Oral history interview with Perez Zagorin, 2007 January 17-18

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The following oral history transcript is the result of a tape-recorded interview with Perez Zagorin on January 17 and 18, 2007. The interview took place in Charlottesville, VA, and was conducted by Laura Orgon MacCarthy for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Perez Zagorin and Laura Orgon MacCarthy have reviewed the transcript and have made corrections and emendations. The reader should bear in mind that he or she is reading a transcript of spoken, rather than written, prose.

This interview was produced in conjunction with the exhibition, "Anatomy of a Painting: Honore Sharrer's Tribute to the American Working People," on view at the Lawrence A. Fleischman Gallery of the Archives of American Art, March 8 through June 20, 2007.

LAURA MACCARTHY: Okay. Here we go.

PEREZ ZAGORIN: Have you conceived this interview in light of this exhibition?

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes. Actually, Liza [Kirwin, curator of manuscripts, Archives of American Art] has suggested that I do this. And I think it's great, because it'll also just become a part of the permanent record outside of the exhibition but in relation to the exhibition.

So, okay, here we go. This is Laura MacCarthy interviewing Perez Zagorin at the studio of Honoré Sharrer in Charlottesville, Virginia on January 17, 2007, for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution. And this is disc number one, session one.

Okay, Perez, if you could tell us, first, when and where you were born and then when and where Honoré was born.

MR. ZAGORIN: I was born in Chicago, Illinois on May 29, 1920. Honoré was born in the United States Military Academy at West Point, New York on July 12, 1920.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, both in 1920. I didn't realize that. My birthday is July 15.

I'm just going to ask you to describe what you can of Honoré's childhood and family background. I know her mother was a painter, obviously. We actually have documents of Madeleine's in our collection. This must have predisposed her to a career in art very early on.

Do you think that she ever thought of doing anything else? And you can get to this in your own way, but were the stints in factory work part of her training as a painter and how did this all fit together and how did her upbringing and her childhood-this can be as open-ended as you want it to be.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, Honoré's father was a professional soldier, graduate of U.S. Military Academy at West Point, New York on July 12, 1920.

Honoré's mother, Madeleine, was the child of a Briton who'd come over to the United States; he was a journalist and did other things. He was a mining investor who never made the fortune that he hoped to achieve. They were both-they were an upper-class family and Honoré's mother was born in Colorado, and as a child Honoré lived in various places because of her father's various assignments.

She [Honoré] was in the Philippines for a period of time. She had many memories of that and of the Chinese nurse that looked after her. And she also lived in various places of the United States, I think most notably the connections that her family had and things that she did in Montgomery, Alabama, and then subsequently a couple of years that her father was assigned to Paris and they lived on the Ile St. Louis in Paris in a beautiful old apartment and her father was connected with the American Embassy, but I think his particular assignment had something to do with serving as an aide to General Pershing. And this was in the 1930s and I think when she came back from France to live in the United States she was probably 15 or 16 years old.

Her mother was always interested in art and painted from an early age and took art classes. And when Honoré lived in Paris, she was particularly influenced by the-she saw a lot of art. She went to the Louvre regularly. She was quite free to move around. She lived with a French family for a period of time, and she and her mother spent a summer in Brittany, which left a lasting impression on her.
I can't remember when she started doing art, but it was at a very early age. And I think she had suffered dyslexia—no one ever recognized that she was slow reader, and I think she also felt that her ability was in art and so there was never a time when I think she ever thought of anything but being an artist. She has told me a great deal. We talked a lot—used to talk a lot about our early lives and we told each other everything that we could recall of our childhoods and the lives with our families and so on.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's great. There are a couple of questions here that I do know the answer to, but I want to ask them anyway so they become part of the record. So where was Honoré educated? What were her most rewarding educational experiences that she may have told you about and particularly influential classes or teachers? Anything along those lines?

MR. ZAGORIN: Honoré, I think, may have gone to both public and private schools whose names I don't know in various places that her family lived, because she lived—I know that she lived at one point in Wilmington, North Carolina. Her father was—the branch of the service that he served in—that he was in was the Engineers and so he did a lot of engineering work that required him at rivers and harbors, which is one of the domains of the [Army] Corps of Engineers.

She lived in New Orleans. She may have gone to some girls' school there. And then in France where she was sent to a society girls' convent called—run by the Blue Nuns, Les Oiseaux Bleues, and she was not happy there. And then I think she went to a—en école—and was living with a French family, and when she came back, the part of her education that I know the most about, it seems perhaps to have marked her the most was the years she spent at the Bishop's School in La Jolla, California.

The Bishop's School took its name from the bishop of the diocese there. It was in that sense a church school. There weren't only Christians who went—occasionally Jewish. There were Jewish students. Honoré, I think, had very little notion at that time about the existence of Jews and it was quite strict.

There was compulsory chapel. The girls were taught academically, it was demanding, but they were taught to sew and some other things. They were obviously being educated to be wives and mothers, and I think she found the strictness of that school rather forbidding. She used to tell me about one of the recurrent dreams that she had through a large part of her life in which she would arrive at compulsory chapel late.

The head mistress was a Vassar graduate. All these girls were taught to be ladies. These were daughters of affluent families. And she did not excel academically at all, but there were certain teachers that liked her, that she found of interest. During the period that she was there—this must be amongst your biographical dates—she entered the competition organized by one of the popular magazines in the period called *The American Magazine*, for young people. They were asked to compete—I'm not certain whether there was also a literary or even a poetry side, or whether it was just limited to art, but the subject that they were to deal with was "My Vision for America."

And it could have been one of her art teachers who found out about this and she suggested that she enter. I understand that there were at least a quarter of a million people, young people that entered this, and she won the first prize and the prize consisted of this chaperoned trip to New York and a visit there with the other winners, I guess, in the other categories. And she enjoyed this very much and remembered it and I don't know where the work is now. I've seen it reproduced. She also did a mural for the—yes, she did a mural for the Bishop's School.

The Bishop's School has since become much larger and it is also—it was a girls' school, it's now coeducation, but she did a mural for the library. It may still be there and—I think she was very shy, very reticent. She rarely—she, I'm sure, found it difficult to volunteer and answering questions and so on. She must have been popular in some way, because I think one of the highest student honors that you could get was to be elected by your classmates as May Queen and she was in the year that she graduated.

While she was living in La Jolla—in Coronado, California, where her family moved after they returned from Paris and where they built a house—her mother was very active I think in the San Diego Museum of Art; she may have been on the board of trustees at one time—and I've seen clippings. I'd find news about her in the society column of the San Diego paper.

The San Diego Museum was a small, but quite distinguished museum, and there were some particular donors who had a lot of resources who gave exceptional gifts to the museum. And the director of the museum, who had his art historical training at Princeton and who was a graduate of Brown University and quite devoted to Brown, was named Reginald Poland and he became a good friend of Madeleine Sharrer, Honoré's mother. And, also, he was one of those who saw, at an early time, that Honoré was a very talented artist.

And I think while Honoré was still at the Bishop's School or during the end of her time at the Bishop's School—I don't know whether she was altogether happy at the Bishop's School, because she started out as a boarder
there and she hated being a boarder and she persuaded her family to let her stay at home. The family had a couple that worked in the houses, cook and housekeeper, so I think she was driven everyday in subsequent years or maybe to the ferry. I'm not quite sure how it worked.

And she had a studio. There was a studio in the house that they built that she used, but I think the friendship with Reginald Poland and I think they had a Legion of Honor-some San Francisco thing. Some exhibition there-it might have been connected with the San Francisco World's Fair or something and I've been told that Honoré was the youngest artist to exhibit there. Her style was very free and painterly at that time-it might have been some still life or whatever, I'm not quite sure, but I think there was an art life. There were San Diego artists and I've never seen this much noted about her and I don't think I've spoken about it.

One of the people that they knew was a sculptor. He was very well known. He may have had an actual reputation. I imagine he did. His name was Donal Hord. And Hord was very well known out in San Diego and he was a sculptor who worked with very hard materials- hard stones and carved-and there was at least one very large public monument, or was, near the waterfront in San Diego that Donal Hord did.

And Donal Hord lived with his wife-and I think there was a man there who was his assistant in his sculptor's studio-and in this room here, that wooden figure there is Donal Hord's, and I think Honoré bought it probably when she was 17 or 18 years old. But she has told me a lot of Donal Hord, and she was very much impressed by Donal Hord's craftsmanship and by his utter dedication to his art.

I met Donal Hord. We were in New York City and we were on our way to Europe and we were spending the night at a hotel quite close to the United Nations building and it was extraordinary. On that overnight stay, we were leaving from New York. Donal Hord was staying there with both his wife and his assistant, and the daughter of a general named General Wash-Patsy Wash—was also there with her husband and all by chance met, but I remember sitting with him and Honoré, talking with Donal Hord and a classmate of Honoré's reviving memories.

So I think Honoré had a real art life even when she was in San Diego both through art classes and so on. I think that the burden that she felt in reading so slowly, and so on, was somewhat troubling for her, but I think she had a lot of compensation. She played hockey, school hockey. She was very lovely, beautiful, and she had a boyfriend, but she was very shy, not liking to go out, not wanting to have dates, very reticent.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay, well, this is another good one then. Describe how, where, and when you first met Honoré.

MR. ZAGORIN: Honoré and I were both living in New York City in Greenwich Village. I had been at Harvard and I came down. After Pearl Harbor, I wanted to enlist in the Navy, but I was rejected. I had eyesight problems and migraines. And I went to work for the Office of War Information in New York City, which was a new war agency that the Roosevelt administration had created for purposes of propaganda and so on, analyzing the effect of broadcasting and sending in other ways information to Axis-occupied Europe. And I was living on West 12th Street in New York City and I took that-I got that job about 1942.

I met Honoré in July of 1943, one Sunday morning when I went-I didn't do any work on Sunday, and I went to a place that I sometimes had breakfast in on 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenue, which was an important block in Greenwich Village. And I had the Sunday Times with me and I saw this young woman who also had the Sunday Times, and was sitting at a table reading and she was so lovely and had such a distinguished face. I found the courage to speak to her.

And we fell into a conversation of some kind. It was a lovely, bright Sunday in July and I very distinctly remember what she was wearing. And when we were leaving, I asked her where she was going and she said she was going to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and I asked if I could come with her and she said no.

MS. MACCARTHY: [Laughs.]

MR. ZAGORIN: But I did-I must have had her address or telephone number. So I did get to see her and she was living on West 10th Street in a basement apartment and she was working at that time in Todd's Shipyard. Todd was a shipbuilding firm in Hoboken, New Jersey.

She had worked—she had come from the West Coast after the war began. Her father, who had retired from the service before the war, Colonel Robert Sharrer, went back into the service in the Engineer Corps and did various things, and then, after a time, he was assigned to West Point Military Academy as a professor to teach mathematics to the cadets that were there. And Honoré went-this must have been—well, I've neglected to say that Honoré went to Yale [University, New Haven, CT].

You asked about her art education. When she finished the Bishop's School, she went immediately to Yale and she did a year at Yale. And it was a very academic and demanding teaching and a very traditional kind of
teaching. The Yale Art School went through a whole revolution in later years when it was taken over completely by abstract art. But at that time there were people who were great specialists in Renaissance art and conservation-tempera painting, gesso, all of that kind of thing.

And she felt that she knew quite a lot about art and they put her through a kind of drills that can bore you and drawing one thing and another thing, but she enjoyed the freedom and she-and then her mother became pregnant with her brother, who is 18 years younger. And in the second year she was asked to come back and help her mother, which she did.

And then she went up to San Francisco and she has told me very often what she felt at Yale was that they were teaching quite a lot of how to paint, how-to techniques, but attached no importance to what you painted, and she was very concerned about the kind of things that she was interested in painting.

And she went to the San Francisco School of Art and I can't remember with whom she studied there. That school also went through a revolution, I'm sure not that long afterwards. I know, for example that Clyfford Still, who was a leading abstract expressionist, came there with his credo. I've been told that he actually painted over a mural that Diego Rivera had painted in the San Francisco School of Art. I don't know whether this report is accurate, but Honoré was no longer connected with it.

And finally, she then came to the East Coast. She had married in California to a man considerably older than herself named Arthur Weld. I don't think she ever fully understood how she came to marry him, except that he pursued her very intensely and put a lot of pressure on her. Maybe there weren't that many young men around and the marriage didn't last too long, but Arthur Weld was a merchant seaman and came from the working class. My wife was an upper class woman and her parents felt that the marriage was completely unsuitable for her. And when they met Arthur Weld, they were confirmed in that belief.

I think they put a lot of pressure on her to end that marriage, but since Art Weld was working at sea part of the time and her family moved to the East Coast because her father had been assigned to West Point-so, she came to New York. She met the man she married, Arthur Weld, when she was working at Marin Ship in San Francisco, and you have papers from that period and you can see that she was active with the union.

Her mother and grandmother were New Dealers. Perhaps they had even mild socialist leanings-I think her grandfather Claude Sachs-and I can't explain exactly what gave her this populist feeling that was in her from the start. And I think that she went to work in the shipyard in California and then in Hoboken at Todd's partly because she felt that she ought to be doing something for the war and perhaps because her father thought that she ought to be doing something for the war. But she was painting and, when I met her, she explained to me that she was a painter.

The very first gift that I brought her was a nice reproduction of a Käthe Kollwitz lithograph. The first gift that she brought me was a lovely and beautiful honeydew melon which she left by my apartment door. And I think that experience of working in the shipyards was of interest to her.

I myself later on, very soon after we met, I moved over-I was interested in the labor movement. I became a labor organizer and I worked in a labor movement between maybe 1943 or 1944. Until 1946, I worked for a big CIO Union. I was very dedicated to this work, because, like Honoré, I was kind of a socialist and I envisaged the labor movement as a part of the road towards a very democratic American society.

And there is a great deal more to be said about the whole political atmosphere lingering from the New Deal and the influence of a vaguely described left, which included the Communist Party of the United States, and its influence on culture at that time and on intellectuals of all sorts.

But I think Honoré's idea was always to be a painter. And she got a job doing the drawings for an animated film company and she was terrific at it and they took a lot of trouble with her and they were pretty upset when she left them.

And she left them-I don't know whether you've heard this or somebody could have mentioned to you. Her father knew that she was-I guess she was starting to work on this polyptych. She had this idea that I'm sure dates from some time around 1943, because her father told her, well, if you want to paint, I'll support you. I'll make you an allowance. You'll have enough to live on. You'd be a full time painter.

What I have omitted is the period in which she moved from New York up to West Point to the Military Academy, because they gave her a commission to do in the Grill Room of the Thayer Hotel which was on the academy grounds where people came to stay. I don't know whether that mural is still in existence at the Thayer Hotel, but she had never done a mural. One of the art people there who did a huge mural and who was a commissioned officer, an artist named Tom Johnson, was very helpful to her in showing her some of the technical things regarding mural painting and she painted this mural with the utmost seriousness.
From time to time, she would come and see me in New York and I can remember on a Labor Day weekend, I felt pretty much alone, and I said please come down and spend the weekend. And she was so rigorous, so self-disciplined, that she wouldn't do it, because she just felt she needed to work and she felt the importance of this assignment.

But it was after she finished that-I think she came back and lived in New York and her father gave her an allowance and she was then 24 years old, I think, and she devoted herself morning, noon, and night to painting. And we lived-we were lodgers of the same house in the Village on Bank Street and I saw the progress of all her work. We took a lot of our meals together. We were living separately, but living together, and it was in that period that she went to Reno and got a divorce.

We didn't marry immediately. There were difficulties to be overcome. She was very determined that if she married again it was going to be an absolutely solid lasting marriage and she wanted to be sure and she wasn't - she didn't feel that secure while I was working in the labor movement because that meant late meetings and all kinds of things. I may have exceeded the limits of the question that you asked me-

MS. MACCARTHY: Doesn't matter-

MR. ZAGORIN: -but I was becoming very keen on resuming an intellectual life. I actually began to write. I formed a project for writing a work of history while I was still employed as an international representative organizer by the United Electrical, Radio and machine Workers Union and the last job I did for that union was when, immediately at the end of the II World War, the three biggest CIO unions, the auto, steel and electrical, radio, and machines unions, simultaneously called a strike with a common demand of an 18.5 cents an hour wage increase for their workers. And I was responsible for the conduct of that strike along with the local committees and people, of course. In parts of Ohio, where there were plants of General Electric and General Motors making electric light bulbs and other things of that sort. And as soon as I finished that, I went back to Harvard and Honoré was lonely in New York.

After I went up to Cambridge, there were many men who wanted her, who pursued her and some who loved her. But she went back to California thinking that she'd find it easier if she could go on working with her family and I think she found living with her family rather difficult. And so by this time it was 1947 and so we decided to marry and she came east from California to Cambridge. I found her a place to live. She brought her work, she continued-and we married on the 29th of May 1947, but I think- I am almost confident that the inception of this polyptych was around really some time in 1943 or 1944.

In 1946 her family gave up, I think they gave up the-her father left the Army and they went and spent a summer on the Cape, near Provincetown-Truro-and Honoré and I went out to visit them. Her mother was taking classes with a man who had an art school on the Cape. It was quite a good place and very well-known. The artist's name was Jerry Farnsworth and Honoré was doing and had been selected by that time to take part in the Museum of Modern Art's Fourteen Americans [exhibition] and she rented a chicken coop where she worked everyday and she did the picture that summer called Workman by a Fountain [1946], which is owned by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York], bequest of Lincoln Kirstein.

When I saw that picture at the UVA art exhibit last spring-I hadn't seen it for years and years and years and I was deeply impressed at how very, very beautiful but showing the strong influence of Netherlandish paintings. She and I used to go to the Met a lot. We never failed to spend a lot of time looking at the [Hans] Memlings, the [Jan] van Eycks and so on and the Met collection. And so what else was there?

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, I was just going to say if you-since if you married in 1947 and "Fourteen Americans" was in-

MR. ZAGORIN: 1946.

MS. MACCARTHY: '46-that means Country Fair and In the Parlor were both exhibited in that show.

MR. ZAGORIN: And they were being done, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: They were started in New York.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, absolutely.

MS. MACCARTHY: And she might have brought them with her to California at that time.

MR. ZAGORIN: I remember her taking photographs on Bank Street. That street had some fine old Federal houses there and we lived at-I think the address was 135 Bank Street. The house was owned by a great woman who was a friend of ours and her husband-and they rented rooms to several people. And Honoré took photographs.
Hudson Street was close by the West Side Highway and on the opposite side of Bank Street there were working class apartment houses. A door or two down from us, the American painter, who became a close friend of ours, Philip Evergood, lived and I can remember Honoré photographing things. And the woman at the clothesline [referring to a figure within Tribute to the American Working People], I remember she took that photograph in the backyard of 135 Bank Street and the person herself was Esther McKenzie, Esther, who was our landlady. She was a very good personal friend of ours.

MS. MACCARTHY: Do you mean this woman?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Didn't we look-?

MS. MACCARTHY: What is she doing there? Do you think she's cutting her hair?

MR. ZAGORIN: Or she's-is she fitting an apron onto her? No, I think she is cutting-

MS. MACCARTHY: That's Esther? What's her name?

MR. ZAGORIN: McKenzie.

MS. MACCARTHY: McKenzie. Spelled the way I think it's spelled?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, wonderful person. And not too long afterwards-

MS. MACCARTHY: Is that her husband?

MR. ZAGORIN: Where?

MS. MACCARTHY: In these pictures-it's a gentleman.

MR. ZAGORIN: I think it is. I think that's their backyard on 135 Bank Street.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's so cool. The next time I'm in New York I'm going to have to go to 135 Bank Street.

MR. ZAGORIN: I went there some years ago and they weren't home. I don't know what happened and there were a lot of changes.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's great. Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: But this idea must have come to her quite early. It was preceded of course by the Workers and Paintings [1943], which was for a mural competition in Springfield. I came to visit her family for the first time, I would say, in the winter of 1944.

MS. MACCARTHY: In West Point?

MR. ZAGORIN: In West Point and the painting was in West Point at that time and it was the first piece of work of hers that I'd seen and I was bowled over by it. Because, you know, all kinds of people had been art students, were studying art, not that Honoré—even if she said I'm an artist, you might have felt something that made her different. But when I saw this picture, I knew that she was really an artist—that this was the real thing.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. That's great. And then that painting was subsequently bought. Lincoln Kirstein was a friend of the Sharrers in West Point. He came to visit for tea and then he bought that painting and then gave it to the MoMA [Museum of Modern Art, New York]. It's wonderful. It's a very, very cool painting.

You can do a whole exhibition on that one, too.

MR. ZAGORIN: You could, I know. And one time she had the idea of entering a WPA [Works Progress Administration] mural competition. This must have been in the last phase.

And I think it had to do with St. Louis. She went out to St. Louis or maybe she was crossing, going on the train to California. And she got off at St. Louis-she spent some time looking the situation over. It would have been a huge thing, I think beyond a single individual, especially a young artist—but she was thinking in those terms.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. And then—but it is also interesting when you think about the scale of Tribute since it is on such a small, more meticulous scale—everyone who's ever written about it talks about relation to Dutch and Northern Renaissance painting, to Van Eyck, who painted with a thread, practically.

Whenever I view this painting, since looking at Honoré's other work, it's very, very similar and very similar also to the way a contemporary—a bit older generation—but Grant Wood, who was also very influenced by
Netherlandish painting, the kind of fine detail.

So it's that kind of paradox between the mural painting and then painting something on Tribute's scale, which is relatively small, really.

MR. ZAGORIN: One thing I want to say about Workers and Paintings: the whole idea is wonderful, because these are black people there. And the meeting of these people with the world of high art, in masterpieces, modern and older and what-how this thought came to her-this exposure of these two domains to one another.

And there is both a humor and a kindness in this, if one could use those terms. It's kind of funny, don't you think? The black woman there-

MS. MACCARTHY: Over here?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, well these people here, yes. With her of all-presumably-looks like Boucher's Madame de Pompadour [1758]. I mean, that collocation-it's just a real inspiration and it's so amusing and yet it is so-there is huge humanity in this picture and a kind of wit. And these have been lasting features of Honoré's art.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, yes, and you really can look at it forever.

The next questions kind of talk about the labor movement and I think you've mentioned-you know, actually, I'll skip this one, because basically I think you've already answered that, but you mentioned a lot of these.

There was one particular thing in the collection-that's a Christmas card from you to Honoré and it shows union workers on strike and it says: "Merry Christmas, darling!" and then it says, "You and everything in these pictures are my life."

MR. ZAGORIN: Some time in the 1930s there was a magazine founded-it might have been called Photo History-it might have been about the same size as Life magazine-and the point of it was to illustrate the news, the political international news of importance and I think it was probably-

MS. MACCARTHY: The beginnings of photojournalism in a sense.

MR. ZAGORIN: It was a photojournalism, but it wasn't devoted to the variety of subjects that made Life such a remarkable phenomenon. Life was really a great thing for a time.

And I somehow-and I don't know whether it appeared more than three or four issues and I'm not sure I have the name right, but I found those issues. I don't know how I laid my hands on them-very interesting-and what's the date of that card?

MS. MACCARTHY: There wasn't a date on that.

MR. ZAGORIN: I think it must be 1944 and so I must have conceived partly because of that-I was working in the labor movement and I must have conceived that idea because of that and I may have even used that magazine. It was a collage, I mean, just kind of got these bits that showed, but somehow exemplified a common theme of struggle, of people and-what I need to explain to you about that is I grew up in a family of middle-class Jews. My grandfather was a building trade's worker. My parents were middle class people, but there were socialist leanings. My grandfather, himself, was I think a bit of anarchist. He was a free thinker. They were not at all interested in the observant Jewish religion, and I grew up in an atmosphere that was vaguely, but very decidedly, idealistic and left wing.

And when I was at college, I was active in the student movement both at the University of Chicago and nationally, and it coincided with the period when the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations] was just growing up. It had broken away from the American Federation of Labor and they struggled to create the CIO to establish the right to organize and to build unions in big American industry, in the auto industry. There were conflicts, there were people killed.

Chicago was itself a city which had a history of labor conflict going back to the 19th century. And even though I was in many ways an intellectual, my feeling about life was-my idealism was focused on the labor movement and building democratic organizations.

When I went to work at the labor movement, I learned a lot of things-how different they were, how selfish, how ambitious, how unscrupulous people could be who professed to share your ideals and so on and so forth. But I would never have gone permanently into the labor movement. My mother was certainly not happy about it. Had I not felt this belief and this identification-of course I made speeches. I had significant responsibilities and I was very young and it was quite an extraordinary thing.
For example, when I was out to Ohio, I lived in a hotel room during that strike, in Youngstown, Ohio, which was a major steel center—now, of course, the steel industry has pretty much dried up there, but you could see the blast furnaces at night sending up their flames, you know—and already then I was planning to go back to Harvard and I actually had books with me on medieval history, but nonetheless out there—these workers were amazed to find that here was someone who was a Harvard student working with them, speaking with, that was representing them when we had to have small-management didn't offer any resistance to these strikes. As far as I can remember, they were perfectly peaceful and they were finally settled.

So that card that you found—I hadn't realized you had it—is simply the expression of the idealism that I felt at that time that she shared—I can't remember it very well. I remember making it and I don't remember what—I must have given her something with it, but—

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, that's what the feeling I got, and that's why I thought that it just fits really well. You're confirming what I was hoping to hear, that it represented a shared belief in something—

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, absolutely.

MS. MACCARTHY: -and I think that is an underlying belief of why Tribute was painted, although I think it's a lot more complex than just that.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, it certainly would help you understand the reason for the painting. I mean, I never saw Honoré as a left wing painter. I certainly don't think of her as that. I just simply saw her as a gifted—why should these feelings about—I really don't know. It could have been the humanity of her grandmother or mother. I really don't know.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: But I mean, one has to say, we were still at—the New Deal was over. The Second World War put an end to the New Deal. But there were a lot of things that lingered. And with the beginning of Cold War and the hardening, all of that was swept away, and you know in the late ‘40s, the fear of the Soviet Union, the Soviet Union's acquisition of an atomic weapon—it just changed everything. But we're talking about during the Second World War, the USSR was our ally, and there were many people who imagined that when the war was over, we would have a continuance of friendly cooperation between the USSR and its Western allies and that would be—and the United Nation's charter embodies that vision. Of course, it all proved to be an illusion.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. Yeah.

MR. ZAGORIN: And of course, I myself changed my views in the next years very drastically.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. Young and idealistic?

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, I couldn't live without idealism. For example, I'm an idealist about education. I've been a scholar and teacher, and I've taken teaching seriously, and I've had testimonials from students that acknowledged that I've given them something that has been valuable for them, and I regard education as very practical but also as an idealistic profession.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: And so I never ceased to be an idealist, but I'm no longer a political idealist. I mean, I'm not a pessimist, I'm not in despair, but I don't have too high hopes. Of course, we passed through various phases, but I changed my political views entirely. What I mean, I may have been even when I was on the left essentially a sort of a socialist democrat. For example, the idea of freedom of thought and freedom of speech was always absolutely indispensable and central to me. I could never conceive of any society which in the name of socialism would repress the freedom of thought and expression.

So the Roosevelt populist progressivist era in the late ‘30s, and entering into the war period created a feeling of unity in the country, and it's a very extraordinary thing that the Communist Party of the United States when it supported Roosevelt in 1944, but well prior to that they had adopted the slogan "Communism is 20th Century Americanism," and it's a very un-Marxist idea, it seems to me, but anyway that was their slogan, and so there was this blurring of distinctions and cultural organizations with people who were—they might even have been Communist front organizations, where a lot of people involved didn't know that, or even give that a thought, but as soon as it became apparent to me what all this was about, I became what I was perhaps always essentially, sort of a liberal democrat or democratic liberal.

MS. MACCARTHY: [Laughs.] Okay. This we started to touch on, but describe your friendship and Honoré's friendship with Lincoln Kirstein, and how—what sorts of connections did he make for Honoré, and obviously she
met him through the family in West Point. I know you probably met him sometime after that, after you were married. But was it he who introduced her to Dorothy Miller? How did she get chosen for "Fourteen Americans"?

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, I don't know anything about this firsthand. One of the things we need to know about it that I don't know enough about is Kirstein's relationship to the Museum of Modern Art-

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: -at that early time when he was involved with all of those people because subsequently he had I think a really serious break with them. And it could have to-Kirstein wrote an article for the *Atlantic* magazine, I think, as late as 1948 called "American Art Today," and I think it gave great offense, and it was probably a strong critique of abstract painting and some other things and it may have had something to do with the worsening of his relationship.

There was also some question about Nelson Rockefeller, but my guess is that it was Kirstein-in fact, I'm almost certain that it was Kirstein who said to these museum people: "This is a really-you ought to have this artist." I don't remember-Honoré and I were-even before we were married, we were inseparable. I don't remember correspondence. I just don't remember any of that. I don't remember-there were no -she was simply invited.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. Did you guys go to an opening?

MR. ZAGORIN: We did. I remember the opening -

MS. MACCARTHY: It must have been pretty great.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, there were a lot of people there. I was curious about that. I mean, what's his-Robert Motherwell's in that exhibition in 1944, and there were some others painters that we never heard of, and some of these painters have disappeared and some of them felt persecuted or at least, for example, there was a guy who painted with encaustic named David Aronson. And I'm not sure-it'll be very interesting to find out over what period of time they made that selection of the artists who took part in it. But I think we could be pretty near certain that it was Lincoln Kirstein's personal connection with the museum people and his own personal intervention that made it possible for Honoré to be in that exhibition.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay, okay. Also, I have-

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, we didn't see a lot of Kirstein, but we were in touch with him. We've been to his house. He came to see us on various occasions, and we knew, of course, about Kirstein's work with the ballet, and we went with him. When we lived in Montreal, for instance, and I was at McGill University, they had-oh, some performances of the New York City Ballet, we went, saw the rehearsals, and Kirstein came and spent a wonderful evening with us. He'd recently been in Japan, told us great stories about those experiences and we talked a lot.

And one of the most astonishing things that took place that evening, which must have been in the late '50s-well, we were in Europe between 1958 and '60, so it would have been-could have been in early '55 or '56. We're talking about Adam or something, and Adam was that little boy of five or six, and maybe he came in or something, and Adam doesn't push himself forward, but maybe we said, "Shall we dance?" Anyway, he began to improvise this dance, and it was sort of spellbinding and nothing like that ever happened again. But one thought, my God, could he be a ballet dancer? We were the three of us sitting there, and Adam, a boy of six or seven, did this. I don't know how long it lasted, but I've never forgotten it.

But Honoré respected and admired Kirstein, and I think she was very appreciative of his support of her. We couldn't possibly-I mean, Honoré-we can't speak of patrons; she had no patrons. It wasn't anything like that, but he admired her and he had seen her family in her house-that house there in West Point, even though it was a military house, the address was Quarters 89-I mean, it was a house of cultivated people.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: So I would say that Kirstein's influence upon her-and I don't know that we ever discussed ideas, I don't know this, I doubt if she'd-she may have seen Kirstein on occasions that I can't recall now. There couldn't be many if that were so, but I doubt if she ever talked about photography with him or anything of that sort.

And when he came to see us in London, the ballet was having a series of performances there and Lincoln came over with a ballet dancer named Bliss-what was his first name? And some of these best ballet dancers, are not very big. Nijinsky, for example, was not a tall person. Herbert Bliss [1923-1960], and he brought Herbert Bliss to tea with us in our apartment in London, and Bliss was very quiet. He was wearing a t-shirt, if I'm not mistaken. I now suspect that it's possible-maybe Herbert Bliss and Kirstein were lovers at that time-although Kirstein used to speak often pretty contemptuously of the intelligence of ballet dancers. And that's somewhat in keeping with
Balanchine's methods of directing-I don't know whether you're interested in ballet-Honoré and I were intensely interested in ballet, and we've seen a lot of ballet, and I spent a lot of time thinking and reading about ballet and ballet dancers and so on. And you know, the method actors always wanted, because the steps with Stanislavski and his work with the Moscow Art Theater, which was borrowed by these people, and they always wanted to have their characters built up. What was the name-what was Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire"? They'll say it. What was he doing before the play began? What's he going to do afterwards?

MS. MACCARTHY: Right, right.

MR. ZAGORIN: And this sort of, with a psychoanalytic dimension to the way in which made them very good at grunting kinds of characters, but are not so good in pronouncing Shakespearean English if they had to do that. And so Balanchine used to say to these dancers: "Don't think. Just do it. Don't think." He didn't want them to get into all that-into all that stuff. And I must be digressing-

MS. MACCARTHY: No, that's okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: So he came with Bliss, and Bliss hardly said a thing, and then that night we went-or perhaps the next night-we went to the ballet and Bliss was so wonderful.

MS. MACCARTHY: Really?

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, so beautiful. He was such an accomplished dancer. Just the transformation of this rather, perhaps, I'm sure, shy, whatever, intellectuals, or my wife-Honoré would never think of herself that way. Whatever we were talking about, he was very quiet, but he was so good. I mean, you were transported seeing what he did, and then in due course we heard that he'd committed suicide.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh.

MR. ZAGORIN: And I think that Lincoln said this. He said Herbert was very unhappy about something, I'm not sure what. But I remember that so well, but-so I think Kirstein's influence had nothing to do with specific subjects, and I don't think-it was simply the kind of person he was, the position he occupied in American cultural life at that time with various things going on, a highly respected figure and someone who was himself not merely a supporter-and you know, although Kirstein was rich and had independent means, he certainly wasn't tremendously rich.

His father had been was a self-made man who had become a top executive of the Filene Company which had a big-there were big merchants in Boston and elsewhere, and his father was also at one time chairman of the board of the Boston Public Library. He may have been influential, for all I know, in having the Puvis de Chavannes murals that are there-if you've ever seen them-

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, I haven't seen them, but I know them.

MR. ZAGORIN: And so-and there was all of that, but Kirstein's own intelligence, his versatility, his drive, but mainly it was his-what actually seemed to be a very generous, disinterested personal friendship. And that is how I would describe Honoré's relationship to him and mine.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. Would you say that at that period when you met Honoré, and I guess more, say, '46, '47 when-around when you got married, when you met her in 1943, she was saying, "I am a painter,"-

MR. ZAGORIN: Absolutely.

MS. MACCARTHY: And then you saw her work for the first time in, say, '45, '44?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, I can't-it's hard for me to believe that I didn't see anything before then.

MS. MACCARTHY: You mean, at her house?

MR. ZAGORIN: See, I can't remember, for example, when she had that job at Fletcher Smith [Studios]. I saw the work she was doing. Fletcher Smith was an-

MS. MACCARTHY: Paul Revere thing. There's a Paul Revere cartoon-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, but there was another one that they did. They did a Treasure Island series, and they hired her to do the basic sketches from which the animators would work. And she picked that up very quickly and she enjoyed doing it. And I saw some of those things, and it was obvious, they were very skillful and very fast.

One of the things I have to say to you, because after you-since you left, I spent a lot of time in the studio and try
to get things sorted out, and Honoré by temperament is slow. She never liked to be hurried. She never liked-

MS. MACCARTHY: Sounds like my husband.

MR. ZAGORIN: I would say she never did things very fast, but if she had a deadline, for example, when she had to work for Fortune and she did a number of jobs for Fortune, and those were plum jobs—the best American artists were employed to do some of these graphics—graphics and photographers. She worked like a slave, and would do it fast to meet the deadline. She'd go down to New York, she'd stay at the YWCA, and she'd go out and find out from the editors what needed to be done, and she'd go back to her room and sit at YWCA and do it. But she was by temperament slow, and that's why I think in these tight pictures, which she had conquered that style of work at Yale, must have fallen in with some real innate proclivity of hers, but again we have all these fast oils—I have some oil sketches here, that painting of hers, done at the age of 18, entirely different.

MS. MACCARTHY: But my-

MR. ZAGORIN: We were talking about what connection? What led me to this?

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, because I asked you, when you saw her work—I can't imagine-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. What I wanted to say was she must have been working. I don't know about sketching. She sketched all the time. The great thing that's struck me when I went through her drawings—and there were hundreds here—some of those drawings are now in ArtTex. The paintings that we're giving away, and some of the drawings, are in ArtTex near Washington, and that's where these museum people are going to come soon to look at them. But you have all those sketches books-

MS. MACCARTHY: We have sketchbooks, and we have a lot of drawings, too.

MR. ZAGORIN: And—yes, you do. And I realized that she never stopped working. She was never blocked. She was never devoid of an idea. She never had to hunt for subjects.

MS. MACCARTHY: Those people were her subjects.

MR. ZAGORIN: She worked slowly. I mean, after all, are there 100 paintings, or whatever that constitute the sum total, but that wasn't because she didn't work, it's because of the way she worked. But when she worked on drawings, I was amazed at the sureness of some of those drawings, I think, including some of those that are really masterly.

And you see there're no retracements—they're absolutely—there's a huge amount of knowledge in that, and I thought to myself, how productive this artist really has been.

MS. MACCARTHY: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm. What I was going ask, though, is a little bit different. She really felt that she was an artist, a painter. Now, as a-

MR. ZAGORIN: She felt that at Yale. She was disappointed at Yale because perhaps they still thought of her—in some ways she was a student and she'd learned a lot of technical things there, but she regarded herself as a full-fledged artist.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. In that vein, did she have—how did she perceive herself going on with her life? Now—then she met you and you got married—what was your plan as a couple in terms of was there a sense of a plan for her career, and what was her perception of what her career might be?

MR. ZAGORIN: What a good question. I can say this. The person that I married, I was exceedingly conscious that I was marrying an artist. I think I must have been very clear in my own mind even before then that I was determined that she would be an artist, and I would help in every way for her to be an artist. And when we first married I did half the housework and half the cooking because I felt that that was only fair. We didn't talk about feminism, but I really did believe—and she didn't talk about feminism, but she was exceedingly proud and she was determined—and she could be hard.

When she needed to finish teaching me driving—I've told you this—when I went to Amherst College to teach history—and it was a very good job and it was a great job for a new graduate to have. We lived in a beautiful old house in the country—I showed you those photographs of it—and we had to get a car. We bought a car in Cambridge, but they were still somewhat scarce, and I had never driven. She'd been driving roadsters and those Ford station wagons since she was 13 or 14 in California, whatever, like that.

And so she had to teach me, and so she taught me, but she didn't teach me well enough because I failed my first driving lesson. And why was that? Because when we got up in the morning, she didn't want to bother with me. She'd wanted to get to work. I mean, we had rather rigorous routines. I believed in that. I mean, that's how-
and then she relented, and she didn't even want to drive me to Amherst, which was three or four miles away, because I could sometimes get a ride with—because she wanted to get to work. So this was really serious, and she was working on this polyptych, and I always took it for granted that it was absolutely one of my first responsibilities that my wife should be free to paint.

And as soon as we had a child, we had a housekeeper, and we both worked at home so we loved our baby. She breastfed, but not for very long, and we knew what was going on, but Honoré always closed the door in the morning when she went into her room and she worked. I mean, she would come out. We would visit, but she always worked. And I was confident that my wife was a distinguished American artist, that she had everything. And of course that early acclaim, but we never paid much attention to that. It's very, very interesting.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, that is what I'm getting at.

MR. ZAGORIN: Honoré had absolutely no conceit at all, and if anything, was really almost unduly modest, I would say, and she-

MS. MACCARTHY: But what was the sense during that time?

MR. ZAGORIN: I think—but I think it was always—I think it was clear from the beginning of our life together that she was a painter and nothing but a painter; that I was going to be a teacher and a scholar, and our lives worked out. I mean, I'm very well-known in my field and my wife, I think, has a significant—I mean, I don't want to rank her, but I think she's an important American painter of the postwar era. And it was—I don't think—we never—it could not have occurred to me—she often said I've been so lucky. She sometimes said to other artists, I never had to—I mean, her family—we had money. We were never poor. We were never rich. We've got a lot—I'm fairly well off today, but we were never poor. We always had everything we wanted, and we had-

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. Was there a sense when—you guys lived in so many places, so I can't presume to know exactly what order they came in, but you were in Amherst first, and then you went to Europe from there?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. No—let's see, from Amherst—yeah, from Amherst, I went to Europe, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right, and so during that time, I mean, the kind of gallery scene in New York really was kind of just starting to become what it might be?

MR. ZAGORIN: It's the funniest thing. I don't recall-

MS. MACCARTHY: Was there a sense of a strategy—did you two talk about or did she talk to you about how she might go about getting shown in a gallery or any things like that, or she-

MR. ZAGORIN: I don't remember any such thing, but I can tell you this—and this is very important. We were speaking of Kirstein. It was Kirstein without a doubt that also made the connection for her-

MS. MACCARTHY: With Knoedler?

MR. ZAGORIN: -with Knoedler, a leading New York gallery at that time. It was he who did that. And a guy called [E.] Coe Kerr, K-E-R-R, C-O-E, and there was an initial in front of that, but he was one of the main gallery people at that time. In other words, you might say that Honoré didn't have to do anything.

MS. MACCARTHY: With Knoedler?

MR. ZAGORIN: I mean, she was very ambitious. She was determined to excel. Absolutely no question about that. She was modest and utterly unpretentious, would never boast or anything like that, but she was—she believed totally in herself and she was determined to excel. And she—I guess she was confident that she would.

It's amazing, you know, we never talked about going to a gallery. We never said, "Well, how are you going to be exhibited?" I mean—and it just came.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's interesting.

MR. ZAGORIN: Hmm?

MS. MACCARTHY: That's interesting. There're so many variables with that-

MR. ZAGORIN: There is, and it's so hard for so many artists—and we know them.

MS. MACCARTHY: Especially women, so-
MR. ZAGORIN: Absolutely. I can hardly remember anything that indicated a feeling on her part that there might have been some handicap. I think to a certain small extent actually there was. I think—but Honoré was somebody also who perhaps even found it impossible to engage in self-promotion.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, some people are like that.

MR. ZAGORIN: I mean, she just—but I would say that everything, almost everything that she's had in the way of recognition has come to her, and only a few—one or two occasions when she strove for something. For example, you have these documents: it was ridiculous that the Guggenheim Foundation did not give her-

MS. MACCARTHY: That was my next question. You're psychic!

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah. I mean, ridiculous.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, let's talk about that. I'm just going to get my facsimile of the application.

MR. ZAGORIN: And of course, in the history of the Guggenheim Foundation, I'm sure she's not the only one of outstanding ability that failed in an application.

MS. MACCARTHY: So I don't even have a date on this. I do a circa date on it, about 1947-1949, although you might be able to tell me better. But it seems that this is draft copy that she later retyped because she has-

MR. ZAGORIN: Do you realize where she was living at that time? There's our address: Bank Street.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, really. 130 Bank Street. So 130, okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: My god, I can't believe it.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's good.

MR. ZAGORIN: I said 135, so-

MS. MACCARTHY: You're pretty good.

MR. ZAGORIN: And this, of course, is our Amherst address.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. So she must have started it while she was in New York and then this is a draft she was working on. You moved to Amherst-

MR. ZAGORIN: I'll tell you—it's conceivable to me—look whom she names, Alfred Barr-

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, Alfred Barr, Reginald Poland-

MR. ZAGORIN: Dorothy Miller, so interesting. And-

MS. MACCARTHY: And James [Thrall] Soby.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah. Reginald Poland became her stepfather.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: So—now, I want to just say that it's conceivable to me that she made the applications to Guggenheim not once, but twice.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: And on neither occasion did she succeed, and the second could have been some years later.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. So you think this might be—but this is for the polyptych. So this-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, so she had—what's the date of that application?

MS. MACCARTHY: We don't know. That's why I'm asking. So maybe possibly-

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, you might say—you might think that if this took place in the aftermath of "Fourteen Americans" that might have been enough to give her a certain claim on their attention.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, and especially being able to list Alfred Barr.
MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: And it does say, "My project"-

MR. ZAGORIN: What does it say there?

MS. MACCARTHY: "My project of work is a polyptych-triptych was the first thing that was crossed out. Polyptych design is a tribute to contemporary American folk life. The triptych has five panels-two on the left wing, two on the right wing and a large one in the center." So that's the final way it turned out, although it does say three and three originally here. "It is a pictorial chronicle of activities and mannerisms of ordinary Americans, and specifically covering home, recreation, school and work." But that is actually pasted on and crossed out, and I've actually never tried to peel that off and see what's written underneath it, so I might have to do. [They laugh.] But it seems like, you know, she was in progress. So this had to be 1947-1949.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, I know this about the Guggenheim. I've been a recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, and I get the annual reports of the Guggenheim Foundation with the list of fellows and people who are choosing them. And certainly with respect to the second Guggenheim application, if there was one, as I rather seem to think there was-

MS. MACCARTHY: I haven't found another-

MR. ZAGORIN: Those artists that were doing those choosing wouldn't have chosen her then in 100 years because of the shift.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: But what is so fascinating-and this is slightly off the subject of your question, but it is so important-and it's just amazing to me that-she's not a symbolic artist. Those are very concrete, specific things, but there is this symbolic commemorative thing that is part of the idea of Tribute. Right from the start to say activities of ordinary Americans in this thing is quite an ambitious thing to undertake, and I suppose to people reading that at the time or-(unintelligible)-it might smack all that much of that WPA mural period. Who can say?

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, it's possible. I was going to ask you why you think she might not have gotten it the first time-if they only knew now. I'm guess they do know now.

MR. ZAGORIN: That is very likely the reason.

MS. MACCARTHY: I like that it says present occupation and she just wrote "artist." I wonder what most people wrote in present occupation if they're applying for a scholarship.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Now, let's see what else she says here. No, there isn't much in the way-

MR. ZAGORIN: But it is fascinating and it's important to display that document or at least to have this recorded. When you read the biographies of American poets, you know-

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, when would you wish to commence the study proposed? April, 1949. So it was 1948, yeah.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, that clears it up, doesn't it?

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, pretty much except there's a lot of cross-outs, you know.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: She was a member of Artist's Equity?

MR. ZAGORIN: Hmm?

MS. MACCARTHY: She was a member of Artist's Equity it says here.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. I hardly think I can say anything much about that. I don't even remember what Artist Equity-when it was founded or-

MS. MACCARTHY: It's like a union for artists. Didn't really get off the ground.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah. I don't think she ever did anything-I don't-but if she says yes-
MS. MACCARTHY: She wrote it here actually. I think that was around the same time when [Yasuo] Kuniyoshi [was a member], who I think signed Reality.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, he did.

MS. MACCARTHY: So he was involved with a number of other painters of that time, and I can't recall other names, but in trying to charge museums to essentially rent the work for exhibitions.

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, was that one of the things they were doing?

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah. That never really quite got off the ground. [They laugh.]

MR. ZAGORIN: No.

MS. MACCARTHY: Let's see. See, now, I've just got more specifics, photographs and stuff like that. I have this great picture of Honoré that I would like to ask you to help me date. Think you might have told us something about that.

MR. ZAGORIN: I think she must have been posing herself in this picture.

MS. MACCARTHY: Uh-huh. So who would have taken it?

MR. ZAGORIN: I don't know whether it could have been done automatically. Maybe I took it, but I think it was posed for Reception [1958].

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: For that figure in that satin dress.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, yes.

MR. ZAGORIN: Although that figure is in profile, not a frontal thing, but it might have been one of the experiments for that.

MS. MACCARTHY: Now, in the letter to her grandmother, of which I have the facsimile here-just the most wonderful letter—she describes feeling frustrated and she says—there's a lot: "I have come to the point in the polyptych where I am completely fed up with it. The slow technique over the period of four years has become very wearing. I do not find in this technique adequate room for expression of ideas and emotions. I sit for three weeks, for example, and paint moldings on a factory building."

MR. ZAGORIN: Fascinating, isn't it?

MS. MACCARTHY: It is. This is, I mean, pretty much an art historian's dream. This is like—

MR. ZAGORIN: Fascinating.

MS. MACCARTHY: But do you recall her feeling that way and expressing that to you? What you might—what she might want to do about it, or-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, she used to say to me when I was discouraged or—oh, we would say, well, you've swum half the Thames. What's the point of going back because you have to get to the other side? She had tremendous will to work. And she would never shortcut—the time it took in order to do it the way it had to be done was not an issue. And she was not by nature really impatient, but it was, I think, really quite a burden. I used to see her doing this with these small brushes, but she—

MS. MACCARTHY: Double zero brushes?

MR. ZAGORIN: -but she was working to her idea, all the time she was working, and I started to say something to you a little while back and I don't remember the first phrases I uttered, but that I don't know that I'd finished, because she—

MS. MACCARTHY: I'm sorry.

MR. ZAGORIN: -no, no, it was my forgetting because I digress constantly. It's horrible. But she—I've heard her say to other artists, she said, "I've been so lucky because I never had to work. I could do just what I wanted. Perez has always been there," and so on and so forth.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's so nice.
MR. ZAGORIN: And I never felt—it was never, never a burden. I adore this woman. I just can't tell you how much I admirable her, how much she's given me. There was never any—this is very personal—there was never any staleness in all this long marriage between us. I used to say to friends very recently before she'd gotten this ill, I'd say, "I can stand about five hours of separation from my wife, and then I have to go home."

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh. That's wonderful.

MR. ZAGORIN: And my feeling for my wife to the last moment has been romantic. She was always fresh, always lovely. She never did or said a vulgar thing—her innate distinction, her personal refinement. So to be associated with this woman and her life and art is a tremendous privilege.

MS. MACCARTHY: That's wonderful. Well, we have lots more to talk about, but I'm thinking maybe that I want to take a break for today, and then do the other half tomorrow, which would be a lot more about the specific painting to try to see if you could help me—

MR. ZAGORIN: At what time?

MS. MACCARTHY: What time would you like?

MR. ZAGORIN: Well—

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, let's hang on one second. I'm going to stop the tape then for now. So this is the end—[Audio break. Begin session 2.]

MS. MACCARTHY: This is Laura MacCarthy interviewing Perez Zagorin at the studio of Honoré Sharrer in Charlottesville, Virginia, and it is the 18th of January, 2007. This is disc number two, session two, and this, of course, is for the Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, and we are doing this interview on the occasion of an exhibition on a painting called Tribute to the American Working People by Honoré Sharrer.

So we're going to jump right in to where we left off yesterday, and start with after Tribute was painted and after it was shown in Knoedler, the reactions to it and what you might remember from that. Specifically it appeared on a cover of Ammunition magazine in 1951—

MR. ZAGORIN: Ammunition was a publication of the United Automobile Workers.

MS. MACCARTHY: So June of 1951. Do you recall what that might have been like and how Honoré responded to it—did she perceive that as an honor? Was she happy with it? They definitely used it, as Erika Doss mentions in her article, as, sort of, a validation of everything that had gone on with the labor movement, and that seeing real people, real Americans, working Americans in a painting of such high caliber was, to them, a validation of what they were doing.

MR. ZAGORIN: I have very little recollection of any discussion about that, or if the request may have come to Honoré and she may have, without any difficulty, acceded to it, but I don't recall. I don't think she felt that there was some special affinity that she might have had with this in particular, because when that painting was exhibited, it was reviewed and she was talked about in Time magazine, in Newsweek, in Life magazine, in various newspapers. I do recall, by the way, that in certain of these articles, possibly in the Time article—there was some sort of condescending around the patronizing view of the woman artist or someone who was at home. I can't remember, but—

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, they always mentioned how good-looking a woman artist is and they never mention how good-looking a man artist is. Why is that?

MR. ZAGORIN: That was—yes, but that was a particular—there was something that was quite beside the point.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah. Yeah, Dorothy Seckler's "Honoré paints a picture"—

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: -it's a great article, I mean, it's got a lot of information [Properly "Sharrer Paints a Picture." Art News 50 (April 1951): 42.]

MR. ZAGORIN: What I want to say about that is this: I don't recall seeing Dorothy Seckler and she might have visited Honoré, and I think the photograph that's in that—is there a photograph of Honoré in that thing? She was shown sitting at her easel in front of the window?

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, absolutely.
MR. ZAGORIN: We were then in Amherst.

MS. MACCARTHY: I think so.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, it could be. That was when we were living in an apartment on Central Square in Cambridge, Massachusetts, having returned from London in September of 1950. And I think that Honoré probably finished that painting in that apartment, and there a number of photographs that I recall showing her in profile sitting in front of her easel and she would be in the living room with that window. I think the street we were living on was Cottage Street. I think our address was 46 Cottage Street, and Central Square was then a somewhat slummy part. It was just a few minutes walk from Harvard Square, but it was out of the fashionable part of-it's probably changed a huge amount over the years since we were last there.

And what strikes me when I think of Dorothy Seckler's article, which was one of a series, something that appeared occasionally about somebody doing a picture, was the extraordinary speed with which, following that, Art News changed its entire approach to the art scene. I can't recall who the editor of Art News was at the time that Dorothy Seckler did that, which appeared at one of the 1951 issues, did it not?

MS. MACCARTHY: Sure.

MR. ZAGORIN: It could have been a man called Frankfurter or Frankenstein [Alfred Frankfurter was editor of Art News from 1936-1948]. There was-

MS. MACCARTHY: That might be it.

MR. ZAGORIN: -an art critic at the San Francisco paper [San Francisco Chronicle] who was Frankfurter or Frankenstein [this critic was Alfred Frankenstein 1906-1981], maybe I'm confusing those names-one of them. Thomas Hess became the editor of the "Art News" at some point [1948]. I don't know whether he was affiliated with it, on the staff at the time that article on Honoré was written, but the whole direction of the magazine changed towards abstract expressionist painting, which was glorified and given an enormous amount of attention.

Now, I'm speaking impressionistically because I haven't looked into this, but certainly that is how I recall it. And it seems to me that a year later than that it would have probably been impossible that they would not have probably published this article. Perhaps they could have. The painting received a great deal of notice. But it is very striking to me how-and it would be interesting to know whether-how long Dorothy Seckler remained on the staff and whether she finally found that she couldn't take it any longer or they got rid of her.

But Thomas B. Hess was a major art journalist figure in the reception that abstract expression was accorded at that time. And it would be very interesting, in fact, to explore, to have something written down in history in those years of Art News, the kind of thing he was doing: who wrote for it, and so on and so forth.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, we have Thomas Hess's papers as well, so-

MR. ZAGORIN: Now, John Ashbery [b.1927] was writing art criticism, the American poet, and I don't know whether he was writing for the various things, newspapers, and at one point, probably later, he spoke very favorably about that painting of Honoré's. And it's interesting about Ashbery. Ashbery today is regarded by many people as our best poet. It's not a judgment that I can quite share, but one of the things I liked very much about Ashbery is his catholic approach to art and to poetry-and his interest in poets and artists, his very generous view dealing with the literary scene, because you find people who are so dogmatic and so rigid in their approach to things.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. Okay. Yeah, the next couple of questions are really pretty specific on as far as technique and things, so you might not be able to answer them, but I want to try. So I think we talked a little bit about this yesterday, about the small format of Tribute and how she came to use fiberboard, why she chose oils over tempera? I know that a lot of artists like Ben Shahn, and you mentioned a lot of people using tempera at Yale, and people who were doing that in the Renaissance, a neo- Renaissance kind of tradition. What-do you recall how she made those choices, or why?

MR. ZAGORIN: I really don't. I think she probably-I doubt if she ever was interested in doing anything except in oils. As I pointed out to you, she was very, very insistent on having the absolute best materials of every kind. She didn't choose materials because they were less expensive. When she-those were painted on-what are those painted on?

MS. MACCARTHY: Masonite.

MR. ZAGORIN: Masonite. And I think she liked it for its surface-she took a lot of pains in preparing those surfaces.
MS. MACCARTHY: Right, she put something on them.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, later on—I mean, with larger paintings, but Masonite is somewhat of an inconvenience simply because of the weight of them, and I don't know when she switched to canvas, but the brushes were Windsor-Newton brushes, the paint was Windsor-Newton paint. And in the course of working on that thing—and it might have been due to her concerns about conservation questions, one of the books she studied a lot was Ralph Mayer’s. You know that book?

MS. MACCARTHY: No, I don’t know that book.

MR. ZAGORIN: It’s on this shelf here somewhere, and it’s here. For example, these are books that she used a great deal. This is—

MS. MACCARTHY: The book that Perez has given me is Ralph Mayer, The Artist’s Handbook of Materials and Techniques, published by the Viking Press, 1940.

MR. ZAGORIN: And she was very interested in—and here’s another one, I’m not sure—well, here’s something, there you are.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. Oh, wonderful. Now, this book is The Materials of the Artist and Their Use in Painting: With Notes on the Techniques of the Old Masters by Max Doerner, and that’s by Harcourt Press and Company—and I don’t know the year, but there’s an inscription here: Tempera is underpainting for oil painting. Use a tempera or casein, hot gum or starch, which repels oil paint. Page 237. I’ll have to take a look at this. Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, and there was a man—she had conversations in Cambridge with people who are at the conservation department of the Fogg Museum [Harvard University], and there was one man who may have been at the Fogg at that time or may have originated at the Fogg and who wrote a book that might have been a book on tempera painting or on fresco painting—and it’s very likely in the shelf here—whose name was Stout [George Leslie Stout, 1897-1978], and Stout, I think, then became at some point the director of the Worcester Art Museum.

And I think she was in contact with Stout at the Fogg Museum, or perhaps afterwards too at the Worcester Museum, because she had a lot of—she was very—I think her interest in technical problems was especially concerned with preservation with materials and applications so that there would not be any deterioration of the painting and I think possibly also with learning particular techniques that when become somewhat archaic or so on because they still taught those things the time she was in Yale, and she may have heard of Stout at Yale and I’m sure she was in contact with Stout, and there may have been another person as well. I recall very distinctly a book on the subject. It might have been how these Renaissance artists’ work. It’s probably among those books there somewhere.

MS. MACCARTHY: Now, she did the sketches in oil—like the one that you showed me of the center panel—before she started painting with the real thing. In the Dorothy Seckler article, there is an oil sketch of Country Fair, which is the top left panel, and I was wondering if you knew where that is now?

MR. ZAGORIN: Let’s see if we can find a copy—do you have a photograph of that?

MS. MACCARTHY: No, I don’t. I have a photograph of the panel, not of the sketch.

MR. ZAGORIN: Here’s a copy of the Dorothy Seckler’s article.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, there we go. Now, see. This is one of the sketch, and this—

MR. ZAGORIN: Now, I want you to know that—

MS. MACCARTHY: I have this photograph.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, this was at our house, our apartment in Central Square.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, in Cambridge, right? Okay. I’m mixing up the Massachusetts.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Well, I wished I could tell you. I remember these ink things so well.

MS. MACCARTHY: She really went through a painstaking process. It’s great. Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: You have copies of these in your files, I’m sure.
I came back to Harvard in the summer of 1946, very happy to resume my work for Ph.D. I intended to write a book and I intended to become a university teacher and a historian / writer. And my intention at that time was to—because I was—I had married Honoré in the spring of 1947, which was the year following the time that I returned. I wanted to get through all of this as fast as possible. I took my Ph.D. orals very soon, and it was remarkable, some people thought that I was very intent.

I passed, had a lot of things—I was no longer as restless. I was 26 years old then and I was determined to have a job as soon as possible and I was appointed to the faculty at Amherst College, which I think was perhaps the best job going for any Ph.D. candidate at Harvard that particular year. And when I was at Amherst, I left there because Harvard had awarded me the Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, which enabled me to go to London and finish my thesis and out of which my first book grew, and I had a Fulbright fellowship from 1949-50.

And we lived in London and we had a wonderful year, and Honoré worked, and it was a very creative, productive time. During the period, they would not give me leave of absence, in spite of the fact that they regarded me as very promising young faculty there. The reason for that was that in 1948, Henry Wallace ran as a third party candidate for the presidency. The Democratic candidate was Truman, Harry Truman, and the Republican was Thomas Dewey, and everyone predicted that Dewey was going to win.

And the candidacy of Henry Wallace was based upon his belief that the friendly relationship with the USSR should be and could be continued. The Communist Party was certainly instrumental in mobilizing support for Henry Wallace. I made speeches for Wallace in the Connecticut River Valley here and there. And there were senior faculty members at Amherst College who looked upon me for doing that kind of thing with considerable disapproval. And I’m certain the reason that President Charlie Cole, who was a very nice man, did not want to give me a leave of absence so that I could return to Amherst, had to do with politics of that period—the investigating committee atmosphere, which was spreading; the ideological polarities of the Cold War, which was certainly felt increasingly in the universities.

So that when I came back from London after living there and working that year, I had an extremely happy, productive period. Harvard was supposed to appoint me to a teaching fellowship. And there were some new courses that had been given, or only recently started; one was a very well-known course in which they did some kind of interdisciplinary stuff, might have been called Social Science 1. The professor was a very popular political scientist named Samuel Beer [Samuel Hutchinson Beer, b. 1911], I think, and there were some people who were teaching in that course with Sam Beer who became very noted scholars in later years.

And I found that I had a reputation in the Harvard history department as a leftist.

I found that there was a distancing that I had not experienced before. Because when I came back to Harvard in the spring of 1946, I returned not as a Medievalist, which had been my original field of interest, but as an early modernist with a particular interest in the English 16th and 17th centuries, and I'd done a lot of reading even in the last months of my work in the labor movement and the professor with whom I worked who was also the president of Radcliffe College was quite struck by the amount of notes that I had accumulated, the stuff that I had read. And as a matter of fact, in my very first semester there, he asked me to be his assistant in the course he was giving on Tudor England.

And the fact that I just had a Sheldon Traveling Fellowship, which is a real distinction and it's not anything you would apply for, you're nominated for it, there are no applications—and then came back and found this, and I recall having an interview with one of the senior members of the department, who asked me if I could keep
Marxism out of my classes. This was deeply offensive to me. I had very high standards about teaching, about indoctrination, about the exchange of ideas, of exposure to ideas. The notion that I would import my own was really pretty offensive.

And I did not have an academic post when we came back. Harvard did not give me a fellowship. I hadn't finished my thesis, but I did not get the support that I had every reason to suppose that I would get. And I was not earning any income and we were living in Central Square, and Honoré was painting her work. We had money, and I was working hard on my thesis and I was doing everything I could to see if I could find an academic post and I was appointed to the Vassar faculty in the following year, so I was out of work for one year.

And when we went to Vassar the fall of 1951, Honoré's polyptych had been shown and it received a great deal of attention. It had been bought through Knoedler. We bought a new car when we moved to Vassar and I was happy to have that post and I found Vassar very interesting and I stayed in Vassar for two years. I finished my thesis in the fall of my first year there and was awarded my doctorate while I was there. And at this during this period, the whole witch-hunt in the country, and in the universities for communists and communist sympathizers was intensified. This was a period of McCarthyism and the rest of it. And of course, there were communists who had been engaged in espionage for the Soviet Union. Later, we also heard some things about the atomic bomb project. I'm very interested in Oppenheimer. I'm very interested in history of American and Soviet communism, they're sidelines of my historical interest.

And I recall meetings of the Vassar faculty where they discussed the question of what faculty members should do if anyone was called to testify before any of these committees. And there were senior members of the faculty who stood up and said, we should be so grateful to have a job, and then there were people like myself who hadn't tenure and said we really ought to resist cooperating with these people because this is casting such a chill on our-and I was a very popular teacher.

Adam was born while I was at Vassar. And I remember so well I had some of the best students that I've ever taught among these women who were there. And they came and brought us gifts for the baby. It was wonderful. And I had very good friends there. Linda Nochlin and her future husband were friends of mine. Linda was still an undergraduate, a senior and was the apple of the art history department, the apple of the eye of the art history department. And Linda herself, of course, came out of that through her own family in that left-wing atmosphere.

And Vassar after two years did not reappoint me, and so I was out of job, and we weren't quite sure what to do. We thought of buying a house in the country. We looked for places in the country.

MS. MCCARTHY: In Upstate New York?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. We decided to move to Cambridge, Massachusetts, because it was Boston. We moved to Cambridge. We bought a house in Cambridge in one of the less fashionable neighborhoods. We lived in the house of a professor whom we knew in the summer of 1953, and then we moved into the house that we bought in the fall of 1953. We had it painted. It was a very nice old house. It had-it was sort of a working class neighborhood off Mass. [Massachusetts] Avenue. It had a large yard. We had an infant who had been born in Vassar, so he was just a few months old. Honoré set herself to work and she turned that house into a very attractive, charming thing. I had a lovely workroom of my own on the second floor, and the baby had his room. Honoré had one of the rooms to the right of the entrance as we came in, as a studio.

And I wrote some articles during that year, but I had to get various-I looked for various jobs, and I was also sending out letters. The history department was, of course, supposed to help in placing me. I think there was a stigma all this time upon me because of my support for Henry Wallace, the fact that I'd been working for the labor movement. And I recall when I came back to Harvard in the fall of 1946 and spoke to W.K. Jordan [Wilbur Kitchener Jordan, 1908-1980], who was a distinguished 16th century historian and was also president of Radcliffe. He's the man with whom I worked during the time and I got to know him very well. We were quite good friends.

I told him that I had in mind the possibility of writing a Marxist history of the English Revolution. It was still-now, Marxism was always, not only-there weren't very many in the American academic profession. There were many perhaps during those Depression years. I could think of some very important scholars who were exposed to Marxism and influenced by it, but you didn't really-those people who might identify themselves as Marxists would be very, very few. Today and in the '60s, the best universities chairs have been held by Marxists. This was utterly impossible in that period, but the fact that I felt that I could speak like this I thought I didn't-northeast that's what I said and he took it in good part and so on and so forth. But all these things were harmful to me later on.

And at one point, I had a job. I decided I-I'd been a labor organizer. I'd work with people. I was a leader. I thought perhaps one of the best things that I might do is to go through-work with some organization as a fundraiser because I knew how to organize people for various purposes, and I thought I ought to be bringing in some
money. We had some money. We had a housekeeper that was employed to help with the child all this time. I got a job with the Massachusetts Heart Association as a fundraiser.

The chief executive hired me and I became a kind of executive assistant to him and he got me involved in corporate giving, and I devised a formula by which corporations or executives could decide how much they ought to give. It was made up on a special card and I did this job for a while. I remember putting an ad in the Boston Globe saying that I wanted a management job, that I was an extremely quick learner, but that I won't accept any job that would pay me less than $10,000 or $15,000 a year. I may have had one or two answers to that. I had great confidence in myself despite the fact that this was a very difficult—it was quite a strain, political stresses.

And then the Korean War began in 1950, and the investigating committees were operating. The Berkeley Oath controversy was going in which the government of the state of California required that faculties of the University of California take a special loyalty oath. It created a huge controversy. It was a very famous episode in the history of American academic freedom. And there were only 12 faculty members who finally refused the oath. Of course, many others took it under protest, but these 12 faculty members, who included some very distinguished people in history, in the social sciences, and they've found other jobs. I don't know the details of that, but that was going on at that time, and during this period, I was sending out letters on my own to universities enquiring about positions. I had one or two interviews, but those posts were not satisfactory.

And then on my own, I'd been in touch with McGill University at Montreal, which was the major—along with the University of Toronto, the major English language Canadian university. And the chairman of the department who was dean of the faculty wrote me and said, please come up and be interviewed. And I went up there and had a successful interview. He himself had been a graduate student at Oxford, and I was appointed as assistant professor of history. And I recall the day that that letter came, Honoré was in her room, and we were waiting for some kind of an answer following my trip to Montreal, and so we had a job.

And Honoré went up in due course and bought a house in Montreal in the bastion of English-Canadianism in that city called the City of Westmount. Only really rich French Quebecois tended to live in that part of the city, the rest were Anglo. And the city was divided linguistically, and I had a very successful career at McGill as a teacher—a lot of students. I was awarded—I was allowed to go to England. I had support from the Canada Council in the book that I was writing. I was away in England between 1958-1960 on fellowship grants, including some from the United States Social Science Research Council. I had a few outside offers. McGill promoted me to a full professorship during that period, and we were spending our summers in [Vinalhaven] Maine at the house that we owned there, very beautiful. And Honoré was working and we had a lot of friends, artist friends that we knew and other people up there. The climate was fierce in winter.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, but it's lovely in the summer.

MR. ZAGORIN: But for various reasons, we felt a growing desire to return to the United States.

MS. MACCARTHY: How long were you at McGill?

MR. ZAGORIN: I was there for nine years. I was away in Europe for three of them. And I spent a year as a visiting professor at Johns Hopkins University while I was there, and I was appointed in 1965 as professor of history, University of Rochester which was in a tremendously expansive mode at that time, but the administration had great—it was at that time, the fifth richest privately endowed university of the United States because of Eastman Kodak and George Eastman's benefactions, Xerox was there and so on. These people were very strong supporters of the cultural scene in the university.

And I spent 25 years at the University of Rochester, but I've been explaining to you about living in Cambridge in 1951. I think that was the point of departure of this whole question. That period in Cambridge was difficult because I wasn't working and I hadn't any job and I knew that the history department—the chairman of the department, these people whom I kept in touch, I always felt that their support of me was halfhearted because I have to say that during this period my views about politics, world, the USSR changed completely, but I did feel—see a great deal of moral and intellectual cowardice in universities.

And at Harvard—this is a different subject. One of my great friends was a man called Robert [Neelly] Bellah [b. 1927], who was one of the leading-

MS. MACCARTHY: Robert, what's his last name?

MR. ZAGORIN: Bellah, B-E-L-L-A-H. And Robert Bellah has written—Robert Bellah was one of the favorite students of the most distinguished sociologists of the United States at that time, Talcott Parsons [1902-1979]. And he was a specialist in sociology, religion. He had learned Japanese and he was appointed to the Harvard faculty, and I think perhaps as an undergrad was a member of the Communist Party at Harvard or something—and there's a lot
about this biographical material about McGeorge Bundy [1919-1996]. I think you know who he is.

McGeorge Bundy was the dean of the Harvard faculty, came from a very rich, distinguished New England family and then he became President Kennedy's [National Security Advisor]-one of the really important officials in the White House and remained on with Lyndon Johnson, and was involved also in the conduct of the Vietnam War. And there’re a lot of ambiguities about him. He left all of that and he became the head of the Ford Foundation. He was dean of the faculty at the time that I was-I think he must have become dean of the faculty maybe around 1950-and Bob Bellah was called in by McGeorge Bundy. He wasn't the only one. I mean, there’s-this has been written up. There’s a lot of discussion about it, and he was told that he would have to be-he needed his assurance that he would be a cooperative witness to one of these committees. He wouldn't give them his assurance. He said, I'm prepared to talk about myself, but I'm not going to talk about anybody else.

And so he lost his appointment. The following year, he came out to Montreal while we were living there and he became the fellow at the Islamic Institute there, and he began the study of Arabic and Islamic religion. Later, he was appointed again at Harvard, wasn’t happy there, and went out to Berkeley. He's very well-known as an American sociologist. I don't see him very much, but we knew him and his wife quite well. And there were other episodes of that kind.

Harvard had a reputation of resisting those committees which was, to a considerable extent, undeserved. They defended one tenured faculty member who was a physicist who had been accused by [Joseph] McCarthy or somebody of being a Communist, but there were a lot of other people, and this was at a time that Nathan Pusey [1907-2001] was president. And so this year that I spent in-

MS. MACCARTHY: How do you spell Pusey?

MR. ZAGORIN: P-U-S-E-Y. This year that I-this year of 1950-’51 that we spent in Cambridge was a very uneasy year for me. I was working on my thesis and still doing research as well as writing. Honoré was working hard at her polyptych. We were in a way very fortunate. We had enough money to get on with and we had a car, but I was very conscious that I really couldn’t count on the Harvard history department and W.K. Jordan, president of Radcliffe [College], who was my advisor and whom I knew very well and whom I mentioned in the preface to my first book, and who was very much a liberal. And I have to stress that Jordan was the author of a very important work which I guess was-started with his own doctoral work at Harvard called The Development of Religious Toleration in England, four volumes, a very scholarly work.

And yet even though Jordan and I remained friends until the end of his life, I think I didn't see very much of him in his last years and following his retirement, I think I suffered from Alzheimer’s. It was really a tragic, terrible thing. But even Jordan, I could see that all of these people were stricken with a certain kind of fear and they had-they regarded themselves as having to be very, very careful and discreet. And this very much affected my relationship, but above all my professional prospects. It seemed to me that it was quite possible that I might never have an academic job again. It was really-it was very bad. There was a very alarmed atmosphere, and a lot academic people who were not courageous.

I have to say that in the 1960s, during the Vietnam War agitation, when the universities were amongst the top targets of agitation, I saw and I did not favor the student movement in the occupation of buildings in Columbia and Harvard and so on.

I saw a similar lack of courage on the part of the faculties who just-of course, there were divided loyalties, feelings-it's a very complicated story. I was chairman of my department and I did not go along with calling policemen pigs. Eldridge Cleaver [1935-1998], the head of the Black Panthers, when he came and gave a speech at the University of Rochester, all of my colleagues and faculty people were just thrilled to death as he strolled up and down speaking about the pigs and the bitches and the-you know? So I had reason to think that Jordan regarded me as one of the very best students he'd ever had, and that there was another student who was a very competent historian and but who was not troubled in this way.

And at the point when Jordan came to retirement and the question of his successor, I had reason to think that perhaps I might have a chance at an appointment there. I never lost this stigma, but I looked upon it differently when my own views changed in the '50s and I managed-I’ve had a successful career and I’ve been a tenured professor, but that was a very hard time. That was the period that this polyptych appeared, and that was also the period in which the humanist, social-realist kind of thing was ebbing away in American art and was being displaced in the most celebratory way by the abstract expressionist phenomenon which bestrode the scene like a colossus for at least a decade.

So this was quite a-I mean, all these are very much interconnected.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes. Did you know a gentleman named Richard McLanahan (ph)?
MR. ZAGORIN: I may have met him. He was the secretary of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, if I'm not mistaken.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, and he was at Harvard as well. He was undergraduate at Harvard. We just got a big addition of his papers. He has a really large collection. He's an art historian as well. He wrote-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, American art.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, American art some, and then he wrote a lot on actually [Leonardo] da Vinci and [Peter Paul] Rubens, but he was very far-reaching in terms of his subject matter. He also was the curator of an exhibition of American art that went to Moscow in, I believe, 1960, '61.

MR. ZAGORIN: Honoré's painting was in that exhibition?

MS. MACCARTHY: No, it wasn't, but the reason why I mention it is, just because this last addition of papers we've received contains all of his correspondence after the Freedom of Information Act was passed [1966], he went back to try to find out what was said about him in the 1950s and '60s when he-so he has all the, you know, copies of all the FBI and CIA files of him asking for information about how he was investigated, and he was. It's just very interesting to see that. I think it's all interconnected, as you said. Abstract expressionism has this kind of, you know, typical American art, this quintessential American art.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, there's a whole line of argument that says-

[Audio break.]

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. We're recording again here. So you're thinking, perhaps, Henry Geldzahler [1935-1994]-I'm going to write down his name might have organized an exhibition to Moscow.

MR. ZAGORIN: You know, I'm thinking-yes, yes, yes. It could have been in the '80s or something.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: Somewhat late.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: I mean, you know, various efforts at détente-that kind of thing. You were too young to remember all that, but I mean-

MS. MACCARTHY: That's true. [They laugh.] Let's see. I could look at this afterwards, but it was a SITES [Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service] which was called the Working American-oh, yeah, you're right. Here we go: "American Art in the USSR" organized by Henry Geldzahler of the Metropolitan Museum of Art for an exhibition in the former Soviet Union.

MR. ZAGORIN: Isn't that fascinating?

MS. MACCARTHY: You are right, and it's 1977, which was the year I was born.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah. My God, yeah. [They laugh.] It wasn't the former Soviet Union then-1977-it was the USSR. It was the period of [Leonid Ilyich] Brezhnev.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: I think. I think [Nikita] Krushchev had probably been deposed and Brezhnev was then the stagnating leader of the country. But I can't recall having any literature, catalog-I don't remember that, but shall we return for a moment to-

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, I'll try to find a catalog for that.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: What were we talking about?

MR. ZAGORIN: You mentioned-

MS. MACCARTHY: McLanathan.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, McLanathan. What I wanted to say was-and you will be familiar in general terms with this-there is a line of historical argument about the genesis-the course of abstract expressionism, the importance it
assumed in this country, that holds that abstract expressionism was a reflection of the Cold War polarity. It was an art that was totally unpolitical. It was subsidized by the State Department and cultural organs for the purpose of engaging in cultural competition with the USSR for the allegiance of European, and maybe, in particular, French, intellectuals, and that there is often a statement, referred to Clement Greenberg, made to the effect that someday the secret will be revealed, and it had something to do with perhaps Greenberg's own evolution. He was a Trotskyist and a Marxist. He always remained, in my opinion, a historical inevitablist.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: That is, he thought there was only one course. That's a part of the logic of the Hegelian and the Marxist version of the Hegelian theory of history.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: The only defect that I recall that there was in the first place where I saw this discussed—it may have been the first place where it was discussed—was a book by Serge Guilbaut which I recall seeing in the Stanford University bookstore, when I was just, you know, browsing amongst the art history stuff there in 1983 or '84. And he links the emergence of abstract expressionism with the Cold War and with Cold War politics and the rest of it.

The only thing that I want to say about that—and this has been expressed to me also by some American art scholars with realist interests—is that abstract expressionism, to an extent that I think is unparalleled in the history of American art, and maybe even unparalleled in the history of modern art, was accompanied by a huge explanatory theoretical account, and the principal figure in formulating this account was Clement Greenberg.

And, of course, there's been a reaction against Clement Greenberg and so on and so forth, and I actually read the recent biography of Clement Greenberg by somebody, Barbie or Barbara. I went through it very fast. But Clement Greenberg had a rationale for abstract expressionism about the logic of modern art, the completion of the extrusion of illusionism of any kind from it, the completion of abstraction, the focus on the picture plane and flatness. He had got it—there was a time when he had everybody talking about it.

Now, there are people who will tell you that he was very intelligent, I think, an interesting writer, that he was one of the best—certainly, the best American art critic of the 20th Century. I really don't—there are a number of art critics, but my own view is if you cannot give a sociological explanation to the degree that it's even valid, it certainly does something to explain the support which the government gave and all the rest of it, but you need to make the theoretical arguments in favor of the inevitablist view, the theoretical conception of what—the very idea that only this is possible for art today, nothing else is possible, is itself a horrible thought. It's an utter chain upon—and the extent to which artists I know were confused by this whole thing, and even immobilized, paralyzed.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right, right.

MR. ZAGORIN: So we need to—and I don't know the literature well enough to know to what extent those arguments were met. And then take a figure like Meyer Schapiro [1904-1996]. He's always thought of as one among the New York intellectuals and, of course, he has an almost revered position today. He died at an old age as an art scholar.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: I've read his stuff. I've read his—I know that place. It's Moissac. His first thesis was on Romanesque art and it was this beautiful old place. I'm sure it's Moissac. There are certain—we spent several different summers in that part of the Dordogne. And Moissac is not too far from Montauban, and we must have gone to Moissac a half dozen times, and later on I read his monograph on Moissac, and it's good, and I never heard a better lecture. I heard him give a lecture just by chance. I came in towards the beginning, but not at the beginning. It was one of a group of lectures he was delivering this was years and years ago. It must be in the '40s when he was still working in New York on Gothic art. And it was absolutely brilliant.

But Meyer Schapiro never wrote a real book. He wrote these things, but he had this view of abstract expressionism. One was that it was freedom in an increasingly mechanized society; the artists were free. And there may be another one about the crafting. These were meretricious arguments. They won't really stand up, in my opinion, to serious analysis, so there are these rationales. I don't know the literature on this very well. How did we get on this subject? Oh, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: We were just talking about McLanathan.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, but you introduced a political dimension in connection with McLanathan's own interests, and I suppose some importance has to be given to the support of the State Department and so on, the promotion of
abstract expressionist art.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: I recall now, that in 14 Americans, Robert Motherwell is typical-Motherwell was one of the intellectuals. Barnett Newman is supposed to figure amongst them, but I think he's something of a fake. But Motherwell speaks for internationalism here. Doesn't he? Let's see if I can find this thing. Yes. At the end of the first paragraph: "Among other ends, modern art is related to the ideal of internationalism." And so he invokes the idea of internationalism, and one of the things that I think ideologically accompanied the canonization of abstract expressionism was the denunciation of the populist WPA provincialism and patriotic stink of American art in the 1930s. And, of course, that might true here or there.

The lumping together of the WPA stuff without any discrimination amongst the things that were done is outrageous-absolutely outrageous. I mean, these artists-Raphael Soyer [1899-1987] never got enough, had never had enough money in his life, until he began to sell well, well maybe down in the '70s. He had the means to go to Europe for the first time, and I used to see him occasionally. And he was taken to the island of Vinalhaven and he and his wife loved it, and so they rented a cottage there. We used to occasionally see them there. I remember seeing him there after they'd just returned from-maybe it was his second European trip-it would be worth looking into that. Utterly transported by his personal contact with these great works of art. He was ecstatic. He was just raised beyond himself. International? All of these artists, you know, and-but of course, if you're speaking of modern internationalism-and, of course, a lot of that is the influence of France anyway.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right, right.

MR. ZAGORIN: And not that we should exclude German expressionism or Italian futurism. I mean, that's all-so they've played a lot with words of this kind and the whole thing needs a very good art scholar with a really good mind to sum it up, to deal with it fairly, but to place it and to expose it and so on and so forth.

MS. MACCARTHY: How did Honoré react to Clement Greenberg?

MR. ZAGORIN: She didn't. She never read him. She never read him. She studied her art history all the time and-but she didn't go in for-I mean, you remember using-I don't know what-maybe it was Barnett Newman who said this-it may even be in the book of quotations by now-that art historians or art critics are to painters what ornithologists are to birds. [They laugh.] She was not interested. She never paid any attention to that.

MS. MACCARTHY: You talked about some of the studio spaces generally, but I know that she had a studio in every place she lived. She would go in and close the door in the mornings and really work. Do you know what went on in there? Were you allowed into that space?

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: But did she listen to music or the radio or things like that?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, she did.

MS. MACCARTHY: Did she have visitors?

MR. ZAGORIN: She did. She didn. In Amherst-well, let me tell you this. She did a painting when she went back to Coronado I think when she was around 18 or so after leaving Yale, because her brother was born, and she stayed with her family for a while and she did a very large painting. It might have been a self-portrait. She decided she wanted to get away from her family and the house and she found some kind of a shack or a cottage up in the hills outside of San Diego and she moved over there, and lived by herself there. And she started a very big self portrait that was life-sized, and she called it Love, and she had a portable phonograph that she kept-one of the things she played over and over, was Love and Death music, or maybe the night of love music from Wagner's Tristan and Isolde.

Now, Honoré was not musical. For example, she didn't sing or hum, but she liked classical music and she heard a lot of it. She liked jazz, too. However, I had a musical education and I have been a devotee of classical music from childhood on. I was taken to the children's concerts of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. And in a later period in my life I became deeply interested in Wagner. I'm very interested in Wagner. I know a lot about him and his music. And Tristan and Isolde-there is nothing quite like it in the musical expression of a love that is not only spiritual, but is physical. And the love / death theme in the second act, Tristan, who was conducting this Irish princess to the king of Cornwall, who was going to marry her, and Isolde, this Irish princess, they've been given a love potion. They've fallen in love with each other and they have sex in the second act.

It's long but there isn't much action, and the music of this love relationship, including the act of sex, succeeds in
expressing in musical language something that resembles very closely the experience of the orgasm in its pulsation and it's reaching a climax. It is quite incredible. I mean, it's a very, very famous piece of music, the Metropolitan Opera has performed it, but this second act-Nacht der Liebe.

And then in the third act, Tristan has been wounded to death, and he's dying on this island, and Isolde comes to him and his-Tristan's squire or herald-they're waiting for her ship, and Tristan is longing for this woman and he is wounded. His servant, his squire Kurwenal was playing this sad thing on the pipes, and then the sails come and he decidedly starts to play a merry tune and she arrives and she finds Tristan near death. She takes him in her arms and pillows him and she sings this Liebestod.

It is extremely beautiful and is part of Wagner's idea that the culmination of love-love is something that may reach its culmination and even be carried beyond through death, union through death. It's a very strange idea. And they both-she dies and he dies in this final, utterly moving-in the night of love-the night of love begins with Tristan's-[foreign phrase]- "come and descend, o night of love", but in the love death in Act III-the conclusion of Act III—yes, she is looking down on him and she says, [singing in German] "mildly and softly how he smiles." This is the dying-well, she was playing this over and over again, while doing this self-portrait called Love, and she destroyed this portrait.

MS. MACCARTHY: Why?

MR. ZAGORIN: Dissatisfaction with it or something. I can't tell you how much I—when you asked—this is all—you see how I digress. You asked if she listened to music. When she was in Amherst, she listened to—she loved her serials. She listened to Fibber McGee and Molly [aired from 1935-1959]. This was one of these things [that was] very, very popular on American radio. She loved all of that.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: And she'd turn it on in the morning, and she would tell me sometimes about what was going on. Fibber McGee and Molly is a very, very famous American thing like Jack Benny or Burns and Allen. You may not even know them, but these were great, great stars of the radio period. And so, yes, she listened always to the radio. Working here, she'd have her boom box. She loved flamenco music. We did a lot of—we were very interested in flamenco things, and we followed them. We hunted them up in Spain when we were there because they bastardized, pulverized—pure flamenco isn't that easy to see any longer, but we have-right there, there are a number of flamenco records that she would play over and over. Yeah, she played the "Threepenny Opera," Brecht and Weill; she has the German version up there. Yes, jazz, Louis Armstrong, Old Man Mose, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: You think during the period of the polyptych was probably more classical music?

MR. ZAGORIN: No.

MS. MACCARTHY: No?

MR. ZAGORIN: I think she had listened a lot to the radio. She listened to these morning shows.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. I love listening to talk radio.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, talk radio at that time wasn't political. You know, it was—

MS. MACCARTHY: So this is more in the same vein, but as far as her working process, I know with the polyptych in particular, there's a lot of her going out to the factory, her writing away for factory pictures from Cone Mill, her going—

MR. ZAGORIN: She used. I watched her do it. One of the things she made great use of were the old Sears-Roebuck mail order catalogs.

MS. MACCARTHY: Oh, okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: There were a number of those at the house. She loved them. They were very thick because Sears-Roebuck, I think, made its—you may not even have heard of it any longer because it was one of the great American—it was like Wal-Mart.

MS. MACCARTHY: No, no, no. I know Sears, of course.

MR. ZAGORIN: But I mean, they were, I think, the great bulk of Sears-Roebuck's business was mail order.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. When I was young, it was still a big deal. So you get that Christmas catalog—
MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah, there you are. There you are, right, yes. But she used things. She loved things like Paris Match. She was a great devotee of Paris Match.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: Because Paris Match had really a lot of sensational and sensationalist photography. Violence. They went in big for royalty, for Princess Grace, for ambassadors, for politicians, for war violence, for murder scenes, for crimes, she—all of that was of great interest to her.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. Was this what she would do in her studio? Or was there something, you know, she's constantly on the hunt for, you know, new photographs?

MR. ZAGORIN: I really don't know. I mean, we tended not to work—I never was very productive at night. I found my best hours always to be the morning hours. Sometimes I'd prepare lectures and so on, but we tended to go to bed early. We'd be in bed by 10:00. We didn't sit up late. But very often after dinner, she'd walk into her studio and turn on the light, she'd look at her work—what she'd been doing in the day. She loved those files of hers. Oh, how she cherished them. She always was on the lookout for things. There never was a time when she wasn't watching—she wasn't tearing something. I brought her things all the time that I thought might—if they might be of interest to her from the newspapers, and I was doing this as recently as two years or so ago I would say. Even then I'd show her something in the New York Times, asked her whether she might like to have it, so-

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. And then in the polyptych specifically, she did so much photography. Now, I can assume that most of them are photographs she took herself as she went to these various places.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Like especially in school scene, there are some really good pictures of the children.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Just like this one here. That is directly-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, I love those things.

MS. MACCARTHY: -yeah, this one as well.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Oh, yeah, I love that.

MS. MACCARTHY: That girl is in the polyptych twice.

MR. ZAGORIN: I love those things. Yes. This is so touching.

MS. MACCARTHY: She would try and try again too. She has a couple different people who posed for that.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: We have that one as well. She used that figure, I think, again-

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, I love these. I do. Did someone tell you—I should tell you. This is important. Suzanne Foley [curator, University of Virginia Art Museum]-it's so sad. She died. It's just dreadful.

MS. MACCARTHY: I just found out last night.

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, no.

MS. MACCARTHY: Absolutely awful.

MR. ZAGORIN: Last week there was a funeral and a service for her. Ruth Cross spoke at it. It was Ruth who told me. She had some trouble with her foot or something, and it might have been an aneurysm; I don't know what it was.

MS. MACCARTHY: And then she wanted to be moved to an assisted living thing because she was not very mobile on her foot.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: And it was very sudden. I just saw her in October.
MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Well, Suzanne Foley told me back last summer or sometime, or spring, that the guy who
would pose for the central panel, Jimmy McIntosh—that his granddaughter called her, and they knew all about
this painting, and I would discover that Jimmy McIntosh had—who certainly seemed all Yankee; he was a tailor in
Amherst.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. He wasn't an actual factory worker.

MR. ZAGORIN: He wasn't. He may-there may even have been some Lebanese background there which kind of
amazed me. And I'm sure I asked her to give me the name of this woman so you could speak to her.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: But I don't think I have it. Oh, what a pity.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah. I should be getting ready to call and tell her about the show.

MR. ZAGORIN: The camera that Honoré was using at that time-

MS. MACCARTHY: It was 35-millimeter.

MR. ZAGORIN: Was a what?

MS. MACCARTHY: I know it was a 35-millimeter. I don't know what brand.

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, I know the name so well; I see the case. She used it for years and years. It wasn't a Leica, but
it was a very well-known and very highly regarded. It was a German Rolleiflex.

MS. MACCARTHY: Rolleiflex.

MR. ZAGORIN: She was using a Rolleiflex. And I always-and she appreciated photography. She met Henri Cartier-
Bresson. He may have picked her up actually on the Cape when she was getting a ride down to her chicken coop
where she was painting Man at the Fountain because Cartier-Bresson-I think he was in the United States, and of
course, I think that Kirstein must have known him fairly well. He was out on the Cape, but I think she may have
seen him now and again there, and she had his work. She has books about his work here and early things that
he did in Spain which are extremely interesting and so on and so forth. And I haven't any doubt-but she always
looked upon photography as ancillary to painting.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes. Obviously.

MR. ZAGORIN: I have no doubt that if she wanted-had wanted to be a photographer, she could have been an
absolutely first rate one because a lot of those pictures are very good. And for example, the photograph that you
may not remember, but it's in my room there, it's the 4th of July, big day in Vinalhaven, Maine—very moving, the
old people, the American Legion paraded in the morning at around 10:00, not a very large parade, but it just
really gets to you. You can't keep the tears from your eyes, and we went to that parade every year—there might
be picnics afterwards and so on. And Adam is sitting on the porch, and he's a boy of five or six, at the American
Legion hall. They're old people. Do you know the picture I'm telling you about?

MS. MACCARTHY: No.

MR. ZAGORIN: It's a perfectly lovely picture. I'll show it to in a moment. She could have done that, and I have to
confess for myself that this is still my view, but-and it might have been hers, but we never really discussed this.
My view has always been that photography is not of the same level of an art as painting, and it's very likely that
a painter or an artist like Cartier-Bresson felt the same thing. Cartier-Bresson has said that he became a
photographer because he found he couldn't be a painter.

Eliot Elisofon [1911-1973] was a very well-known Life photographer. Ever heard of him? And he was a great
photographer of native peoples. So I mean, he's published a volume—he was a photographer on Life magazine all
through his career. His name is spelled E-L-I-S-O-F-O-N. I don't know what happened to his papers. And he was
also a movie consultant in color matters. The first Moulin Rouge, not the one with Nicole Kidman, there was an
earlier one. I think he was the consultant on that. He went out to Hollywood to do that. But he was a very good
friend of ours. We knew him well and we only saw him in the summer because he had a house in Vinalhaven.

Why did I bring up Eliot Elisofon? Oh, yes. He started out as a painter and he used to do watercolors. They were
weak things. But as a photographer he was really, really first rate. He's one of the best American photographers,
and—but my own view was—we have much more theoretical stuff on photography, and in Rochester, New York,
Beaumont Newhall and his wife Nancy Newhall were there, they were—and so there was every—but my own
feeling is that—I mean, I know how much photographers manipulate their stuff, the kind of things they do in
development, and they can have all kinds of view possibilities, but I think photography—of course, I mean, I've read [Edward] Weston's [1886-1958] diaries; these are Westons up here on the wall right now. Well, one's a Ben Shahn, but the other two, the upper ones-

MS. MACCARTHY: Which one is Ben Shahn? The middle, right?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. And I love that photograph. But I think probably, Honoré would have taken the same view. This is not a popular view today, and it's a view that may be mistaken—the only thing is—I mean, what is the executive moment in photography? Is it the moment when the photographer sees or the moment when he snaps? Now, when he snaps or she snaps, the work is done. Well, it isn't done because there is all the stuff that you can do to manipulate it. And so—but I think she had a very high regard for what photography could do historically, documentarily.

And of course, we went very often to the Eastman Museum of Photography, and you'd see all these art photographers, Alvin Coburn, Alvin Langdon Coburn [1882-1966], and many others; the fashion photographers, Horst [1906-1999]-wonderful, wonderful stuff. But there are things that people like [Irving]Penn [b. 1917] have done, and especially [Richard] Avedon [1923-2004] that are so mannered, and my admiration for Diane Arbus [1923-1971] went over this repeatedly. She loved those things, and reading John Vachon's [1914-1975] interview in that publication of yours [Archives of American Art Journal], and he describes the purism of these photographers. There were certain things that I thought were really not to be done by a photographer.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: I was fascinated by that—their morality of craft that he revealed there. He mentions it in connection with certain things that Shahn condemned that photographers shouldn't do, I mean, in a technical sort that seems—the ethic of photography as craft is suddenly perhaps—I mean, there's such a lot of bad photography, there's-

MS. MACCARTHY: There's a lot of bad painting, too.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yeah. But simply the numbers in the democratization of this country, we're born democratic-people going in for all kinds of stuff. You know, and they think about it as self-expression. We have a great friend who's a painter, Kathy Calderwood who owns one or two of Honoré's paintings. She's a Rochester painter. She's a good artist, and she's had a struggle—it's so hard to get a dealer. She came down here to deliver the painting that belongs to her from this exhibit at the UVA and she spent the night with me. We knew her well and she's plucky and resourceful and so on, and she's an artist, very dedicated, and—what brought me here?

MS. MACCARTHY: Photography, painters, how this country-

MR. ZAGORIN: Oh, I had something important to tell you about that. Oh, God. Honoré was always good friends with her. She loved and admired Honoré. She absolutely insisted on seeing Honoré at that place when she was here and it was a very touching kind of meeting. Yes. It was back in the spring. But it has to do with—it must be something to do with photography, but I can't—I've lost it.

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, she had a hard time getting a dealer and-

MR. ZAGORIN: Maybe it will come back to me. But we were speaking about photography. I would be a daring man today if I were to say that photography is not an art on the same level as the art of painting.

MS. MACCARTHY: You've already said that.

MR. ZAGORIN: But I'll tell you this. I remember seeing when we were in France a few years ago an interview with some correspondents. There had been an interview with Cartier-Bresson, who died only recently. He was really quite old. I don't know if he was over 90. But in this interview with Cartier-Bresson, he expressed a lot of disdain for a lot of the stuff that these French photographers were doing. And they were very upset because they admitted him—he was an icon and that he didn't have an understanding of the stuff that they were doing.

And I followed the correspondence—it appeared in Le Monde and, I mean, I regard Cartier-Bresson as a great photographer not only because—I mean, he had all the technical resources, but because he was a wonderful photographer of human beings, and there are others like that. There's a French photographer that I first saw in quantities at the Eastman Museum. He must have had an exhibition. His name was Robert, Robert Doisneau, D-O-I-S-N-E-A-U. Oh, such joie de vivre, so free, so lovely.


MR. ZAGORIN: You got it. Exactly.
MS. MACCARTHY: He does the kissing on the bridge—that's been reproduced a million times.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Wonderful. Yes. And even the work—I published a long article in the New Literary History which is—you know that journal?

MS. MACCARTHY: UVa's?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. On Marcel Proust. It was in the spring. You want a copy of it? I'll give it to you.

MS. MACCARTHY: I won't understand it, but hey-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, you will. [They laugh.] I think I'm very accessible, and you'll learn a lot about Proust. But when I wrote—I was thinking about that article, and I've loved Proust for many years, and Honoré and I had our time with Proust obsession. This Baalbek girls is Proust. This sums up Proust.

MS. MACCARTHY: Ah.

MR. ZAGORIN: Those are characters—the Baalbek girl. Baalbek is an invented summer place in Normandy where the narrator in this novel, Proust's great long novel, spent summers. And there he meets these girls in this town called Baalbek. He falls in love with one of them called Albertine. She's the one in the cap, and the love affair between the narrator and Albertine is a very, very important part of the novel, and he's never sure whether Albertine is a lesbian or not, and—oh, Proust is such a very great writer, but-

MS. MACCARTHY: So you wrote an article on him, and that's how we got on to Robert Doisneau.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. There was a photographer. The pre-1914 and after period, [Jacques-Henri] Lartigue [1894-1986].

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah, sure.

MR. ZAGORIN: And he's wonderful, of course. He was rich. He had independent means. I went through a lot of Lartigue's work and I studied his life. I should say something about Lartigue in that period of what the French call the Belle époque. The Belle époque is, of course, between the founding of the Third Republic in 1871 and 1914, the beginning of the First World War. But I never did mention Lartigue. But I have Lartigue in my mind thinking about Proust and some of Proust's scenes.

The last thing I'd want to do is denigrate photography, but you know, there's a photographer who's chair at the University of Rochester, and writes a lot, I think, in art photography journals named Carl Chiarenza, C-H-I-A-R-E-N-Z-A, and I think he perhaps wanted a sort of art photography theorist intellectuals, and I've seen his reviews of other photographers like Lee Friedlander [b. 1934], not Mary Ellen Mark [b. 1940], but—and he does his photography, and I've seen it up at the University of Rochester—they had a sort of small exhibition room in the Wilson Commons. I've seen his photography and it is so utterly boring, just trees, just boring.

And it is very, very possible to be bored by this stuff. I have to make a horrible confession. When I see Clyfford Stills's paintings, they bore me. And if I see a number of them—I mean, one, two, but then three, four, five, they are boring.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah. That's the thing, though, I think there's a lot of bad painting out there, as well as bad sculpture out there. There's a lot of great ideas and poor execution, or a lot bad execution and great ideas.

MR. ZAGORIN: That's right. But now I remember why I brought up Kathy.

MS. MACCARTHY: That work that you showed, I mean, there's some really bad painting in that show.

MR. ZAGORIN: Absolutely. Well, that's the problem. They have a very comprehensive attitude towards American art, but now I remember why I brought up Kathy Calderwood. Because we were saying and you've just repeated how many bad this and that and the other. That's because in some ways it's so easy to take it up. And they take it up—a lot of people talk about this in connection with poetry—to express yourself. It's part of—it may be connected with this idea that's got into American education too, about how important self-esteem is.

MS. MACCARTHY: The "me" generation—

MR. ZAGORIN: There's only one thing to be said about self-esteem. You feel self-esteem if you achieve something, and you achieve something by learning to be competent.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.
MR. ZAGORIN: But-[phone rings].

[Audio break.]

MS. MACCARTHY: All right. We're recording again.

MR. ZAGORIN: When Kathy Calderwood-when we first knew her, she came over to our house one day on a Sunday with her husband. She was then married to this man, and we sat around this table in our kitchen. We had a big fireplace there. It was very pleasant, we were having a conversation. And she quoted this to me-this is the reason I bring it up-I said to her, what's so great about self-expression? I said, the self isn't that important. She was stunned by it.

I mean, when you're a worker, such as Honoré is, you don't think about self-expression at all. Now, you could say from that wonderful passage in that letter that we read yesterday about the difficulty of expressing yourself through a medium as rigorous-the technique as rigorous as she was using, but she was not an artist. I don't ever recall her ever thinking-just wasn't, and for myself as a historian and a writer-of course, I have the experience of intellectual creativity, which is very satisfying and sometimes exciting, but it's the work that counts; it's not the self. It's so tiresome, you see. And I think this profoundly important in dealing with students.

When I have students, though, I feel great concern about-I would never humiliate a student or anything like that, and I have had quite close relations with some of my students. What I want to teach them is to be competent, to be really good at something, and when you're good at something, you're confident of yourself and you'll be wanted. And it's hard work.

MS. MACCARTHY: Right. So you don't think Honoré was trying to express-what was she trying to express in Tribute, then?

MR. ZAGORIN: She had a great soul. She had a great-the richness of this-

MS. MACCARTHY: Was she more of a storyteller, somebody who-

MR. ZAGORIN: She loved stories, yes. Still, it's hard to say. She had such a slant view of things too: the run in the stocking, the slip showing, always, the imperfection. Of course, she chose to be an artist. I think it was a vocation, but she wasn't-this was destined. And so whatever it was that she absorbed, she wanted-but self-expression should be-it's like happiness.

The greatest work of moral philosophy in the Western tradition and quite possibly of the literature the whole world is Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, and it begins with the theme that all men aim at happiness. But how do you-you don't aim at happiness. Happiness is not a goal. Happiness is the byproduct of the things you do. And I could say, truly, I've had a happy life and I know Honoré's had a happy life, and that was because we were all the time doing just what we wanted to be doing. Happiness emerged, it effervesced.

So you don't aim-I mean, to your husband, your self is very important, and it should be, and the other way-converse-the other way around. But for other people, why should they give a damn about your self? There's a famous remark that T.S. Eliot made with regard to self-expression. T.S. Eliot is very well-known and to an extent that has elicited a lot of comment for his doctrine of impersonality. One of his critical essays has a remark to the effect that-he posits a disjunction between the artist's personal emotions and sufferings, and the work, which is a very anti-romantic attitude, and he always said he was in favor of classicism. I mean, not that there aren't romantic elements in his work, there are, but this is a distinct critique of romanticism.

And so-and many people have hunted out the personal things in his work which seem to run contrary to the doctrine of impersonality, but in speaking about self-expression, he says somewhere-he says, self-expression-but of course, you have to have something to express, and that's the heart of the thing, you see. These selves that are being expressed in those cases, we must respect individuals, but they are very ordinary selves. They haven't anything much to say. So that's why Kathy was stunned by this remark of mine. The work is everything.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yeah. It is. That's what lasts. Some of the things we've gone over-

MR. ZAGORIN: I hope I'm responsive to you.

MS. MACCARTHY: This is great. One interesting thing, when you mentioned some of the people that Honoré knew, but I'm just curious as to who her other artist friends were. I know [George] Tooker [was a friend]. There's a lot of letters from him. Did she go to, after Tribute was viewed and there was this kind of recognition that she experienced at the time, and she was a part of the Reality thing; she said that the she wasn't a founder, that they came to her-

MR. ZAGORIN: She was never any part of any artist's group and she never had a lot of artist friends. And I've
often thought about this and occasionally discussed it with her, but not in any way that led to conclusions. Whether it was wrong, it was harmful for her that she was totally separated from New York, and she was totally separated from New York because my academic appointments weren't in New York. I can say quite sincerely that if I had thought that Honoré needed New York, or if she had felt that she needed New York, I would have moved heaven and earth to be in New York.

I always used to say to colleagues of mine who had commuter marriages in academia because they couldn't get a job in the same place, that if I were married to a woman who needed a job at a particular place, I would give her the priority, that I would go with her, that I would find my work there. I had such regard for Honoré and I was so resolved that I was-I didn't think about this, because this was without any sense of burden, I was happy. This was our relationship, and I don't know whether in some way-but Honoré is a very lone person, and she never needed people. She has said to me many times that-I only need one person, and that's you. She needed her son, and he is so devoted to her, and it's so touching when he sees her. But she knew how to be alone. She really did, and so she didn't really need anybody, and we had conversations about-we had an intellectual life together. We were tremendous friends-did I show you the dedication that I wrote to her in this book?

MS. MACCARTHY: No.

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, I published the book in 2005, which has done quite well, called the How the Idea of Religious Toleration-I can't remember the title of my own book-[they laugh]-How the Idea of Religious Toleration Came to the West, and it's a long study, scholarly study published by the Princeton University Press, and it's a study of the idea of religious toleration.

It begins with the observation that of all the world religions, Christianity has been the most intolerant and it poses a historical question that how it is that in Western society, from a very intolerant society, we became a society which has a very profound belief in the importance of religious freedom and liberty of conscience and so on, and it explains this and why the controversies-some significant thinkers because the struggle to formulate the idea of religious freedom was itself a very arduous one, and this book is dedicated to Honoré, and the dedication-I can you show you, it ran something like this: this book is dedicated to my wife Honoré Sharrer in gratitude for over 50 years of married happiness and intellectual companionship.

So we talked about all of these things. I think Honoré was too isolated, and I think-and Honoré liked being with artists. When we lived in Montreal, there was a woman named Betty Goodwyn [b. 1923] who lived across the street from us, very cultivated person who was an artist and wanted very much to be an artist, had a large burden of inferiority that she was carrying because she was the great friend of another Canadian artist who had achieved early success, and this artist accused her of imitating and so on, but when we left Montreal in 1965, we pretty much lost touch with Betty Goodwyn and her husband. They were really good friends of ours, and Honoré saw Betty Goodwyn a lot.

Very often towards the end of the day-she'd walk over-Betty had a studio in her house, she lived in a lovely old house in the city and they did a lot of talking. Sometimes, I'd come home and I'd call up Honoré, please come home, dinner has to be gotten-because she was doing the cooking by then. Well, we had a cook too, sometimes a housekeeper, but still she had to do, and she enjoyed it. They spent a lot of time together-with Betty Goodwyn. I think in succeeding years she became quite well-known. She may still be alive. She would be old, but I think maybe in graphics and painting, she-I've tried to find out a little and I haven't succeeded very much, so I haven't put-but I liked her very much and Honoré did too. And so I think she [Honoré] needed and missed the company of artists.

I think when she was with Kathy Calderwood, they enjoyed themselves, and at one point she went to RIT, the Rochester Institute of Technology because she wanted to learn more about etching and printing, and she spent a lot of time there and she went to the studio by herself and she loved being among those artists. They were somewhat stunned when they saw certain kinds of things that she did. They were stunned when they saw what she was doing, this is some kind of an artist, but she was never-I mean, she felt she was a learner, wanted to learn about things and she did and she did prints as a result of that, and this was very satisfying to her.

MS. MACCARTHY: When was this?

MR. ZAGORIN: In the ’70s maybe. What happened was in 1972 and ’73, I was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, and the Princeton people gave her complete access to their art studios, and she met there right at the time we arrived, this Japanese artist Mayumi Oda.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes, sure.

MR. ZAGORIN: That's her work, and she and Mayumi became very good friends. And Mayumi worked at prints, and so Honoré started to go with her to the print room, and they went three or four times a week. She had a
very close friendship with Mayumi, and that's when she began to do this kind of stuff. And I think did this often all through the year, though she was painting too, and then I think she decided to pursue this further at RIT and she went to RIT classes for several years, then she dropped it.

So I feel that it was my fault partly-she never-when we moved here, we learnt that there was-this was 1995, we moved to this house in 1995-I found out for her maybe, or she found out that there was a life class that met weekly, and one of the people in the art department was giving, Philip Geiger. We never even met Philip Geiger until last spring when he came to see Honoré's work and was very excited by it, brought his students and so on. And I pleaded with her to go to that art class. And it would have been going one night, and I said, you'll be stimulated, it will be fun. She wouldn't do it. And I don't know whether it was inertia or what, I feel that in some ways, I take the blame for this mainly. I think I could have-but she never expressed any desire for this very much. But I am confident that at the time she felt quite isolated.

MS. MACCARTHY: Well, she also had her mom as a painter-

MR. ZAGORIN: She did, and they would talk, and her mother was-when her mother would come to see her, they'd talk about Honoré's work. They'd go in the studio, they spent three hours there reviewing things that she'd be doing, and her mother had these art classes in Guilford, Connecticut, and became rather significant there because there were a lot of people who came to those classes over the years and Madeleine lived there, and their eyes were open to art, some of them were-and they often express their appreciation for the things that she gave them. And one other thing she did with the students, there were some students-she had classes every Sunday and then once during the week and there were sort of core of people that were just devoted to her and came year after year after year, and they'd go for a week to Block Island which is lovely out there, off the coast-

MS. MACCARTHY: Of course.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. And Honoré went with them, and they all stayed at this rather old fashioned hotel and they'd get up in the morning and they'd go out and work and then work again, have lunch together, and go out and work again in the afternoon. And in the evening, they'd get together for a drink and dinner and talk about the work. And it was a week, and they'd all loved it. Honoré always spent the week with them and I came at the weekend, and she was-oh, she was very happy. I could see her standing on the ferry landing waiting for me. It was such a-to be left for two days alone, let alone a week alone, was just murder for me.

MS. MACCARTHY: Really?

MR. ZAGORIN: Absolutely. I can't tell you. I was wild just being by myself. I hated her to go away. I never understood it, but then she'd have to see her mother, and these were enjoyable days for her and they were fun days. So I think she needed artists around her. I think she didn't have enough of that. I feel very badly about that.

MS. MACCARTHY: Okay. I don't think you should feel badly about that.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: How did she feel about the category magic realism?

MR. ZAGORIN: She never used it of herself at all. I never thought about it that way. It's my understanding that magic realism was a term invented by Alfred Barr in the 1940s.

MS. MACCARTHY: For the exhibition-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, yes. And I suppose-and I can't give you the history of it because I haven't reviewed this literature. I suppose others took it up. I'm not sure whether Kirstein endorsed it, whether he embraced it, and an exhibition that he had in London of these artists that he was interested in, it was called Magic Realism, wasn't it?

MS. MACCARTHY: I think so.

MR. ZAGORIN: So that then got around, and it's been widely used and one of the things that's of interest to me is these people at Columbus, Ohio, at this museum, they're planning a big magic realist exhibition and there's a guy who's a curator at the Cleveland Museum named Mark Cole who wrote a thesis-

MS. MACCARTHY: K-O-H-O?

MR. ZAGORIN: No. C-O-L-E. I think. I can't swear to it. It could be the other. He wrote a thesis on Jared French. I think it was written at the University of Delaware in art history. Within the last ten years. He's now at the Cleveland Museum and he's helping out, I think, these Columbus people-Columbus, Ohio people of this magic realism exhibition. And other-I mean, the term surrealism is also-
MS. MACCARTHY: And they contacted you because they wanted Honoré's work in the exhibition?

MR. ZAGORIN: Well, Mark Cole contacted me and Mark Cole also made a point of seeing the exhibition at the University of Virginia Art Museum, and we were told by Virginia Mecklenburg that Mark Cole and these people at the Cleveland Museum might be interested in having a few of Honoré's paintings. I spoke to Mark Cole on the telephone and he informed me that they're not a study museum and they haven't facilities for large numbers of works by particular artists.

But most recently, I heard from my art consultant that he-and there was one other person who expressed a similar view, what they were especially interested in was a work of Honoré's before 1950. And there isn't any such work that's available for them, and I think this is one of the consequences possibly of the polyptych, you see. I think that's really pretty damn stupid myself, but it does impose kind of a burden, perhaps lasting. I don't know. But we'd never, ourselves, use that word. I hardly think that she ever thought-I'm not sure how she felt of herself. She never thought of herself as belonging to anything. Perhaps at the beginning, maybe writing for that Fourteen Americans, or in Reality, associating herself. She was a very self-sufficient person, and I think she had great confidence in her own view of things, and so-

MS. MACCARTHY: She didn't need it. She obviously had confidence in her ability and confidence in the story she wanted to tell. How did she feel about abstract work?

MR. ZAGORIN: I think she-

MS. MACCARTHY: Did she ever meet any of the other artists in Fourteen Americans? There are a lot of abstract artists in that-

MR. ZAGORIN: No, she never did. We talked about it. I think-I could say a few things about that. She certainly appreciated abstract art, and we saw abstract artists. A lot of the French modernism is not purely abstract. I mean, it is-

MS. MACCARTHY: Sure.

MR. ZAGORIN: They're abstract tendencies. For example, a painting like Picasso's Woman in the Mirror [1932], is in Workers and Paintings-is it an abstract painting? I suppose it is. Cubism is certainly a form of abstraction.

MS. MACCARTHY: [As opposed to] non-objective painting.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. So she-and we admired-I'd never thought of Robert Motherwell as a strong artist. In fact, in some ways I often think of him as more of a design artist, but we-and even a painting like the black things-

MS. MACCARTHY: [Kasimir] Malevich?

MR. ZAGORIN: No, no. I'm speaking of Motherwell's Elegy to the Spanish Republic [1953-54]. Mainly I think of Motherwell as a rather refined decorative artist, not a power artist at all. I think most of his works are better described as refined and decorative than they are the other thing. And we enjoyed that, and I think, for example, she learned to appreciate Kandinsky, who is thoroughly abstract. I recall my first sight of Kandinsky's in large numbers because I went to the Guggenheim Museum when I lived in New York City, and the Guggenheim Museum then was a small institution. I think it was on 8th Street between 5th and 6th Avenues, and Baroness Hilla Rebay was still running it. But I've seen the Kandinsky's, some of which were at the Guggenheim Museum, and I also saw a lot of them more than once in Munich at the Lenbachhaus [Stadtsche Galerie im Lenbachhaus, Munich] as part of the exhibit of these German painters called Die Blaue Reiter-the Blue Riders, and I saw also Kandinsky's notebooks. And leaving aside all his theosophy of his various spiritualistic-I was quite thrilled and excited. They're beautiful, and so on. And I think she appreciated abstract art. She liked Léger, she liked Braque. We saw all those things, you know, all repeatedly I mean, one sees them.

MS. MACCARTHY: What about Jackson Pollock?

MR. ZAGORIN: I don't think that meant anything in particular-what I think she felt about that for a time, she never expressed it to me. I think she felt a real bitter isolation forced upon her. But I have to say Honoré just never complained. I've said this to you. She never complained about anything. She never complained about physical ills. She never complained about working conditions. She could set up and work. She never complained about people. It's extraordinary. She was fundamentally contented and happy as long as she could work, but I think she felt pretty well beset and we all did. You suddenly found yourself banished. I don't know whether this is genuinely appreciated yet. It may be.

I just-here's a case in point. One of the very well-known and admired painters-well, let's forget Ben Shahn. Ben Shahn was thought of a leading American painter in the 1940s, and he certainly was received, treated well by
the Museum of Modern Art, and I think the implication in the letter of Kirstein's is that Shahn did not want to antagonize the Museum of Modern Art and that is certainly one of the reasons why he wouldn't associate himself with this thing, even though he had good reason to-looking at his own painting, of course, Kirstein also felt-and I did myself-and I think that appears a little bit in that letter that in those years after the war, the painting of the children on swings—Paul Klee was getting into that stuff, a certain degree of abstract—a loss of that kind of photograph concreteness that gave a lot of the strength that I think Shahn's paintings were becoming more tasteful and more refined and less strong. I suspect that that's what Kirstein felt too.

On the other hand, we have to remember that the posters that he did for the 1944 Roosevelt campaign and also for the Second World War, for the Office of War Information. There's one of a French worker, we French workers—(unintelligible)—he was such a good graphic artist. I mean, he was really terrific at that, so-where were we? Why are we on that?

MS. MACCARTHY: We're just talking about-

MR. ZAGORIN: What was your question?

MS. MACCARTHY: Jackson Pollock.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. But I think she never spoke much about Pollock. We saw Pollock. I saw Pollock just not too long ago at the Met when I was there, say, in the last year or two, beautifully hung, really striking, very interesting picture, but I've seen a lot of bad Pollocks. You know, I mean, that's another story, but I don't know how much important it is to say that Pollock broke the ice. It was, I think, [Willem] de Kooning's statement about him. We knew what abstract painting was. We admired it. Honoré never felt the slightest temptation in that direction. It just wasn't something she felt she wanted to do, or perhaps she felt that she could do.

But you see, abstract expressionism was not an art that was promoted to live with other arts. It was promoted to be only kind of art that you could do. You have to realize—it would be worth your while just to spend an hour looking back at some of the Art News of that time and Thomas Hess's stuff. I mean, they had a lot of different people writing art reviews. They were trying to cover the art scene fairly comprehensively, so they reviewed everything that was on—however briefly.

But I mean—and this is another point all together. It's a very peculiar thing that I don't to this day understand. One of the people writing art criticism for a time for Art News was Fairfield Porter. Fairfield Porter is a charming, conventional, American artist. If you know his work, he's never been an abstract artist. He did portraits of people and so on, and of course, he was friends with some of the New York poets, Ashbery, Frank O'Hara and one other who's name I can't recall, lived with him for 12 or 13 years with him and his wife. It's incredible. And the abstract expressionists have always taken this sort of a friendly view of Fairfield Porter. Why this is, I'm not able to explain. Because he was friends with them. Maybe he went to the Cedar Tavern, though I don't think he's in the picture in that photograph of the "Irascibles." But he was writing art criticism for a time, perhaps he was painting and maybe— he was reviewing some of these artists. So, it's kind of interesting.

MS. MACCARTHY: It was all corrupt?

MR. ZAGORIN: No, I don't know. This was nothing. I would never want to say that. I really—I don't. I mean, there was a huge amount of promotion and there was a tremendous amount of conformity. It really was I would say the herd of independent minds. But we also have to take into account the point that Kirstein made and that is the impulse that had given rise to all of that art was fading. Who were the really good artists? Where was this work to be found? Where it could be exemplary? I mean, when pop artists came along, the abstract expressionists were furious. I mean, they were just offended, but ever since then—but Honoré didn't complain. I think at times she felt really besieged and isolated, and she has said that she found that she couldn't exhibit small pictures. They would just be lost, and that's why she didn't-

MS. MACCARTHY: So she just got bigger?

MR. ZAGORIN: That biggest picture, Leda and the Folks [1963]. That was exhibited at the Corcoran, with the Rauschenberg—maybe one of the famous Rauschenbergs—that has a bed [Bed, 1955]-

MS. MACCARTHY: Right.

MR. ZAGORIN: Or maybe he did more than one of those. I think—I mean, she wanted to have a career and be a recognized artist. I think she felt that it had become for the first time in her life a struggle, but I never heard her complain. She didn't want to talk about it even, I would say.

MS. MACCARTHY: Did you meet George Tooker?
MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. We knew Tooker. We first met Tooker in New York.

MS. MACCARTHY: Are there any anecdotes about any of them—did you meet Jared French or Paul Cadmus?

MR. ZAGORIN: Honoré knew Paul Cadmus, and she knew Ben Shahn, and she visited Ben Shahn in Roosevelt, New Jersey, and Ben Shahn was a very smart fellow. I think Ben Shahn regarded himself really as a sort of a top of painting at that time kind of thing. He was doing a lot of artists treated him [that way]. I remember meeting an artist at Princeton in 1972, when we live there named Gregorio Prestopino, realist artist, a rather good one, and he spoke of Shahn who had died—I think he may have lived in the same town of Roosevelt, New Jersey. He spoke of Shahn as sort of a mentor, a leader, and they may have been others like that. Shahn was very popular. His graphics work, the posters he did for the Roosevelt election campaign in 1944, and other things, that little book that James Thrall Soby wrote about him and and so on and so forth.

And it’s amazing to me that I’ve seen Ben Shahn referred to in the most dismissive terms in New York Times art reviews, you see. I mean, coming to terms with all that, but I remember—I started to say something and then I forgot it. One of the major painters of that period who was highly regarded—his work was purchased by the Met and others—was Jack Levine. Now, Jack Levine was a Boston artist and he’d studied at the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, I think, and he’d also had some support from an independent art person, a collector, named Denman Ross [1853-1935], I'm not sure.

MS. MACCARTHY: Yes. I've heard of him.

MR. ZAGORIN: Anyway, the first Museum of Modern Art selection of Americans for those quadrennial things was in ’42, and Jack Levine was in that show, and I think I may even have the catalogue here. And so we saw a number of Jack Levine’s paintings. And I think Jack Levine—I don't know whether he used encaustic. I'm sure that Jack Levine was quite influenced maybe by [Chaim] Soutine [1893-1943] and [Jules] Pascin [1885-1930] and he found a way of glazing so that you could get a sort of swirly, rather satirical effect, and he did a painting, quite a well-known painting. It may be owned by the Met. It was called—maybe it’s owned by the Museum of Modern Art, it was called the Feast of Pure Reason, and the title itself is sarcasm, because what the painting shows is politicians and a police chief. These are men of power, they're obviously corrupt, you know, and there are figures like this, and the way the surface of the painting is treated enhances this ironical double entendre which is contained in the title of the painting itself.

We didn’t know Jack Levine. We met Jack Levine on various occasions, and Jack Levine's wife was a painter, Ruth Gikow [1915-1982], and then after she died, I suppose I don't know what he did, but I know at one time he had a relation that must have gone on for sometime with the American dealer Terri Dintenfass—Robert Gwathmey [1903-1988] was also Terri Dintenfass’s lover, and I'm not sure what order that came in, whether I'm being accurate at all about—I have no doubt that Gwathmey and Dintenfass were together, and I'm not sure about—Jack Levine must be pretty old now.

Now, Jack Levine is a very smart person, he's very art educated, he's traveled, and various things that have been reported to me—many things that I've seen of his statements are exceedingly bitter on the subject of abstract expressionism, and it would be very, very instructive to see if one could find anything that he has said about this. What I am trying to say to you is that there was, in a sense that I really know no parallel for, certainly not in American art, of displacement of isolation, and it was vocally—well, there is some sense of that probably, and there's some of that in Reality. All these artists had to readjust themselves.

I remember—I may have mentioned this to you when you and Liza were here—I remember Honoré getting a call from Philip Evergood living in the country. He was drunk. I mean, I didn't know what happened. Evergood's work is in demand, it appears on the art market. I don't know what happened to Evergood, how he felt. You just need to take into—what happened to Peter Blume? You need to take into account that there were a number of artists of some standing and recognition and sometimes of considerable reputation who suffered a tremendous displacement. Ben Shahn died in ’69, to what extent he felt it or how conscious of it he was. I think it’s very, very important in art scholarship to see if one can investigate this further, to see how it plays out. Has anyone ever brought this to your attention in the way I'm doing now?

MS. MACCARTHY: No, no.

MR. ZAGORIN: What I'm saying has some validity to it.

MS. MACCARTHY: Sure, I think it does too. I think the last question, and then we'll—we're actually going to stop here and start a new disc.

[Audio break.]

Okay. Here we go. We're recording again, and this Laura MacCarthy interviewing Perez Zagorin at the studio of
Honoré Sharrer in Charlottesville, Virginia, 18th of January. This is for the Archives of the American Art, Smithsonian Institution. This is disc number three, still of session two, and we're about to kind of wrap it up here, but I left what I believe to be the most important question for last—and I think we've touched on some of these ideas, but just in a maybe a kind of cohesive, coherent manner in terms of talking about just this question: What you perceive as the statement that Honoré was making. If she was making a statement with *Tribute*, was it a swan song for the labor movement, or was it a celebration of the strengths of the labor movement, or is it the celebration of the strengths of ordinary Americans? What sort of story she was trying to tell?

MR. ZAGORIN: I don't think she was saying anything to do with the labor movement.

MS. MacCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: And I don't think she was making a political statement, certainly, nothing directly.

MS. MacCARTHY: Okay.

MR. ZAGORIN: I think she was just expressing the feeling that she had at that time in her life, about this country, her love for this country. She was very conscious of the vulgarity that existed in American life, and I think she must have—she felt the need to say something—I'm using the word—I don't think she ever used it—"monumental" to express this feeling.

Honoré was a person who could talk to anybody and could draw them out, though she wasn't—she was reticent so she just—I think she was making some kind of—I have to emphasize again, the factories weren't the factories of the 1940s. They weren't the factories of great mass production. There's something—Erika Doss touches on this, but I think she gets it completely wrong. I can't remember the reason that she proposes for this. It's almost a vanishing America, and I think maybe there's something about it too.

MS. MacCARTHY: This isn't futurism. She's not celebrating—

MR. ZAGORIN: I think it dominates—no, no, it's not a celebration of technology or something. No, it's nothing like that. I just think it's the feeling she had about people and wanting to probe them, and Honoré was not a person who was judgmental—and you're not supposed to be judgmental. I mean, we all know that there are some things that are deserving of respect and others that are not and that includes people, and of course, one cannot function without judgments, including moral judgments, esthetic judgments. So if that's the case, there has to be some ground for these judgments, so the critique of judgmentalism seems to me to be a mistake. But Honoré wasn't—I think she was simply moved.

The source of the picture lies—a poet will tell you: a word, a certain thing playing, ringing in the head. They give rise to a line, and to a poem. I think Honoré—when you went with Honoré, if you walked with Honoré in the city or the country, you might become tired quite soon by the degree of observation that she demanded of you by saying, look at this. And I think just the folds of a man's coat, the shoes, the aprons that these women wore, the jars of preserves, the little animals, the little dogs, all these things were seen with a loving, absolutely objective eye, and I think she wanted to express the emotions that these aroused. I think it's elemental as that.

It was not a political painting, but it certainly sprang from the populist feelings about the struggles of the American people, not just of the working class. And even though she had such a personal refinement in her in every way, she understood that there needed to be the crude, that there needed to be nothing effete, you see, and I don't know whether there's anything really crude or vulgar in any of those. There's something—I mean, the School Scene is horrible sentimentalism, and that teacher—but I think when she begins this statement in Fourteen Americans: "Running with seven league boots." I think it's that feeling at that time. How she loved going up to photograph these people. And she talked to them, and they'd sit, and you know, they'd do this for her. She'd stop somebody coming out of the supermarket and fall into a conversation with her and get him to stand for photographs.

I think it was this—there was a love. This painting could not have been done without a profound love for the subject, and I think that must have sustained her through all those things, at times when it seemed so boring to be painting, you know, moldings. But doesn't that say running with seven league boots?

MS. MacCARTHY: Yes, sure. "Running in seven league boots, I pursue a genre America to capture all in my butterfly net." That's from a fairy tale, isn't it?

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Well, yes. I think it's one of Grimm's fairytales, like a pair of boots that take a step of seven leagues at a time. [Seven-league boots were a standard element in fairy tales from all over Europe. One of the most famous scenes involving the boots is in Charles Perrault's *Le Petit Poucet* (Hop O' My Thumb). Perrault lived from 1628-1703.]
MS. MACCARTHY: Right, right. Exactly. She was just trying to capture all in, that the details are very important in that story. The details from the story really. All the little subtleties, and like you mentioned before-the imperfections-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes. Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Because life isn't perfect. I mean, it sounds cliched but that emanates from it all, you know, like you said, not to focus on happiness as a goal, to me, and I can't quite express why being cognizant of those imperfections lends itself to a similar feeling, not-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: I can't explain why. You know, not being so focused on perfection-

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes.

MS. MACCARTHY: Happiness isn't perfection, either.

MR. ZAGORIN: Yes, yes. I think this painting is a remarkable achievement through the vision that controlled it from beginning to end and the amount of work it took, the resolve, the idealism that sustained it. This is a work of American idealism, even though it's not that sentimental of a work. It's not Norman Rockwell, by a long shot, but it is a work of American idealism.

MS. MACCARTHY: I think that's a good place to end. I think that's great.

[END OF INTERVIEW.]

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