Hofmann.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh yeah. What about Hawthorne? What was he like during his—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, he was alright. I think his coloring has darkened, and that's because of his medium that he made up.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But was he—was he gentle with the students? Or—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yes. Yes, he was—he was a nice person. I knew his son. [00:28:00] In fact, the son's wife was out here yesterday for a while. Hazel Hawthorne.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes. Well, you, uh, then—decided to—went to Miami University. Did you apply for the job or was it—did you know anything about that place when you went there in 1927?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I think my sister had gone to Miami, and she wrote to me and said, "I think they're—they want an art teacher. Would you like to try out?" And so I wrote to the president of Miami and told him who I was, and so that's—as artist in residence—I have the letter saying, "You don't have to teach. You just be there and let students come in and watch you paint." And then the thing was that the man who was teaching the art history also taught Spanish and French. Cune [ph] was his name. And, uh, he got cancer of the mouth; he smoked cigarettes all the time. And so he died around Christmastime, and they wanted somebody to teach art history. And the president wanted to know if I could do that, and I said, "Well, I—I've studied a lot of art history, but I'll try." And so that's the way [laughs] I got started teaching.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Wait, so you were the—how would you—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: So—

ROBERT F. BROWN: —by the way, how had you made a living in the several years from the time you left Earlham College and the Univers—and Chicago, until you came to Miami University?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: [00:30:07] Oh, I worked at different jobs on the railroad and so on. I worked in a

roundhouse at Richmond, the Pennsylvania district division was there from Indianapolis to Pittsburgh, I think, and they had a roundhouse. I have pictures of me there. I learned how to temper steel and—and I worked in the summer in a wheat field. I got overcome by the heat.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You kept painting as much as you could—did you—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yes. I always liked to. And when I'd travel, I'd take a sketchbook. I've got a dozen or so black sketchbooks just for inking or Conté crayon or something.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In your hometown, Richmond, IN, they must have thought that you were a pretty good artist. I noticed that you won prizes at the Richmond Art Association exhibitions.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Beginning about 1925, so you—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And in Dayton, too. I have a picture I did of a dead seagull.

ROBERT F. BROWN: That was somewhat later, I think. Wasn't it?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I got a prize in Dayton with that.

ROBERT F. BROWN: In the '20s, you were doing still lifes, portraits, landscapes—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. And I did figure painting.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. So when you—at Miami, you were essentially—by the middle of your first year, you were essentially the whole art department, is that right?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: [00:32:05] Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What kind of a school was it? Was it a fairly small place, or a—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I think the enrollment was about 2,000 for the whole university, and there wasn't anybody in art. In fact, I had to have benches made and easels and that sort of thing. They had a woodworking department there, and—and they let me draw—sketch benches to sit on, and—and I had a hard time convincing the workers that I needed those. They said, "Well, that's just a waste of good lumber. The art isn't going to last very long." And they didn't want to make them. But they're still using them, 50-some [laughs] years later.

ROBERT F. BROWN: They were that good.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So, uh, you came in 1927. Did you have very many students in the beginning, or—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: There were—I think—there was one, Beulah Ashbaugh [ph]. She had been in art education in the School of Education. But when they started the School of Fine Arts—see, the university's made up of different schools, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: They founded that School of Fine Arts, I believe, in 1929—a couple years after you got there.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Yeah, I came and was there two years, and they decided it was worth having it. And so, using those things that Carnegie, uh, gave us—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:34:02] I should ask, uh—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —that helped a lot.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —did the \$10,000 from the Carnegie Foundation—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —did that—did you get that for the university? Or how did that—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. It came just before I got there. I think that gave them the incentive then to try using it, because they—they sent an inspector around to see how it's been used, and he'd check up on what I

was doing. And the only stipulation was: there was one course called "Art Appreciation" making use of their stuff. And that was the one-hour course that I gave once a week—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now what was their stuff? Maybe you'd better tell us. What—what was it that the Carnegie gr—money—what did they provide to the university?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, it was a—oak cabinet. And it had mounted prints—and some in color and black and white. And, uh, any—anything that an art teacher would want to use. And they even sent outlines of what to teach.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. And these were prints of famous works of art?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Yeah. And so, it worked alright for two or three years. And then a couple years after I'd been there, I wanted to marry Lucy, and—and so I asked the president if I could get a raise in salary if I got married, and he said, "Oh yes, I'll double your salary." So instead of \$500 a year, I got \$1,000 a year. Oh—and that went on for several years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:36:02] Really? He kept doubling your salary?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, no, no—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Just that \$1,000.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Got it. Was that enough to—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, we survived. It's a state-supported school—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, it is? Miami University?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah, there are five state schools. George Washington gave a grant for—it's a land grant college. Yeah, when I left there, there were about 35,000 there.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, really.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: So it did boom.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It was very big. Now, was Ohio State the principal state university?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was there a—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. And there was Ohio University in Bowling Green, and Miami.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. Now the School of Fine Arts, which was established in 1929, you were—at this point—still, I guess, an instructor, were you? Or something else—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, they said I was the full professor—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Full professor.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —whatever that is.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh. Very quickly. So, and I noticed the dean in those early years was a man named Theodore Kratt.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now what was his background?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Music.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Music.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: In fact, all the deans there—were there when I was there—uh, came—were music people. Music background. And I suppose as a dean, that has to do a lot of public speaking and that sort of thing,

and musician—a music person is more used to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Well, did the School of Fine Arts itself include music? Did they teach music in the School of Fine Arts?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, yes. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, they did.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Music and architecture.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, architecture, too. Right.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you could take that for what, three or four or five years? [00:38:03] Architecture? Was that a specialized—training?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No, in the School of Fine Arts, they had these specialized divisions. There was painting and design—they were separate.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was painting and design—was design separate from painting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. And, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what was that aimed towards? Design—toward practical applications and pottery? Or industrial design?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, they did pottery, yes. That sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: But design was mainly what, sort of abstract—learning the general principles of design?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. Well, when I started teaching, batique was very popular on silk, you know? And that tie-dye stuff? And all the schools were doing batiques—so I had them buy these little things you heat the wax in, and—so we did those. In fact, I did one with some dancers going along, and Tony found it the other day, and had—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Your son, Tony.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —had it framed up, yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Was it—did it fairly quickly become quite a good school? The School of Fine Arts?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well—no, it didn't go right away, but there were—a lot of good students came there. There were four boys who we'd call them the Four Horsemen of the—uh, they were very good painters. Philip Romfer [ph] and Jack Snook—Jack Snook's story I think is interesting. He, uh—well, the four boys rented a basement for a place to stay—they hadn't any money, or very little. [00:40:09] Lucy and I would bake a ham or beef or something and take them to keep them alive.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And what about Jack Snook? You were going to tell me.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, his—his daughter is teaching at Miami, now, and she teaches sculpture. She got a contract with the Toledo Zoo, I think it is, to model some animals—animal sculpture—and does a beautiful job. Well, she got her master's at Miami in art, and, uh, I don't know what the arrangement was, but they had to take an old picture and—they could find one around the studio there—and use that—incorporate the idea in a picture. Well, what she did, she found a nude painting that her father had done as a student, and she used that as the thing she was going to use in her—for her thesis. And it was a nude figure, and he said, "You know who—who that is in that picture? That's your mother." [00:42:07] [They laugh.] She'd been one of the models there. So I thought that was kind of nice.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh yeah, yeah. Well, you taught yourself in these early years—you were teaching drawing as well as painting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yeah. Yeah, and I taught photography.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yes, did you take up photography pretty early? Because you've done a lot of fine photographs. Did you begin—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes—yes, my father had a box camera with glass plates, you know? And he did a lot of photography. And—so I got all the equipment you need, and I did photographs, and George Hoxie taught design—

ROBERT F. BROWN: George Hoxie.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

[Audio Break.]

ROBERT F. BROWN: So George Hoxie, was he somebody—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: George Hoxie taught design. I hired him to come from Syracuse to teach design, and then after a few years, he taught photography, and he—he got—liked photography so much that he resigned and opened up a studio in town and took a lot of photographs.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And was it—was partly through him that you got so involved in photography?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. And he got involved because he took over the photography I was teaching. There's a picture in here of Burl Ives. [00:44:00] Did you ever hear of Burl Ives?

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh yes. Sure.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, George took that picture of Burl Ives with his son, sitting down the shore. It's in there someplace.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you had a—you—in 1929 is when you married, and on your honeymoon I gather you came to Cape Cod.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Came to Provincetown.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So that must have been in the summer, then.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh yeah. Just for the summer. We were here three months, I guess.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And was your wife, Lucy—was she interested in art—in painting or—herself?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. In fact, uh—oh, where were we? Well, when we came to Provincetown, she had never painted before, but I was always painting on this honeymoon. And then she decided she'd better paint. So she did a few oil paintings.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did she keep at it? Did she keep—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, not as a hobby, but just—as she wrote. She did poetry. And well, there are two out there—*Rhyming Around Greece* is one of them—that she put together.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You know, this was uh—the years you got married was the very year, the beginning of the Great Depression. Did this have much of an effect on you?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. [Laughs.] It didn't at all.

ROBERT F. BROWN: You were very lucky.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: In fact, in 1931—that was a bad year, wasn't it? For—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —the Depression. Well, that was the year we went to Europe for three months—traveled all around. [00:46:04] The reason for that was that I was supposed to get a master's degree, and I'd have to take time off, then, and go back to Chicago and get a master's degree in art. But I told the president I'd like to, if I'm going to have to teach these art history courses, I'd like to see the original paintings that I'm going to talk about and the environment in which the artists worked. And so he said that sounds all right with him. So that's why we went to Europe in 1931 and we spent the summer going to, uh, galleries in Europe and France and Eng—

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MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Uh—I was interested in that, and, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: You mean you were interested in how they taught.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: They—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Or you were—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —up to that time, most art schools used plaster casts of classical models. And the sculptors were classic in their form. But in 1931, they were importing exhibits from Africa—of African woodcarving—and they had figures with long noses and—and slanty eyes, and the Fauvist movement—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The Fauves.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —took over the classical. And that was the beginning of that. They did away with classic influence.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And this—you knew—was occurring in [inaudible] and that's why you particularly wanted to go there and visit.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did—so you were learning quite a lot.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh, I learned a tremendous amount.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: That's the way to do it, too. Just sit in the class and listen to the guy. Read out of a book, well that's—that's not teaching it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No. So, did this—you didn't have to get a master's degree, then? You were able—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —the president of Miami thought this was pretty—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did the university pay for your trip over there?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: [00:02:02] No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: No?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. But, uh, well—I still itch. You don't need to—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well—

ROBERT F. BROWN: That trip was pretty important to you, then. 1931.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: 1931. Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. Yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: And you kept coming almost every summer when you weren't going—say—to Europe, you would go to, uh—come out to—particularly to Provincetown.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I'd teach summer school some years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, in Ohio.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: In Ohio. At Miami. But whenever we could, we'd come out to the Cape, because there was a lot going on in Provincetown—artists from all around were coming here. Some of them were studying with—well, there were about four art schools.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Did Coats and Hopkins, did they—did their school last very long?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No. Only two years.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Two years. And of course, Hawthorne died in 1930, so that was over.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Well, Hawthorne was the oldest I guess, and the best known.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now, who were some of the other, uh, people you were getting to know in Provincetown? You must have known Ross Moffett by that point, the painter?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes. Yes, I—I liked Ross, and I hired him and he came out and taught at Miami for about three years. During the war.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah, I think he first—he first went out in—in actually in the early 1930s. 1932.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Mm-hmm [affirmative].

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:04:01] And he and you both shared an interest then in geology—or, well, he was interested—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Interested.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in paleontology, or well—or the Indian side.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, he was—Indian stuff, yeah. And I showed him where all the Indian mounds were in Ohio, and—so he's spent most of his time [laughs] out hunting arrowheads.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Would you and he have discussions about art, or things like that? Or—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —fashions—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: No.

ROBERT F. BROWN: —in general, you—in those days, people didn't talk too much about it when they got together? They'd just look at the work, and—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I didn't argue with it. I—I had my idea of what art was, and the others—I'd ask a person: "How—how would you define art?" And they would say, "Well, you can't, it's an instinct," or something. And—but I still thought that you could; if you're talking about art, what are you talking about? And so I worked out my own definition: art is man's harmonious interpretation of the physical and spiritual phenomena affecting him. Now, that includes all the arts: the art of dancing, there's rhythm and balance; and—all the different arts, I think would—fall under that definition. Art—art has to have harmony in it. And balance. [00:06:00] And it's an interpretation of things that affect you, so, uh, it's not a copy. Well, that little wayside shrine there—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh, this painting by you.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's from Italy, I would think. Yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, I did that from a watercolor I did in—near Portofino. Uh, up in the hills there, you walk along a little trail, and there are waysides shrines to the Virgin Mary—"Passagio qui tri transisti sosta e prega" [ph].

ROBERT F. BROWN: Right.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: "Traveler, when you come this way, stop and pray." And the shrines like that, I was impressed by and uh, so it's that sort of thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So this is—this is what you mean by interpreting, uh, what affects you.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: So you interpret—you try to interpret not merely the appearance, the physical appearance, of what you saw, but you try to convey something of the affect it had on you, is that right?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Now, a lot of painters I think wonder how much value they can get. "Is this

something that I can sell and make more money?" And I never thought of that, because I was teaching. And I got a check for—from the university for teaching. So I didn't have to wonder if I could sell that or not. And that's why these galleries around here aren't interested in me, and—

ROBERT F. BROWN: [00:08:01] Why is that?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: —or I in them. Because, uh, I'll give them the—give a picture away or sell it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Oh.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I don't think I ever charged more than \$250 for a picture. In fact, that one of Ed Dick and Bill Bogart and myself that are in the art museum—I gave them—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Mm-hmm [affirmative]. The one of you and Edward Dickinson and William Bogart.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: I gave those to the museum, and I could have gotten—I know there was a dealer down in Connecticut someplace, Dr. Fogleman [ph]. Did you ever hear of Dr. Fogleman? He's quite a collector, and he wanted to buy the Bill Bogart sitting on the beach, and I said, well, I didn't want to sell it. But I sold him the sketch—I had a watercolor sketch I had done—so he has that. But, uh—

ROBERT F. BROWN: On the other hand, you must—you were raising a family pretty soon—you—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, we waited to have a family until we could afford it.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Okay.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: And—well, that's another thing. My ideas are not just my own; they're a collection of things I like. "For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love / First when we see them painted, things we have passed. Perhaps I—" [Browning, Robert. "Fra Lippo Lippi." *Men and Women*. London: 1855.]—I don't care to see, and so they're better painted, better for us or the same thing or they're the same thing.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Now that is—are you quoting? Are you quoting there?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: What are you quoting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah.

ROBERT F. BROWN: *What* are you quoting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Oh. [00:10:02] "For, don't you mark? we're made"—oh no, who is this? "Stains the white radiance of eternity." [Shelley, Percy Bysshe. "Adonaïs: An Elegy on the Death of John Keats, Author of Endymion, Hyperion, etc." London: Charles Ollier, 1821.]—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Shelley's—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. I've tried painting that. I've got it around here someplace. He proves that some things—there are different art forms. And painting and poetry is one thing. And it has to have meaning and rhythm and balance and—"Life, like a dome of many-colored glass / stains the white radiance of eternity." Well, we all live in our own little sphere. And if we live a colorful, full life, we influence a lot of people in eternity. Or if we're selfish and, uh, not interested in much in the world, we leave a little grease spot in eternity. But if you have to explain that in words, what you're getting at, it's better in words. So I—I do have a picture—it's an oil thing about that big square.

ROBERT F. BROWN: It's better to—to recite the equivalent in poetry, right? The—poetry and painting are equivalents, do you feel? Do you feel that—

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yes, in a way. But in some mediums, uh are more appropriate for the ideas than others. [00:12:08] But there are art forms—you can't use that definition though, on a lot of stuff that's so-called art today. I saw a show in Dallin County Court [ph] a few years ago—all of them were—

ROBERT F. BROWN: Dallin Court in Provincetown.

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Yeah. Dead sparrows, they had stuck them on a board and framed them, and it was art.

ROBERT F. BROWN: Yeah. What about abstraction in painting?

MARSTON DEAN HODGIN: Well, abstractions I have—I have a retrospective book in there that the faculty put together when I left Miami, and I have examples of Futurism, Fauvism, and Abstraction—

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