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ARTISTS' LIVES

STEPHEN COX

Interviewed by Denise Hooker

F4913 Side A

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 12th of May 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Tell me when and where you were born.

I was born in Bristol in 1946.

Well, I'd like to try and go back to your grandparents really. Did they play an important part in your life, did you know them?

No I didn't know them at all. I had one grandparent who I knew. My father's mother died of cancer long before I was born, and his father, I don't even really know anything about him. My mother's father was in the Navy and was gassed in the First World War, before I was born, and my grandmother was someone who I knew and grew up close to in Bristol in the suburb of Bedminster.

Did you go to her house, or did she come to you?

I think probably it was reasonably traditional; it was one of those neighbourhood situations, my grandmother lived just three or four hundred yards down the road in a house that survived bombing. Our house was destroyed and my mother took the family to live in another part of south-west Bristol, Bishopsworth, for a period of time. Again I'm not quite clear about the proximity of my grandmother at that time, but I think probably she stayed in her own home, and we moved back to Bedminster to a house that was rebuilt on the ruins of the old house in Hengaston Street.

So - it's a marvellous name, isn't it - that was your mother's house?

That was my parents' house.

Your parents' house.

Mm, which was a rented house, a small terraced house. The rest of the family, I suppose if one doesn't talk about one's grandparents because one has very little recollection of them, I mean there are some rather interesting skeletons in the cupboard which me might talk about one of these days, but let's say in the nature of the family my father had a reasonably, I say reasonably large family, I think probably had about six brothers and sisters, about half of them lived reasonably close by, but we didn't really have a very very close association with his side of the family. And my mother's side of the family were spread reasonably throughout Bristol in different parts of south Bristol mainly, and they all came together usually for high days and holidays, Christmases and bank holidays and things like that, so we did actually get together and there was quite a strong family sense of communion in terms of getting together, and the house seemed to be a place that people, other parts of the family rather more distant, people, cousins who lived in Wales, when I say distant we're talking about a very very short distance in terms of these days but we might see other members of the family once or twice a year and they would drop by in the cars that were not very many in those days.

So, did your grandmother talk to you about your grandfather, or her parents?

She came to...yes, she didn't really. I've got very little recollection of my grandmother bouncing me on her knee; maybe she was too frail in a way. She was always very old I suppose in terms of my recollection of her. I'm the youngest of four sons and I think I only ever remember my grandmother being really quite old, and I don't think she was...she suffered from deafness, I don't think conversation was particularly easy for her. And so the history of our family is rather more, well as time's gone by it's been rather interesting that my mother's sister seems to recall some of the rather interesting aspects of quite curious early relationships in the family.

Tell me about those.

Well one very curious thing which was always...was never spoken about, and it seems to be that my grandmother married her half-brother, and it was to do with an adoption in her family of someone, a child, and they grew up together, but it transpired that the half child, the half-brother was the issue of a relation that went to live in America and left his wife behind, presumably divorced, and I think he left when she was pregnant. So there was a kind of a strange...anyway, I can't quite get it clear in my mind, but there was a notion that a part of the family wasn't...the family wasn't spoken about a great deal, and possibly it was because of, there was this little bit of suspicion over the way things worked. [BREAK IN RECORDING - TELEPHONE]

Do you feel deprived only having had one grandparent?

[LAUGHS] I think, probably, it's...yes I suppose I am in a way, I suppose one...everybody else has... I think it's unusual in actual fact to only have memory of one grandparent. My brothers possibly have recollections of grandparents on the other side, I think not; it all seemed to happen after the First World War.

Do you know what your grandfather did?

My grandfather on my mother's side, who was in the Navy, was in fact a time-serving sailor, but he was also, rather interestingly he was an instructor in what was called the Nautical School at Portishead, which was a borstal, a place where young offenders

would be sent for the discipline of an eventual, probably enrolment in the Navy, and he was a gym instructor, a physical training instructor. And I suppose, I've got quite a strong recollection of my grandfather through photographs, which show him standing barrel-chested amongst all these young crew-cutted kids jumping, vaulting, standing in formation, sitting with sabres across their knees from fencing. He was quite an accomplished sportsman. And it's said, I've forgotten who it was but he actually, when he was in the Navy I think he went to America once and he actually fought a bout boxing against a great American heavyweight, and although he wasn't himself a heavyweight he actually lasted some time in the ring with this quite famous boxer. And, I think he might have been champion of the British fleet or something as well, so he was quite an accomplished athlete. And, I suppose that had a bearing...I mean in terms of, let's say, genetically my family, my brothers were all pretty athletic one way or another.

Did you hear anything about his family and how he was brought up?

No, I think probably that's something I would have to again interview my aunts. Maybe that's something again that we could almost go into, because it is interesting, I think it's quite interesting the stigma that obviously has affected an area of the history of a family, there's a shadowy area, and of course that's terribly interesting now, but the shame I think is something that is of interest to us, probably because, I mean it didn't happen very much, it's happened, it's one of those things, but it's kind of curious. It rather makes us different in a way I suppose. We seem to have survived it anyway.

When did you in fact find out about it?

Well only recently, that my aunt, one of the few surviving aunts on my mother's side, has been...I suppose in a way she doesn't seem to feel any more that it's something to be ashamed of, and it's probably because she's now 80 she feels that it's a part of the history of the family that, you know, if she can recall it, is worth, you know, telling people so that bit of history can be sort of passed down. So I think it was probably, it's like you were suggesting, this needn't necessarily be listened to if I don't want it to

be for however long. But I think, again I think it's probably a matter to do with that business of shame, as being to protect the family reputation.

And did your aunt or your grandmother tell you how she was brought up? Where did she come from?

Well, we're all a Bristol-based family, I don't think, my mother's maiden name was MacGill, which has Irish origins I believe. I think basically we could see that both my father and my mother were from Bedminster, the Bedminister part of Bristol, and in terms of upbringing I think my mother was, I know my mother was very athletic. She went to a school called Parson Street, which is in the same area of Bristol. It's rather interesting that this rather famous millionaire called Billy Butlin, the great holiday camp entrepreneur, when he came from Canada he went to Parson Street School where my mother was at school to start with, and later he went to St Mary Redcliffe School, which was my school, and he endowed the school with gifts and various other things occasionally. And so my brothers would come back and say that Billy Butlin had come and given a speech at the school when they were kids. But I think otherwise, I suppose memories of my parents' upbringing really survive through the family photographs, the biscuit tin full of photographs, you know, wonderful open-top charabancs, photographs of just family friends on the beach. I mean my mother was a very attractive-looking woman, and my aunts seem to be. Another interesting thing about my family I think probably is quite unusual is that three of my mother's family married three of my father's family, and that is kind of, is interesting. I think my father and a sister - and two sisters, married my mother and two brothers of her side, and so there's...maybe that is a reason to suggest that the family was quite close in many respects, and possibly not as extended as it might otherwise have been in other families.

Did they live locally?

Relatively locally I think. Not within the same streets, you know, bus rides away, different parts of south Bristol really.

So they would have, they met through each other as it were.

Yes, yes. I forget which was the first. I had one, the oldest of the whole family was the eldest brother of my mother's side, died of cancer early on, and I've only got very very shadowy recollections of him, and he was married to my father's older sister, my father was the youngest of the family. My father had to, I think sacrificed to an extent his potential in many respects because as he was the youngest child and his mother was dying of cancer he had to give up school to nurse her, and so he spent a great deal of his, let's say early life when he should have, might otherwise have been at school, looking after his mother. But I mean he was actually a very very clever man, and, good with figures anyway.

But just to go back to your maternal grandmother, your surviving grandmother, what do you know about how she was brought up and her family background?

Nothing.

Nothing at all?

Mm.

So she, she didn't tell you stories or...?

No, no.

I know you said she, you know, she was deaf.

Right. No I've got really no ideas about that. I think...there are some...there are some members of the family which my brothers and I still have games about, see who we can remember, and there are recollections of, because they are that much older than me, I'm six years younger than the next oldest brother, and they have much clearer recollections of, you know, whoever these aunts were, great-aunts.

So what part do you think your grandmother played in your life?

Not really very much, I don't think so. In terms of this kind of shadowy past in this area of the family I can't recall my grandmother doing anything except telling me that the particular girlfriend I had at the time when she was I think probably going senile was not going to be good for me. Outside of the fact that she kept around her some of the memorabilia related to her husband, who was someone let's say, probably through that memorabilia, the photographs I mentioned, and some of his, and his medals and things that were kept by one of my uncles, that we had a sense of, let's say pride in him, and through his athleticism I suppose one felt probably a stronger tie to him than my grandmother who was very very, sort of a frail old lady who had had a very large family and maybe that was...it had taken its toll. I think probably she died really quite young, I'm not quite sure if she was in her early seventies or whether she actually made it to the late seventies, but she was living with us at the time, and you know, that caused a little bit of family tension. It had caused some family tension when, of course it's always down to the wife in a family and my grandmother lived with one of my uncles, and his wife was responsible for looking after him, and that was one of the members of the family who weren't brothers and sisters of my parents. So, again it caused a little family tension in the family that the wife who was not the mother was taking care of the old lady who was getting very old and she came to live with us for a while.

And how old were you then?

I was I suppose about, well I suppose just by saying that the girlfriend that she particularly didn't like at the time, I was at college, I was just starting college, so I was 17, 18, and that was the last of dear Granny MacGill.

What do you remember of her house? Did you visit her when you were a child?

I suppose I have a sort of sense of sort of, I don't know, a sense of the smells and velvet and certain cushions and comfy chairs. Always dark, and I've got a sort of sense of these kind of dark rooms; maybe she was always saving power.

What kind of smells?

I don't know, I would have said it was sort of garlicky but it couldn't have been, I'm sure she didn't use it. It must have been onions, but I don't know. I can't...I would like it to, like it to have been a perfume or something, but, it's a very very...it's a very very dark area in terms of recollection, and it's rather funny in a way.

How often would you go there?

Oh quite often. I used to do her shopping, you know, down the hill I remember.

How old would you have been then?

Oh, from, I mean just from after...I mean I was born just after the war, and so when I was 4 or 5, 6, 7, whatever, I mean I would be running errands I suppose from quite an early age. I remember she told me off once for buying some small scraping new potatoes which were tiny like marbles which I thought were really nice-looking, and she made me take them back and get some big ones that would be able to be peeled. But, no, I'm kind of embarrassed to think that I don't really have that strong recollections of that very early time.

Did she have to watch her pennies?

Yes, we weren't...I suppose she wasn't wealthy, in absolutely no way at all. I mean we are not in any way a...and my background isn't a wealthy background.

And how many children did she have?

I think she had about nine, I think that number seems to sort of, I couldn't go through it all. I think one died early on, and I...yes, I think one died early on. I know there was a poem floating around somewhere of a child that died. I think it was written by

my father, which suggests that that would have happened very very late on, but anyway.

So did your aunts and uncles on that side, did they play much of a part in your childhood?

I think probably inasmuch as there was this sort of, this spirit of gathering together at certain times, which made Christmases rather wonderful because we would entertain each other, we would sit in a room and sing songs, and people would take it in turn. We had a piano in the house, my mother could pick out a tune on the piano, and consequently there was a sort of sense of being entertained. My mother was...my mother was quite capable of entertaining and having fun really, and that was nice to remember as a child.

Just to go back to your mother then, sorry to labour the point.

No no, it's OK, I've...

Do you know what she did before she got married?

I think...no, I really haven't the faintest idea. I should have a faint idea, and, I think in...I think in that respect, I mean if one was, you know, if these things are significant then a little bit of research could in fact deal with this, you know, and if it is a part of the significance of the interview we can in fact plonk it on the front.

And these lovely Christmas gatherings, would it just have been your mother's side of the family that was there, or would your father's side have been there?

Generally my mother's side only. It was rather odd, my father's side of the family would drop in occasionally, and they lived really quite close, and it's always been a mystery to me as to why that might have been the case. Maybe my father was a bit resentful that he in fact was the one who had to sacrifice his education while everybody else went out and treated him as a dogsbody. I mean maybe he was just a

surrogate everything, you know, if he did have to do everything, which I'm sure he did, and maybe he even had to cook. I mean everybody was out working when he was a child and he was at home looking after mother.

Your father was the youngest of how many children?

I think probably six.

And what did you know about those grandparents, your paternal grandparents? I mean what did your grandfather...?

Outside, well the fact that she, the grandmother, died of cancer, I only have a recollection from a misty photograph of what she looked like. And, I suppose it's one of those things, maybe she died of cancer, people didn't like to talk about it, you know, didn't like to talk about it or even talk about her. My father never really spoke very much about it, I think he loved her very much but... I know nothing about the other side of the family. I mean his father was never spoken about.

So you don't know what he did even?

I haven't the faintest idea.

Or what your grandmother did before she got married?

No, no idea at all.

How old was your father when his mother died?

I think he was probably about 16, 17.

So when did he leave school?

I think he had to leave school when he was about 12, something like that, 12 or 13.

And then he was at home looking after his mother?

Looking after her.

And the rest of the family.

And the rest of the family, yes.

So, what about his brothers and sisters?

Well outside of... My gosh! Aunt Elsie, who married Uncle George on my mother's side; and Uncle Tom who was the eldest who lived up the road; Uncle Bert who was a publican, a super old bloke who was a buff, I mean was a buffalo because he was, you know, a publican he was a very very social man. He survived my father in fact, I'm not quite sure if Bert was...I think... Yes there's something quite inadequate about this, I really should have written, drawn up a family tree before we started this. Because I mean if it is of interest it could be something that again, because this could be carrying on, we could cover this area again, but it's interesting to think that...amazing isn't it.

What did they do, the other brothers and sisters? When you're saying that, was it Bert was a publican...

That's right. Well we knew about him because of course he was a publican and that was always good fun, you go and visit him. But what Uncle Tom did, I think he probably worked at Robinson's paper factory or something, the local factory in Bristol. Aunt Elsie of course was a housewife. Most of the women in the families worked at Wills cigarette factory, you know, on all sides of the family. I don't think we had anybody involved in the aeroplane industry. Yes, probably just either in paper factories or...

And did the women carry on working after they married?

They tended not to, no. My mother had a little job which she did occasionally in a sweet shop, but generally the family, that was probably when we were grown up, rather more grown up that these things happened. But generally I think it was a traditional family of the housewife taking care of the families. I mean the families were quite large, I mean four children in my family, and the others tended to be in twos and threes.

So did your father take any part in housework?

No, not at all. He was quite busy, he was...he was...yes, I suppose you're going to ask me, or you should be asking me what my father did. My father worked for the Prudential, the man from the Pru. I mean my early recollections I suppose were the Prudential bulletins that came through the letterbox once a month which had a picture of Holborn Bars on the front which of course is unchanged and cleaned and now one sees it at first hand, it's magnificent.

A picture of what?

Holborn Bars, the Prudential head office. You know the wonderful Gothic building in High Holborn. So my father worked for the Prudential. My mother during the war I think worked at Wills, the cigarette factory, as so many women did in those days.

Were they actually making cigarettes?

Making cigarettes.

Do you know how your mother and father met?

No I don't. Probably through...well, through family. I mean it was because of the brothers and sisters already having been married, I think that's the way it came about. It almost suggests a kind of inevitability in a way that through close family connections, brothers and sisters got married. It's unusual nevertheless.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Do you know when your mother and father got married?

[LAUGHS] Oh dear. No, this is like a guessing game. I think this is...I think the way that this is going at the moment, just nothing is making me feel confident about the way that we're proceeding simply because I can't give you any positive answers to the questions you're giving me. And if we're going back into, I mean pre-history as far as my family are concerned, this thing...I mean it is...I mean let's say it might be considered interesting that I know so little about it on the one hand. I mean I'm sure that these are things that must have been forgotten by me. But on the other hand I think it's probably something, if it's of any value to the conversation and the archive then I think it would require me to do a little bit of research, if there's so much significance being attached to it.

Your father was in the Navy, in Bombay, wasn't he, during the war?

That's right. He was a gunnery instructor during the war. He joined up before conscription; he knew there was going to be a war and he wanted to be in the Navy, he didn't want to wait to become a foot soldier, you know, through conscription. So he joined up and he achieved the rank of petty officer and was a chief gunnery instructor, and...I mean he travelled around, I think he was in the North Atlantic convoys during the earlier part of the war, was finally posted to India as a part of the, I suppose the Asian theatre, and he was...well he came back from India after the war, which is where I come in. [LAUGHS]

Yes. Did he talk to you much about India, was it an important part of his life?

Well I think so. I think he really would have liked to have stayed in the Navy after the war, and I think quite frequently rued the fact that he didn't. In terms of India I think, you know, it was a place that he had been posted to; he told me on a number of occasions that, you know... He spoke about Bombay, you know, in terms of places,

he told me about, you know, odd things that stick in my mind. He told me once he stopped a military policeman beating to death a rickshaw boy and almost broke his arm, you know, stopping this fellow. I think he was probably a friendly kind of person, my father, when it came to being in India. Oh, I mean growing up in, it was kind of curious to have the language of one's home punctuated with the odd bit of Hindi, you know, terms that obviously he used when shouting at, probably people like rickshaw boys or various types of menial Indian workers, so juldi juldi was one of the things that might be called to us if we were making him a cup of tea, and one would hear `ec dho, te, ec pial chai liaw, juldi juldi'. So, well, however these things...sounds, apparently what he was asking for were cups of tea quickly.

Do you think it made you want to go to India?

Well I've always said that I had a particular attraction to India, and I've associated this perhaps with the fact that when I was conceived my father having just come back from India was probably mostly Indian. [LAUGHING] It's...I feel a very close association with India for some reason, and maybe there's something to do with that, it's in one's genes perhaps, I don't know.

So you were the youngest of four brothers.

Mhm.

And what was the sort of age gaps between you?

Well I'm the youngest by six years and I was the last shot at having a daughter. My eldest brother is twelve years older than me, the next one is ten years older than me, and the next one is six years older than me, so I was very much the younger. The next one up from me is Reginald Dudley, I think his names were chosen by some lady who was...oh I think they were chose by the midwife; he always regretted the fact that, why did the midwife have to choose his name, because they're rather different from the rest of the names of the children in the family. The eldest is John, and the next was David Leonard, after my father.

Were the children born at home?

No they were born generally in the Trinity Hospital, I was born in the Bristol Maternity Hospital. I don't know where the others were born, but I would imagine in hospital somewhere.

Do you know if your father was there?

I would imagine absolutely not. As far away as possible I should think.

And were you close to your brothers?

Yes, quite. Being the baby in many respects I suppose I was often being given to them to take care of me, and this always proved problematic I think when my brothers were, some of my brothers were courting, at home anyway, you know, having to baby-sit me at the same time was not a lot of fun for them. But also I was often taken care of when they would go out adventuring. We lived at the edge of Bristol and the woods and the fields were only a couple of miles away at the most, so I would always be tagging along with the big boys, much to their chagrin. [LAUGHS]

And what did they do, or do they do I should say?

What do they do? Well my eldest brother John is a director of opera. He's the famous one of the family who has sort of succeeded from a very early age, he's very clever. And one is.....

End of F4913 Side A

F4913 Side B

He became particularly interested in opera, he was involved in the Oxford Operatic Society, and I remember, though I was really quite young but I can remember Ernani was something that he was involved with as a production. And he then won an award to become a director, I think it was an ITV award, so he became an associate director in rep in York after university. He did his National Service as well, I'm not quite sure where that came, I think probably the National Service came after Oxford, maybe, where he was in Signals under the Russian. And then he went to Glyndebourne as an assistant director in the days when Carl Ebert was still there, and John Christie was still alive. And he's had quite a close association with Glyndebourne ever since. Although his permanent position as director of productions came to an end about ten years ago, he then became director of the Scottish Opera, general administrator of the Scottish Opera, and then came back to London where until two months ago he was director of opera productions at the Royal Opera House.

What about the other two?

The other two, David, who is, well, what is he, what is he now? Well he's two years younger than John so ten years older than me. He became an apprentice at a company in Bristol called George Adlams, an engineering company, but he was quite ambitious and decided that he would do something - when I say quite ambitious, basically he didn't want to stay as an apprentice so he slogged it over a postal course in salesmanship, selling, so he became a salesman for some company and, again, well I suppose paper, in the paper business, and then got involved with a company that dealt with exports to the Middle East and now he has his own company which deals with, I suppose market promotion for British companies that don't have representation in the Middle East. So he basically has a family company.

And does he work in Egypt?

Not at all, interestingly. I've tried to encourage him to come and meet people in Egypt where I've been working for the last six years, and also India, which I've been

saying for the last ten years since I first went there he must come because there's phenomenal potential there, and of course that's being realised now. The problem is that little brothers don't give advice to big brothers you see. And that's David. And Reg, Reginald, I suppose my parents have always called him the black sheep of the family in a way. I mean he is sort of underachieved in many respects. At the moment he is not doing anything in particular. He had a very interesting period when he had a shop in Burnham-on-Sea, which was a ship's chandlery, so he was in the retail business in ships, ships and boats, and he was the commodore of the local yacht club for a period of time, but that business went bust because, all, so many businesses started going bust ten years ago, and I think then he's just been trying to keep his head above water one way or another, you know.

Stephen, do you mind if we go right back to your earliest childhood memories of your family?

Mm, I think that might be a little easier, because it puts the onus on me and my memories about me, yes. It's rather strange I must say, it's quite curious to have seemed to have lost in terms of my own recollections certain things. But I've...in terms of my very first memories, I was trying to think about them recently, I've got a kind of a shadowy memory of being in a pram, and a face popping around a door which would have been Reg.

Reg?

Yes, looking around a door. I'm not quite sure if that could have...I must have been sitting up because obviously if you were lying down in a pram you wouldn't have been able to see anything at all, unless it was someone poking their head over the top of it. I think to an extent memories are often informed by photographs, and in that respect I have tried to kind of sort out what might be photograph images and try and remember what photographs I've seen. But there are certain, you know, there are one or two images, moving images that I recall. Certainly there was a point at which we were leaving the house that we had moved into when our home was bombed during the war.

And how old would you have been then?

I would have been maybe 3, 2 or 3.

And what's your memories of that house?

Well I can...my recollection of the house is probably, it could also be informed by the fact that I went back there several times, because we had a very close friend of the family who was always referred to as Aunt who lived in the same area. But I have...my recollections are rather more probably objects that were more at my level. I remember sort of white dried milk tins with blue labels.

Was this right when you were 3 years old?

Well I suppose just after the war. I remember ration books and, I must have been pretty young. I mean I don't know to what extent when ration books finished, but I do recall on one occasion going to get vinegar with my mother to a place that made vinegar in Bristol and I can remember queueing. I can remember being quite small, you know, holding hands with Mother. And little things, yes, those blue screw-top bottles on concentrated orange juice, little things like that. The malt extract that was kind of ladled into one's face every day. All those things that seem to be very significant for the new children of the war, part of, you know, the post-war baby boom really, and I think the kind, there seemed to be a sense of being cared for, you know. Maybe, I suppose it was just basically a very new sort of Welfare State, one was a product of it. I don't remember however, powdered egg, which someone was talking about the other day.

Were you very close to your mother?

Yes I think so. Very in many respects, being that much younger than all the others, so...

So was she quite old when she had you?

Yes she must have been. She died when she was 70, 71, in 1980, so, yes, I don't like doing sums in my head now, I can't remember exactly, but anyway she was quite old when she had me. And because I was a child if you like in the house, in terms of my recollections, by the time I was 6 and had a brother of 11 I suppose the school and everybody was out of the house early on, and then when I went to school of course one wasn't around at all. One was very independent in those days, you know, one would be taken to...I can remember being taken to school on the first day, I think from then on I went on my own, you know, that sort of thing, from the age of 5, you know, one could walk on one's own to school, however far it might have been, a mile maybe.

And what was your mother like? What do you remember of her from those early years?

I don't know, isn't that funny. I mean again I think, you know, I have images.

You seem to have a very visual memory.

Oh, yes, absolutely. I just remember being very close. I remember being in kitchens, I remember washing with Lifebuoy soap and all those sorts of things. We had, you know, it was after the war, we didn't have a line in the bath but I remember one was, you had to get in line for how many baths could be got out of one bathful of water. I suppose I was always around her at a level that probably would have meant that you were looking at her skirt rather more than looking at her face. But she was always, you know, busy cooking and doing this and that. I think probably in the area of things that I recall doing together as a family were rather interesting and may have a bearing on, you know, what this is all about. Really I suppose the things that were, I suppose that would have formed my kind of making sensibilities, you know, the business of making Christmas puddings and the idea of all the ingredients being sort of put onto a big table and kind of mixed up by hand, the Guinness and the flour and the fruit and everything being mixed up, and we used to do that as a family every year. The boiler, the enamel boiler that was used for boiling the laundry was

converted for use as the great bain-marie for steaming the puddings, and they would be, I can remember quite clearly I suppose, you know, the basins being filled and the cloth being tied around the top with string, strings being left hanging over the edge and the lid being put on the boiler, and being boiled all night long, you know, this kind of thing. And there were the things I suppose all to do with the kind of thrift of post-war Britain of making rag rugs, you know; an old sack would become the backing for rag rugs, I think I used to be captivated by all that. And then knotted wool rugs that were also sort of things that people made in those days.

Did you use to help with making things?

Oh absolutely, yes, we would sit and make, help them make things. And trimming wallpaper and helping my father make wallpaper. I suppose I had a...I mean I'm sure that these were things done by just about everybody, but they're not done by anybody any more, you know. So the fact, it wasn't a kind of a do-it-yourself thing, it was just the way that things were done, you know, it was...of course it was do-it-yourself, I think...I don't think anybody was employed to do these kinds of things really; if you wanted to decorate a room you would do it yourself. Had big scissors and the smell of paste and planks and things like that.

Do you think Christmas was the highlight of the year, your family year?

I would have thought so, yes, I think probably people would always be coming through to see other members of the family, so they were always dropping in. The doors were all, you know, the front door was always open, you know. I mean until very recently in Bristol people lived with their front door open. I mean the first thing one would do in the morning would be to open the outer front door and put the coconut mat down, that was the first gesture, and then the inner door was always open, but things have changed now, people can't live that kind of life any more, there's too much violence and intrusion. I recently went back to Bristol to see the next-door neighbours who took care of my mother before she died, and I saw in the distance three old ladies looking towards me, and although I hadn't been at home really since I left to go to college when I was 18, when I went to Loughborough first

and then to London, these people hadn't changed one bit. I couldn't believe that, you know, Mrs Harrington and Mrs Griffin or Mrs whatever they were called, Mrs Wyatt, they looked at me and I thought, my goodness they haven't changed one bit. And I walked up to see them and I gave them all a hug. I think they wondered who I was. [LAUGHS]

So it wasn't just family that were dropping in, were there neighbours, friends?

Yes, neighbours would be dropping by. You know, you also had close friends of the family would be referred to as uncles and aunts, of which there were...when my father was away during the war there was a friend and her husband, her husband didn't make it to the war, I think he had flat feet or something, they used to come by and, or they used to be involved with the family when my father was away, and they kind of maintained a very close connection with the family afterwards. So I would have said that, you know, there was always someone dropping in. I had an uncle who continued to work at Wills's cigarette factory who would come to have lunch at home, and he would see...I always remember him being quite a disciplinarian when my father wasn't around and I would have to...

And were your parents strict?

No not really. I think that there was, you know, I think probably just a kind of a normal kind of discipline really. There were certain ways of doing things, you know, and I think in that respect... Again I think it was one of those...it's rather interesting that even when it comes to, let's say my father, I suppose you would have to say he was kind of a free-ranging white collar worker in a way, I mean the kind of job he had with the Prudential was as a, he was a district supervisor, which involved both going around collecting money from people paying their insurance, or supervising people who were doing the same kind of work, so he had a sort of a job of a number of men who did that kind of work, and he just dealt with that, and doing the work as well. So he was often out during the day or, you know, he would have kind of irregular hours really, because often people had their money collected in the evenings, so he wouldn't be around in the evenings. So in that respect it was kind of an unusual, I suppose

contact with Father, who one would see at certain times of the day when other fathers might have been at work or whatever. But anyway he worked at home, and had strange hours.

So he was around quite a lot.

Yes, I would have said so, although, you know he...yes he was around quite a lot.

And was he accessible to you?

Yes.

Wasn't locked away working?

No, not really. I mean it was...I suppose the centre of the house was very much the table in the sitting-room, you know - no, well we call it the dining-room I suppose. I mean the sitting-room had the best furniture in, and you wouldn't really ever go in there, you know. It's rather funny, a very very small house for example, you know, the best furniture and the best room you might go into it on Sundays. It seemed to be probably excessive to go and put an electric fire on in there unless there was a special purpose, you know, or it might be the place where the courting took place from the other brothers.

So where would your father sit when he was working?

In the dining-room with the, on the dining table I suppose.

So the best room was the sitting-room?

The best room is the front room, the sitting-room.

Tell me about the house and the rooms and what you remember about it.

Well I suppose it was a very very simple house. It was three bedrooms upstairs and, must have been three rooms downstairs. There was a front room and a dining-room, and a kitchen which was basically where the work took place. The bathroom was on the back end of the house. It was a very very simple house with quite a small garden.

And which room did you all live in?

We all lived in the one right in the middle really, where the telly was, which, because we had a television quite early on, Radio Rentals it must have been, one of those great big things with a wood look.

Did it play an important part, television, did you watch it a lot?

Well, considering we used to listen to the radio quite, you know, as a family I think, we used to listen to `The Red Planet' especially or `Dick Barton' or, I mean there were favourite radio programmes that we would sit around and listen to.

What were they?

Well besides `Dick Barton' and `The Red Planet' I suppose there were all sorts of things really but I can't...

But I don't know what they were.

Oh I see, what were they. Well `The Red Planet' was this space fiction thing, and, well `Dick Barton' was this sort of private detective.

And would you all listen to it together as a family?

Yes, yes, generally, except John who was always, who was at boarding school, so he was sort of out of the family. The others also were quite, you know, busy pursuing their own sort of young lives.

Maybe we should try and go back a bit to when you were much smaller, you know, sort of 5 and under.

Mm. 5 and under!

We haven't really talked...well, whatever, you know.

No that's interesting.

We haven't really talked about your father actually and how you remember him.

Mm.

You know, his personality and...

Yes. Yes.

Were you close to him?

I would have said so. I had...

Was he easy to talk to?

This is getting psychoanalytic isn't it, in a way. Let me think about this. I would have said that my, I was quite close to my, I was very close to my father, I loved my father a great deal. Possibly, again I'm not quite sure about how the other boys got on with him in a way, I mean there were moments of anxiety and moments of confrontation as you would expect in a small house with, let's say three or four growing children, growing, and a very young one in that respect. And, you know, I've got quite nice recollections of holidays rather than I suppose being around the house, of Weymouth and West Bay, and Weston-super-Mare, of sand and skin and parents and, you know, the smell of ozone, or what you used to call ozone, or iodine probably more to the point, in the mud of Weston-super-Mare. We used to go on trips a lot, we always had

cars, little cars, and we were always going on trips, and so I've got, you know, the idea of a family going out together.

Was this sort of Sunday outings?

Sunday outings. We used to go to collect fruit quite often, blackberrying, and my father was particularly keen. I mean it was kind of unusual in a way. My father actually liked the life of a pub, inasmuch as he would go to the pub quite often, and he enjoyed very much the fraternity of certain friends in pubs - well, a particular pub, let's say he would have favourites and favourite friends and he would go the pub quite often.

What was the name of that pub, do you know?

That pub, several pubs. God! The names of the pubs, the pubs in Bristol are legion. And he had, I mean he had a certain...you might say that he would have been a real ale specialist in times when people weren't really into beer, so it might have been the fact that the Naval Volunteer in the centre of Bristol is the place where real Dublin Guinness could be bought. It used to be rolled down from the ships from the harbour and rolled down King Street, the top[??] of King Street to the Naval Volunteer. So this was kind of a particular taste that he had. And then, you know, it might be the Llandogger Trow which is a very ancient pub in Bristol wrecked by Bernie Inns but it was a beautiful, wonderful old pub. And if the Worthington E was particularly good, at a particular moment in time, then he would go there. It might be the Clifton restaurant or it might be a pub known as Fossils to the locals which was called The Nelson in East Street, which was next door to the chitling shop.

So would he be out a lot in the evenings in the pub rather than at home?

He worked in the evenings, and when he would go to collect or supervise, whatever, in the evenings, that would be when people would be at home, so you know, he might not come home till 9, 9.30, something like that, but he might have a pint when he was

there, that sort of thing. And probably at lunchtime he might have a drink as well, but...

So how do you think he and your mother got on?

Interesting. Well I think they got on very well. I think my father was selfish, I think probably a lot of men suffer from of course this, I suppose relatively, I suppose universal trait of misogyny. He...I mean I know that certain, let's say on my mother's side of the family they felt that he treated them badly, he treated her badly.

In what way?

Well I suppose the fact that we never owned our own house for example, when we could have easily. Because I suppose he was considered to be quite a high earner comparatively, he had a white-collar job and he was a supervisor in a big company. I know [INAUDIBLE] different, but I think probably if he said he only earned £1,000 a year in those days it was a lot of money, you know. And I suppose, we never owned our own house and I think people thought, well, he should for my mother have done that, and have established that, you know, that kind of security.

And why do you think he didn't?

Probably it was quite pragmatic. Maybe the rent on the house that we had was so low that it was probably cheaper to keep paying the rent on a house that was taken care of by the landlord - the landlady, who lived next door, didn't spend a lot of money on the house. I mean I think it's...I mean he was a person whose head was into figures rather than into certain aspects of status, you know, in that respect. But I think he had quite a simple idea of what was satisfying as a life, you know, so, I mean outside of his drink at the pub and being at home, my mother was a pretty good cook; I mean Sundays was always fantastic because of Sunday lunch, and the general kind of notion of, you know, of going out, having a drink, coming back for lunch it's really, it's terrible, I'll get hung drawn and quartered for this. But, I think it's rather interesting in a way. I think probably to an extent there was a notion that, OK, you

don't go out to have a drink very much, but when one, you know, as student, you know, one would go and drink all the time, you know, as a matter of, that style of life. And I think probably people go to the pub quite often these days. In the community that I grew up in, maybe because my family, my relations, had a certain kind of aspiration, maybe more sort of a middle-class aspiration, which meant that you didn't go drinking so much as my father did that...

So they frowned on him for that, your mother's family?

Yes, yes they would have, I suppose. When my father died and I had a, I managed to have his funeral service at St. Mary Redcliffe church, and I told the vicar about him from my stand-point, and for me when my father said to me when I was 17 just as I was coming up to finishing at school or whatever age I was, he said, `We're not going to ask you...we don't want you to do anything for us, we want you to do whatever you want to do. We only ask that you give the same choice to your children.' And I think for me that, if you like, was the most generous-spirited thing, because in the kind of area if you like, edge of working class even, sort of attitude was that you go out, you leave school, you go and take an apprenticeship, you get a job if you can get one, and you just come home and give your wage packet to your mother, who would then give you some pocket money. But there was very little ambition I think in a lot of people's ideas, let's say within a certain class. However, I think from our stand-point and because, maybe because we had, they had a son who was so clever in John who had achieved so much by going to public school and then to university, that they probably felt that there was no reason why achievement, one could achieve far outside, you know, the limited scope of the aspirations of the sort of people that we lived amongst, but at the same time there was an amazing sense of, not sense, actual achievement from people like us in our area. A family up the road had a brilliant, I think he worked at the aeroplane factory, they were called the Richardses, the eldest, Colin Richards, went to the same Bluecoat school as my brother, the second son also went to the same bluecoat school; they both went to Oxford, one is currently a professor of Arabic at Oxford, the other one I think became quite a top pharmacist in Beechams. But I mean again, from, I think he was also a professor of pharma...whatever, chemistry or whatever at Oxford. The youngest daughter was my supposed girlfriend

and was the head girl of the best girls' school in Bristol. So I mean they were four children and they were all quite brilliant. A fellow who lived four or five doors away from me in another direction, the elder brother of my best friend, went to London University where he studied Chinese and became the only Englishman left in China during the Cultural Revolution, and he stayed and taught in Peking University during the whole time. I know this because I had heard him on the radio. And I bumped into him soon after in the street near the Central School and lost contact with him, which is a shame. There were other very very bright kids around and achieved phenomenally when you consider the relatively working-class area that we lived in in the suburb of Bristol.

And were they all going to the same school?

Different schools.

Different schools. Stephen, do you mind if we go back again? I mean I keep wanting to ask you about these Sunday lunches, and presumably you remember those as a very young child. Because they sound as if they were the sort of, a family focal point.

Mm.

Do you remember what you ate?

Yes. It's very simple I suppose, we ate roast joints and they would be rotated through whatever the seasonal best buys would be I suppose. And several vegetables that would be either baked or boiled. I mean it was just, I suppose the...you know, it was a main course and a pudding, I mean there was no soup except on very odd occasions. I think, my father actually made quite good soup. He used to be quite active in the kitchen in a way that was with some kind of pomp and ceremony that Father would make a curry, or would make a salad.

Was this regularly?

Oh quite regularly, you know. I mean he would make the salad for tea on Sunday maybe, which might be sort of sliced lettuce but you know, he might have placed the egg on the top neatly or something.

What other things did he do around the house? You mentioned decorating.

Yes, I mean he would have been perfectly adequate at wallpapering a wall. He was a very good-looking man my father, I've omitted to mention that when he was a young man he was incredibly handsome, and his trademark was the trilby. And the photographs, I mean I suppose, I have memories of him again which are probably just as easily informed by photographs as much as anything but, yes I've...it's funny, I don't have any pictures like kinetic images in my head about us walking down the road together, you know, it's rather odd. I suppose, I was always terribly observant as a child, it was rather odd, but it's funny that one, I can't conjure up images in any way at all of doing things.

Did you spend much time with him alone, did he take you out?

Occasionally, very occasionally, but then I...interestingly he had friends who had interests in areas that I had interests in. There was a very very funny guy, a drinking crony of my father called Jo Hanniford who used to tell us funny stories, a very very funny man, who was also a man who loved the countryside and I loved the countryside and I used to go out for walks with him, so it was rather odd in a way for a small boy to go out with a friend of my father, you know, it was rather nice in a way. He didn't have any sons, and maybe that was what...he had two daughters and maybe he liked the idea of, you know, scrambling in trees or, you know, showing one where birds' nests were, you know, because his daughters probably weren't interested or something. But anyway, so I used to go off rambling with Jo Hanniford occasionally.

And what would you do with your father?

Well we'd probably go and watch my brothers play cricket, things like that. before I could actually play myself. Certainly we used to, I mean the images and recollections of driving in cars to wherever we might be making day trips or longer than day trips or going on holiday.....

End of F4913 Side B

F4914 Side A

So you went on holiday twice a year?

Yes we did. We lived quite close to resorts that were quite close to Bristol. Portishead was eight miles away, Clevedon twelve miles away, and Weston-super-Mare was twenty miles away, so we could go frequently to the seaside. My father had a car so it was quite easy for us to pop backwards and forwards to these places whenever there was a sunny day without too much planning. Family holidays might have been to more distant places like Weymouth which was probably forty miles away, where one might have stayed for a week in a caravan or bed and breakfast or something like that. And I can remember, I suppose photographs would have informed me that we were together as a family in those days, I can remember a photograph of me being, I was very young, sort of standing on a weighing scales with a lemonade bottle with straws in my hand looking like an absolute little darling, and I must have been 3 at the time, or even younger. But, I suppose I recall, one of the things I recall about Weymouth are these amazing sand castles that usually were of architectural wonders, and each week or each season there would be a Gothic cathedral of one sort or another made in sand, and it was particularly good sand that they have in Weymouth for making sand castles which was quite fine. These sand cathedrals were quite phenomenal.

And did you make them then?

Not at all, just a bucket and stuff this sand in and dolloped out...in the usual cake, was I think as much as I did. I didn't really get into making sand castles till much later on when I had my own children, and I could show off. [LAUGHS]

Did you stay in hotels when you went on holidays?

No, I think, my recollection is of caravans more than hotels, but bed and breakfast we would have stayed at, not at hotels really, I don't recall having stayed at hotels. I remember a holiday at West Bay, which is on the north Devon...no it's not, where is

West Bay? I think it's on the north Devon coast. Yes, it's on the north Devon coast. And I remember also touring holidays. There used to be a fad for stickers in car windows of places that you visited, and I remember, as the youngest, just myself and my mother and father driving around in an Austin A40 on one of those tours which require bed and breakfast as you went. But the earliest holidays of all were I suppose for me remembered mainly by the fact that we used to pin a blanket up to the ceiling covering in the car and we would sing songs and play games as we travelled to and fro. But certainly singing at the tops of our voices as we travelled through the countryside, I can recall as a child very much.

Sounds fun. Do you remember any of the songs?

Yes, I still sing them. The Wivenford song in particular was a favourite, and Mother and Father had a pretty good repertoire of old songs from Nellie Dean and God knows whatever else there might have been, but I'd have to write down a list of them. But, yes, we still sing when I go with my family, we still sing on long journeys, it's a part of that thing.

And what sort of games did you play?

Daft games really. I suppose if it was too dark to play I-Spy we just would be messing about really, pinning a blanket up between Mum and Dad in the front and what we would get up to in the back, I don't know, obviously something that wasn't supposed to be seen or was naughty or maybe just a matter of not going to sleep as we were being told to, but... We had a Morris 8 I remember, my very very first recollections of cars was a Morris, a Morris 8.

When would that have been?

Which had wire wheels. Well I suppose that must have been in, around 19...must have been around 1950 I suppose, yes, about 1950.

Gosh, you were just about 4 then weren't you?

I suppose, that was the car we had then. And then we had a Ford 8, or was it a Ford Prefect? Ford 8, I think it was a Ford 8. Then we had an Austin A40. Going up-market all the time. But, yes, holidays were always looked forward to, it's rather odd in a way that that sort of thing hasn't kind of gone on in my own family, everyone's just been too...is just too busy. The idea of a traditional holiday is still very much a part of everybody's annual life, but not any more for me, I don't think I've had a holiday in 25 years. But anyway, ask me about the early years.

So do you think you got on well as a family then?

I think so. I had a very good rapport with my brothers. I think, again it's difficult to think back so into the distant past; I suppose it's a matter of kind of, of trying to establish the sorts of things that one got up to as a kid with one's friends, which were different to the sorts of things that one got up to with one's brothers when we adventured around the woods.

Did you play a lot with your brothers?

We used to have kind of street games, I mean, that were fantastic really. We used to play interesting games like Under the Mill.

What was that?

Or Weak Horse. And Kick Tin. Under the Mill was a strange game in which the person who was singled out would have to run the gauntlet through an arch of boys who would smack the person who had somehow been singled out, I've forgotten what aspects of the game it was that this person would have been singled out, but Under the Mill would have been where you put a hand up against a wall and then with your free hand the person has to run through the mill and they get wet like paddles in a mill stream. Things like Weak Horse were when you got this...you had, usually the fat boy stood against the wall, he was called the cushion, and then you got then like a linear rugby scrum as a team of four or five people, and then the other team would run

from across the road and leap onto the horse with a view to try and collapse it, and so you get a whole pile of people trying to break the horse that was made up of the boys. Crazy games, good fun.

So was it mainly playing outdoors or...?

Playing out of doors in the street, I mean they were street games really. Tally-ho, chasing games which reigned over quite large areas of, you know, of the locality, which involved if you like, I suppose it was like a mass chase like Touch but in a gang. But they were called Tally-ho, sounds jolly countrified in a way.

So you weren't just playing with your brothers, there were whole gangs of you?

No no, there were...yes, the street friends.

Did you have a garden?

A garden at the back, a tiny garden, a garden that was... We used to play cricket in the garden, the wicket fence at one end was the gate, a wicket gate at one end with three appropriate-sized fence posts would be the wickets. There were two wooden sort of expansion joints in the concrete path which were the crease, and the bowling end, and we used to bowl from one end and break windows quite frequently I think. [LAUGHS]

Your parents sound as if they were quite easy-going with you.

Yes, I think so. I think they were always very proud of having four sons in a way, and the eldest son being sort of academic and successful on the one hand, and three rather more rowdy and normal kind of, and athletic; you know, we had athletic aspirations. My brothers were all, and myself, were all pretty good at sports, from cricket and football and rugby according to whatever age we were at when we were playing these particular sports.

So what sort of things got you into trouble when you were very young?

Well I suppose breaking a neighbour's window would have been the most troublesome problem for my mother. Occasionally telling dirty jokes to girls at school brought the wrath of neighbours to my mother.

But earlier?

But earlier, well I don't think I got into trouble at all. I was actually quite a good boy really I think. I never used to nick things, and when I was little - I'm now talking about apples and stuff like that, scrumping, and you know, I didn't really ever do that. I think I had quite a severe sense of right and wrong I think when it came down to it, but even normal boyhood activities, like nicking apples from the neighbour, just didn't occur to me.

Do you think that was instilled in you by your mother or father?

I don't know, maybe. I think that we were educated by our parents, you know, to sit properly at the table, to use knives and forks properly, and to be courteous and well-mannered and, you know, behave, and maybe I took it more seriously than my brothers really.

Did that come more from your mother or your father?

Both really. I think they were both... They weren't disciplinarian but they would, you know, they would expect a certain demeanour at certain times, which is kind of unusual, I mean you certainly wouldn't find it today. I mean I'm quite astonished sometimes, you know, both my daughters have been to public school and their friends who come and stay with us sometimes, I am absolutely horrified by their table manners for example. [LAUGHS]

Would you describe it as an affectionate family?

Yes, oh we were terribly affectionate. We were one of the few families that I know, English families, in which men kiss, we've always had a very very strong sense of demonstrating our affection. So my father and my brothers have all kissed when they've met, and that's something which I think probably has gone on to our own families and my brother's families, and it's quite noticeable amongst members, let's say people from outside the family. I mean we've spent such a long time in Italy that the idea of bodily contact between people, friends and whatever, is much more commonplace than it is in this country. But it's all, you know, it is something, when you see people, even my wife's side of the family, there isn't really a strong contact of touching, certainly between the father and his son, and their children. I find it noticeable that I will if you like have a warmth in greeting, even to children of, on my wife's side of the family, that I know that they don't get from their own parents for example.

So your father was demonstrative to you?

Yes. Yes. I mean these days I suppose it might be considered odd, but I consider it in the context of, let's say...it was almost done...I mean, warmer climes have always been for me places I felt very very at home in, and the business of, you know, Italy or France or wherever, where men show affection openly, is for me a natural kind of behaviour, and it seemed unnatural not to demonstrate, you know, your affection. But it's been noticeable because one sees amongst other people saying goodbye at a railway station that, you know, even an extended hand between a father and a son is kind of conspicuously awkward, whereas my family would kiss.

And did that extend into other things, were they quite open about sex?

Probably no, not. My eldest brother is homosexual, and he never told my parents, and I think probably his judgement was right because it would have...I mean my father probably knew in the end but my mother probably never knew, although my brother's relationship with his partner has been long-standing since they were at university together, and it's still current, so it's been since, crikey, that's '50...he's 60 now, a 40-year relationship, it's pretty rare in any circumstances. But, I mean, I don't think

people were prudish within the family but I think there was always a place. I mean, you know, we lived in a small house, I don't think I've had any notion about my mother and father ever having sex, and probably by the time I was born it was probably a bit late in the day for them, maybe. As far as my brothers were concerned, well, I suppose boyfriends, girlfriends and necking in the front room is probably as far as they got.

But it wasn't a sort of taboo subject at all?

No, not really, not that one sort of openly discussed sex. I can't remember my ever having had a, you know, one of those heart-to-heart talks with my mum and my dad about things, but they probably, you know, would have understood that, you know, one knew these things quite early on, you know.

So when did you know these things, or how did you find out?

[LAUGHS] Yes, well it's funny, I suppose without mentioning names one used to play around with girl...with, you know, when one played as children one experimented with things; even if one didn't have the equipment to deal with it one still sort of thought, well these are things that you've heard about, so, you sort of rubbed bellies with girls and things like that. Boys too sometimes, you know, didn't know what the difference was. But, I mean that's, I'm talking about, you know, when one was 4 and 5 years old and very curious about differences between, you know, the sexes. So I think all that was kind of just normal curiosity and not unhealthy.

Did you share rooms with your brothers?

Yes, brothers. I mean it was a three-bedroomed house, four sons, one at boarding school, and John infrequently stayed at home. We had double beds and according to the situation I would have slept with a brother, so we shared rooms and shared beds.

Again going right back to those early years, do you remember any particular toys that were important to you, or that you still remember?

Interesting. A top, a spinning top I suppose, one that you pumped and it span, spun, with, you know, sort of brightly coloured. I remember actually a beach ball made of rubber. I associate that with my eldest brother John in a way. It was made, isn't that interesting, I've never thought about this, it was orange and red, or yellow...what am I saying? It was yellow and blue, and it was made of, I suppose a rubberised canvas, and it had kind of, a tube to blow it up and one of those plugs you plugged it in and pushed it back inside itself. But it was a particularly sort of floppy, bouncy ball, you know, I suppose I remember that. I don't really have a very strong recollection of toys really. I remember my other brothers' toys. I remember comforters like a silky head scarf of my mother's which had frayed edges which was...I always thought it was my piece of tickle but I was told it was my brother's piece of tickle, so I, I suppose, adopted things like that. My eldest brother had a teddy which I suppose I inherited eventually, probably worth a fortune now, it was a long-nosed teddy bear called Lulu, and I am sure it looks just like the one you see at Sotheby's these days, you know, with a sort of a currant for an eye and very much, I suppose a very archetypal teddy bear. But, not really very much.

And were there pictures and books at home?

Yes, certainly, certainly. My mother and father weren't great readers, but perfectly literate. But John I suppose made sure there were books in the house, the eldest son.

Did they read to you?

Yes they would have read to me when I was little, I can't remember really what. I remember my mother teaching me the Lord's Prayer, and that was something, you know, sitting on the bed being taught that. It's interesting.

Did the family go to church?

Very infrequently. My mother probably was more, as I suppose was traditionally the case, was more orientated towards any kind of expression of religion. We were expected to go to Sunday school, and we did, I did certainly.

At what age?

Oh for I suppose, I probably went to Sunday school before I went to school, you know, it was probably from the age of 4, you know.

Until?

Until, I don't know, I suppose, I was 8 or 9 or something, I really got fed up with it. I mean I suppose one started to exercise a degree of choice at a certain point by saying, well I don't like going to that Sunday school and I'd rather go to the other one because they give you texts.

What do you remember about Sunday school?

I remember getting texts, in fact I've got my, I think I've got my Bible from when I was a kid. I've got my Bible from my godparents, my Aunt Mildred and Uncle Frank, with an inscription in it, which I still have, it's still got my texts in from when I was tiny. Really it didn't matter which denomination, we just happened to go to the closest, which was called The Tabernacle, so I suppose a Methodist place one went to Sunday school. But by choice one would go to St. Aldhelm's Church, Church of England church, quite a large church in the locality, which was where one of my brothers was married, one of my brothers, David, was married at the age of 18, and I think that was before he did his National Service, before he did his National Service.

So religion definitely played a part in your upbringing.

Oh certainly. I think everybody, everybody was expected as a child to go to Sunday school, it was the sort of thing you did, you know. So I think in those days your parents would teach you the Lord's Prayer, you would have a Bible given to you by

your godparents, you were expected to go to Sunday school, and of course when you went to school you would have a service every day at school, with singing hymns etcetera. So I think, you know, the sort of spiritual life of a young growing child in this country was always taken care of. And I mean to an extent may still be the case, I'm sure Sunday school doesn't happen any more, or so much.

Did you go willingly?

To an extent. I mean I think it was probably considered to be fun, you know, singing and being with other children. I can't remember the, if you like the teaching side of it so much; I suppose that really didn't come until later. I suppose the idea of gathering when one was at school and more receptive I suppose, I suppose at school one knew that one was there to learn things rather more than just be got out of the way whilst Mother did the Sunday lunch, you know.

And what about the theatre or concerts? I mean it's interesting that your, you know, your family should produce two people so involved in the arts.

Mm.

What do you think there was in your family childhood?

Well I really think it's...there's very little. My, as I say my mother could pick out a tune on the piano, I think she...it might have been in the genes to an extent that she had a musical interest. My aunt tells me, this is a recent thing, family disclosures, that my mother used to tap-dance in, I think it was a pub in Bristol, which would have been presumably, obviously before the war, I mean before she got married, so she was, I think she was probably quite a liberated young woman, my mother, in a way. I think she, she was certainly athletic, she was good at sports, she was a good sprinter and she was a good high-jumper, I think she came second in the Bristol schools or something, and I think probably for a young woman in those days that was something. And I think she liked fun, and she liked singing, she liked dancing, and I think she probably was, you know, fortunate enough to not feel that she should not exercise her

rights in a way to do what she wanted. Maybe it was the fact that her father was dead that he wasn't there with a big strap threatening her like other children might have been, or young people I'm saying, this was when she was a young woman I suppose. But if one saw, with other families in the neighbourhood, I mean say a working-class area really... It's kind of interesting because in the area where we lived, I mentioned before about these brilliant children living close by, they were basically terraced houses which, some of which were bombed during the war which one of ours was one of those which were basically very small houses with three up and two down with a kitchen and bathroom on the back kind of thing, then the older houses that didn't get bombed. But then there was quite a big house, there were two or three big houses within the kind of crossroads with bigger gardens, you know, detached or whatever, and one of my friend's father was a wing commander in the Air Force, and they were quite a well-to-do family but they lived in this kind of area. Now what did you ask me? Why am I getting into this?

We were talking about your mother.

I was talking about my mother. God! talking of tap-dancing. [LAUGHING] That was a real meander. Oh God! I was saying, you know, so that this area...well I suppose I'm just basically talking about...talking about class, I'm talking about the idea of this being a working-class area in a way. We never saw ourselves as working class really, probably because my father had a white-collar job, we would have said, might have thought we were middle class or something, so let's say we would have felt that, you know, within the context of where we lived there were people of different financial rates, statuses, like I was saying, a wing commander in the Air Force were...several other big houses, so reasonably well, better off people who were obviously identifiable as maybe middle class rather than working class, so I suppose you, according to the colour of your collar and possibly your income, then you might have identified with one rather than the other. I suppose what I'm getting back to is that, you know, within that locality there was, you know, one of the families were the kids I used to kick around with, and a very very large family, and the father was an absolute tyrant, you know, he was somebody who would whack his daughter with a leather belt and the boys too if they did anything wrong. And if you were kids

playing in the street, he was a lorry driver, if you were playing in the street whenever he came home he made sure the kids scattered, you know, and he would scream to a halt and a great big Scammell lorry you know, used to screech to a halt and kids' marbles would go flying and he would sort of be an absolutely threatening, horrible person really. I mean he had kind of a wicked glint in his eye because he knew what he was playing at, but... So it was a kind of a mixed bag of a neighbourhood, and I suppose within the context of, you know, how...I mean I suppose I was talking about the idea that being a...my mother didn't have someone to strap her for going dancing in a public place when she was a girl, but I'm probably being unfair really, I'm sure my grandfather wouldn't have been like that anyway, but who knows, I mean he was someone who used to keep borstal boys in line and probably was quite an authoritarian.

What was your family attitude to money?

Family attitude to money? Oh, I really don't know. I mean money came through the house because my father was always collecting it. I don't think...we didn't seem to go without things, you know, I mean we had a television as soon as televisions became available, it might have been a rented television. I remember my bicycle was bought on the hire purchase but I suppose that was a bicycle when I first...say it was a 21-inch frame with engages on, I was probably at secondary school by the time that happened. And that was paid for on hire purchase from the local bicycle shop. Money was something which, I suppose it came and it went really. There was never a surplus of money that wasn't enough, you know, any more than was necessary to pay for the annual holiday or to make sure that...you know, we never seemed to go without things really. But we I think to an extent, I mentioned that my father's sort of social habits suggested that maybe he spent more socialising than he might...he spent more on socialising than he spent on extra things for the family I'm saying, because we didn't really go without anything.

Was it a musical family, did you play instruments?

I tried to play the guitar. When it came to the idea of playing a musical instrument, which seemed to be I think a good idea at the time, the idea of the clarinet or the guitar came up, but these were suggestions that were really informed by popular music, from a very early age with two brothers who were into, let's say when I was 6 and then a brother who was 12 and another one who was 14, let's go[??] 7 or 8, the older one was 15, 16, earning his first wage packet as an apprentice and buying records. I mean music in the family was really playing records, so record players. Some were old...

This was the popular music?

It was more popular music I suppose.

Do you remember anything particularly?

Well when my brother first got a wage packet he bought a pair of crepe-soled shoes which my mother freaked out over. This was the Teddy boy era, and although he was never a Ted there were some very famous Teds living in our area.

Was this John?

Teddy boys. No, this was David, the next one down. John was at boarding school and as I say after boarding school at university, so I suppose he was out of that kind of localised suburban culture in a way. And my brothers didn't...I mean it was just passing phases in many respects, but they were buying Elvis Presley records. My brother I know, one of my brothers, probably Reg, wanted for Christmas one year a Bill Hayley and the Comets LP and my mother and father bought him a Glenn Miller LP instead because they thought it wasn't...it was rather more decent. [LAUGHS] But the Glenn Miller, I still have the Glenn Miller LP. Though we had some wonderful old 78 records that seemed to come our way from one source or another and we used to, you know, nice old jazz records, you know, from Louis Armstrong and others, I can't remember who, I'm sure...I mean wonderful, I can remember wonderful jazz records of Earl Bostik and Tangerine and Flamingo and stuff. I mean,

I think probably my musical taste was formed by my younger brothers rather than by John, because it was some years later when I was a student that I really started listening to classical music.

Did your parents ever take you out to art galleries, museums, theatres?

Well from a very early age I did actually go to museums and art galleries, but that was usually with John, because he went to school in Clifton where the art gallery was, so when we would visit him occasionally he would take me. So from a very early age I can remember going to...

How old?

Well, I suppose if John was still at school and, let's say he was at school until he was 18, and he's 12 years older than me, I was quite young. But I've got recollections of, which I've gone back to the museum and seen, Alma-Tadema paintings. Even, I can remember a Barbara Hepworth drawing of hands from an early age, I'm not sure how early. But you know, I can remember going to the museum with my oldest brother.

And were you particularly excited by that?

Yes, I think so, yes certainly. I used to enjoy it very much. And I think probably, you know, those were the planting of the seeds of interest in a way. I think the idea of drawing was something that one played around with early on in life when I was at infants school, you know, I was into drawing. I remember drawing Spitfires and Hurricanes, and I remember drawing Hawker Hunters.

End of F4914 Side A

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And you were still drawing Spitfires and... Where would you have seen them?

Well probably drawn for me by my brothers I suppose, though I saw a Spitfire last week flying over Kent. [LAUGHS] Yes.

So you think you took to drawing naturally from a very early age?

Yes I've got recollections of drawing at an early age. I mean as well I can recall, at the age of 5 I suppose - well actually at the age of 4, I went to school when I was 4 rather than 5, and I had to spend two years in one class because I got to, I was born on September the 16th which is close enough to the beginning of the school year to make me almost, you know, the previous, part of the previous lot. So I did start school early, so from the age of 4, I remember my very first year at school making a seal in clay with a ball on its nose, and, I've often thought about the...well actually I can remember making that seal, wasn't that funny, I made an object earlier on than I can remember, and maybe that there was something there.

Were you praised for it?

Praised? Yes I was certainly praised for it. I stood[??] like a seal. I think the ball on its nose didn't last there for long but, I'm sure it was a lumpy old thing but I've got an idea of how it looked as not, you know, as not being bad. Dad could draw a bit as well, he did some drawings of ducks for me once which I took to school with a certain degree of pride. But in terms of, you know, actual talent and involvement there was no real kind of cultural background. You asked me before about, you know, did we, you know, musically did we do anything, did we ever go to concerts, you know, or whatever, I mean of course I went to art galleries but not with my mother and father . My mother and father probably didn't have any kind of input culturally into my life at all, but certainly my eldest brother John did from quite an early age.

And did he take you, would he have taken you to the theatre and concerts or anything?

I probably didn't go to concerts. We probably would have gone to pantomime of course early on, you know, most definitely. But concerts-wise, no I don't think John did, but I think quite...it was necessarily...we're going into another era really when it comes to, when it comes to the point when I started going to concerts from my own volition, but I was at school, at secondary school at the time.

What sort of pictures did you have at home?

I don't think we had any pictures. Family photographs. I think we had a plaster cast of a water mill, one of those plaques. [LAUGHS] We probably had some ducks flying around as well. But, my brother John I remember when he was at school brought back, maybe he was at college, but certainly a book on the nude came into the house at some point, which I think was probably for me and my brothers a sort of titillation rather than interest culturally. So in fact it wasn't...I wasn't in a home surrounded by culture, in fact to an extent, you know, deprived of it. It's rather ironic in a way that my daughters have been brought up being dragged around the museums, art galleries and churches of the world, and they're both involved in the visual arts, but they're screaming really, they're not really sure that's what they want to do, you know. But it's surprising that two of four sons have ended up in the arts.

Were you brought up with the sort of classical children's books?

The only kind of classical, the only business of the classical in children's books was when I remember I wanted to go and play football and my brother back from school one weekend made me sit down and read `Winnie the Pooh', which I sort of managed for half an hour.

This is John was it?

John, yes. So he was kind of concerned about my cultural appetite from an early age. I think to an extent although, I think probably when John went on to university, friends that he had had at school and friends from university took an interest in me. It was rather interesting that it was a friend of John's who bought me my first set of oil paints, which was when I was in the sort of beginning of secondary school, and the same person gave me a long-playing record, Beethoven's 7th.

And who was that?

A man called Gerald Forcey with the BBC, a BBC announcer, presenter, and has retired recently. He also bought one of my early sculptures which I had made at secondary school, and again that's jumping ahead from where we were when I was at school, at infants school.

Well I think, perhaps we could go to school now.

Can I go to school please. [LAUGHS]

You went to school when you were 4 you said.

That's right, yes. God! We've got three hours of tape and I'm only 4. [LAUGHING] Oh dear! Yes my recollections of school, I remember going with my mother, taking me, I don't think I cried. I think she told me once that I did. But from then on I went to school quite willingly.

This was the local?

The local, Luckwell Infants School. I remember Mrs Fox was my first teacher, and I remember the first word she wrote on the blackboard was `window'.

`Window'?

And I remember writing my name, and getting a blue star. I can see it in front of me now.

Writing?

Yes.

So you could write before you went to school?

No well I mean, whenever it was she taught us to, taught us to write. I'm not quite sure whether my mother put any effort into...but I'm sure she probably wrote everybody's name on the blackboard and we had to copy it, something like that, you know, just a start. But I can remember that. I mean the whole, the old school system. I say the old school system, and I think back on the way that schools were organised in those days, it seemed very very modern, the idea of play, the idea of learning by weighing things and measuring things, by familiar objects. I don't have a very strong recollection outside of that first word, `window', and the seal, what happened in that first year. I know I got stuck somewhere along the line because my age was out of sync with others. I can remember Miss Nicholls, Miss Nicholls was in a mixed class, and I think her sister was a friend of my brother's who was at boarding school and her sister went to The Red Maid's or something. And so, maybe I had a sense that someone was keeping an eye on me or something, you know. I remember spoiling an experiment once because I seemed to...I was someone who knew it all. Certainly I wouldn't be told, and it's something that my wife confronts me with now. `You told me your teacher told you when you were 5 you wouldn't be told, and you still won't be told,' she says. But I can remember messing up an experiment which was a tin bath with water in it with colours that were being poured onto the top, paraffin being poured onto the top of this, and then colours being poured onto the top of that with a view to kind of taking prints of marbling on paper, and I remember that the teacher put all this stuff in and when she turned her back I stirred up all the colours. And the experiment was never made again. I can remember we did a project on Holland, and we made fields of flowers by taking little discs of tissue paper and folding them into, like little buds, and this became fields of flowers and windmills made of papier-

mâché, stuff like that. And I can remember we made cheese by taking our milk, our third-pint milk bottles and spending an hour shaking them until the butter on the top turned to cheese, or it turned to butter actually, we were making butter, and I think we all had to take bread in that day so we could actually have an example of our own butter. Imaginative. In 1953, so I was, in 1953 when I was 7 we did a project on the Coronation, and I can remember, I do have some photographs of us as children in the class, because, I don't know why, but you know, two tables put together with children sitting there and weighing things in terms of class techniques is really what's done today. It was a very imaginative educational system. And we did projects on the Crown Jewels, I think I did a project on the Crown Jewels, other people did other things, you know, related to the Coronation, and these things were hanging on the wall around the place.

And did the school celebrate the Coronation?

I'm sure we did, but we also celebrated it, because whatever day it fell on, it was probably on a weekend, there was also the great parties, local neighbourhood parties.

And what was that like?

Oh that was amazing, I can remember, and in fact I remember wearing a sailor-suit that was my brother's sailor-suit that he wore as page-boy in one of my aunt's weddings, so it was very old and I was still small enough to wear this little sailor-suit on the day of the...because it was a kind of fancy-dress thing in the local pub, in the skittle alley of the local pub.

So it was a street party for the Coronation?

That's right, yes, yes, street party, local pub skittle alley party, you know, paid for by the local landlords and I suppose the local families.

I don't think I do know what a skittle alley party is.

A skittle alley? Well I suppose it's just a big room, because it's long enough to have a...yes? It was a party in a skittle alley.

Grown-ups and children?

Yes the children...well the grown-ups all made the party for the children really. I think the grown-ups were in the pub. [LAUGHS] God! Oh gosh I must go and listen to Henry Moore's recollections of his days of washing his mother's back. [LAUGHS] Or watching his father wash his mother's back or whatever.

And were you encouraged to draw or sculpt, to model, at school?

At that point probably it was just to do with painting. I was interested in painting. I can't remember any pictures that I painted when I was at infant school since the days of the seal; I don't recall paintings in the same way.

Was it more painting than modelling?

Oh yes, most certainly. I can't remember any of the paintings.

Do you remember any of your friends from you were a young age, even outside the family?

I could probably tell you the names if I had a school photograph, and I'm sure I've got one around somewhere, I could probably tell you the names of everybody on it.

Have you stayed friends with anyone?

No. I don't know anybody, even from secondary school, rather different in a way. I mean maybe moving away from Bristol in the way that I have, you know, given that I don't have a social life in Bristol since my parents died anyway, but even having left school and gone to college I lost contact completely. Although I went to the college to start with in Bristol. It's curious in a way I think, whereas my daughter's friends

from school and university are always here, they don't lose contact. They're almost like, or maybe because of boarding school they have a kind of notion of surrogate family in a way, which they identify with and maintain through school and through university, they have a kind of an attitude towards their peers which seems to be maintained. It's rather nice really. So we have a kind of an extended family through our children's friendships. But my own, very very few. My wife has maintained contact with friends of hers from school, in fact we stayed with one recently. But going back to that particular point, absolutely not. I can remember, I can remember having to...I can remember being absolutely furious that once I was given the bells to jingle instead of a tambourine or something, or a triangle; there were certain macho instruments that you would get when you did music, you know, and these lovely roll-out sheets of music with coloured notes and the coloured notes would be, you know, blue ones with tambourines and yellow ones for the triangles, and the red ones for the bells, and... It was a pretty rounded kind of education in a way with what was, you know, music input and the singing input and everything else.

And what subjects were you particularly good at?

I don't know, I suppose I was pretty good all round in a way. I don't recall not being any good at sums as it was called then. And, I used to write neatly, I think that was probably the most important thing then was to write neatly. Had a good hand, and of course I suppose I could paint and draw, stuff like that.

So you didn't get into trouble?

And I didn't get into trouble much. I think, I did get into trouble, yes I did get into trouble occasionally for doing kind of silly little things. I can't remember in infants school about the nature of those... Oh I remember once I was actually disciplined very very severely. We had a school playground and then we had a grassy patch, which was very radical for a school to have a grassy patch as a sports area, again this is infants, and I remember the ground was being graded, and I went with some boys and we picked up some stones and we threw them over the fence and over a green fencing area where there were some tennis courts. Stupid thing to do but anyway, of

course we were told how stupid it was because we might have hit someone, and then we actually had to spend every playtime for what seemed like a month standing in the headmistress's office with our face to the wall. Mrs Withers. Yes, that was amazing.

So it wasn't a very authoritarian school?

That was pretty authoritarian for us having to stand with our faces to the wall, but, no it was a wonderful, wonderful school. I remember, I was the commando net monitor. I used to go to school hours ahead of everybody else, you know, because I was in charge of putting up this commando net, and it had a great big steel pipe coming over the wall and down to the ground. I think about it today, they wouldn't allow it in a school, but this was about, I suppose it must have been fourteen feet high this thing, and with this rope net that used to drape over the top of this, and then was tethered so that it made a kind of a tent shape. And basically you just climb up this thing and do somersaults over the top of it. I mean amazing danger. And so my duties in the morning were to go and throw the ropes over the top, tie off the ropes and hoist up the long length of wood that kept the bottom of the thing wide open, and we just pulled it up over the top. I mean it was a great responsibility.

And were you good at sports?

Yes, I suppose so.

What do you remember playing?

I suppose at infants school you don't really do very much but kick a ball around the yard really. Chased like mad around things. I'm not sure we actually got into very formal sports at infants school. Again later, we'll get on to junior school in five hours' time. [LAUGHS]

The junior school came after the infants school?

Oh after infants school, very much so, yes. We're still in the age group I suppose, well 4 and 5, to what must have been 8 or 9, because I suppose when you think about it, the 11-plus is taking place at junior school, one must have spent three or four years, so it must have been four years in each, yes, so it must have been 4 to 8, 8 to 12, and then 12 to 16, and then A'level after that.

So tell me about junior school.

Junior school. That's quick.

Have we left something out?

[LAUGHS] Junior school. Junior school. South Street Junior School was in the other direction from Luckwell School, along a bit. Forest of Dean stone, as all the buildings, even Luckwell School was Forest of Dean stone.

Which you're still using aren't you.

Which I've used since, yes. You know, iron gates, big playgrounds, big boys. We used to go in one end because we weren't big enough to go in the other end. And I do remember my very first day being spanked because...

What did you do to deserve that?

Well I was sitting, I think I was sort of, I was sort of whistling or blowing air through my teeth at a point at which we were told to be silent in the class as Mr Thomas took his first class, and he said, `That boy there, come out here, bend over,' wallop, and he gave me one across the back of the legs. Of course I mean at that point I suppose I was singled out as being a trouble-maker, and being put firmly in my place, when I think I was doing something like nervously whatever on the first day, first five minutes in the class. But he was a good person I think, Mr Thomas.

Was it all boys?

Mixed.

And the infants school?

And the infants school mixed too. I mean I suppose there...what I was particularly interested in then, I mean given that we were given projects and things to do, which were extendible if you were enthusiastic, again I used to go to school very very early because I was the, I used to run the travel agency. And I used to just, you know, thumbing through brochures and doing things like playing the job of arranging people's travelling trips and things. God knows what they [INAUDIBLE] shuffled papers and...

So you were play-acting that you were a travel agent?

Oh yes, it was a part of the thing that you did in school. I mean like one of the things that you did in the class, it was a geography game really about where places were. I suppose it dealt with notions of commerce and travel and stuff. But again, early years.

Do you remember any of the places you sent people to?

No I don't really. I suppose I just get a sense of the smell of the brochures really.

What did it smell like?

And the qualities of the paper. Well like any new print I suppose. Qualities of paper.

Did you used to dream about going anywhere?

Not...I don't have any kind of conscious notions of it I suppose, conscious notions of dreaming about things. No, not really. I'm not sure that I ever felt that, you know, going somewhere was necessarily out of reach, but I didn't, you know, there was no

kind of mystique about it I suppose in a way, as far as, from where one was. I mean my father had been in India during the war, two brothers by that time, the eldest, John had been in the Navy and had been in Germany; David, if he had gone yet, at the age of 18, no, he probably hadn't yet been into the Navy but I suppose the idea of joining up and travelling might have been already in my mind that you know, one would eventually be conscripted to do one's National Service or whatever, and I suppose I would have expected that I would have travelled at that point but you know, that never happened.

So what were you interested in at junior school?

Well I was, I suppose...I suppose art must have been developing. I do remember later on in junior school being particularly active. I'm just trying to...I'm thinking of the location of the classroom because I do have quite strong memories of making certain kinds of things. I remember winning a competition, Brooke Bond painting competition, but it was only, you know, it was the school part of the competition which then went on, we never got far, but there was a guy who was a friend of mine called Philip Snook, who was also very good at drawing and we used to sit together. There was also a guy called, and do you know this is actually at infants school, there was a boy that was very good at drawing, he was called Nicholas Hillier. Another age. He was also a very good draughtsman I remember, don't know what happened to him.

So what did you paint for the Brooke Bond competition?

I can remember a Boy Scout I think cooking something over a camp-fire down on one knee.

So you were a Scout?

I was a Scout. I got thrown out of the Cubs, I think I moved my position during the Akela, because I showed a lack of discipline at that point and I got thrown out. The thing I liked very much about the Cubs was the whole business about nature though, I

loved going to the woods, I loved...I mean I knew about and showed a great interest in, I suppose the kinds of books, I suppose going back to home really, things like `Observer' books and `I Spy' books, and train-spotting, all those sorts of things I did when I was little.

Were there any particular books in your childhood, I mean talking about the whole of your childhood, that were important to you?

John had a book of British birds which I remember quite distinctly. Again it was the sort of smells and feels of things. It had tissue paper over each of the plates of the birds. I remember the bittern in particular, this absolutely upright neck and this little bittern baby sort of with open mouths.

Why do you think that attracted you particularly?

The bittern? I don't know, I suppose it was the way it almost transformed itself, which was what it was trying to do, I suppose it was just being camouflaged, being caught out in this camouflage. It's funny that. I still have, it's very...I don't know why but nevertheless it was an image that stuck, because I often say to, you know, anybody that's reaching out for something, like little bitterns. I think, my family had quite an interesting little sort of, idea of playing with words and things. I know sometimes my brothers would come home from school and they might have learnt something during the day that would be attached to one or either of us, and I became known as Bannockburn on the...

What's that?

Well the Battle of Bannockburn, one of my brothers had learnt something about the Battle of Bannockburn, and probably my father had said, `What did you learn about today?' so, the Battle of Bannockburn. So the name or the word became a thing to play with, and it got attached to me, and as the kid I was known as Bannockburn.

What were the others known as?

Oh goodness knows. Oh, well the others were known by their friends at school, my brother David was known as Archie, Archie Cox, goodness knows why, and Reg, I don't know what Reg was known as, just probably Reg, Reggie. John I don't think had a nickname; he might, I probably don't know, he would probably keep his a secret. It was another world, John's life was a kind of a total mystery to us. When I was a kid, and I suppose at the point at which, you know, going to junior school there was a point at which it might have been hoped that I might make it to the same school, and I remember sitting an entrance exam. But John's, you know, John's life in that school was quite a mystery. I mean he would come out in this frock-coat, yellow stockings, and collar, and would come home on weekends, and it was always a wonderful sight to see. I mean worn with pride, and you know, real pantaloons I suppose, pantaloons, yellow stockings, black shoes, frock-coat, beautiful.

Did he take a particular interest in you?

Yes I think he did. We're still, we're very good friends really, and he still takes an interest in me. And he's someone who I suppose if I was going to say, you know, who are my friends in the world, he is one of them. We've I suppose a shared interest and he's always had an interest in what I've done from a very early age, and I suppose it's paid dividends in a way if one can say that if anybody has had an influence on me, then he has in terms of being supportive in an area that might have been rather alien otherwise. But I mean I would also say that, you know, it's kind of interesting I suppose in the context of how this whole recollection develops in terms of, you know, what one can spot as clues, and you know, outside of the Brooke Bond painting competition. It's kind of odd, because I suppose my childhood was really quite normal; I really loved sport and, you know, the idea of thinking about what one was going to do never really entered one's head. I don't think that, you know, when I went home, I mean I did do some oil painting and stuff at home maybe when I was at secondary school, and I'm sure I picked up a pencil and did the odd bit of drawing, but I wasn't, you know, obsessively involved with art, I just happened to do it at school and that was one of the things that one did. What one really did and enjoyed doing was playing football and cricket, and I captained the South Street Junior School

cricket team and we were unbeaten. And I played football, and we were one of the best teams in Bristol.

What age was that?

Well that was again from the age of 8 to the age of 9 - no, whatever, when one went to secondary school, 11 to 12. But I think, I probably started playing football for the school when I was quite young really. And, there were some great footballers. We had blue and white halved shirts like Blackburn, and then they became scarlet and emerald when they changed the kit one year, halves, very distinctive. And Mike Docherty's dad always used to tie our boots before the match, he used to tie them so tight. I had a pair of Artex football boots that were bought through mail order because they were Continental style with moulded rubber bottoms and cut-away tops, and these were days when everybody else had leather boots with toe-caps made of iron and leather studs with nails sticking out the bottom. So it was quite a coup to have such a super pair of football boots.

So apart from football, what else do you think was important to you at that junior school?

Gymnastics. I remember showing off that I could do a somersault once and I almost broke my neck, but nevertheless, you know, sort of run like mad down the gym and sort of throw yourself on a coconut mat, trying to get your feet on the floor before your head hit it, but... No, I suppose...I always...I suppose there was just a general sense of, you know, of security, of a kind of inevitability that life went on and you know, things just kind of happened. I don't really recall outside of...it's quite a lot for one to do. I mean, cricket and football is pretty time-consuming, I'm sure one used to hare around the playground, you know, doing one or the other all the time that one wasn't in the classroom, so...

And what went on the classroom?

I suppose one sat in rows. In that respect I suppose it was very different to the infant school which was very, you know, very open-plan. And my daughter went to Prior Weston School which was run by a man called Henry Pluckrose who was a very, if you like, I can't say avant-garde, he was very progressive, a progressive educationalist, and in terms of what my kids did, besides the fact that they called teachers by their first names at Prior Weston, the way that they actually went about their schooling was very much the way that I had my schooling in this little school in Bristol without being, you know, considered to be anything special, at least I don't think so, I mean I went there because it was the closest; maybe I was really lucky. But as far as the next stage went, it was, you know, in rows, in desks, and basically that was that.

Were you, any subjects there that you particularly shone in?

When it came to, you know, reports and everything, I suppose I did OK in, it was probably called arithmetic in those days, and in English. I mean I used to, you know, I think basically I was pretty, again a pretty good all-rounder, I was always pretty near the top of the class. I think probably in the top ten. If I look back at old school reports I would probably find it wasn't true at all, but in certain subjects I was OK. I was always top or second in art.

You were top in art?

Top, yes top or second.

And did they encourage you?

Yes I think so, but I don't think necessarily anything was considered to be extraordinary in a way. And I suppose in that respect that part of my school life, again it's probably more dim than infants school in a way. I can't remember the classrooms, funny. It's funny, because the first one I can, especially when I got slapped.

What was the first classroom like?

Well I suppose I just sort of know where it was, and because I've got an image of the building, you know, it was just on the ground floor, somewhere in there next to the hall. Of course all classrooms were off, usually off the hall where the morning service took place, or the assembly, and that converted to being the gym. Smells of sawdust and that polish that used to be impregnated into sawdust and swept across the gym floor, that sort of thing. Kids being sick and ill, and things like that, things that stick in your memory.

Do you remember school dinners?

Yes, I suppose one does. I suppose when it came to those, one...I suppose the gym also converted into being the school dinner room.

This is at your infants school?

This was at...the infants school had its own...actually that is, I mean again the recollection of the dining-room in infants school is much clearer to me than the other, probably because it was a distinctive place, and distinctive smells I suppose. I had a brief memory of smells now you mention the.....

End of F4914 Side B

F4915 Side A

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 23rd of May 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Just to finish with your early years Stephen, I was pretty impressed that you had all those memories of your early school teachers. I remember you mentioned a Mrs Fox, a Miss Nicholl.

Oh yes.

And then there was a headmistress, Mrs Withers.

Mrs Withers, right.

And then Mr Thomas.

Oh gosh, I did mention Mr Thomas at the junior school, yes.

Yes. Just before we sort of leave them all behind I wondered, what they were like, I mean what your memories were of them.

Well my memories of, well I suppose if we're onto junior school I think, since the last time, I don't know if I mentioned I was actually smacked on my first morning at school.

Yes. That was Mr Thomas, wasn't it?

That was Mr Thomas, yes. And, I don't remember exactly, I thought the name of the man who was the art teacher was a man called Shepherd but maybe he was the man at the, the first art teacher at secondary school. But, I remember a man called Lang - Lane, and as well as doing I think general teaching, as they all did in those days, he also used to take country dancing. And I think, I remember once he, I'm not sure if it

was the Grand National or the Derby, but the horse I think was called Sun Dew and he had backed it and one of the other teachers came and told him that he had won, and I remember him being particularly happy about that, and I think I got into trouble because I also reacted because I realised what they were talking about and I wasn't supposed to know about things like gambling, or something. But, I suppose I was...I had my nose into other people's business rather too much, as a child anyway. Maybe a bit precocious.

Was he the main teacher you remember from your, that school?

Well, I mean there would have been principal teachers, let's say year teachers or form teachers, so Mr Thomas was the first in that junior school, and Mr Lane, I think he must have been the teacher when we were involved in the 11-plus.

Who would you have thought would have had the formative influence on you?

Difficult to say really. I think one just sort of took one's teachers as people standing in front of a class and just delivering material; I don't really recall anybody as having said anything to me that meant that my life changed at that point anyway.

Yes.

As I mentioned before, talking about the art classes, I do recall simply because there was, maybe there was an obvious kind of reward in doing things in the visual arts; if you had succeeded for example you were rewarded with a prize of some sort, I think mine was book tokens. And I suppose you don't really go through life thinking about having learnt something in algebra or long division, or what pi meant, you know, those aren't such milestones in one's life. But interestingly I can only remember two teachers in that particular school, and I think that worries me, unless that was the nature of the educational system then, that the junior period was only for a couple of years or so. And what's so...I mean the building, I have a very very strong image of the building, which is still there, but the location of classrooms. I can remember being on the ground floor in one year next to the gym and the assembly hall in one,

whatever, which also was the dining-room as well, and then I suppose you had wall bars all round gyms in those days as opposed to infants schools where you didn't.

What about the personalities of those teachers, do they stick in your mind at all?

Inasmuch I've got quite a strong image of what they looked like, both Mr Thomas and Mr Lane. I suppose I respected, I mean I would have respected a teacher in terms of who and what they were, and even the smack on the back of the legs from Mr Thomas didn't make me feel that he was in the wrong or anybody that I should not have respected. I suppose, I just remember faces.

Yes. Well, describe their faces to me.

Mr Thomas was, I suppose one might say archetypally Welsh, sort of short, dark, quite a handsome, open-faced, dark man, I suppose it's difficult to say, I would have considered his age to have probably been in his mid-twenties, whereas Mr Lane was a little older, rather ruddy-faced and rather sort of hawkish nose and receding hair, rather more, well, yes, less Welsh certainly. I don't know, I suppose rather more Slavic perhaps.

What about right back at that first school? I was impressed that you remembered the names of, was it Miss Nicholls and...

Yes, right.

Mrs Fox. What were they like?

What were they like? Well Mrs Fox was a plumpish lady with bifocal glasses and sort of hair pulled back, always wore black. I suppose she was, again I suppose the sort of person a teacher might appear to be. And Miss Nicholls was much younger, reddish hair, considerate and loving and helpful, less authoritarian. I can even remember things, the sort of questions that she may have asked. Because we used to do things that I liked very much like embroidery, and I think probably I started to do

embroidery when I was in her class, Miss Nicholls's class, and, gosh it could even have been at that time I did a cloth with, you know, all sorts of cross-stitch and chain-stitch on a calico rectangle, which was I think our television mat in our home for decades. But, taking on things like that. I suppose the sorts of things that, yes, one learnt as a child in those days. That's why I think it was like an amazingly liberal education which I compare to the sorts of things that are considered to be inroads into, you know, adventurous new education. My own daughters went to the school called Prior Weston which was run by quite a famous educationalist called Henry Pluckrose, and the only difference it seems to me between the way that they were taught and the way that I was taught was that they called their teachers and the headmaster by their first names, and we were rather more disciplined, you know, in that respect.

Was the headmistress, Mrs Withers, was she strict?

Yes, I would say she was strict. She very much was, you know, on Mount Olympus in a way, one really didn't have any reason to see her except that she was that person in the distance in assembly in the mornings. I think probably with a little more thought and a few drinks one might actually have even clearer impressions of how things used to be. The piano-playing in assembly, goodness knows what was talked about.

We've been talking about your cats now, Stephen; did you have animals as a child?

Yes, not...we weren't very big on animals in a way. I think we had a stray cat called Pushkin, who was actually a tabby Persian, long-haired tabby, sort of walked into our lives off the streets one day and that stayed with us for many many years. I do remember however, just before that, when I was very very young there was a black cat that was in the family, probably called - no it couldn't have been called Tiddles, I can't remember its name, that might have been confused with my wife's cat that she talks about. But I remember it dying, and I've got an impression of this cat being wrapped in brown paper to be buried in our garden, and I must have been terribly tiny when that happened, because, I suppose I must have been 5 or 6 when Pushkin came

along. Pushkin is the name given to the cat by my eldest brother John, a rather sophisticated name for a cat in Bedminster.

Was he at school then?

He was at QEH then, John.

What's QEH?

Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, a Bluecoats school, which is where he won a scholarship.

Bluecoat is Queen Elizabeth Hospital is it?

Queen Elizabeth Hospital is a Bluecoat school, it's one of those that was, I forget which, Edward VII or, Edward II even, I'm not sure, I think they were founded by Henry VIII. Who was Henry VIII's father, I forget now.

Yes I think it was Edward VII. Did you say Edward VII?

Oh yes, well, yes, or Edward II even.

Or Henry VII. Oh dear!

Anyway I didn't go to the school, I would have known if I had gone to the school.

Yes.

But I think I mentioned before his coming home at weekends in frock-coat and yellow stockings, and a cleric collar, as a very very powerful image in my childhood.

Were your parents encouraging you do you think to try and go there too?

Oh I sat an entrance exam there when it was my time just as one of my other brothers had also sat an entrance exam, but we didn't succeed. I remember when I sat the entrance exam I suppose I must have been 10 or 11, I remember sitting on a long table at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital on a long oak table looking up to the big carved oak boards with the names of the head boys on, and my brother's name was carved on the board above my head, and I think this kind of, a formidable kind of atmosphere.

How did you feel about seeing that?

Well I suppose one had a sense of pride about my eldest brother's success really and academic achievement. And so, I mean I don't think it...I just wished that, you know, that I had had that extra little bit of sort of academic ability to have been able to deal with it, but it's just one of those things.

Did you have that sense of competing, with your brothers?

Not a sense of competing, a sense of aspiration in a way. I don't really feel that I was in any way, I never had a sense of having failed by not having, say, got to that level. I suppose for some reason I felt that, I've always been terribly determined about whatever way of testing there might be, if I had failed I would always set about proving the test wrong, or who had tested me wrong, and interestingly I was discussing this same issue with my eldest daughter last night, about the nature of competitiveness, which I feel maybe comes out of sport as much as anything, that if you like the game is something which is set up not for you to ever feel any sense of, like defeat as being a totally un...a position from which one cannot recover; it's a part of a process which establishes at a particular moment in time, maybe a level from which it is possible to re-emerge or re-establish oneself, or to climb out of, and I think I've always had a sense of determination in that respect. So having failed my 11-plus for example, I went to...from South Street Junior School, I think the headmaster was called Mr Agg, and they were all sort of disappointed that I didn't get through, didn't pass my 11-plus.

Your parents?

Well the school as well, in a way.

Yes. Did your parents and the school push you academically?

No. I mean one did what one was expected to do. I never felt that, you know, I mean homework wasn't a thing that one really had very much to do, you know, one had the occasional thing. I mean it was very much, a much more casual education in those days, especially from the kind of background that I was coming from. Two of my brothers had already gone to St. Mary Redcliffe school, the ones that were older than me, and John had gone to arguably the best school in Bristol.

St. Mary Redcliffe is where you went?

St. Mary Redcliffe was the school attached to St. Mary Redcliffe Church. And although, let's say in my catchment area from where I lived I would have automatically gone to another school, my two other brothers who had gone to this school meant that it was a way into getting into this other school; though it was a secondary modern school but it was a school that had a reputation for both sport and for other achievement. It had a reputation, had a status in the city, as being a good school. Previously it had a reputation for being a very very tough school, but it was tough but it still had a sense of pride about something, maybe because of the age of the school and the fact that it was attached to this ancient church, which was all very very proud. One of the first things you learned about St. Mary Redcliffe Church that was considered by Elizabeth I to be the fairest and the godliest parish church in all England, and it was, I mean, in many respects it was rather more spectacular than Bristol Cathedral, beautiful Perpendicular architecture, a magnificent church, absolutely stunning, and I think that probably had a profound effect on my life as an artist in a way, it was a place that had a, you know...and one was being marched there every week. So there was, you know, I think a place of spirituality, you know, St. Mary Redcliffe is a place like that.

The school as well as the church?

The school was across the road, and the school was just a Victorian red brick, you know, thing, but I'm not quite sure how many centuries that there had been a school associated with the church. But it's a historical, sort of traditions seem to go back quite a long way, from, you know, like having Maundy money here, and we had days when, there was a Colston Day and we would...

Colston?

Colston.

What's that?

Colston was a merchant in Bristol who endowed the church and the school, and we would get a bun and a shilling on a particular day of the year. This is something which went back ages. And next to the church as well, I mean one walked up and down to the church, you know, past Thomas Plimsoll's house - Samuel Plimsoll's house, Plimsoll, who...

Who was he?

Plimsoll who established the line on the side of ships, and plimsoll shoes. The kind of naval traditions were a part of the school. I mean the historical sense of Bristol is, if you like where I went to school, and there was a sense of the trading of the city, you know, and the slavery unfortunately.

Where did you get a sense of that?

Well by, because of the church school, going to school more or less in the centre of the city, being, the school overlooked the docks. I mean history was taught, and there was, to an extent it was, you know, one would look out of the window and would see the harbour, Bristol's maritime and mercantile tradition is as old as Roman settlement, you know. I mean, I've had quite a strong sense of history, probably from that

proximity of the school to the city and history being taught by probably very good teachers, you know, above the run-of-the-mill teachers.

And was it actually a church school?

Yes.

So was there a strong religious ethos at the school?

Yes there was. I suppose to an extent, one of the things about the school, because I think probably which is what makes it rather extraordinary as a secondary modern school, was that it was a comprehensive school inasmuch as the headmaster, the new headmaster when I was there, had been there a couple of years, and the headmaster who had taught my brothers, if you like headed the school then had gone. And the point was that the headmaster then believed very much in the notion of, let's say late developers, and so there was an opportunity for someone like myself who had been expected to pass their 11-plus to actually have the opportunity of taking O'levels. So we were streamed just as a comprehensive - this was before comprehensive education, and it was a boys' school, but we were streamed according to ability, and so there was what was considered to be the examination group, which was quite a large class. So I was, if you like, being groomed, as the others in that class, to take O'levels, which for a secondary school was rather innovatory.

Did you have much to do with the headmaster?

Not a lot. I mean he was quite a charismatic character, very very tall man, very sort of imposing looking, kind of...I suppose he had a...he perpetuated a sense of the religious and a kind of a moral philosophy I suppose.

Were there regular prayers?

Yes. But then again every school has regular prayers, as I would maybe even like to think that today, schools had a morning assembly. Though in those days we had one

Pakistani boy - two, two brothers, and they were the only, that was the only sort of sense of there being anything like someone who had a different kind of philosophical approach to life, so they would have been either, either they wouldn't have participated in assembly and they would have just sat it out somewhere in a classroom reading or whatever. But the idea of a Christian assembly was very much a part of I think every school life, every school's life in the past, up until, well whenever, I'm not quite sure when.
[BREAK IN RECORDING]
.....things. Church, the role of the church.

Yes. What was the headmaster's name again?

His name was Stan Lowes, and, the school had a fantastic reputation from the past for rugby and cricket, and my brothers both played rugby. We had a reputation for having more rugby international schoolboys than any other, all the other Bristol schools put together, and I think probably, although there were public schools, England teams, there was also, you know, the other mob like, whatever else the catchment was drawn from. So rugby and sport gave it a reputation, but he was very very encouraging to people. We had one boy who was the head boy called Bob Thomas who was England Schools Champion at backstroke who became a bit of a personality inasmuch there was a programme on `Sportsview ' many many years ago in which he was sort of featured as someone training to swim for England. And so you know, that again was something which put the school on the map, we had brilliant swimmers, very very good rugby teams. And we also, what was rather interesting, we had a very very, for me and for the school as well, is that we, a school choir was developed with a man called Peter Fowler, which established the school as having a very very good, a high standard of choral achievement, and we, I was a member of the school choir, I went on its second tour to Spain.

When was that?

Golly, well I suppose I must have been around 14 or 15. And we did a tour of Spain which, we were based in Tossa de Mar, and the tour was basically off Catalonia, and

we sang in musical societies in Barcelona. And what was extraordinary was that we were invited to sing to the monastery choir of Montserrat, which is a very very famous boys' choir, like the Vienna Boys' Choir, maybe second only in Europe to the Vienna Boys' Choir. And they sang for us and we sang for them at their school.

And was this religious songs?

I have an LP. We're on record. No there were religious and other songs. I mean they sang to us religious songs, but ours was, you know, from folk songs, Tchaikovsky, and some religious songs. We had some very very good singers.

And it was one of the school teachers, did you say, that was leading it?

Yes, a man called Peter Fowler. And so we had, you know, as a part of our music class, and, I don't know whether kids do music in schools today, but we made music, we sang as a part of a class lesson. And if you were tone deaf I suppose you just had to sit and listen or they would have found a role for them to do something else. But everybody seemed to participate. But the school choir was excellent, and one of the things that I did, which was, in terms of my contact with the headmaster, was that I was just in the process of leaving school, I think I was in the lower sixth, I didn't do A'levels, because I had been accepted at the West of England College of Art to do foundation studies and it didn't seem necessary to get A'levels as I had already been accepted, so I just marked time for a year in the lower sixth before I went to art school. But during that time my brother, who was beginning his career in music...

Your brother John?

My brother John, was assistant to Gian Carlo Menotti, who was in the process for the Bath Festival of producing his new opera, `Martin's Lie', which was a world premier, at Bristol Cathedral as part of the Bath Festival. And my brother, who had heard my school LP, thought that they would be a good source, the school would be a good source for high quality singers. And a boy called John Hayley, who was one of the top singers, became the little star of the production, and the school, the choir became

a chorus for this opera of Gian Carlo Menotti's, and they even travelled, they travelled all over Europe in these roles for him. It was really quite an extraordinary kind of, I mean professional achievement to sing at this level.

And you were involved in that?

I introduced my headmaster to my brother to set up the whole thing of the school, the school singing.

So you were aware of Menotti all that time before you got involved with this later festival?

Absolutely. That's very perceptive of you.

That's extraordinary isn't it.

Right. In fact it was quite funny because I met Menotti, and interestingly as well I met a woman called Priscilla Morgan...

You met Menotti when?

I met...

Was that when you were at school?

When I was, yes, 15 or 16.

Yes.

And, in his entourage was a woman called Priscilla Morgan, who eventually married Isamu Noguchi, and a woman called Wendy Hanson, who had been, or was to become, the Beatles' public relations person, who I got to know quite well later on, I met her in various places where she worked, either in New York or in London. So

they were kind of interesting people that started to come into my life through my brother. And I had a girl...well in fact I then went to foundation in Bristol, pre-diploma it was called, at the West of England College of Art, during that period when the opera and my brother and Menotti were working in Bristol, and I think Menotti as a little gesture bought from me a small gouache work, abstract drawing.

Was Menotti important for you?

I suppose he was in a way. He's an amazing man who's got fantastic sort of, he's very inspirational with young people, with children.

What's he like?

Absolutely charming man. I mean I think he's someone who, you know, if you get to know him is capable of all sorts of, you know, sort of tantrums and whatever. But I mean an extraordinary man in terms of, I think his sort of, his...I mean he is much older than he appears. The joke was he would take monkey glands every day to stay young. [LAUGHS]

Did he take an interest in you right back then?

Yes he did. I mean let's say he was interested...he was staying at the Grand...the Royal Hotel in Bristol, or was it the Grand? The Royal. And he asked me to bring a portfolio of drawings to show him just because he was curious, but you know, I mean the man's background was amazing both as a, at that time the Spoleto Festival, the Festivale dei Due Mondi, was an established international event, and to have met him then. And I suppose what was extraordinary, he called me `cherubino', which for a sort of rugby-playing... [LAUGHING]

Well it's interesting that you had that early contact with Italy isn't it.

Yes, and...

Was it through him that you got involved with Italy?

Well I suppose...no, it wasn't, that was the curious thing. I mean that summer he had invited me to go to visit him in Italy, and I had a girlfriend at the time from, my first girlfriend at art school, and we hitchhiked down through Italy, and we...

But this is later than when you first met him?

Well they're the same period, because in the first...

When you were 15?

I was, how old was I? 16. I mean, I was in my first year of sixth form, so 15, 16. I mean I may have been...I'm not quite sure, 16 anyway, but the first year of sixth form, whatever that might have been, I forget, what age do you take O'levels? 15?

A'levels?

O'levels, 15?

16-ish.

15 or 16. So I was in that sort of area, you know. But I think it was probably, according to whenever the Festival happened, I was just in my foundation year and still having an association with the school. Maybe I had just left the school and I introduced the headmaster to my brother, and that was the kind of connection. And Peter Fowler was the kind of choral master for the group, for the young people, the children who were singing in the opera. But, I then hitchhiked with this girl down to, I mean maybe we've already left secondary school and you don't want to [INAUDIBLE].

We'll be going back to it, don't worry.

We were invited by him, to visit him at his house in the Val Gardena valley, Santa Cristina in the Dolomites, and so we, it was fabulous, I mean this grey kind of, well massive sort of rambling sort of wooden villa on the side of this hill with this fabulous view from our window looking out towards this mountain. And he just was very very helpful. He then, I think he paid for our tickets to go to Rome, and he invited us to go and visit him in Venice, and so we stayed in the youth hostel in Venice and visited him at his hotel on the Grand Canal and at his cabana at the Metropole, and we saw...I saw Tito Gobbi in `Otelo' in the Doge's Palace. I mean, spectacular.

That's very generous of him to take such an interest in a young person isn't it?

Yes.

Cherubino or not.

Cherubino. Yes, that's right. It was, it was nice, it was really super.

Do you think he saw potential in your work then?

I don't think so. And I think it was quite a surprise to him when I turned up at the Festival, the Spoleto Festival by a completely different route, the route having been through Giovanni Carandente.

Mm. But did he talk to you about your art?

No, not really, not since that time when we just, he just looked through as a gesture, my work. I mean maybe he did, he never discussed it with me how, what my potential might be, but it was rather funny being in the hotel in Bristol and out of courtesy he looked through my drawings and selected one, which I think he paid me a fiver for, or maybe fifteen pounds or something; seemed a lot in those days. But, that I should turn up in Spoleto, knocking on his door and saying, `Hi.'

About twenty years later wasn't it?

Yes I suppose it was, and you know, my show as one of the principal shows of the festival. The point, apparently the story is however that he wasn't particularly friendly with Giovanni Carandente, who was, you know, they were both prima donnas in their way, and in that respect, it was surprising that we didn't, when we met, Judy and I and the children went to see him at his villa in Spoleto, and he was very very nice and very courteous and wonderful to meet him, but you know, it ended there. Although we did visit him once in his house, because he came to live in Britain and has a house called Yester House at Gifford in East Lothian, and we used to have a little house on the Murray Firth, and we went and stayed with him en route once, which was again wonderful to see him in his very English country seat, it was rather incongruous in a way, the sort of, the Italian American Scotsman, was kind of curious.

Had you stayed in touch with him from those very early days till when you were at Spoleto?

Occasionally I think I might have sent the odd card to say that something was happening in my career. But it was curious in a way. I suppose to an extent my brother had more of a reason to be in touch with him than me, and he lost contact with him in a way, and I think to an extent it was, you know, it was something to do with the professional atmosphere of criticism or whatever. I mean some people say that Menotti is a very very good composer of contemporary music and opera but he's not such a good director of his own work, and maybe there's a conflict there between, you know, what the interaction might be from an assistant director who might be able to advise or give a suggestion which isn't wanted to someone. I mean, one's creativity as a director, or John's creativity as a director, then, I mean mushroomed into being quite a formidable reputation in his own right. So, I mean maybe Gian Carlo is someone who has been a great sort of instigator or a generator or encourager of talent at.....

End of F4915 Side

F4915 Side B

So Stephen, that was your first visit to Italy was it?

I think it must have been. Now, what age was I? Yes absolutely, yes it was. I don't think I had travelled very much. Maybe it was my first trip abroad, maybe it was my first...second trip abroad; I had gone to Spain the previous year with a friend of mine from school.

Were you already interested in Italian art at that early period?

I think I was...yes. I think one of the interesting things about art education in those days was that if you did O'level you also did an art theory paper, an art history paper, and so the art room was a place where you were drawing, painting and making sculpture, and in the case of the school that I went to you were also reading books, set books, and doing essays, and I think that's a very very significant contribution in any examination, and one of my own kind of hobby-horses at the moment is the fact that schools do not have that as a contingent part of the art education programme, it seems to me that art, the domain of art is in therapy rather than as an education, a kind of very significant cultural history.

I think we ought to try actually and go right back to your first, you know, those early school years again before we forget about them altogether. It's easy to run on, isn't it.

Yes.

But the ethos presumably at the secondary school must have been quite different to those two earlier schools.

Yes.

It must have been a bit of a shock to the system I think.

I suppose it was. I mean from sports, which I've talked about before, cricket and football I played, and one just sort of went through life really, I suppose the way that one structured one's life in those days, I mean from a very very early age I played club cricket for example. I mean I can remember being told that I looked like a pair of cricket pads walking to the wicket, having two brothers who played cricket for a club, and when I was still at junior school I was playing cricket with men, you know, when they were short, you know, for the full team, but being encouraged, you know, to play. I remember the slow ball being kindly bowled to me by someone from the opposition who thought, well you know, this is going to encourage this lad to want to play, you know, so we won't knock his stumps out of the ground. So I can remember the kind of, the generosity of spirit of generally encouraging young people to play cricket and things. So when it came to secondary school, I can't...I don't think I can remember my first day somehow. I mean don't forget I was uniformed then, I mean in secondary school it was uniform time.

What was your uniform like?

Black blazer, grey flannels, badge with black and red diagonal stripes, a Gothic R in the middle, and Floriat Redcliffe as the motto underneath the badge. And I suppose having started off wearing the right uniform one then spent one's time trying to abuse it and corrupt it to make it seem more fashionable.

The emphasis still seems to be very firmly on sports and singing. What were the other subjects you were interested in?

Well I think probably...I think we had very very good teachers, and I quite enjoyed school, I think I really did enjoy school. I think the first year was a man called Stevens; I don't know why we started off with 2E but I think there was a man called Stevens.

2E?

Yes, it was the first year, I think our first year was called 2E. There must have been a 1E somewhere but I can't remember it really. I remember a man called Stevens who taught history, who was a form teacher.

What was he like?

I just, I think probably I was impressed with all my teachers in a way inasmuch as they all seemed to have something to say and something to communicate, and I think to an extent I was, you know, I was kind of hungry for information. And so, I mean terribly excited, I can remember history being about, you know, the Greeks, and I mean for a small boy I mean that's terribly exciting stuff, I mean very very exciting.

History seems to have been important to you, you had that sense of the history of the city.

Yes I think probably, you know. and I think to an extent as well, I mean just as a child, you know, just walking around with one's father, you know, there was some knowledge that was being communicated. And my brother as I mentioned before having been in receipt of a good education. So, you know, the stories of the city, it's a beautiful historical city, Bristol, with the great mansions and Georgian terraces of Clifton, rather old, I suppose even 15th century, 16th century buildings, the pubs, the inns, the warehouses, the old Stock Exchange, the Nails, which are famous for the saying, being paid on the nail, the Nail is in fact, the Nail are these beautiful bronze tables that are set in the pavement outside Bristol's Corn Exchange where deals were done, and paying on the Nail was the sealing of the deal, and so this kind of...there are little things like that which are rather wonderful. Places called Black Boy Hill have reasons for being called that, and they was the slaving centres, you know, shackles in walls by the docks were places that, you know, were pointed out to be places where slaves would have been tied.

What would have been the attitude to that at that time?

Just a kind of historical past. I mean the other wonder is, I mentioned before, you know, my father's social life was very much orientated around, I mean I suppose men's company and public houses and things, and the pubs that he frequented, and I mean my father's sense of history was really wonderful. I mean we would go to pubs that were contesting whether they were the places where Robert Louis Stevenson wrote `Treasure Island', so there was one called the Llandogger Trow, which is just in King Street opposite the Theatre Royal in Bristol, the oldest rep in the country. It was a half-timbered building, it was built in 1666 so you know, the kind of, the idea that it was actually established at that time, the year of the, well the year after the Plague, I mean, those sorts of things. But the other pub called the Coach and Horses, which we always referred to as the Hole in the Wall, was strategically the place where Louis Stevenson might more likely to have, Robert Louis Stevenson might have been more likely to have written the book because it was actually on the harbour side more or less with spy holes where they say press-gangs would have been spotted, and then the drinkers would have been able to run off somewhere and hide from the press-gangs. But that sort of sense of history, yes, I mean if you're drinking in a pub and you're a kid, I mean maybe waiting outside of a pub for your parents or whatever, I mean one's mind can wander looking at the ships on the quayside into all sorts of things, whether it's, you know, where they've come from, the travel, whether they're just, the dredger is dredging the river which silted up and always had done since I suppose Bristol was considered even at one point as potentially the capital of England, sort of the natural fortressing of a meandering river as a defensive thing. You know, there was a lot of sort of, for me living history, or interesting history associated with Bristol.

And the school gave you a good grounding in history?

Yes I think so. I mean the problem was, as was always the case I suppose in schools when you have to make choices, I think at one point I had to make a choice between history and geography I think, and I chose geography, and I'm not really quite sure why, except that it might have conflicted with something else on the timetable. And I know that I had to choose between art and French, and that was in the third year, and I chose art because that was where I was at. But in terms of where interest lay, of course I was interested in history because it seemed so exciting to know about the

Battle of Marathon and the Battle of Thermopylae, Leonardis[ph] and...just extraordinary.

It did come up into the modern era, did it?

Oh I don't know, it certainly over a period got a little bit boring when it got to the Industrial Revolution, but I think probably that's a point at which I dropped out of history really. I mean for all that one, you know, I mean the Industrial Revolution and whatever it was called, I've forgotten the names of these developments, but you know, if we were learning about the feudal system and the change in...I don't want to try and pretend to you that I remember very much, but... I can remember once we did a project, and the project was on the Industrial Revolution, and for some reason I got something into my head that I didn't need to write about the Industrial Revolution and so I wrote about what would have been the sort of, I suppose revolution in culture or something at the time, and I ended up doing a project on art and culture of the time instead of the Industrial Revolution. I think it was the point at which my history teacher in exasperation said, `Well this is not a subject for you really, you haven't answered the question right, answered the project, and you've spent months doing it and you completely got it wrong.' I think that was probably his attitude to it. So I suppose that was the end of history as a subject for me really.

How old would you have been then?

13 or 14 I suppose.

Do you think that teacher was particularly influential for you?

I think he taught, I mean in terms of the history that I was interested in, I think that, let's say the way he taught about the Greeks was something that excited me a great deal, and so let's say that spark of interest and delight from things that were just not known to me before is something which I suppose has stayed with me to an extent.

He was able to bring it alive?

I think so, yes I think so, very much so. I remember, you know, I mean the idea of battle diagrams and things like that, wonderful. I mean, and of course because it's so exciting one would, you know, use libraries and just go and check on stuff for homework. You know, homework, that was the other thing, homework was something that one hadn't been concerned about until secondary school.

So do you think that was what started your interest in other cultures and times?

Probably, unless it was just a kind of, I suppose like anybody's walk through life there's an introduction, you know, according to... I mean what is it that opens your eyes? I think a teacher is someone, but your parents are also teachers really. I remember as a child, and I'm not saying it's anything to do with history but just as kind of an aside, I can't remember the date but it was a long long time ago, there was a great famous shipwreck, and it was called The Flying Enterprise, I have a very vivid recollection of this particular event, it was a ship that was snagged on the Needles I think it was off Cornwall, and, I suppose it may have been something to do with the fact that it had happened when television was around for the first time, it was a long time ago, it must have been in the early Fifties. And there was a man called Captain Carson who stayed with his ship as it went down, and they were trying to get him off, and there was a ship called, there was an ocean-going tug called The Turmoil, which was also featured in trying to...well, in saving him and trying to save the boat and saving all the people. So this was an heroic piece of sort of folk history I suppose in the annals of the sea around Britain's coasts. And The Turmoil tug came to Bristol in what's called the floating harbour, in Bathurst Basin - no not Bathurst Basin, the floating harbour which is near one of the great lock gates, and my father took me down to see it once, and I remember going on the ocean-going tug, The Turmoil. I suppose what I'm saying is that, if you're with active parents, and I think everybody, all parents, I mean there's no reason why they're any different, I'm just saying that things like that meant that you were aware of what was going on, there's a connection between... And there was an important thing really that if one saw something on the television which was a news thing in those days, or heard something on the radio, the fact that you could actually go and if you like be assured and reinforced of the

existence of the reality of these things by seeing the thing that was there on the television, was somehow giving one a sense of the reality of I suppose history and events. You know, this was just after the war, you know, still, I mean we're only talking about a few years after the war. I remember as well as a kid lying on the floor in my sitting-room at home and my father was very very concerned about Formosa, and the possibility of the Second World War, you know, having just ended, of it becoming a resurgent issue over the `yellow peril'.

I am ignorant Stephen, tell me about it.

Well I can't, I was...I think I was probably 4 or 5 at this time. I remember pretending to read the paper but I can remember my father going on about Formosa, and it was to do with Chiang Kai-shek and Mao Tse-tung, and so, you know, this was the kind of confrontation that was going on and whether or not if you like the imperialist West was going to support Chiang Kai-shek against the Chinese. Was the `yellow peril' going to kind of spread all over the world or were we going to actually nip it in the bud? I mean don't forget that the Chinese were our allies against you know, the Axis and the Japanese at some point. And then one was looking to kind of ambitions, the ambitions of... Anyway, I'm talking about this in historical retrospect, I'm not talking about this as understanding as a child, but, I mean it was just something then talking about...

But it's interesting that you raise Stephen, because I wanted to ask you about the family politics. And what do you think your father's politics were now; they pervaded the house[??]?

My father always guarded, he would never say who he voted for. It was to do with that moment of, you know, putting your cross in the right, in the hole, and that was always his prerogative, not to let anybody know what he was. I would have expected he probably voted Conservative.

So would there have been any political discussion in the house?

My father...no, not really. I think, my father was an avid reader of the newspaper, the `News Chronicle' used to come through the door every day.

What sort of inclination was that?

The `News Chronicle'? My God! I was too young to even know, but I suppose it was...I mean I don't think they had tabloid newspapers in those days. Or maybe they did. But I think it would have been the equivalent to the `Mail' when the `Mail' was a large format newspaper, a broadsheet newspaper.

So it was right wing rather than anything else?

I would have thought so, yes. I suppose that's the easiest way to determine, it wasn't the `Mirror' or whatever, the `Sketch', no, the `Sketch', or the `Star'.

And your mother, was she interested in politics?

No I don't think so. I think she voted Labour because her father always had, or something.

And was that a source of conflict between your parents?

No not really, I think that, basically there was never... I mean they might have discussed things, but it wasn't...there were never any sort of burning issues, it wasn't as if there was a...just an intellectual kind of sparking of interest within the family.

So you wouldn't say that it was a particularly political upbringing?

No, absolutely not, there was no... There were no senses of principles or conflicts of interest between, you know... I don't recall my father, you know, really being angered especially about news except that as I mentioned this kind of concern. I'm not quite sure what his attitude was over Suez, you know.

And your brothers?

My eldest brother would have been very very involved, I suppose because he is an intellectual who would have, and has always taken an interest in what's going on; politically he's left wing. My other brother who I suppose started out as an apprentice and then became involved in business is probably, certainly rather more Conservative than Labour, and the third brother, I've no idea. I suppose when he had his own business he would have been a Conservative and maybe as he's not exactly out of work but probably a little bit down on his luck at the moment is probably more likely to be socialist.

So you didn't all talk about politics among yourselves?

No not really. I think probably the pub was where you talked about politics, and anything else that, you know... I mean certainly I think the living-room was not where politics was discussed; maybe family issues might have been discussed. But, I think probably the pub was the forum for the men, I'm not quite sure whether my mother would have been involved. Lived in a house full of men, I mean, boys anyway, my mother was terribly outnumbered, just like I am outnumbered now.

But your grandmother was living with you, wasn't she?

Yes she was for a while, I'm not quite sure how many years it was in the end but probably not for all that long, maybe four years or so. But that didn't feature.

Well, I didn't really get a sense of what she was like.

No, I don't think I have very much of a sense of what she was like either. I think probably she was bedridden a great deal of the time.

Did she take an interest in you?

I never really noticed an interest. I think probably...I don't think there was any kind of resentment about having someone kind of suddenly emerge into the house, an old person. I mean maybe there was a sense of worry from my...I mean my...it wasn't my...she was my mother's mother, not my father's mother; I'm sure my father might have said, `Oh God! your mother's not coming to live with us, is she?' But probably it wasn't...didn't take very much to establish that that was where she was coming, to stay with us.

Was she affectionate to you?

Oh yes, I mean, yes I think so, but I can't remember, you know. I mean I was a giant, I mean she was a frail little old lady, I mean, I'd only ever known her to be quite a frail little old lady.

How would she have spent her time?

I was probably at school, I never knew.

Watching television?

No I don't think she liked, she didn't like gadgets. I mean my grandmother was rather, I mean she was deaf, and she had some real, well she had quite a compact hearing aid at one point and then it seemed to me that she must have got particularly badly deaf and the National Health then dished out some awful contraption of a deaf aid which involved some kind of receiver-cum-ear piece which actually wasn't next to her ear, it was actually on her chest, so she had these things hanging down inside her clothing which was her hearing aid. And if anybody wanted to speak to her on the telephone it was a peculiar kind of event of juggling between an ear piece which was on her stomach and her mouth piece which was...

So communication in the normal run of things was...

Yes, communication was difficult. She was dying, she probably was quite solitary in a way. I mean she would have maybe sat in the front room and sat in the sitting-room, and she was there and she would go to bed early, and my mother took care of her. So I don't think she really had a profound influence or a place in the household. It wasn't as if she pontificated on the way things ought to be.

How old were you when she came to live with you, about?

I should imagine 13 or 14. I was probably at secondary school. She died when she lived with us. And interestingly that didn't have, you know, the idea of someone, I did see her when she was dead in the house, and I kissed her, I noticed how cold she was, and, you know, I suppose it's just one of those images that are just sort of locked away really.

How did you feel about her?

I suppose there was an inevitability about it really, and I didn't really have any great emotional sort of sense of what happened. Callous person aren't I?

So what else were you doing at school apart from these history lessons, what really was captivating you?

Well art really, I had two fantastic art teachers.

You had already sort of found your interest had you by then?

Well, I suppose it grew more. I was interested in art. I mean in terms of what one did at a secondary modern school, if you consider that boys would have been more likely to become involved with using their hands rather more than using their brains, except as I say the school anyway had the notion of being a comprehensive school to deal with late developers, so that was a kind of a new development, but the school was kitted out for practical work as well, so we had as well as an art room we had a woodwork room, which is again, most of the schools would have this kind of

equipment even today. We had a very very good teacher called Mr Ball, who was the woodwork teacher, and a man called Mr Jordan who also did boxing, and also had a reputation for tampering with the boys. [LAUGHS]

Was he the art teacher as well?

He was the woodwork teacher.

Mr Ball and Mr Jordan?

Mm, that's right.

Two woodwork teachers?

Two woodwork teachers, and a very good, well-equipped woodworking shop.

Did you escape him?

I escaped being tampered with; I did have one session of boxing once and didn't really like the idea of being punched without there being a reason, like playing rugby seemed to have much more point to me. But I mean the boxing, I'm not sure, maybe some of the little kids used to, you know, get involved with inter-school boxing, but it was, you know, basically it was the way, you know, this particular teacher would probably get his hands on little boys. But Mr Ball was a very very nice sensible man, and, you know, I learnt how to handle wood and make joints and use tools and, I did O'level woodwork, again it was just making a jointed object and doing a theory paper.

So what kind of things would you have made?

Well, for O'level that's nothing really, but the sorts of things that one made were sort of trouser racks and towel racks, and I made a television table. What we used to do was, we used to look through a book of furniture and if there was something that was considered to be something that we could make, then we would make it, and I made a

television table, which had to kind of have a big fat heavy telly sitting on it, which was... I mean we bought the legs, we didn't turn them, you know, black sort of G-Plan sort of legs, but the wood was of white ramin with mitres, so there was a place for putting your magazines underneath, sort of basic... Well actually quite a nice simple sort of modern design I remember.

Did you design it?

No, it was taken, you know, we looked through the book and saw images of something that we thought we could make or would like to make, so that's what...

And did you enjoy working with wood then?

Yes, yes it was good. I mean I've never forgotten what I was taught. I mean that's the extraordinary thing about, you know, education. I mean I don't know whether people... Of course, you know, how can you...I mean these are the things that are, if you like, the building blocks of our lives, so, you know, how to handle wood, how to mark wood, how to measure from a face edge and a face side, you know, always keeping your marking line in so you know, you never go too far, which means you are lost completely. These are kind of good angles on life as a whole really.

For a sculptor too.

And for a sculptor too. But as well as the other practical, if you like the other, I suppose what would have been considered the practical things and the therapeutic side of things was the art class, and I suppose the music class as well. But, I mean outside of, I mean...I liked science, I mean it was terrific to do science. That was something again one hadn't done in junior school. This was growing up really when you started, you know, talking about Brownian motions and litmus paper and potassium permanganate and things that you could actually do yourself and sort of see things change, and putting...oh it was interesting, like today I still use copper sulphate to stain my sculpture; in those days the idea of being able to put a piece of metal into a solution of copper sulphate and copper plating it without any electrolysis was, you

know, quite amazing; I still do that, you know, it's kind of funny. And we had interesting teachers. I had a form teacher called Mr Williams who, later on my cousin, who started to look after old people, it transpired that she was looking after Mr Williams who is now retired and going senile, but my old maths teacher. And the thing that again amazed me from work that I was doing in the rather more sort of conceptually-orientated sculpture that I was making in the late Seventies, I was interested in the idea of axioms, if you like rule systems within art, and I was using as a model Euclid's `Elements', and when I bought a copy of Euclid's `Elements' I found I had actually bought my course maths book, my first course maths book from secondary modern school, you know, it was all Euclid and all axiomatic, it was all to do... And then maths to me then had a meaning, because I was interested in it in terms of how it associated with art rather than, you know, geometry. But the idea of truths were things that were of interest. I loved the beauty, the aesthetic beauty of those mathematic axioms.

Any particular teachers that were influential, important to you at school? I presume you're going to tell me about the art master.

Yes, I suppose I'll get round to him, I'm trying to wipe everybody else out first. The French teacher was a man called Breen...Breen? I was talking to him the other day. Tony Breen. And he went to Arusha in Kenya, he left the school. It was a rather interesting kind of event that someone should go...

What did he go there for?

To teach French in Arusha University I think. And, I suppose the connection there is that he seemed to be quite...they were very young teachers, very dynamic, and you know, exciting people, young...

Does his personality stick out more than the others?

Yes, he used to go cross and red-faced because you might not be able to conjugate your verbs probably or whatever. But, yes they were kind of actors; they were

involved with, well they were young enough to be sort of active and interact, and you could identify as young, you know, well between the ages of 11 and 17, you know, these teachers were probably in their mid-twenties, just left college some of them, and so they weren't so sort of far away in terms of one's own age. And we had, you know, rugby teachers who taught English, I mean, everything was done on the basis that, you know, there was, a part of the kind of vocational role in the life of teachers was that they worked with boys, they worked with the idea of communicating. So we had two English teachers who were both involved with cricket and rugby as well as gym teachers who were specialist gym teachers.

Did English interest you?

Yes, I loved English. I loved writing essays.

Did you?

Yes. I think I'm quite, I think I write well, and again, I suppose the kind of education that we would have been brought up to expect in Britain in the past, and I hope today, I mean, although my kids don't seem to know anything about grammar, and even to an extent, although, you know, I passed my O'level reasonably comfortably, I seem to have forgotten about the business of the grammar. If I go to Italy and I talk to someone about the Italian language, which I don't speak particularly well but let's say I've learnt through, not through study, rather more through use, they were talking about gerunds and verbs in various tenses. I can talk to anybody in Italy and they will know what they're talking about in grammatical classification, but we just don't seem...I mean my brother who did, John who studied English at Oxford will actually be able to talk about English grammar in a way that almost anybody I know in Italy will talk about grammar. So.....

End of F4915 Side B

F4916 Side A

Do you remember what books you studied in English?

Gosh!

That made an impression on you anyway.

Blimey! Well they must have, but I can't remember. I can't even remember what Shakespeare we did. Must have been `Macbeth', must have been `Macbeth'. I think we probably did Thomas Hardy, something. I remember the grammar books were called `Ride Out', and we had a very very good English teacher besides the one I mentioned; there was a particularly academic teacher, rather he didn't do any sports as a side issue. And of course all these, as you went through the years you had different teachers anyway. But I can't remember what I did for...well I mean probably what I did for O'level was what I mentioned, but earlier books I don't know. We used to do this thing called Book Club which was rather interesting in which we were expected to read one book every week or every two weeks, and we had to then write a précis dealing with characterisation, plot, concluding blah blah blah. Most kids used to read the dust-covers of books and get away with it. But I mean it's one of the things that really introduced me to reading, and I mean I'm not a great reader now but, I just don't have time. I get so exhausted from work. It's crazy.

But there weren't any books that sort of seized your imagination when you were at...?

When I was at school? Well they wouldn't necessarily have been course books. Oh that's right...

Oh that doesn't matter.

No there was a book called `Pattern of Islands' by a man called Gilbert, I think it was Gilbert, and it's all about the Polynesian islands. Well the Gilbert and Ellice Islands. And I think the guy was a Government, you know, a Government rep, and basically it

was kind of a story about the islands. Probably a book worth reading, going back to, `The Pattern of Islands'. But I can...and I read other books of, you know, golly, I mean I can remember a book called `Devil on my Shoulder' by somebody that's is about German prisoner of war camps. And I remember reading, actually a book that was a bit of an eye-opener which was called, `Those About to Die', and it was about the...no, it was called, was it `The Decline'? It couldn't have been `The Decline of the Roman Empire' because no one actually had that much time to read that much material, but it was a book about the decline of the Roman Empire, and it was rather awful because it was all about the games and some of the horrendous things that took place. And I remember reading a book called - these are books that I read from, you know, my own, myself - and a book called `The Forest of Fear' which was about orchid hunters in the Amazon. It's coming back. [LAUGHS] But I mean literature... [LAUGHS]

No, I don't necessarily mean...

Literature.

Just things that mattered to you, of any sort.

Mm, well it's just a question of remembering. Oh `Catcher in the Rye' I read when I was at school, brilliant, absolutely brilliant book. So I read some books, yes.

Yes. But it sounds as if art was beginning to become important now.

Yes it was. I suppose it must have been in my third or fourth year when art was in the ascendancy, and I had, well, two particularly brilliant teachers, Roger Watson and a fellow called Ron Keynes, and...

Why were they brilliant?

Well they were young, they had both only recently come from the West of England College of Art. I suppose they had been in teacher training, both of them, so they

must have gone through the art school first and then done a year's teacher training in Bristol. Roger Watson used to sort of paint Bernard Buffet like matadors, and, although...and he impressed us.

What was he like?

Young, red beard, red hair, blue eyes, looked a bit like Vincent Van Gogh I suppose. [LAUGHS] But really dynamic and very exciting, and very ambitious for what we were capable of. I mean that was one of the great things. And Ron Keynes, I'm not sure if he was a part-timer or whether he wasn't directly involved with us initially, but he was rather more weird, and...

How was he weird?

Well a little bit sort of, you know, kind of a bit more eccentric in a way, I mean inasmuch as he had a slightly different attitude, rather more reckless in a way, a rather more dangerous sort of person.

And how did that manifest itself?

Well I suppose he just, he was less of, he didn't have the kind of, the kind of authoritative role that a teacher-student relationship might have. He seemed to be rather, he didn't necessarily stand on ceremony in a way. I mean he would tell you what he thought, and he appealed to certain of us. But one of the things about the school especially that was interesting is that schools didn't really do much in the way of sculpture, and our school became particularly well known for sculpture through Roger Watson, and there was a fellow a year ahead of me, two fellows in fact, one called Ferber and one called, a guy called Peter Smith. Peter Smith is actually very very talented. He was a year ahead of me, and he was just very very talented and made interesting sculptural objects, as did this guy Ferber. Ferber's weren't so interesting to me, but I mean when someone in a school makes a life-size abstracted figure, actually it was a pair of figures that Ferber made, and Peter Smith I think he was making a thing that was rather more three-dimensional Bernard Buffet kind of

Don Quixote sort of thing. But they were kind of rather inventive abstracted forms. And I made about the same time a couple of Kendo fighters. It was kind of interesting, it was quite an ambitious object in a way, because the way that, it was to do with dynamics, and although I didn't really know anything about Futurism, the thing was very Futuristic.

I'm sure I ought to know what Kendo is.

Kendo is Japanese sword fighting. So Samurai I suppose, yes? And, so there were kind of two figures sort of confronting with swords, and the swords were in fact like a, was a sweep of metal, so it was like the idea of a dynamic of a sword cutting through space. And these sort of figures were abstracted with kind of odd abstractions between armour and figure, physique.

Were you already aware of Futurism and things?

I don't think I was at that time, although I might have been, you know. I'm not quite sure if it was in my course book. I mean we would have been familiar with Cubism. I've got some pictures even now I could show you.

So you were taught history of art?

Yes, we were taught the history of art, and the history of art would have gone up to Cubism and, you know, passing, well just about everything. I mean I think...was that a history book called `From Ur to Rome'? No, it must have been the history book was called `From Ur to Rome', but there was an art book that I can recall, a yellow-covered art book which seemed to go from pre-historic Altamira, Lascaux, to Cubism in 200 pages. [LAUGHS]

So, you were taught more from a book than from slide lectures?

Oh, we didn't have slides, that's much too advanced. Maybe looking at pictures, looking at posters maybe, you know, those sort of quite well-printed prints that are

often used for scholastic purposes that have been stuck on the walls, and we may have been surrounded with the pictures. I can't remember what we might have been surrounded by, but...

Were you interested in any particular period, or did anything seize your imagination?

No I don't think so. I suppose I was interested...I can remember writing pieces on Rubens, I can remember Michelangelo and I can remember all the things that I mentioned. I suppose, I'm just trying to think what that book had to offer to me. But I suppose the fact that, you know, if Roger Watson was doing things that looked a bit like Bernard Buffet, which I thought, you know, I suppose it was pretty impressive to a young lad like me, I was doing things in which I was playing around with Cubism. I mean I was doing still lifes, which I suppose I must have been 16 or so, and which actually, you know, using school dinner tins as kind of still life material. I can remember kind of organisationally being aware of what Cubism could offer in terms of being able to organise pictorial space in a different way to purely representational space.

But you were working much more in sculpture than painting and drawing?

I made paintings and collages, and also made sculpture too. So I think probably, I only made at the time one or two sculptures and this particular sculpture which I did make was taken by the head of Bristol's art education department to a conference on what was achievable in schools, so I was quite proud of that. I remember the base was an old desk top, and then the thing was made of wire bound together, and now belongs, it was bought, probably for a fiver, by Gerald Forcey, who I mentioned last week as being, well he was a `Guardian' journalist in Manchester and then became an announcer for the BBC.

He was with the `Guardian'?

Yes, the `Manchester Guardian'.

Oh sorry, I didn't hear you. What was he like? He sounds as if he's someone that did have quite an influence on you.

Well he was an influence inasmuch as my brother had very very close friends from school and from university, and for some reason I suppose, I was that much younger than all my brothers and that much younger than him, Gerald for example had a sister, he didn't have a younger brother, and seemed to be rather interested in nurturing my potential that possibly he and my brother had spotted. I mentioned before he bought me my first set of oil paints, and I must have been at school then.

And was he at university or had he already left?

He had gone to Bristol University, where he studied languages, but don't forget he was, I think he was even older than my brother so he was thirteen years older than me, and at that particular moment in time he would have been working for the `Western Daily Press' as a journalist before he went to the `Manchester Guardian'.

What was he like?

A super generous sort of person. I mean, you don't expect to have attention lavished on you by, in any form really, from older people who weren't your brothers, and I had plenty of brothers around, but we're talking about here, one brother who at the age of 18 was married, another brother who was busy getting on with his life. Then my brother's friends almost became surrogate older brother in a way inasmuch as they seemed to have an interest in, maybe John's being my brother who wasn't around because he was either in York or in his National Service, or wherever he happened to have been. So it was kind of interesting that... But it's interesting also in the context of my own children who went to public school, their friends come around, and my brother's friends came around as a matter of, you know... Because when they were at school they would have come to us possibly because they couldn't go home on weekends or something, so they would come to us for tea or something, so they would come and visit us, just like my daughters' friends come and visit us too. So it was a different kind of cultural network from public school, and I seemed to have been

picked up because I was the one at home when they came to visit, so they, you know, showed an interest in me because of that sort of thing, you know.

But Gerald Forcey was the most important one?

Gerald, yes, I suppose he was. Gerald also played tennis. He said to me once upon a time when I was really quite small, you know, he would teach me to play tennis, so we played tennis, just the pair of us, I mean he was that much older, but he said, `When you can see the base line across the net, then you'll really be tall enough to play tennis'. I don't think I can still see the base line above the net. [LAUGHS] But one of the nice things then was that in those days when Gerald was a journalist, I met Brian Baron, who then was quite a well-known correspondent - that was when I was tiny, really young - and I was given by Gerald Brian Baron's Green Flash Dunlop tennis racket, which I treasured for a while, and of course he's popped up all over the world on television, he probably doesn't know that I had his tennis racket, but nevertheless, again one of those little connections, and it's a connection I suppose which means that people that even you know from Bedminster district, you know, have kind of gone on to do extraordinary things, have become high achievers I suppose.

Do you think that they were the people outside of the family that were the most important and had the most influence on you?

I think probably Gerald was important. I think I mentioned before that he gave me my first classical record, which was Beethoven's 7th, Klemperer, the Berlin Philharmonic, probably still got it somewhere, scratched to death by my children who don't know how to look after records. But I'm, you know, I think that in terms of importance I would have said that, you know, Gerald was someone who kind of encouraged me early on, because he bought me paints and I wanted to use them, and then I was interested that someone should give me an opportunity of doing something that I wouldn't otherwise have...I don't think, I suppose I would have ended up with oil paints anyway somewhere along the line.

This was before you were using them at school then?

We never used oil paints at school, just, you know, tempera, powder paints and stuff.

How were you taught art?

Interesting. I suppose we were taught through observation initially, through drawing and observation. I can remember once saying to Roger Watson, when he asked us to choose something to draw, and I chose something, I think it was a cornflower, and he said that was particularly difficult, and I said, `That's why I chose it,' and he thought that was really very good. [LAUGHS] Yes it's funny. Also, I can remember doing a drawing of the inside of a trawler, it was the bridge of a trawler in a storm, and I can remember the perspective was tilted, which was another reason that someone commented on how curious that was and how difficult it was to do, you know. So I quite liked the idea of taking on difficult things.

Did you already have a sense of wanting to be an artist?

I suppose that came in a bit of a...yes I suppose so, I suppose so. I suppose when I was at school and achieving something in art, that going into art was probably something that I was going to do. I remember there were three things I was interested in, the Fleet Air Arm, farming, and art. And I suppose the Fleet Air Arm would have been something... I mean the Navy was in the family; the idea of flying maybe was something that was all related to my drawing aeroplanes when I was a kid. Someone told me that, I had a friend, Andy Shepherd, who became a tug-boat captain, and his sister was married to a guy who in the Air Force, and he said, `If you saw how big an aircraft carrier was from the air, and you were expected to land on it, you wouldn't want to be in the Fleet Air Arm.' Anyway you needed science and all that sort of stuff and obviously I wasn't going to achieve that.

So this is the Naval division of the Air Force, was it?

The Fleet Air Arm is the air wing, aircraft carriers, aeroplanes that live on aircraft carriers, so it's the Navy, but you know, flying aeroplanes in the Navy. Seemed like a good idea at the time.

Were people, do you think, encouraging you to be an artist, your teachers, your family?

I think so. I mean that was really at the end of the day I think where it made sense, was you know, one was expected to look at what one might do, where one would go on to from the secondary school. And, I mean I was interested in sport, and I was good at it, I captained every rugby team in my school from the first year to the lower sixth form, and I think probably the first team when the other, when the captain who normally captained, who was the school captain wasn't playing. I captained my house team. I even captained my house team when the head of school was in my team, but he wasn't able to captain the rugby team so I... So anyway I was a reasonably high achiever in rugby.

It must have made you very popular all this sport prowess.

Well my wife reminds me that she remembers hearing a mother complaining about the way I shouted at their children, mothers complaining about the way I shouted at their children on the rugby pitch. [LAUGHS] It wasn't the place for the faint-hearted or for mothers really, watching rugby. And I also played for my junior all-boys team, I was captain of that, and I took it all very seriously, and I used to go to meetings all the time to select teams and stuff. So I took the responsibility seriously doing that kind of thing.

But you weren't tempted to be a professional sportsman?

Well I suppose to an extent I was still interested in sport at a reasonably high level, having, I played for Bristol Colts, which is an under-18s team, and in the period leading up to when I went to art school after my foundation I chose, well I went to Loughborough where I was hoping that I might play for Loughborough College, and

maybe develop my sporting achievements along those lines, but I broke a collar bone just as I left to go up to college, and discovered Loughborough to be such a hole that I didn't want to stay there, so I left after a term - after a year, to go to the Central School. But that's again maybe leaping forward a bit.

But your art teachers were encouraging you to carry on with art?

Oh very much so. I mean we...some of my...I think I still have some of my work from the early days which were my application to art school, and I remember my interviewing panel asked me if I had done a particular painting, which I had done from my bedroom window, yes, so I was kind of, I think I was flattered because I think that was probably what they were getting at, otherwise I thought it was terrible, but... Yes, it just, things just happened to fall away I suppose in terms of what one was best at, and I was best at art.

So it wasn't exactly a passion.

Oh, no I think it was very much...I mean in terms of the way it was working through what was happening in school, and how one was achieving then, I mean don't forget I played a lot of rugby and a lot of cricket, and I suppose in terms of devotion I was involved in physical sports, but then, you know, as art emerged as something that I was going to become increasingly involved with, I mean the door was opening firmly.

What were you looking at at the time?

Well I suppose I was looking at Picasso as much as anything, I mean, if...we were looking at...and I suppose Henry Moore. We were looking at sculpture, and it was modern, we weren't looking at... I suppose that was quite an interesting thing really, we weren't just sitting down in front of, you know, whatever still lifes and copying what was there, just like we weren't really making figurative sculptures which might have been rather more of what one would have expected from a secondary school background; we had young teachers who were really introducing us to what was going on.

Was this in reproduction?

Yes, yes photographs and reproductions. I don't suppose we really had access, I'm not sure, even as a group, if we ever went to see a major exhibition of anything. We may have visited the art school to see what was going on there. But no, it was visual arts. I'm not saying that when I was going into the visual arts that I had a clear idea that I was going to become an artist, I might have become a graphic designer. I mean I think probably if I thought about how things were going to go, making a living out of being an artist was something that one could identify in graphic design or industrial design, so I suppose one thought along, given my practical training from school as much as anything else that, you know, the use of what one was making and designing as a commodity might have been something that was in the ascendancy really in terms of how one might have envisaged moving on as an artist.

Were there any other family members that were encouraging you?

Probably in sport. A little bit in music; I did try playing the guitar at one point and I had brothers interested in rock'n'roll, who thought I probably, you know, might make it as a musician playing the guitar, or, Acker Bilk was big and the clarinet I think was also considered at one point. But, no, I think probably my brothers' achievements were in the sporting domain, my younger brothers, the ones who were nearer to me at home, and we all played cricket. John was already gone off to wherever he happened to be in the world, but my other two brothers were Bristol based still at this point and we all played cricket for our local club.

What about the uncles and aunts, were any of those particularly important?

No, not really. Loved for their kind of natures, but not in any way. I mean I would have said that in terms of the aspirations of my family as a whole was either working class white collar or white collar perhaps imagining that they were middle class, but really only being white collar lower middle class if you can consider that, and one or two or three of them may have owned their own houses, but others didn't. I had one

cousin who was king of the Teds in Bristol, even, so, Uncle Joe and Aunty Ida were the loveliest, dearest of people, had a son who was an absolute wayward, crazy.

Were you close to him?

Not really. I suppose he was an absolute shame for the whole family, that was Tony.

But weren't you rather proud of him?

Oh it was Mike, sorry, he was called Mike, Mike McGill. In retrospect much more so, but really he was weird. He went off, he was known to go off with girls, I think in a Comma van, and he had `Love and Hate' engraved upon it and on his knuckles.

Did you see him much?

Not a lot, hardly ever really, but he was a bit of an enigma in a way, someone that people were trying to keep hidden. My mother talked of the shame perhaps of poor Uncle Joe and Aunt Ida. It's quite funny really.

Were you close to them?

As much as we were close to any other members of the family. No, my mother, you know, was always, if anybody was ill my mother would go and visit them, or go and help out. Generous with her time. But, yes I suppose as much as any family sort of stay close. We weren't...

I just wondered if there were any particular members of the family that you were close to.

No, not at all. I suppose my mother's younger sister, Rene, Irene, she's still alive. My mother would always go and help her relations. One of the, my father's sister who married my mother's brother, of the three couples on each side of the family who married each other, had Parkinson's disease, and my mother used to go and look after

her every week, used to go and spend the day with her. So one kind of was in contact with members of the family if my mother had contact with them. When my gran used to live with Aunt Mildred and Uncle Frank I would go and visit Gran, you know, every couple of months or so and see them, they were my godparents.

Yes you mentioned them before. What were they like?

Well she, my Aunt Mildred was very glamorous, and I liked that, she was nice, because she always wore big amethyst rings and earrings, and she was dark and really quite vivacious, lively, different kind of character. I think her...she had a nephew who was an artist, who she was terribly proud of; she was always terribly proud of her son. But her son, Bob, my cousin, was born without a hand, had a stump, a `fisty' it was known as in the family, and so they never had any children again after that, probably for that reason, just in case there was...I don't know what it was about but anyway... But they were lovely. She spoilt her son and everything about her side of the family was magnificent. Possibly because of John's success on our side of the family she maybe was quite competitive. Whereas everybody else was reasonably proud and accepted that it had happened, as far as she was concerned, you know, her pride and joy had to be better or, you know, if there was someone she knew who was better, you know... That's the type.

And Frank?

Frank, lovely man. He was torpedoed in the war. A very very quiet and unassuming sort of man, but a very very sweet, gentle person, who has just had a heart attack.

And as your godparents, did they have much effect?

They gave me a Bible, and that's it. [LAUGHS]

But your own life must have been opening up a lot then, by the time you went to the big school; you must have been much more independent of your family. You mentioned a friend, was it Andy Gold...?

Oh, no, not Andy. Andy Shepherd, became the tug-boat captain. But remember I was captain of the rugby team so I had a kind of quite, a direct, pretty close relationship with a lot of blokes, I mean socially there were a lot of friends. And he was, I was quite close with Andy. I was still very very interested in nature, I would go off walking in the countryside, we would be climbing trees looking for birds' eggs, it's something that sort of carried on I suppose, and if one was in the country one, you know, you would go for walks, you know, not exactly looking for mischief but, you know. There was a big old country house just on the edge of Bristol which has since become a conference centre which belonged to the Smythe family, my granny was an under-stairs maid there when she was a girl, and that place was basically derelict, it was left locked up, and we sort of would find a way in and would just kind of wander through this extraordinary house which had a padded cell even somewhere which probably some mad member of the family was locked up in.

Was that the granny that lived at home?

The granny that lived at home when she was a girl, yes, when she was...that was when she was a Bush I suppose.

That was her maiden name?

Mm.

Did she tell you stories about being a maid there?

Not at all, not at all. But then again Aunt Rene would probably have to fill us in on some of that.

Is Aunt Rene the one that's been revealing all the family secrets lately?

Yes, that's right, that's right. She's still got a very very good clear mind. The last time I spoke to her I wrote, I drew out this little family tree from that side of the family,

and it's interesting, and I must also try and get her to remember more about my father's side of the family because I don't really know how else one will ever find out about it. But, no it's kind of, it was kind of interesting.

End of F4916 Side

F4916 Side B

We were talking about your Aunt Rene briefly and you were telling me what she was like.

She was quite like my mother in a way.

Or is like.

Is like. Aunt Rene. Aunt Rene, oh I don't know really, I don't know what to say about Aunt Rene, she's just one of the family, my mother's younger sister, and she is just a very very nice lady. She had a small family I suppose as far as those days were concerned, two children, a boy and a girl, perfect family. Her husband worked for the Post Office, but he unlike the rest of us was in the Air Force, unlike the rest of the family was in the Air Force, as a, I'm not quite sure what rank he had but nevertheless he was in the Air Force, that gave him a certain special kind of status, and I think he was sort of managerial in the Post Office.

What was his name?

Fred Fraser. And they had what was considered to be a nice house in King's Head Lane in Bishopsworth, and that's now been passed on to the daughter. Like my mother she was quite a sociable lady. Her husband died a long time ago, when I was quite young, so she was unfortunate to be widowed probably when I was in my teens, early teens, so it made her kind of apart in a way. And like my mother became an active member of the British Legion in Bishopsworth branch.

You haven't mention that about your mother before.

No. My mother was a great one for...I mentioned that my mother was supportive, competitive etcetera, and I suppose in later life she became quite competitive at skittles.

What does the British Legion do?

The British Legion? Well they're social clubs like, almost like working men's clubs, but they're orientated around servicemen, ex-servicemen, and they have the annual Poppy Day appeal, the Hague Fund, which is one of their great sort of fund-raising activities which culminates in the great bash at the Royal Albert Hall once a year. But my mother was a great collector for the Poppy Day appeal and she was always there or thereabouts and collecting the most, and even when she was dying of cancer she, you know, she was busy collecting.

Your mother died of cancer?

Yes. Busy collecting money for Poppy Day appeals rather than sort of finding out what was wrong with her herself. And I think to an extent she died unnecessarily quickly because there was something wrong and no one really spotted it, which was rather sad, and that's one of the things I suppose about not living at home, that we lost sight of, you know, maybe the fact that she was...there was something rather more wrong with her than the fact that she had some new false teeth.

When did she die?

In 1980.

And what about your father?

And my father survived another four years, but felt particularly sorry about life without her really, not really sure he would go on. I think also my father suffered from the fact that, you know, retirement meant that you basically became redundant in life, and for a period of time after he retired from the Prudential he was very good with figures and stuff and he got a job with the Inland Revenue tax collecting working in an office, and found that he was working but all his money was being taxed; he was either losing his pension or not getting any income, so he was working for nothing. One of these awful aberrations in if you like contemporary society when it comes to

this new concept anyway which is obviously the only way we can go forward; it's not a new concept, it's so blinking obvious that, you know, people should only retire when they feel like retiring. And so the answer to the problem about you know, having a geriatric society, only it has that kind of stigma if you think about it in the context of old people being redundant, and old people are quite capable of carrying on and being, you know, contributing members of society. And my father unfortunately, you know, I mean just because of the sheer kind of logic of numbers was rather less concerned about the therapy side of keeping busy, and so gave that up because there was nothing in it financially, and thought maybe he should enjoy his retirement, but my mother died and there wasn't really very much left for him really.

Did you see your parents much later on?

No, it was rather sad. I mean I suppose it's one of those things that, I had a young family, myself in London, I was teaching in Newport in South Wales and every week I went to teach in Newport and drove past Bristol almost, you know, almost all the time, I mean maybe one in ten times I might stop, you know, but I didn't visit as often as I ought to have. So I feel a little bit sorry that I didn't spend more time dropping in on them.

Did they take an interest in your career?

I involved them wherever I could. I think they were quite proud of the fact that things were happening. I mean they came, both came to see my exhibition at the Hayward Gallery while I was involved in one of the Hayward Opens, you know. I think that was probably the most significant sort of exposure of my work when they were alive. Yes, I mean I think generally they were kind of proud anyway of having four boys who sort of all survived, became sort of strong, straight and healthy and had families. I'm sure my mother would have been devastated by the fact that one of my brothers' families broke up, I mean recent, not so long ago. So I think we've all tended to have a sort of a sense of a family sticking together, and the fact that one of the families broke up would have been awful for her.

But to go back to the school years we were talking about, Stephen, would you say that your social life at that time was mainly structured round sports that you were playing?

Yes, sports and other things. I suppose there was...we had a young old boys' society, which, we were given rather an interesting room in the school, and it was a place where some fifth formers, lower and upper sixth actually had as a common room, and from that sort of rather interesting, rather more ambitious and interesting things happened. So we organised caving trips to the Mendips and we did hiking across the Mendips in the middle of the night in the middle of winter. One extraordinary trip we did in fact there were about a dozen of us and my father I remember drove us off, some of us, and one of the boys had a car, and we drove off into the Mendips about 7 o'clock in the evening on a winter's night, and we were just dropped, and we then set about hiking. I don't think any of us had really ever read a map before, one of us might have, and so there was a leader. And we were a kind of a ramshackle mob of all people trying to be fashionable and hikers at the same time, and I remember that the school captain, Bob Thomas, was in a pair of sort of leather, kind of leather pull-on boots that were rather more like cowboy boots, and it wasn't, you know, only after a few miles his sort of feet were in a terrible state, and most other people hadn't really done any walking across rough areas. I mean the Mendips in certain parts is amongst the roughest country in Britain. And it was kind of drizzly and we were kind of crawling through streams and God knows what, and sort of sometime I think in the middle of the night, it was a moonlit night, we decided to sort of pitch the tent and, you know, it was just kind of extraordinary self-inflicted hardship. I know that in the morning in one particular place, we had stopped by this place called Priddy Pool, and we all put in 10p or something, and we bet Bob Thomas, this was the English backstroke champion, that he wouldn't swim across Priddy Pool, this was in mid-winter. Anyway he said he would do it, as long as we built a fire. So we built a fire and this guy, in the middle of the winter, was like having to crack the ice to get into this blinking pond, swam right across the pond and back. Mad things like that, and we used to have parties and events. I suppose we saw ourselves as on the edge of almost being students, and so we had rather nice parties at boat clubs and things in different parts of rivers around about Bristol. So it was a kind of a different sort of social thing happening which wasn't just, you know, after...I mean I'm talking about

being 15 and 16 but we still used to go to the pub after rugby, you know, and drink before we should have, all those sorts of things. Even in those days, I mentioned my school teachers in the art room when I was there, I suppose 15 I was designing and painting posters for the jazz club that they played jazz for in a pub near the school, and we used to go, at the age of 15 we used to go along to the jazz club and drink with the teachers.

I expect you had girls along with you by this time.

No, unfortunately not. I think that was, one had to wait until art school before I think the girls came along really, although I had friends who were always reckoned to be pretty active with girls, and I think they used to feel sorry... I played so much sport that my friends often seemed to have more spare time than me and they seemed to have girlfriends before me. They used to feel sorry for me and sort of try fixing me up occasionally. I remember going on a blind date once and waiting about three hours outside the cinema for a girl to turn up and I didn't know who she was, and I remember asking three or four girls who were also waiting if they were the person I was supposed to meet, suffering the ignominy of it not being them, and ending up walking away. [LAUGHS]

But you did mention a girl earlier, didn't you, or you said your so-called girlfriend who was the...the local family.

Oh right, Mary Richards, yes. Yes I suppose a string of girlfriends from...so-called girlfriends, but... I used to put Payne's Poppets in her desk on Valentine's Day. That was at infants school. That was when I was 6. [LAUGHS] So, and...yes, Postman's Knock at parties I remember, that was... You don't want to hear more of that. [LAUGHS]

Maybe I do.

Kissing behind the sofa, yes. Seemed to know what to do with girls, you know, kissing them and things.

But, then you went on to, the West of England Art School?

That's right. What was then called pre-diploma.

And what was that like?

It was terrific, absolutely amazing. There was a fellow called Dennis Curry who headed the department, and a man called Neil Murrison[ph]. And, it seemed to me that they had this kind of schedule to sort of wipe out any preconceptions you might have had about what being an artist or being a designer or going to art school was all about. And what was wonderful was that we had just taken over a new annex building in Redland, away from the main part of the West of England College of Art, which was in Clifton, and so this rather nice Victorian house, very big Victorian house, was just taken over as an art school, and you know, it had wallpaper on the walls from whoever was living there before, and we just set about turning it into an art environment. And so we were given all sorts of things to do in groups; it was almost like callisthenics, you know, as a group you would all, you know... I can remember drawing ovals on the wall with left and right hand, you know, and painting, and then developing these things into painting directly on the walls. And then there was the usual sort of thing, I suppose studying from nature and making objects and things that were to do with analyses of structure, and life drawing, I suppose, you know, the life drawing class for the first time must have been, you know, I mean it was quite an event really. Ladies with no clothes on for the first time for real instead of in picture books and the newsagents' window. But, yes it was a part of the kind of introduction to art school life.

So you weren't then oriented to sculpture?

No I wasn't. I remember, I suppose painting. I remember some sculptural objects that I made which were...

What were they?

Oh well I remember making...well two things. One was, I made an object which actually was a commission in a way, I made a small sculpture which was not dissimilar to the one that I had made at school which was these two figures. But I mean that wasn't really out of the teaching at the school, so this was a little commission and these were rather like karate figures fighting, I remember again using the sort of technique of Futurist planal extension in this little group. That was in plaster. But I made something that was to do with an analysis of ash-keys or sycamore-keys, which was an analysis, and it was, which involved a sort of a welded frame with sort of planes of plaster. I loved plaster, I loved...rubbed or, rubbed down, polished plaster, it was a very very beautiful surface, which I had learned from these other things that I had been working on. So that was one small object I remember making. Otherwise I really haven't got much of a recollection of the things that I did except there were lots of tests and studies and this and that.

And this is painting and drawing?

Painting, drawing, and I suppose sculpture. We had a rather good garden, and we did things with coloured boards, and this when we were playing around with ideas of perception, diagrams, colour, Goethe and, you know, how colours operate and the theory. We also did a day, a release to the main college at Clifton each week, we would go to be introduced to other aspects of, I mean specialist areas for example, we did graphic design, and I remember it was Richard Hollis who talked on graphic design, and Richard has just designed my book. And then there was a fellow called Ron Fuller, who had been at the Royal College with David Hockney, a print-maker, and we had David Hockney etchings just thumb-tacked to the wall of the etching room, I remember that quite distinctly.

Did they make an impact on you?

Very, very much. I remember when my, I suppose my etchings were actually done on aluminium plate and were kind of playing around I suppose with a certain kind of image-making that might have, let's say depended upon a knowledge of Hockney.

He must have already had a reputation by then.

He did. In fact whilst I was a student at Bristol he came and gave a lecture to the amassed college, and that was, I mean the lecture theatre was packed to the gunnells, and he talked, and he was, I mean he was brilliant, very very extraordinary.

Do you remember what he was talking about?

Well I suppose he was going through his work and talking about the ideas of, you know, how boys interested him and how white socks were particularly of interest. And he liked the hair on the thigh of a particular photograph that he was looking at of a naked man, and he liked the way that, you know, a plastic shower screen would sort of semi-obscure something. He liked the way that water came out of a nozzle. That sort of thing, you know.

Was it inspiring?

Oh I think it was quite inspiring, because I suppose it just, it really showed a personal vision of things, and how kind of salient, as a kind of a subject matter for an artist that was, and you know, it... There was a strong sense of history; I mean you could see, you know, if there was something Matissian in a curtain, and I think he may have mentioned even Matisse I'm not sure. But there was something about the, there was a live artist, a famous artist who was alive, who was standing in front of you, it was like an affirmation of what else one had ever seen only in prints, and it's rather interesting that, you know, my brother's become very friendly with David Hockney and has designed several operas for my brother.

And that was much later was it?

Much much later, and I've met David several times since so, you know, I got to know him through my brother, interestingly, rather than the other way around.

Who else would you have been looking at at that time?

I think probably the influence of one's immediate teachers are significant.

Well tell me about them.

Well, there were people like...well painters like Paul Fyler, who was someone who to an extent was associated with the American, Washington school, I believe it would be fair to say that, who was the head of painting. There was a guy called Ernie Pascoe who used to make rather more ecclesiastical sort of things I recall, churches and things. But there was a sort of a, there was stuff being made by professional artists. It was interesting that I think rather surprisingly, there was a guy called Paul Rogers who was a print-maker who was brilliant, one could see that as a first-year student, and he also...

Could you work with these people?

One got to know them only vaguely, because one, you know, one was a bit of a lad I suppose around the place, so older students one got to know.

These were other students rather than teaching then?

Students, I'm just now talking about one or two students, and it was rather interesting to see that, you know, if David Hockney wasn't very, you know, was still a young artist, there were students who one was impressed by, and this guy Paul Rogers I mentioned in the print-making, who I think ended up in London, was a very very brilliant young graphic artist who fell foul of the authorities in the college I think because he was having an affair with the wife of one of the tutors. Happened to my tutor I think. And there was Richard Long was in the process of being expelled because his work was considered to be inappropriate or not thorough, or not a part of the course. And at the time I can recall, I may be completely wrong but my image is of him doing almost miniatures of landscapes, very very intense rather beautiful poetic little miniatures, but you know, with amazing magic to them, I remember that.

And on the other hand, whereas people like this boy who was about to get, you know, having trouble for one reason, he was a brilliant artist, a brilliant graphic artist, and Richard Long who had his principles and was prepared to stand by them, you know, before he got chucked out of the West of England College of Art, there was someone like Carl Plackman, who was, you know, like the ideal student, he had just gone through his N.D.D., the Dip.A.D. had just been instituted and he managed to get a transfer to be able to do the Dip.A.D. which meant another three years at college, and I think eventually he went to the Royal College, so I mean he was a professional sort of student, but you know, a very very accomplished draughtsman and a very very good sculptor.

How did the art school system work then?

Well from the N.D.D., which was rather orientated towards sort of a programmatic introduction to all sorts of traditional ways of working, both in the figure and from if you like letter-cutting, if you were involved in sculpture, and you know, it was really much more ordered in terms of what you would learn and what you would pass your, you know, pass your various kind of tests on, which I wasn't involved with. But the Dip.A.D. was a new system that had been devised under, or out of, a Summerson Report, which was to look into art schools, in which there was much kind of fear and onus put upon students to, like I suppose in a university context in a way, to pursue their own study in a way that was then followed by a close tutorial system on a one-to-one basis for those ideas to be generated and developed. Also giving a kind of primacy to the fine arts within an institute of art education, which I suppose was always, you know, was always the way that art schools have been run since, and possibly it's changing now.

And you thought that was an improvement?

I didn't really know enough about N.D.D. to be able to judge, but I certainly felt the way things were in terms of how I found art education, I thought it was incredibly stimulating, a brilliant education.

Any other students who you remember?

No. Well I remember faces and people, I don't think, you know... There were a couple of Welsh guys, one played rugby for Neith, called Don - or was that not Don? Maybe that was not Don. There was another fellow. Oh I can't remember. There seemed to be quite a lot of young talented people. It's rather interesting that however small the art world is, I don't think I've bumped into anybody who I knew from foundation, or my pre-diploma. There was one very very talented guy, and I suppose I learnt a lesson in a way early on about someone with a natural talent who came to an art school, I've forgotten this fellow's name, but he was a quite brilliant draughtsman, and basically wouldn't listen to anything that was being taught to him. I mean he didn't like the idea of this kind of performance of doing what you were doing with, you know, I suppose abstract notions or concepts of art that were being promulgated at the time, and I think probably it may have been somebody who just went by the wayside, you know, like so many people who have got a natural talent and won't listen, because it's only a stage, it's only a part, it's an attribute as an artist amongst lots of other things. It was a great year, and I fell in love with a girl called Julie Buchanan, who ended up going to St. Martin's to do graphic design.

Was she another student there?

She was a student, yes, in the same year as me, and that was I suppose a part of, very much a part of growing up.

Made it a nice year.

It made it a nice year, yes, my first real love affair.

And what about the two teachers you mentioned who were important?

Well, the two that I mentioned who were teaching in the foundation studies department, people like Dennis Curry, Dennis Curry was an absolute nutter. It was rather nice to see recently when Richard Long had a big exhibition at the Hayward

Gallery that he had invited Dennis Curry to be there; I think he now lives in Wales, he hasn't changed much, a few more wrinkles I suppose. And he's one of these crazy people, he's a crazy inasmuch as, Dennis's thing as an artist wasn't to do with painting or sculpture, he was trying to make a flying machine, and so he would build these fantastic contraptions, you know, in which he showed little sort of 8mm films of him being strapped into some sort of Icarus-like winged structure in which he had done all the sort of analysis of modern materials to make wings with, but somehow, you know, there was never any chance that they were ever going to work. I mean he was probably the first person to decline the opportunity of using a hang-glider for example, that was probably the total fear of actually having to fly. But rather funny to see these sort of pictures of him in these sort of body harnesses going up and down like some kind of extraordinary doll being flexed in which he would just kind of keel over and fall to the ground with people rushing to hold him up.

How do you think he influenced you?

I think probably his course was so good because I think it probably did the trick in terms of, you know, breaking down notions, pre-conceived notions of what art school might have been about, and opening up all sorts of possibility to whatever art could be. And so that was really quite a significant thing. And Neil Murrison[ph] had in fact been an art teacher at Q.E.H, my brother's school, and I think there was some kind of recollection, maybe because he had been to Q.E.H. in the past, but there was still very much a kind of a sense of, you know, Bristol orientation. There was another person, I remember there was a fellow called Hobbs, Hobbs, I forgot his first name, who was a painter, who came to give a talk to us once, and he sort of said something interesting. I don't think he was so famous as to think that, you know, what he had to say was going to be something that we had to live or die by, but he was someone who, in showing his work would show an extraordinary variety of things, you know, he was showing paintings and sculptures and different stylistic things. So he was actually going on about experimentation. So I can remember that as being something which I felt was a significant thing in a way that one should never deny oneself the opportunity of doing whatever one felt like pursuing, you know, however, whatever it might have been, whether it was figurative or abstract or whether it was painting or

sculpture, that you know, it was there for you to experiment with, in any opportunity really.

Were you working more with abstraction at that time?

I suppose abstraction was opening up, but I suppose there was always some kind of figurative input really at that time.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

What about your life at this time, what was your girlfriend like?

What was she like? She was blonde, she had a nice bottom, she was quite short. And, actually it's interesting, she had been to Bedales and so she had just come out of a completely different kind of background to me. Her mother lived on the south side of the Mendip Hills. And I think we were quite close for, you know, as long as we were students, it was rather a nice kind of companionship, and as I mentioned before we travelled to Italy together, hitchhiking. So we became to an extent relatively inseparable for the time that we were together, which was probably a year or so, or less than a year.

So what would your social life have been like at that time?

Oh I suppose pubs and dancing and, you know, I mean I would go to weekends down to her parents' - her mother's house, her father was dead.

And what was that like?

It was a wonderful little cottage in the town of Westbury-sub-Mendip, famous because they discovered some IRA bombers there recently, otherwise it's on the edge of the moors of the, what are they called, the Levels, near Sedgemoor I suppose, quite a...

Was that like going into quite a different world from your own family?

Yes it was, I mean both her and her brother was at Bedales, her sister had been to another private school somewhere, her sister was married to a farmer. Her mother had been, they owned a house in Kensington, and her mother had been to the Slade when it had been a finishing school, that sort of thing, and she, her mother was a very very extraordinary sort of...

What do you mean by that, when the Slade was a finishing school?

[LAUGHS] Well, my notion, I'd been given the notion that the Slade had been a place, you know, that ladies went to finish their education, rather more than it was sort of a serious art school training artists, that kind of thing.

And was that the time when Sickert taught there and all of his circle of ladies?

Probably, I'm not quite sure, she might have been old enough to be one of them. I suppose she was, her mother was really quite old so I suppose her mother must have been in her sixties. Yes. And she had two plaited buns over her ears, so I mean it was that kind of...you know, she looked the part. Great long skirts in flannel.

How did people feel about you going off to Italy with this girlfriend?

I suppose they accepted that was the sort of thing that people did at art school, from art school, and you know, maybe it was a part of this new liberal...I mean this was don't forget the late Sixties. Another person who came to teach us when we were on foundation, she actually gave a lecture, I think it was in collaboration with the art school but the audience was expected to be so big it was given in...oh it was given in conjunction with a fashion parade in Maggs', which is a big departmental store in Clifton, that was Mary Quant. So, we're talking about the Sixties, mid-Sixties, we're talking about really when things were happening in England in terms of a liberal attitude to life. In fact the other social event was that we were asked, we were all co-opted from the college to be extras in an arts ball at the Pump Rooms in Bath for a

film with the Dave Clark Five, `Catch Us If You Can'. And we all went off in buses dressed in fancy dress one morning to go to Bath, that was kind of weird, all those kind of crazy arts events that... So...

But after this you leave Bristol in fact, don't you.

Yes. I wanted to go to London to St. Martin's, that was the place to be, and my girlfriend had already been accepted to do graphics there, but I failed unfortunately. In fact I failed to get into St. Martin's from just application.

But just before you went to Loughborough, is that when you went to Italy?

That's right, yes. That would have been in...yes that's right, it would have been...it would have been in the...yes it would have been the summer before that. So yes, so my life kind of collapsed after that period I suppose.

Why do you say that?

Well I suppose my girlfriend went to London and I went to the countryside, countryside being Loughborough.

And did the relationship with her finish when she went to London?

More or less, yes.

And how did you feel about that?

Devastated, terrible, I felt awful. When I say awful, isolated because I was in a town in the middle of nowhere nursing a broken collar bone so I couldn't play rugby, which was my.....

End of F4916 Side B

F4917 Side A

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 20th of June 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Stephen, I just wanted to ask you about the trip to Italy you made when you left the West of England Art College. I know you had a very good time, but I wondered whether it was important for you artistically.

I think all my trips abroad for so-called holidays are important. I always seem to go to places that are going to be of cultural interest and stimulus. I think in particular, besides the fact that if there was a holiday side to that visit, I visited the Dolomites and the region around where Menotti's villa at Santa Cristina was, was certainly a side of Italy that I had never appreciated before, that very beautiful mountainous region. But then moving down through Italy via Venice also, I'm not sure if that was my first visit to Venice or not; if it was my first visit to Venice then of course Venice is an extraordinary experience for anybody.

I wondered if you remembered any particular works of art that you had seen that time.

Well I've been to Venice so many times now that I can't really single out anything in particular. I think perhaps one will just have to say the experience of seeing a city suspended in the middle of a sea is something in itself just architecturally extraordinary.

And didn't you make a trip to Rome?

I made a trip to Rome at the same time, so between the trip to Venice and the trip to Rome, yes one took in a few other things on the way. It's difficult I suppose to explain. I know that there have been things in my life when I've seen things that have actually stayed with me as an image, but I think perhaps as time has gone by the many many, or the myriad experiences of one's life have tended to kind of melt into a general sense of an experience, and so, the occasional thing hits me these days; in

those days I'm sure just about everything struck me as being just absolutely extraordinary and it's difficult to single individual things out. I'm sure it's going to be one of those moments that will come back to me later that, oh yes, that was absolutely extraordinary. But, no I think that just the sense of the city, the absolutely fantastic nature of Venice in itself.

And I know you went to Spain with this school choir, but did you not have another trip to Spain?

I did. I think perhaps I went to Spain either between school and college or after my...it must have been between school and college. I'm not quite sure why but I did have a very strong view of going to Spain to study Gaudí, to look at Gaudí, and I'm not quite sure how, in historical terms, in terms of what I was up to, where my particular interest in Gaudí would have come from, because I can't imagine it was something that I was specifically targeting as an interest between school and college. But nevertheless having gone only to northern Spain, to Catalonia with the school choir, it was another trip with a friend hitchhiking, a guy called Geoff Keynes, that, we hitchhiked down through France and ended up in Barcelona and we never went any further south than the beaches just outside of Barcelona. In those days it seemed pretty fantastic in itself. And I've not been back to Spain since, haven't been any further south, so I've only known, you know, the emergent holiday areas of the Tossa de Mar, you know, that's the only part of Spain I know.

And did Gaudí make a big impact on you?

Oh absolutely, yes. I know, I think that Gaudí was going to be a subject of a thesis, and eventually I didn't do Gaudí, but that may have been as into the future as my degree thesis when I was a student at the Central School. But I was very impressed by the business of sort of sculptured architecture, and I was very interested in the mechanisms of his design, his inverted suspended weights and balances to establish the systems of parabolae that are the nature of the structure of the Sagrada Familia for example, and the Parc Guell, the idea of bits and pieces of broken pottery, ceramic,

glass, this kind of child-like play, it was almost like seeing three-dimensional Miró. But, yes.

Was Miró important for you? Picasso was in Barcelona.

I remember, interestingly, going back, I suppose it's exactly the time we're talking about, because, I mentioned before I think the woman who was in Gian Carlo Menotti's entourage was a woman called Wendy Hanson who was the public relations person, representative or whatever for the Beatles, and another woman called Priscilla Morgan who eventually married Isamu Noguchi, and she was very very close to Menotti, I think she wanted to marry Menotti, but maybe didn't appreciate his tendencies not towards getting married, or towards not getting married. But I know that she visited London once and had a meeting with my brother, and I went along and had lunch with them, and we went to the Miró exhibition at the Tate Gallery, and I was very very struck by his first painting that he made in Paris, which included I think some earth that he took with him from Spain, which was almost like a Rousseauian surreal landscape of just mostly fields and buildings. And the big field paintings really that were, I think entitled `Taking a Line for a Walk', or were about taking a line for a walk, basically large fields of green or red with just a dotted line, little starry figure. Those things stuck with me.

What about his sculptures?

His sculptures, I don't think I was looking at sculptures then, I'm not even sure if there were sculptures in that exhibition. And I think probably the later sculptures that I am familiar with are, this kind of great, this this fantastic playfulness. Of course I just think he's a great artist, a great sculptor, and I suppose within the pantheons someone who one has always had to take note of, but I wouldn't have necessarily thought of him as a direct stimulus upon my work, just a part of the business of the language of sculpture that one has absorbed I suppose, or the language of art, painting and sculpture.

When you came back from Italy, you started at Loughborough College of Art didn't you.

Yes.

I don't think that was a good period of your life was it.

No it wasn't, I think it was emotionally distressing in a way because I suppose it was my first..... [BREAK IN RECORDING - NOISE ON MIC] My first relationship. But Loughborough was a shame. One of the things about Loughborough in those days was that it was quite famous for its sport, it was in fact a teacher training college and Loughborough College of Art was a part of the Loughborough colleges; there was a technical college and there was an educational department which had a fantastic rugby team. And I was very fond of rugby, I had played a great deal of rugby, and I had gone, and finally, not having got into a London art school, going to Loughborough was at least an opportunity for me to pursue my ambitions in the field of sport. But I broke my collar bone, I may have already mentioned this, I broke my collar bone the week before I went up to Loughborough.

How did you do that?

Playing rugby for my club side selection matches, what are they called? Trials. And I broke a collar bone. So I went to Loughborough, at least, well the only thing I felt that I was going to get out of Loughborough, which was playing rugby, nursing a broken collar bone and then arriving in Loughborough and finding that it really was sort of culturally the pits. It's kind of a tiny Midland town, it was sort of half-way agricultural, half-way industrial. No sense of any real sort of identifiable culture that I was used to from someone coming from a city that's got a fantastic, I suppose history and general sense of its self historically, coming to what seemed to be a small country town with nothing identifiable as far as I was concerned that I could identify with anyway. So I made a determined effort from the day that I went there that I wasn't going to stay there any longer than necessary. So, I worked very very hard there and decided that the best thing for me to do was to find a way out by applying to

the Royal College or the Slade, and I made during the period before the applications went in, which was probably by the end of the first term, I made enough work to apply to the Royal College and the Slade at the same time. And got into neither, but whilst I was there collecting my portfolios, I put the portfolio together and went along to the Central School, where I had a meeting with Brian Wall, who listened to me sympathetically, especially as I went in and said, `Look, when I was changing my application preferences from my foundation course you gave me to believe that there was a distinct possibility that I would get in simply because you had a very low application, and when I came you in fact...I became very disappointed or disillusioned by the fact that I didn't get through, and it transpired that the reason this was the case was because I didn't have a specific notion of whether I wanted to do painting or sculpture at that time, so my portfolio was rather dual in terms of, you know, two-dimensional and three-dimensional work.' It was probably a stronger tendency towards two-dimensional work, but having come from Loughborough where I had done quite, a bit of sculpture, I managed to persuade him to take me into the second year as a transfer candidate. So that was great, and he said that he would accept me at that particular point, this was in the beginning of the second term. And I had a miserable concluding two terms at Loughborough because they tried to make my life hell, because I wanted to leave, but I stuck it out, and when I did eventually go to the Central School in the beginning of the second year they asked me why I didn't come, join the previous year, because they had written to Loughborough to say, could I be released to come as soon as possible into the transfer. And they hadn't told me. So, they were in the process of trying to expel me from the course because, for various reasons I didn't conform to what they had in mind, although I mean I had done reasonably well, I think. But eventually I got to where I wanted to be, which was in London.

Did you take anything positive from Loughborough, were there any inspired teachers at all?

No, not really. I mean I think they were very...I think British artists who work in art schools are very very good, I wouldn't, you know... Maybe we had personality clashes and in that respect the reasons that they may have had for making my life

uncomfortable were for their own sort of egocentric purposes about the importance of a provincial college, which had a fantastic reputation in the field of design, and they had some very, I can remember a couple of students, one called Dave Morris who was a third-year at the time, I think he's a lecturer now at Liverpool but we're talking about a long long time ago. In fact interestingly last week I gave an address to a, or a lecture and slide talk to a group of inspectors in the visual arts for schools, which was a national convention in the north of England, and two of the people that were there at the convention were two people who were students with me at Loughborough, and it was interesting to hear one of these guys, who I was in digs with, with this big Polish lady who used to serve us potatoes and corned beef I think most of the time, this guy was called Bill Goodall, and in the five minutes we were talking just the other day he was saying, `I remember your work,' he said. `I remember that great big purple fibreglass flower that had a machine inside it to make it wave backwards and forwards.' And, it was really amazing to think that this fellow had had a notion of weird things that I was doing as a student then. And he said it was so different from what anybody else was doing, and he seemed to have an idea that, you know, that I wasn't going to be sticking around in Loughborough and that I would go on. So it was rather interesting to hear, if you like, a student's-eye view of me, we're talking about thirty years after the event.

What was your work like at that time?

Well it was, I suppose it had to be eclectic. I can remember the first thing I did when we were doing some life modelling, I did a life modelling from the head, and I turned the face of my life model into a cast in ciment fondue. I had done some ciment fondue casting in my foundation year in the West of England College of Art, so I had an idea about materials, you know, quite early on. And so I did this thing which became like a mask and then set it into what was like a phrenologist's head, so it was this kind of white head with blue lines where the brain would be, but set into it was a black cast face that had been modelled from the figure. I had done something as well...I suppose the business about men in space was going around at the time. I remember making a strange construction which was like, it was like an articulated prism which was just a black box, I think it was made of hardboard or something

quite simple, but in the middle of it was a lens set into the edge of it, a lens, so you looked into it where, inside which was illuminated was a figure floating in space, then an umbilical cord coming out of its navel, which went through the box and came out of the end of the box and this umbilicum became like a leg which held up one end of the box. It was the idea of a figure floating in space. I'm not even sure if it was, in fact it was long before walking in space, it was to do with man in space if you like as a figure maybe floating in a womb, you know, those photographs?

But did the idea of man in space really capture your imagination?

I think so. I suppose, yes, space walks and things like that. It must have been, yes, space walks, I'm sure they must have been going on at the time.

I don't know when the first man did walk on the moon, do you?

The first man on the moon was, well we had the anniversary of it just last year didn't we, or this year, so it must have been 25 years ago, 25, 26 years ago. So five years before that there must have been people, well you know, after Yuri Gagarin, people walking in space, I'm sure.

Because I think you use, I have a sense of the image of the earth taken from the moon in some of your later work, and particularly a crucifixion.

Oh, right. I think probably the business of, I mean I've used as an example, there's one very very simple tondo, one of the first tondos that I carved, which moves away from the oval of an egg shape, which is the suggestion of the idea of the, if you like the plate of the earth within the kind of mediaeval form of things, where the canopy of heaven as it were, and the dish of the earth is the sort of, you know, an up there and a down here sort of cosmological view, became a very simple curved horizon, and I think that one piece which has got this curved horizon is a kind of a cosmic view which comes from a view from space, it's a different kind of cosmology. And so, yes I suppose seeing... I mean the idea of cosmologies and views and symbols, simple

symbols and circles and whatever they might...the layering of a simple circle can obviously have many many, many interpretations.

I was thinking of the church in Haringey.

Yes. Absolutely, yes, that's a good point. I mean even that much later, right, I mean, it's a kind of a conjunction of an idea of a mediaeval view of the world as one may see a map, a mediaeval map in a tapestry for example in one of the big paintings in the Vatican, these big painted maps. And I suppose the idea that you can, if I make a more structured view of that in relation to how we now know things are from I suppose seeing things from space, from satellite photographs etcetera.

So there was some relation with [INAUDIBLE]?

I suppose there has to be. I mean to an extent I suppose, I don't necessarily think that is the view of the Earth from space so much as this is the Earth and this is how it would look, and of course one's got a view of that simply because we've taken that on board, because that's now a part of our common language; it's not imagined, it's actual. Interesting. I've never...I mean been talking to you now, I do have slides of these works and I looked at them most recently when we were putting the book together, and it was curious to see certain things that I had more or less forgotten about really. And I suppose if nothing else the works were kind of imaginative, that I was working with. The other piece of work, talking of Loughborough, besides this thing which was like man suspended in some kind of cosmos with the idea of man in an umbilical cord and man in his place in the cosmos, there's an idea if you like of vulnerability and I suppose seeing maybe romantic but nevertheless, a kind of an abstracted between man and the universe. We're all curious to know, I suppose basically they're sort of just the imaginings of a young person who is just beginning to find their feet and wonder where they are and what they're doing. And I suppose if one looked at the three or four pieces of work that I had in my exhibition at that time, I mean I'm talking about my exhibition as a first-year student at Loughborough, there was one piece of welded sculpture that I made which was influenced by a guy who I remember was at the West of England College of Art, and his name was Stuart and

I've forgotten his surname, but he now owns a string of shops in London, and is very sort of, I forget what they're called now, but I always remember, I was very impressed by his welding and the way that he welded up cromium-plated objects and made them into sort of engine cowls and things like this, abstracted sort of images out of I suppose photographs of technological material and data. But, maybe to an extent this was a way of working that I cribbed from him. But I also did some aluminium casting. So there was this one kind of linear thing which had these rather metallic and engineered-looking abstracted, engineered objects, as well as this man in space. And then this other extraordinary thing, goodness knows where it came from, but it consisted of, it was like a plant. I suppose it was abstracted from a plant. It was in purple fibreglass, and it was a base, I suppose almost like, it must have been drawn from, probably from something like an arum lily, where an arum lily has this kind of structure at the bottom with the hood of the flower comes up and in the middle is this kind of stamen which attracts, and this thing ended up as being quite a kind of a rude or organic shape which had this, almost like a palm tree-like canopy, which was pivoted on an upright which was like a foil of a shape like a part of a plant. And then this went down and went inside this base, and where the joint of this thing going into the base was, was foam rubber, and so this kind of shiny purple shape sort of kind of hovered in and out of this soft thing, and it was all counterbalanced in weights, so in the wind the whole thing would kind of move around.

And what artists do you think were influencing you at the time, apart from [INAUDIBLE]?

I don't know because, it's curious I suppose. I think, I'm not sure what exhibitions one had seen. I suppose I was influenced more than anything by students that I had been surrounded by in the West of England College of Art. I think there was an imaginative artist, I think I mentioned that Richard Long was there, and Carl Plackman was there as well as some other very imaginative people. My own teachers from school, and artists that were my teachers at the West of England College of Art. But you know, I mean to an extent, you know, even from an early age I felt that if one was going to do anything one wanted to try and do something that had never been done before, so either one if you like buried one's sources or just tried to imagine all

sorts of weird and wonderful things that had never ever been considered before. But, I think probably one of the most influential sources after that, which links up with a couple of these images, and I'm not sure whether I would have seen anything by this time, was Roland Piché from his early, I suppose, I did see his show at the Marlborough when I was in my first year at the Central School, so I suppose he had already been showing at the New Generation exhibition at the Whitechapel. Now I'm not sure when that was, but it must have been in the mid-Sixties. But an idea of the organic and the mechanical, I mean there are all sorts of things that were being kind of chucked in, and out of the crucible came God knows what really.

And what was your life like when you were at Loughborough?

Well living in digs, in the digs of this Polish lady with...in fact when I saw this man the other week, thinking about this interview I asked him if he could remember her name. And in that respect, seeing this fellow again it sort of, it prompts things when you see someone like that after thirty years and you can remember them. What was life like? Interestingly, the face of the girl who was on his table at this conference the other, last weekend, was the face of a girl who had a party that I was at when we were students, and I was never a great big experimenter with drugs but I do remember taking a couple of pills that someone handed me in this party, and I was pretty drunk at the time, and when I did wake up with my head in this girl's lap she said, `I thought you were going to die. You seemed to be sweating, and frozen; you had one of your irises was closed and the other was wide open.' As I was welcomed back to the world. And I thought, my God! And it was rather funny to see her face across this room yesterday - yesterday, last week, sorry. And, I'm not quite sure if she remembered it; she didn't seem so chatty as the fellow, Bill Goodall.

Don't you know what the pills were?

I haven't the faintest idea. But there was a little bit of a drug thing going on, as I suppose, you know, when I look back, and I never really bothered with it at all except in this one instance, but there was one guy who used to be pushing the stuff, one of the students who used to be pushing stuff around, LSD. And I suppose there were

other bits and pieces really, and there was some smoking going on, and there was certainly, you know, even close friends of mine were smoking hashish when I was at school, but that was very very unusual, I mean I think that was quite extraordinary. I think this one particular friend of mine who used to smoke hashish had a very much older girlfriend and I think they used to sort of hang out in West Indian clubs in Bristol, in the City Road area. The Bamboo Club I remember particularly, which, I was just terrified of ever even going there, and pubs where they used to serve incredibly strong cider that, I don't think I ever went there either. The Three Tons, and they used to drink Jamaica black, which was a...thank God all that seemed to fit together, that kind of life, but I was a bit wary of it.

Nothing like that in Loughborough?

No, there was just this kind of, I suppose a peripheral amount of experimentation.

So was social life based round the pubs?

Absolutely, absolutely. Quite good lecturers there, I remember one very nice man called David Phillips who was the liberal studies fellow who did art history, and he used to do seminars. I remember doing a seminar on André Derain, and it's interesting that, I used to take up causes and the basis of my seminar on Derain was that, you know, really he had a lot more going for him than history had made out, and you know, how Matisse had basically become much more influential but nevertheless Derain had done extraordinary things in sculpture and in painting, and had for some reason been overlooked or sidelined. I think this is something that I picked up later on when I followed my degree thesis, my Dip.A.D. thesis at the Central School when I picked up on Futurism and really tried to make a case for it as a seminal pivotal movement in the 20th century which was very very important because of its association in a socio-political context rather than just in an aesthetic context. So I always looked for, you know, underdogs and sort of championed causes in that respect.

So you did get something out of Loughborough, if only in the liberal studies department?

Yes, oh well of course, in liberal studies I think so. No, I mean I wouldn't close my mind to a place, I'm not really sure...I mean I did in fact, I did in fact, when my collar bone did mend, I'm not quite sure how long it was, but I did encounter the high standards of its sport, and I went along, and it's something I remember very well, but having been playing to quite a high standard of rugby in Bristol, I used to captain my junior old boys' side, as I had captained all my school rugby teams from the first year to the sixth, to the lower sixth, I had gone to Loughborough with the intention of playing, and then..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] And, so, I loved rugby and having been invited to play for Bristol Colts, which was an under-18s side, I had played the previous year, and I wanted to get fit to play in that end of the season, so I suppose it was still the end of the season of the, whenever it was, 1966. Anyway... And I went to a training session and it just happened that the training session was taken by this fellow who was a coach for the British Lions, a man called Jacobs I think, and he said, `OK, you want to get fit for this provincial tour for Bristol?' He said, `Watch the first team train, and then I suggest what you do is train with the seconds, thirds and fourths with Gerald Davies,' who was a Welsh winger international, who was also a student at Loughborough. I almost died watching the first team train. They went to hell and back again, and then back into the jaws of hell, usually carrying someone on their back. But the training regime there was phenomenal and I'd never seen anything like it, and I was a keen rugby player, I used to play twice a week and I used to train three times a week, but there was nothing like this. I mean it was a transition, although I played a very very high standard of rugby in Bristol with men in the club sides, these people were on another plane in terms of training, and given that they were all physical training people anyway. So, white, I went to the training session with the seconds, thirds and fourths under Gerald Davies, and after that I was in bed for four days, I couldn't hardly recover. Then my life changed I suppose to the extent that, you know, the rugby season was over, I never got round to playing again, and the following term I was packing up and, it being summer and then going to London, and I didn't play rugby again really.

Did you have any time for girlfriends at Loughborough?

I think there were a couple of experiences. There are certain high points in Loughborough as I drive through on the motorway going north, I think, ah, look at that, I remember spending a night up there once with someone. Enough said about that.

Well I think, in '66, that autumn then you went to Central didn't you?

That's right, yes.

It must have been very...well I mean there was a lot going on in London at that time wasn't there.

Well there was, and I...

'68 too.

Yes. It was fantastic really. I mean, as you would expect I was going from a provincial town to the place that, you know, for a year I had been unable to get into. I had always had an eye on what was going on in London and I had made a number of trips down to London, chasing my girlfriend who was no longer, and going around seeing things. But, yes, I mean the people that one encountered for a start, I mean my teachers consisted of, well, the head of department Brian Wall who himself was showing work, and making sculpture, making his exhibitions. I remember he did an exhibition at the Grosvenor Gallery, or was it the Hanover Gallery? Hanover Gallery, Hanover Square. Grosvenor Gallery. He was making this work. He was also showing in the Battersea sculpture show, which was one of the big exhibitions that made Battersea famous or Battersea...you know, that made sculpture famous.

End of F4917 Side A

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And did Brian Wall teach you?

Yes, Brian Wall was the head of department, and I suppose inasmuch as anybody taught he would come around studios. The system there was really quite good. First years had a very structured course, dependent upon the model, and then experimentation etcetera. Then the second year you would still be expected to do a couple of hours in the life room before taking on your own work, and even in the third year, the third years were encouraged also to spend a bit of time in the life room. And Bill Turnbull would come in occasionally and do drawing in his own book as well as, you know, be around teaching. The extraordinary thing about the Central School at the time was, as well as well-established artists like William Turnbull and John Warren Davies who was, I mean I suppose I only really knew his work from one of these sort of concise history of British sculpture books, I didn't really see his work in any exhibition, and he was my personal tutor, that people were coming in from outside at quite a rate. William Pye, Menashe Kadishman from Israel, John Panting who was a student at the Royal College, which was post-graduate anyway then, who was also teaching, and Barry Flanagan who was in the post-graduate course at St. Martin's was also coming over to teach. So we had very young and sort of on-the-ball artists teaching alongside established sculptors. And there was a lot going on in terms of public sculpture in those days.

And which of those teachers would have been the most important for you do you think?

William Turnbull was very, of great interest to me because I found that he was a very articulate sort of rational, a sort of profound knowledge of art and culture. I would have always I suppose had...I was very impressed by I suppose his intellectual power, which is not necessarily anything that I would have associated with a painter or a sculptor or in the making of art before that. What was interesting in a particular way was that having transferred into the second year at the Central School I decided that I would like to try and catch up with some of the life work that I had not really been

expected to pursue to the same level on my more general fine art course at Loughborough, so I used to spend - well I spent my first couple of terms working on a full-size life figure, and I was the only person working directly with the model in there at that time so I had a very very close rapport with the model. It was quite an exciting thing to be doing. It was also, it seemed to be of quite a lot of interest to Bill Turnbull and Barry Flanagan, and they used to come in and, they wouldn't necessarily talk to me but they would talk to each other about what I was doing, so I was often an observer responding to my own, well in terms of what I could glean from conversations from Barry and Bill Turnbull. I mean to an extent Bill's, if you like intellectual dexterity, was something which made it often sort of a one-sided conversation, but Barry often had, you know, very very interesting things to say. And this was a time when Barry was really into quite extraordinary sort of radical sculpture, you know, working with piles of sand, stuffing sand inside sewn materials, quite radical material for sculpture. Just would drape bits of felt on a kind of washing line sort of structure. He had a show at the Rowan Gallery when I was a student, which I remember quite distinctly. I also remember - no, I would like to almost start that sentence again, because the name of the artist has slipped out of my mind. But I'm rambling on, you may want to ask me some specific things.

Yes, I was wondering what you particularly would have taken from Bill Turnbull and Barry Flanagan. I mean you've talked about intellectual dexterity.

Yes. I'm not sure really, I don't think that, you know, I would ever say that there has ever been something which made me do that as opposed to this. I remember saying to Bill Turnbull one day, having been to see the Roland Piché show and become very excited by what I had seen of Roland Piché's work, I mean to an extent Roland Piché I suppose in kind of simple terms was a three-dimensional version of Francis Bacon. I remember when I was on foundation I was doing some drawings and paintings that were Baconesque in terms of the way that, you know, one might be able to abstract the figure. And to see Piché's sort of three-dimensional space frames with these great glutinous blobs kind of meandering through them. I remember saying to Bill Turnbull, `If that's not what sculpture's about, I don't know what is.' Of course, I

mean he had his own views. [LAUGHS] He probably had a very low opinion of me in fact because of those sorts of declarations.

Did he ever come to the college?

Roland Piché? No. In fact I didn't meet Roland until I started teaching much much later, and I did some teaching at Maidstone where he was head of the department. I mean Roland's career was very very disappointing. I mean he was someone who was, out of all the new generation artists that showed at the very important and sort of seminal exhibition of the followers of Anthony Caro if you like that was on at the Whitechapel - I say followed Anthony Caro, they were predominantly people who worked in steel, there were all these beautiful finished steel sculptures, and there were these amazing things by Piché as well. I mean we were talking of people like Tim Scott, Philip King, David Annesley, Michael Bolus, as well as Roland and, a couple of others, oh Isaac Whitkin. Out of all of them I think, you know, Roland was the only one who was really picked up by a major gallery at the time and showed with Marlborough, and was taken up immediately, and I think at exactly the same time, given these guys were really high-flying at this particular moment, they came out of college, and Roland was offered a job as a head of department at Maidstone, I mean he had only just left, and twenty years later he was still head of department at Maidstone. Now he's head of department in what's now Maidstone, Canterbury, in the Kent Institute and he's the head of department. So he's never moved, and it's quite extraordinary in a way. But I think it's just one of those strange issues about creativity from teaching that your imagination and your commitment go into teaching, and it starts to take away from the creative input into your own work. And I think Roland to an extent suffered really; I think his early work was terrific. But anyway.

He was one of the most important people you were looking at at that period?

Yes, I mean the show at the Marlborough must have been I suppose in '66 when I was first in London. And I remember making a sculpture... There was...it's rather funny. I could go back, you know, even before, talking about childhood, I'm not even sure

that when I spoke to you about my childhood I actually mentioned the fact that my brothers called me Beadbrain, because I...

Beadbrain?

Beadbrain, because I used to collect beads, and used to sit on the pavement with the girls and used to kind of exchange beads. As well as playing cigarette cards and things like that with the boys I used to love beads, and I used to sort of make totally unwearable bits of jewellery for my mother which she would wear before the cotton broke, you know, this sort of thing. Necklaces and things. But I remember this extraordinary thing when I was a kid, and there was a little lane near our home, and in this back garden, and it always seemed to be there, was a piece of something blue, and I used to go up this little lane and used to look across this garden to this very mysterious piece of blue something. I don't know what it was, it was probably a piece of blue ceramic, you know, just sort of in the earth.

How old were you?

7, 8. And, I was always felt this was very curious. It had a certain sense, quality, a sense, smell, I don't know, taste, those sorts of things. And I remember it was at the Covent Garden tube station, I used to live in Covent Garden, my first flat in London was in Charing Cross Road, fantastic, I shared a flat with an actor who was much much older than me, he was an experienced - I say an experienced actor, he was a man of 30-odd maybe, whose life revolved around pulling chicks, and he had a little flat in one of the mansion blocks over an alley between St. Martin's Lane and Charing Cross Road. And he taught me how to cook, and...

What was his name?

His name was, oh God! don't ask me, I'll have to think. Ask me again later on, see if my memory can... I saw him on a television...he was an extra in a movie, I saw him on television the other day, he was lounging in a greyhound race meeting and the star was talking, and he was sort of posing as an extra and I thought it was the most posed

piece of extra waiting to be discovered; even probably by now he's 50-odd, or more, and still doing little things like that. He was a dancer especially. John Christen his name was, Johnny Christen. And he taught me how to cook. He introduced me to `Larousse Gastronomique'. We used to cook in this cupboard that had been converted into a kitchen so there was a sink on one end and then there was, you pulled a drawer out of the kind of combination oven and oven-cooker unit and fridge, and two rings, but what this fellow could create on that was extraordinary.

What did you create?

Oh, things from `Larousse Gastronomique'. I mean anything, I mean, it could be great. I'm talking about this now as a diversion from saying what this thing was that affected me as a sculpture, but I used to, every Saturday morning I would go into Berwick Street market in Brewer Street, I would go to Delmonico's and buy wine, and to the Algerian coffee shop and buy coffee, and, it was a different life to Loughborough believe me. I mean, you don't need to. [LAUGHS]

Was there a connection with the piece of blue?

Yes, anyway, the piece of blue.

No, but is there a connection?

But there is a connection, because in travelling, Covent Garden tube station, which was one of the ones that one would pass through on the way to Holborn if I was lazy and didn't walk to college, which was only a half a mile away anyway, the Underground station at Covent Garden had a big red disc on the wall, it was one of the older style signs for an Underground station, and until recently it was still there, they had never bothered to rip it off the wall and put one of the new kind of glass or enamelled things up. But this was a great big, it must have been six foot diameter, plum red disc on the wall of the, the curved wall of the tube, and I made a facsimile if you like of that in fibreglass in the studio. Because it knocked me out, there was just something about the taste of this red which was extraordinary. And then I, I suppose

basically I investigated it and I made this great red disc, and then I did something which was, if you like Roland Piché-esque inasmuch as there was this kind of shape went up to its centre and then came off of it and then came down again, so it was like a, taking the view of it coming from, I suppose the space of the spectator and then bouncing off this thing in a kind of a mysterious way. I suppose it was just sort of playing around with the idea of what was in this kind of mysterious thing that made me respond to it, and it reminded me, you know, maybe this kind of...I used to refer to this blue thing as blue peel, like a piece of orange peel but it was blue.

There seems to be a sense of taste with both experiences, taste of a kind of...

Well I think that's something that happens. I think sometimes, I mean it's strange, memory, taste a memory is quite extraordinary, and it's funny how it happens sometimes, I think it affects... I mean I suppose it's like the ears, nose and throat. And sometimes you do, I sometimes get a sense of time through...it's very rare but it happens.

Through...?

Through what you see, a sense of place, maybe it generates a sense of déjà vu; it's kind of a synthesis of all sorts of extraordinary things. But it's a very rare experience and when it happens, and I notice it. Don't ask me when the last time it happened, but nevertheless, it happens. I'll tell you one of the other things I would relate it to, and I wonder whether this kind of strange piece of blue peel, mysterious blue peel, is something...

What was it actually?

God knows, a piece of, probably a piece of blue ceramic. It was in a, you know, a back garden you couldn't get into.

I was going to ask you that.

And so I never...

You couldn't get close to it, ever?

I wonder if once upon a time I did actually hike over the wall and see if I could get it. I was very mystified by it. Then, much later on when I, I suppose about 1980 I was becoming particularly interested in maiolica. I always remember from early days walking round museums that, one of the, I suppose one of the more vulgar things that one responded to or didn't respond to because it was so vulgar in a way was this kind of blue, this extraordinary cobalt blue of maiolica, and it gave me a positive, almost aversion to it, but later on, much much later on I actually went back to it and found it a very very inspirational thing which led me into making some ceramics. So, all these kind of strange connections, and they're very very sparse aren't they in terms of their incidence in one's life, you know, the sort of, as being an 8-year-old, an 18-year-old, or...and then, goodness knows when.

It's a nice thread running through, isn't it.

Well, it's a very sparse thread. [LAUGHS]

So, who were you doing all this cooking for?

Well I suppose, I was...I was a young man in London and I suppose I used to invite girls to have an omelette at lunchtime instead of going to the pub, or something.

Or something, yes.

Or something. [LAUGHS] And I used to be quite an inventive cook with whatever, you know, things you would never see in a market stall anywhere else, you know, like red mullet or something I would cook. But all sorts of things, all sorts of things. I mean anything was, you know, possible.

Who were your friends at that time?

Well there was a fellow called, in my first year, a guy called Jules Caithness. I mean we had very very small departments. This fellow Jules Caithness was very very nice, I suppose he was a Londoner, his father was a brain surgeon, and he gave up, because I think he was under pressure from his father not to go to art school, but he packed up after the second year and went to medical school. But of the others..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] Of the others in my year, I suppose basically we're just saying names. I remember there was a guy called Tim Evert, who never used to seem to come to college very much, tall, sort of good-looking bloke, looked a bit like a chunky urban, chunky Mick Jagger I suppose. And there was a guy called Graham Gilchrist who was an Australian who used to do welded steel sculptures. A girl call Caroline Bracegirdle, which is a name to remember. And a girl called Dorothy, I can't remember her surname. But that was basically our group. Brian Wall seemed to have this notion, or maybe I shouldn't say these things, of having within a very small department a couple of people he thought would actually maybe do something, and usually they would be guys, and then there would be a couple of people who may make it, and maybe a couple of girls to balance things up. And within all that, within the budgeting of the department, in those days you used to have a budget, but he would have expected that the guys who were really going to do something would consume most of the budget, or anybody else, the girls too if they have some ambitious ideas, but generally, you know, the scale of the ambitious notions came from fellows, because I suppose in those days maybe it was more likely that guys would come up with the most ambitious materials-consuming projects, and the girls might be more orientated towards, you know...this is, I'm telling you the kinds of things that were the rationale behind people who actually taught in, you know, taught and managed the departments. But what happened was that you would have a fantastic, or seemed to be, you know, really, some quite ambitious work that was produced by some artists, let's say, OK, there were girls too, but you know, there might have been an orientation towards the figure and traditional ways of working from certain students and some rather more egotistical extraordinarily vast projects from guys. But there always seemed to be money available to do it, and if you consider that we may have had sort of six or seven or eight students in each year, the department as a whole was only twenty people, and then you have a massive number

of staff coming through to teach within a department, and that's almost, you know...you often couldn't work because you actually had too many members of staff coming to talk to you, all wanting to justify their pay. Whereas these days, you know, students don't see staff, you know, weeks on end, and it's completely the opposite was the case when I was a student.

Was there a recognisable sort of Central School style at that time?

Well, I suppose because of Brian Wall and William Turnbull you would have sensed that there was a movement towards using welded steel, and there were one or two students that did, Graham Gilchrist I mentioned was making work with welded steel. But I think, you know, others like myself, I was working with fibreglass mainly, and other people were working in other kinds of materials, looking more, in a more experimental way. But I don't think there was a house style, in fact I think very much the case that St. Martin's was still the dominant sculpture school through Caro's reputation and what was following on there. So, we were quite conscious, and I think to an extent we found that, you know, with the attention given to Caro that there was in one sense perhaps a degree of resentment from people like Brian Wall, and maybe William Turnbull, because at the same time we also got quite a lot of kudos attached to the work of Barry Flanagan who was also St. Martin's based, so there was a St. Martin's thing. I'm not sure where Bill Turnbull was showing at the time, but I think probably he had a major show at the Tate during that period, but at the same time it didn't necessarily go with all the publicity that would have gone along with the St. Martin's school and Anthony Caro. I mean Brian Wall in particular I feel may have had some sense for a degree of resentment, and then Brian in fact was the first contemporary British artist, he welded steel, he had been in St. Ives, I'm not sure where the influence came from; he was an assistant to Barbara Hepworth. Maybe it was from Gonzàlez and from his own sort of researches, but he was making welded steel before anybody, welded steel sculpture before anybody else. I think Anthony Caro was making sort of fat ladies in clay, cast in bronze, and there are those who say that, you know, Brian Wall's first exhibition influenced Anthony Caro, but that, you won't see that written anywhere.

Did he influence you?

Brian? Not really. I suppose...no, not really, I don't think Brian...I think he was an extraordinarily interesting sculptor, but I think to an extent, you know, the method of putting things together was something that was not really within my field of things. It's kind of odd in a way, I suppose that there's a sort of formalism within Brian Wall's work, maybe slightly more architectonic than Caro at the time, and I'm not sure whether Bill, I think Bill's work was also possibly slightly kind of constructed but a little bit more minimal than formal, at the time.

So of all those, I think you mentioned about four teachers, maybe more, who would you have been relating to the most?

Oh right, you mentioned before. The person that I had a very close relationship with was John Panting, who was a student at the Royal College, and one of the things that I suppose, well I found a closeness to him... I've never really responded to other people's way of, style of working, but John Panting was the most incredible workaholic and it affected me profoundly, a fantastic sense of precision, and I used to help him make his work, and when he was doing his final year at the Royal College I spent some time working at the Royal College helping him. I even helped him install his degree exhibition, his final show. But whilst he was teaching me I used to make models for him and make moulds, which required fantastic precision and...

What was his work like?

His work was, kind of weird and wonderful. He used to use, if you could think about the sense of finish that you might associate with New Generation artists in terms of, if you like volumetric shapes made of fibreglass with fantastic finishes, but these would often be units and odd constructions. He was using sprung structures, things that wobbled in the wind, things that looked like they were strung on very complex Arabesque bows, and were suspended on steel strings. Very odd constructions. Clusters of small geometric prisms that sort of constructed around sort of groupings or faces of, let's say triangular prisms that kind of spiralled. But never a kind of, that

didn't conform to any real geometry in the final image of things, but in, let's say the units that he used.

So how did you feel about his work?

I was very impressed by his work in many ways, and in lots of ways I suppose I was floored by it in terms of, you know, trying to sort out what it was about. And in that respect I suppose the thing that I, let's say, was building up as a student at the Central School was, as I say, working closely for John Panting, doing things for him, I was interested in materials and how they behaved. I think I probably had a sense of drawing from nature, I remember in the second year, I mean I only had two years there so, I was using things that were drawn from organic objects, in fact I think I found, it was probably in a day, we had to go to the ceramics department, we used to do a day release if you like into another design department, so did ceramics, and there was a shell of a turtle that I did some studies of, and I made a couple of sculptures that were quite simply abstracted from these very very simple shell shapes. But it wasn't in putting things together in a way that dealt with the formalism but I was more about dealing with identity, you know, that you could make a shape or an object that had a certain kind of character, and then make another one, and they have a kind of a natural relationship. I used to do like the gregariousness of shapes, and I was quite interested in the fact that I could put one shape over there and I could put another shape complete, somewhere else, or even out of sight of the other one, but you would make the associations by identifying those things. So those were the sorts of things that were interesting me.

I don't think I quite understand what you mean by identity on this.

If you have two like objects they obviously have an obvious relationship, and although, let's say the fact that they would have a conspicuous quality that you saw in one space, and then saw the same or similar objects in another place, then your mind would make an association with them, so it was to do with a kind of, it was to do with relationships that weren't to do with formal relationships in the kind of aesthetic way of putting things together. I wasn't putting things together in that way. It's kind of

curious, I'm not quite sure why. I mean maybe because the work that I did didn't depend on drawing in a traditional way, and even at that point maybe was dealing with ideas in a broader sense.

Was that the main work you were doing at Central?

At Central? I suppose I just did certain things. I remember making a very, a big object that was based upon this particular form of this turtle shell, which ended up being almost like a hollowed figure. Technically it was interesting because I found myself having arguments with staff who I had only just met and they thought I was some, you know, upstart, because there were people, technical staff would come and if you like tell you how to make things, and I already knew that I could do certain things because I had experimented before, but I was told that I couldn't do it that way, but I knew I could, so I found myself having arguments with people about technical, you know, technical...techniques which I knew worked, and I was told wouldn't work. So, it's just one of those things. So I was interested in experimentation. So there were three or four pieces that were kind of based upon this kind of business of these pairs of objects and their relationships. And then I got quite interested in sort of architectonic forms, quite simple minimal shapes, and again using materials like pigmented and poured resins. So I would have something that looked like a Mies van der Rohe sort of building, quite small, only four-foot square polished aluminium kind of slab, and then I would pour resin over it and that would sort of make a landscape around it, and then that sort of landscape would be reflected in the polished material. It's kind of odd playing with materials really, experimentation with materials.

And John Panting's personality, workaholism, affected you too you think?

Yes.

Inspired you, maybe.

I mean never inspired, no, probably never affected me enough. He was someone...

What was he like?

He was physically short, stocky, and powerful. He had a fantastic sensitivity. He had amazing qualities. He played a fantastic classical guitar for example, and he was obsessed by hi-fi equipment. And it was nice, because Judy and I had...I haven't really mentioned Judy yet because we met at about this time. We had quite a good friendly relationship with him, John Panting and his wife, and we used to go often to dinner at their home in Crystal Palace, and it would often be the case that he would take us home at something like midnight and then he would go to his studio in the City and he would work there for a number of hours, probably not going home until 3 or 4 in the morning, and would be in college the next morning teaching. And this kind of dynamism is something that really affected me, I think. And of course, some years later anyway he was very tragically killed in a motorcycle accident in an evening when he was working very very late at his studio.

Apart from Roland Piché, who else were you looking at?

I didn't...

That was important to you.

Well I can't...I really... Who did I look at who was important to me? I really don't know. I can't think. I started being kind of, a sense of there being kind of a creative ferment going on. I never really felt that being at college was about having mentors, about having a tutor that one looked to and followed. I suppose one always felt that one was at the centre of a creative process, and I think this is probably the greatness in British art teaching, is that you become a centre and the ideas that you have are developed and questioned and honed and polished, and evaluated to a point at which you then go back in upon yourselves to think about those ideas to see how they've faired and how you feel that that is the point that you are trying to make.

Is that through the tutorial system?

I think it's through the tutorial system. The one-to-one sort of tutorial system that is the feature of British art education.

And you think that's the great strength of it do you?

I do, inasmuch as it, inasmuch as it is a system that depends upon that close interaction between a mature artist and an emerging artist, and a kind of sense of respect for those ideas that the younger artist might have as a source for something original. And in that respect I think it's the notion of originality being drawn out, which is a part of a creative process which artists who become too involved in teaching find...draws or sucks the energy out of their own work.

Because they're too involved with the other person's originality.

I think a lot of the creativity is in, in being an artist is dealing with if you like emergent ideas, and I think to help a student visualise, realise and grasp the nature of what they're doing is a very creative process in itself, and I think that there's only so much that an artist can give before their own work suffers.

End of F4917 Side B

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We were talking about the method of teaching a tutorial at the Central.

Oh right, right, yes. Yes. I mean another I think very very important thing that happened during this time, which must have been '67, was the Picasso show in Paris. One of the most extraordinary things was that we had a college trip to Paris, and we flew, the first time I ever flew, and the trip was paid for by my local council as an essential part of the course. It was quite fantastic the things that one was able to do in those days. And so we flew to Paris to see the Picasso show, and that was fantastic. I wish I remember more about it. I remember staying in this little hotel in, just off Boulevard Saint Michel with a couple of friends and we just went to the show. I think we just sort of bumped into other people who had gone occasionally, and in that respect we just all got there and everybody went their own way, and basically centred one's time in Paris on looking at the Picasso show. And of course it was...

Two days did you say?

Mm?

Two days did you say?

Yes, a weekend, two or three days, I can't remember exactly, but it must have been something like that. But it was obviously one of those experiences that gave a sort of, an international sort of sense. I mean having if you like been in Bristol and then in Loughborough, which was a bit of a backward step and then being in London and then going to Paris, I mean the idea that one, it was only three-quarters of an hour, we went on a Trident, and sort of drank on the plane, it was really incredible, you know, I mean sort of being able to hop over to Paris and see great art. And, well, we went to the Louvre and everything else, but I suppose, you know, I had already travelled but you know, being able to go with the college in that way, in a rather more kind of focused way was fantastic. I don't remember ever having had a seminar on the matter, we just seemed to go and come back again, and I suppose to an extent, you know, as

far as teaching was concerned, to be a student at the Central or I expect any of the other colleges is that basically you went, you had the tutorial system, materials were made available, you discussed your ideas with someone, you talked to technical assistants, there was a fantastic guy called Neil Rutherford who was a fantastic technical assistant there, and if you wanted to make bronzes there was a guy called Ab, known as Ab, his name was Henry Abercrombie, who used to run the bronze foundry. And so with the bronze foundry and the welding, I mean to an extent there was an emphasis, I mean people learned how to weld and construct things etcetera in the basement of the Central School, it's where a lot of great social events took place as well because the bronze foundry was the centre for the boozing side of the social life of the Central because the furnaces are always up and running because there was so much work being produced from Bill Turnbull and Brian Wall and for other people, that you know, there was always drinking to be done in the foundry because it was so hot. And then they got around to the idea of putting the odd side of beef in a kiln and cooking it, so there was sort of barbecues in the basement. So the sculpture school had quite a reputation at the Central for its social life, it was kind of funny.

What made the most impact on you in Paris? Because you saw other things apart from Picasso. And by the way, was his sculpture in that show as well?

Yes, I think it was a general survey. I think it was...it was the year in which Picasso was awarded some great prize, the first ever sculptor - an artist had ever been awarded whatever, the Légion d'honneur, yes? But you know, I can't say. I suppose I just got a sense of Picasso's greatness and versatility and virtuosity that has always been with me. I mean to an extent some things that I remember doing in the school were based upon Picasso's Blue Period images, and in fact things that my brother still has framed up beautifully in his house, and collages of trumpeters in the style of a Blue Period Picasso figure, and there's a dancer upstairs in my daughter's room which is a six-foot high sort of collage of a dancer, again in the sort of, a form of Picasso's Blue Period, sort of distortion. So I mean one was always aware of Picasso and the beauty and the poetry of it, and I suppose the bohemianness of it. But I can't say that, you know, specifically there was something I saw in the Picasso show that struck me.

And what about the Louvre?

At the Louvre, well again just a walk through everything, and I suppose it was just a matter of seeing things that one had always just seen in books really from the Mona Lisa to the `Winged Victory of Samothrace', you know, this kind of thing.

Did you go to exhibitions and galleries and museums a lot in London?

Yes, we were very very close to the British Museum at the Central School anyway, so one was frequently dropping in there. And the West End one generally wandered around, went to private views. I remember a Claes Oldenburg exhibition in the Robert Fraser Gallery, which I think was quite a stunning thing, squidgy things that I recall. Again it was kind of, you know, materials were such a preoccupation as a sculptor that when you saw something that really wowed you as being something new, then even the context of, you know, of experimenting the materials, you know, shiny fat squidgy sculptures were, you know, quite a revelation in a way. I suppose it was just continually being aware of the parameters of the discipline being pushed at, being pushed at and being pushed at, or of being attacked, being attacked, being attacked, according from which way you look at it. But whatever happens, you know, it seemed that there was kind of an expansion of the consciousness of art and sculpture as being able to absorb and get bigger in terms of what it was about.

But the dominant influence at the time was really Caro was it? Not your personal influence, I mean the sort of...

Yes, Caro within that period. There was a great exhibition of Caro's, I'm presuming it was while I was still a student at the Central School, it was a big show at the Hayward, a massive show at the Hayward, which I really think showed Caro as being a great artist, really.

And how were you situating yourself in relation to all that?

Well I suppose, I mean, I was situating myself in terms of the way that some of the things that really struck me in Caro's work were things that I was responding to were the most incredibly Minimal things. There were things like `Smoke', I think there's one sculpture which is like a little bar and a long piece of rod coming off it. Very simple things. I mean things like `Prairie', the big sort of expanded sculptures made of constructed steel were things that were, you know, quite extraordinary as sculptures, I mean basically, you know, trail-blazing in a way. But I was very taken by the very very simple Minimal, the very poised pieces of work of Caro's. So it was to do with, you know, the minimalness of things, you know, less is more sort of thing, to the extent that some of the bigger later works, one which was extraordinary, I recall as being a massive sculpture, which consisted of boilers, bits of boilers which were sort of up on end almost like bits from the Sidney Opera House that were on sort of big rails that were on the floor and then these great pieces of sort of found objects were sticking up out of the ground. I mean to an extent I felt then probably that he was depending more on the found material than he was on his own kind of exquisite capacity to put simple items together, so for me, I mean these little structures were saying almost much more than the great big complex things that were starting to get megalomaniacal in terms of the kind of bringing in massive bits of stuff that were found. I'm not sure he was doing pieces with cloud ends as I think they were called, the ends of the sheets of steel that were chopped off which had these kind of cloud-like shapes. I'm not sure if he was using that material at that time.

Was he the main figure that had to be taken into account?

I think at the time besides, you know, everybody would have been aware of Moore of course.

So how did you feel about Moore and that tradition?

I think probably...I probably have to say in retrospect, with a degree of embarrassment, that one tended not to be looking at Moore. I think it was probably the time in which artists like Caro, who had worked for Moore, were actually antipathetic to Moore, as would have been, you know, people who were actually

being revolutionary with their materials, you know, and welding steel and stuff wasn't making stuff in clay and casting it in bronze. So I mean he was if you like the father that all the young children were kicking against, you know, in there, trying to break away. And I suppose at that time Moore's career, reputation was being further kind of enforced abroad, so of course one was aware of him but everybody I suppose would have said, oh, it's only Henry Moore, you know, or, that's what he does.

I was thinking maybe Caro had replaced him as the figure that one had to react against, but...

I think probably a bit later. I think certainly Caro, I think that's probably something that happened, certainly when I left the Central and started to...and maybe it was beginning but I think that probably when you've got a big show like the Hayward show, which I think may have been about that time, I think that if you were a maker of sculpture generally you saw this man was a powerful artist. It was later I think when people were turning away from object making and turning away from Greenbergian formalism, looking at Conceptualism and Minimalism, that you know, he had had his day. I think, you know, to an extent, I mean we're talking about the turn of the decade I suppose, that his reputation, probably like Caro, there's not really very much room in this country for artists who are successful, or, I mean, there just is a very small, I don't know, ambience within which an artist can survive, and I suppose, I don't know why, I mean I would have...I'm not sure who would have been representing Caro at the time but it seems to me, you know, that as with Moore, Caro then seemed to have his reputation bolstered abroad, he went abroad, to the States where he had obviously the support from Greenberg, a good gallery, I'm sure he was working at that time with major galleries in New York, and again I think probably his reputation was being established and wrought away.

Would you have taken anything from him?

I think...

Technically, or what materials were you using?

I think I was probably using, I was using fibreglass. I wasn't using anything...and I wasn't using it in a way that could have been I suppose attributable to a sort of St. Martin's way of working with materials. As I say I was pouring stuff out of a bowl and that wasn't the sort of thing that they were doing. I mean they were fashioning complex sort of shapes, geometric shapes, and things that Phillip King was doing, things like Genghis Khan and these things with twists and rather beautiful finish, the kind of skin thing, was something that they seemed to be into, the New Generation still had some mileage I think at that time.

But didn't you say you worked in metal?

I have worked in metal, but I wasn't working in metal in the sense that I was welding things together. That was something I mentioned that I had done when I was in my first year at Loughborough. But, no, I think by the time that I...I mean get around to sort of, if you like finalising about me at the Central School was, if you saw my degree exhibition it consisted of a group of objects that were from the two years that I had been there, one or two objects which showed this preoccupation with if you like pairs of objects that had this kind of obvious identity, twinning kind of characteristic. There were a series of pieces that had this kind of architectural kind of core to them, but also dependant upon this kind of experimental use of polyester, pigmented polyester resins which were poured and allowed to make their own shapes and flows of colours etcetera. And then there were a couple of pieces which were actually constructions that were bolted together. I got interested in the way that one could fix or join materials, I made some rather beautiful complex kind of clustering elements which enabled the gravity of an object to interact with a cluster of shapes which gripped that heavy object. And then there were sort of series of rods which came out from this cluster which sat in the pools of this resin, and they were all different lengths in an involuted, of a curve. And so the whole kind of structure was based upon gravity being gripped by this structure. So I was kind of interested in one sculpture and this kind of jointing system. Then I made another system of pieces which were like...it was very much to an extent how you put things together. Again I suppose I was experimenting, more than anything I was experimenting with materials

poured and constructed and cast, putting things together to make, I suppose in this particular instance things that had a look about them that had a look of architecture. But I suppose, I don't know to what extent, I mean, that one might have looked at Archigram, the architectural group, Archigram were making these kind of walking cities, and there may have been something, thinking back, a kind of a structure that had legs as being something raised up that may have had something of an influence, but again that would be guessing now if I was playing art historical games of iconography.

You haven't said much about Barry Flanagan.

No, probably because... Probably going to say because I'm talking about me and not Barry Flanagan. What I said about Barry, with his show at the Rowan Gallery, I think was probably a way of, if you like in terms of an image that I've got, I mean I've known Barry ever since then...

But he taught you, didn't he?

He taught me, yes. I mean, inasmuch as anybody seemed to me...I mean I have very very little recollection of people doing very much more than coming in to the room where I've been working, talking to me about what I'm doing and finding it may be interesting technically. I don't recall ever any real rigour in terms of ideas, except that, you know, just there being as far as I saw it a matter of just kind of conversation at the time. I didn't see it as being something to do with a challenge. And maybe to an extent when I've talked about, you know, the values of British art education, is that it's only since I left the Central School and became a teacher, the point at which I became a teacher was the point at which I started asking more questions than I was asking when I was a student, so, you know, there was a different kind of, I suppose response to the nature of teaching when I became a teacher.

So what do you think you gained from the Central?

From the Central? I suppose a way of going about being an artist really, on all sorts of levels. Certainly a way of, I suppose, the business of using materials in a challenging way, of experimentation, of a sense that there was a tradition, the tradition may have been if you like embodied in the figure and the use of the life figure in the making of a life model or doing a life figure from a model. Drawing from the model. I think probably a sort of sense of tradition was something that was established as an absolute necessity, of having that sense of history. Of the nature of how that history might be articulated from the work of Bill Turnbull, who, you know, may or may not have deigned to talk to you but one could see in terms of his own work and what one read about his work something that was of some substance. I suppose the business of challenging the Academy, the challenging preconceived ideas, and the business of experimentation, trying things out. And extending or expanding a language through your own ingenuity and inventiveness. And I suppose with all that, then, whether or not what you would do, what you did was going to succeed or not was really I suppose based upon how people responded to it, but you know, I suppose at that particular point whether or not, you know, the judgement about what one had been doing was in whether one succeeded in getting one's Dip.A.D. or not, and having done that then I suppose one presumed that what one was doing was at least on some kind of track in the right direction.

It's going to sound like a peculiar question maybe, but did you find it easy to work or was it a struggle?

No, I think quite easy. I quite...I think probably this would go back to, I suppose the business of someone following art as being someone who has been encouraged to use one's hands and use one's abilities in those fields of making, whether it be in, I suppose the practicalness of the woodwork room, or the business of being practical in that area being not too distant from the business of, you know, how you sit down and look at a flower and go about drawing it. And in a way, you know, you're curious about the way things are put together, and if you're shown how to make a joint that makes a table stand up, if you look at the way that a petal joins to a stem, and it's rather more than, you know, just a kind of an edge meeting an edge and there is structure there, I suppose all those things sort of come together, and I think you know,

if you have had some experience in making things, which for a secondary education, you know, as I may have mentioned, you would have expected maybe to go into an apprenticeship, and if you have that kind of ability then I suppose that applies itself directly to, you know, how you go about making a sculpture. So there were some natural tendencies in me that enabled the making of objects a kind of a normal process for me since that first seal with a ball on its nose made of clay... [LAUGHS] ...to the current attempts of doing what one does whenever one picks up a piece of clay if one's going to use it.

Just to go back to something you said much earlier about the attitude to women artists. I mean was there a general sense that women artists were sort of second-class citizens there when students rather?

I would never...I would not say, please don't get me wrong; I was if you like using hearsay as a way of describing how someone had suggested that, you know, someone managed to make a department's finances go in a way that would enable the reputation of the department to be seen to be a department worth, you know, worth its reputation, and I suppose if you ended up with ten students all with fantastic ambitions you would end up not having enough money for, you know, for the department to really establish a reputation. I wouldn't have said that...we had, I mean the relationship between boys and girls in the department was without question to do with equality, to do with an interest generally. I mean we all would hang out together, and discuss things together. I don't mean[??] we played darts together and drink together, I mean it wasn't as if there was anybody doing anything less, and I think probably the particular anecdote would have been something probably said in a pub some time late at night when one was, you know, sort of discussing the politics of being an administrator in an art school trying to make ends meet really. So, I don't think that there's really any sense of that. I mean let's think, I mean Liz Frink's reputation was pretty massive. There were people, now what's she called, Wendy Taylor was making a name for herself with her brick sculptures. At that time she wasn't making brick sculptures, she was making these fibreglass things that looked like kind of marigolds - well, big discs which sat on the floor. I would have said that there were as many women around with, you know, reasonable reputations then as

now. Who else? Tess Jaray, Liliane Lijn. I mean there were people, you know, good artists. I don't think there was really...I mean, I might be being frivolous by saying what I said; there's the danger of these conversations I suppose. But, I mean it paints a picture. I mean I do think, I mean let's think about it in terms of the politics of the...

Well I don't think one should be too careful about political correctness, you know, I think...

No, right.

It's better just to say it how it was.

I suppose the point is that, you know, maybe that is the case, if some people felt that they were hard done by, I mean there were plenty of blokes who were hard done by, I mean it wasn't as if anybody was being singled out. And certainly I don't think that anybody, you know, if anybody had a good idea that needed financing in terms of the resources of the department then they would have got those resources. And I think generally in terms of staff, they were very very willing to help the girls, probably more so than the boys, and I think that's...yes I think there was a great deal of support to help. I mean let's say there was a natural maybe technical facility that a bloke might have because his father probably stuck a plane in his hand at a young age and the daughter was probably stirring sauce in the kitchen with her mother, but when it comes to actually making something, you know, I think probably a girl might be a little bit more behind than, let's say at a different stage of development. You know, I'm not suggesting there was, you know... But there again you find a willingness. I remember a girl when I started teaching a girl who was a very young student who was very pregnant who wanted to make something out of wood, and I got into a bit of...I didn't get into any trouble, the fact was that she was so advanced in her pregnancy that having used a jigsaw for about an hour on cutting the sheet of wood that she insisted on doing, she felt that she almost brought the birth on about a month early. But, I think generally the atmosphere within a department tends to be a sense of camaraderie and I don't really think sexuality has really ever been sort of a cause for anybody to be sort of prejudiced against or whatever.

Well of course the late Sixties, art schools were very very fashionable places to be, weren't they?

Yes.

And, I was thinking that there was such a lot going on at that time. I mean '68 there were the riots, student riots everywhere, and Vietnam.

Well, that's interesting, yes.

I mean how political would you think you were then?

Well I didn't think I was political at all. I was always very curious. I mean that was Hornsey in 1968, very much the case, Paris barricades, all that was going on. I would have said in general art students didn't tend in general to be particularly political. There happened to be a group of students at the Central School who possibly had been canvassed by Hornsey students, because the sit-in was actually taking place when I was still a student, and it happened that we had a strike at the Central School. Now, whilst there was a lock-out or a lock-in...

At?

At Hornsey, in 1968, so I was still a student at the Central, there was a student strike on the basis of representation and democracy of colleges etcetera, and this man called, who was the principal at the Central School whose name was Brian Patrick I think, Brian, certainly Patrick, he addressed this meeting, and it was the most extraordinary piece of diplomacy I have ever seen, in which there were a group of students who made demands on him, that they wanted representation on the board of studies, academic board, etcetera etcetera etcetera. And he stood up and made a speech and he said, `You've got everything you want. You're welcome to come and sit on the board of studies, you're welcome to sit on the academic board.' And he gave access to all these boards without any question. It was quite amazing. And the reason I say it

was amazing, I remember a number of years later, a few, quite a lot, you know, maybe ten years later, I was talking to a student who had been at the Central School, was kind of rueing the fact that they didn't have any representation, and I said, `You go back and look at the Constitution of the Central School and you will probably find that you have absolute rights to be on all those boards'. The point being that this man Patrick thought that they're going to get, the students are going to get very very bored very quickly with sitting on all of these blinking awful meetings. And sure enough they did. But it was set up for them to, you know, to be involved. You know, there used to have to be a student on an interviewing committee for whatever, and I suppose at that point, you know, there was, we may have had for the first time a sabbatical student union rep. But it was a curious event that we had no revolution in the Central School; we just had a very diplomatic, you know, politically aware principal who just said OK, no sweat.

So how did you feel about what was going on at Hornsey?

I suppose it almost seemed like it was another world. One knew of students and friends of friends that, you know, were going...I mean I suppose to an extent one was aware of the kind of sensationalism of there being guard dogs and, you know, students being set upon.

Because there was a lot of public awareness though, wasn't there?

Oh there was, but I don't recall, I think...there may have been a march, I'm not even sure I got involved with it, but, I can't remember there being very much active political reaction at the Central School. I'm not sure about St. Martin's. But I think maybe it was that, maybe Hornsey led the way as a college that had a particular faction that were very very active. Now at the time my brother's partner, John Hayes, was a lecturer in the liberal studies department at Hornsey, and I would have said that he was a Marxist and he would have been typical of people that were, let's say active, and I would have said that if those things... I wouldn't have said that he was active in the sense that he was, you know, an agitator or whatever, but I would have thought that probably, because Lisa Tickner was at Hornsey at the same time, and I would

imagine that if there were a group of people that happened to have some kind of interaction... Oh God! what's the name of the book? It wasn't in fact until I was at the Central School a year or so later I actually started reading the kinds of things that were the reason for the Hornsey outbreak. But I think probably at that particular moment in time Hornsey was a very very on the ball kind of college, considering it was breaking new ground, and demanding some kind of democracy, and I suppose the challenge of Marxism is always going to sort of ask questions of the system within a capitalist society. So I suppose it was, I mean I suppose it's something that should have been going on for years but never happened until Hornsey.

But at that time you weren't interested in it?

Not at all, not at all. Never even considered it really.

And things like Vietnam?

Well that wasn't...I suppose it must have been happening but I certainly became more aware of it later. I know that in terms of wars that Menashe Kadishman was very upset one day because the, I'm not sure if it was the Six Day War or the Yom Kippur war in 1967, something like that, happened when I was a student, I didn't really know what was going on there. I know that he ended up going back to Israel, so I think he was a, you know he was a registered commander in the Israeli Army. But yes, I mean to an extent, you know, from retrospect I was quite surprised in a way that, you know, the nature of teaching didn't really extend into a general sort of, a more general sort of sense of social, political interaction from one's position. One of the things that was I think particularly interesting about, for me about the Central School in terms of liberal studies, was that we had some very very good teachers in liberal studies, and we had a very very good active course in what was to do with the history of architecture, and you know, obviously other historical things that were associated with painting and sculpture, but we also had a fantastic course, which I chose, which was 20th century literature, and there was a guy, God! what's his name, now I like very very much indeed. There was a guy called Mike Oakley who used to be head of department who was very good, I think he's still there.

End of F4918 Side A

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So Frank Hilton.

Frank Hilton, that was it. And the course, well I think one of the courses, 20th century American literature, meant that I was reading books I suppose that I had never dreamed of reading before. Norman Mailler, `The Naked and the Dead', Scott Fitzgerald, Nathaniel West, Nabokov. Extraordinary books, I mean great, great things with great dialogue about - oh Raymond Chandler too, fantastic, I mean a really super group. I think Raymond Chandler was someone who I much later came to realise was someone who either stylistically...was a coincidence about...coincidentally similar to one of my favourite writers on American art, himself a sculptor, Donald Judd. But, yes, Raymond Chandler, and... So I suppose the introduction to American literature in itself was a tremendous background inasmuch as the dominance of American painting and sculpture, somehow one found a background through this course in literature, not that it was necessarily considered to be a part of that, or though maybe I'm just realising that's why we had this imaginative course on 20th century American literature, because it was really underpinning what was going on in painting and sculpture.

Do any books stand out, particular ones?

Oh I suppose one of the books that stood out most of all, I'm sure it was on the list, was in Joseph Heller's `Catch-22'. Was it on the list? Certainly one of the most, one of the greatest books I've read, the greatest book that Heller's ever written. But, you know, all sorts of things. I think in general terms the whole field, although it was a very small part of the field of 20th century American literature, how the books were dealt with by Frank Hilton, and just the general kind of stimulation of what one could get out of them was amazing. I mean I only remember...we still had to sit exams at the end of the term on the books.

Did you study non-American 20th century literature?

We also, there was another course in another term, I can't put them altogether, but one of the books in particular which I think was another great book, handy I suppose because it was pretty short, was Voltaire's `Candide', which was also...though I'm just trying to think what else we did in the French literature side of things. Oh, and we did Sartre, and Camus. So it was obviously a broader French thing, but I remember those in particular.

Were they important?

I think so. I think probably, I mean it's kind of odd, I suppose it was the trilogy of Sartre was I mean important simply because it's something that one has to have read really. Camus `The Fall'. I can't remember a great deal about them in a way but I know the necessary. And `Candide' I think was amazing. One always finds, I mean there's a universal story, and it just keeps cropping up in terms of the kind of extraordinary imagery from that, that book. But...

Were you studying art history as well?

Yes, I can't remember a great deal about my art history. [LAUGHS] I suppose one went through it and one did it, and I mentioned before that I chose to write my thesis on Futurism, sort of making a case for it as being, well for me interesting, perhaps over Cubism because of this kind of socio-political interaction. But interestingly, I mentioned that I wasn't very politically aware but it's kind of curious in a way that looking at Futurism and its influences upon society, and the reverberations throughout Europe in terms of art and society, was what made the subject quite interesting and exciting for me, and became a source of, an extension of that particular subject later when I gave some lectures a number of years later using that as a basis but extending it into a kind of a thesis on art and ideology, Futurism and Constructivism. So, you know, I was taking on board something that was trying to make a case for something. So I suppose one felt that one was always trying to make a point in what one did, if one was working with original material.

And then, I know it's very fashionable in art schools now, but was art taught in a theoretical framework then?

No, not really. I mean the art that was taught in the studio, as I mentioned before, was basically initiated by individual students, and encouraged and discussed and helped through by staff, and, well I suppose, I mean as much as, you know, obviously there is a methodology and a history of art which enabled one to put things together and see the context within which one was working as a part of the historical continuum which had some kind of relationship. Well I suppose a natural consequence of doing art history in an art school as an art student.

And what about life outside college? You've talked about cooking.

Cooking.

It must have been quite an exciting time to be in London.

Yes. Yes it was.

I mean what would you have been doing basically?

I mean socially, I suppose one was drinking, doing..... [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Drinking?

One was drinking in pubs. I mean the pub culture side of it was quite extraordinary. I think probably we would go to the pub at lunchtime and in the evening, and it was a place where, you know, the discussions of the studios would go on. I mean you talked about what you were doing with staff and students. There was a very very, given that it was a small department there was an extraordinarily close group, grouping of staff and students; there was no sort of sense of staff going off somewhere else, basically you tended to be together, and I would say for the two years I was there, you know, one spent, one saw the staff as one's friends and you

drank together and went out, ate together and went to clubs together, went to night-time boozing clubs together. And, I suppose that was extraordinary. I suppose that in those days it seemed that your money went a lot further anyway; I don't think today people could even afford to have that kind of Cedar Bar culture. I mean maybe to an extent it was almost sort of founded on I suppose a notion of what it might have been like in New York, or maybe it was like it was in St. Ives, I mean, you know. But basically the life of the college was in the studios and in the pub, and there was quite a strong sense of family in a way.

And were there particular clubs and bars, pubs you went to?

Certain pubs around, I mean Holborn, right in the centre of London there were certain pubs that you would go to. If anybody had made some kind of noise and being sort of, expected not to turn up the next day, or they might be ejected, I mean you might choose another pub instead, but a pub called the George and Dragon was a pub that we used to use, which was quite amusing because it was a bit of a villain, had been a bit of a villain's pub in the past, so, you would occasionally find people, guys who had done bird kind of coming by, Jack Bush's I think is what it was called to the old crooks, and they used to come back to this pub that used to be a bit of a dive in the old days but had been taken over by a new landlord. But you know, an interesting sort of slice of society would use this pub; people from the offices were in the next to the Ministry, one of the Ministry of Defence buildings. You know, you would find that there were council blocks, people from council flats, there were people from the colleges, people from the Jeannetta Cochrane Theatre. And you know, people about, quite an interesting kind of soup of people, and you find that in many of the pubs in London. We used to play snooker in a place called the Clarence Snooker Rooms, which was in High Holborn, and in playing snooker you would find that, I think one day the Richardson twins came in, they were amongst the kind of great hoodlum gangsters of south London at the time of the Krays. One of the fellows in the George and Dragon had been pursued by one of the Krays and he was terrified once when he thought he was going to be...he managed to climb out of the window of the pub once when he was being pursued by Ronnie I think. So it was a kind of a strange kind of sub culture going on. There was a fellow who used to tie up newspapers who used to

be, his name was Allen, that's his surname, and he was the world featherweight boxing champion once, but given that boxers of that particular era, then basically, you know, they just went back into life at probably the level that they might have been expected to be at before they even went into boxing. Terry Allen, he was a world featherweight boxing champion. Built like the side of a barn door but very short, and I suppose he must have been in his fifties or sixties.

What about the pop scene?

The pop scene? Well, the Central was kind of famous because of the Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band were sort of based there before I got there, I think that they had an association. And there was...we used to do fantastic gigs, there used to be fantastic sort of...we had a student union, guys, you know, the guys who ran the student union sort of social side of things just used to put all the money from the student union for, you know, their year into a big dance and you know, like take the profits out of it and make some money for themselves, I understand. But, they used to do some pretty great, what I suppose now would be called raves, I mean, you know, in the car park of the Central School. I mean we were terribly fortunate to be in the centre of London with that much space in a way, I mean for there to be a car park in the middle of London, an art school with all that spare space. It was fantastic. I mean, you know, and parties, and I suppose one of the best, important parties was a party that I met my wife at.

Tell me about that.

Well I went to this party with Jules Caithness and the party was being thrown by a girl in the theatre department, and it was in Kensington, and there at the party happened to be a couple of girls that this fellow Jules and I sort of asked to dance, and I happened to ask my wife's friend to dance and Jules asked her friend to dance, and, that was Judy, my wife. And then I was dancing with the friend and Jules went off somewhere else and whilst this girl I was dancing with sort of went away for a while the friend, my wife, came up to me and said, `Oh, my friend's married you know, she's

got a daughter'. And I said, `Oh, so what?' So, anyway, but then I started dancing with Judy, and, anyway so that was that.

What was Judy doing at that time?

Judy was a secretary and then working in the evenings as well in a pub, but she had been a student at the Central School the previous year, in the theatre department, so that was where the connection was, and the party was a theatre department party, and Judy was there, and so that was that. She was living in Kynance Mews in Kensington with this other girl, who did have a child and had been married, but the point was that I actually was fouling up a plan that they had for her to meet this rather wealthy brother of the girl whose party it was, so I had to be got out of the way so that this liaison could be made. So I walked Judy home and she drove past with this guy in an AC Cobra that evening I remember. And we've never looked back.

And was Judy intending to go more into the theatre?

She had been in the theatre before. She had been at Joan Littlewood's East 15 where she had been I suppose working as, in the theatre, and she was an ASM, and she had been at the Marlowe Theatre where she had also been an ASM. And...

What was her name at that time?

Judith Atkins, and still is. And she got to know several quite interesting people, designers; Tim Goodchild for example became a good friend, who has done a lot of West End shows, I mean, mainly shows, and they emerge occasionally, people that Judy's worked with. I mean often we're watching television and she says, `Oh there's so-and-so who was such-and-such,' and, it's quite funny. But, I suppose when we got together she looked more towards our relationship because I suppose it wasn't long before we were sort of seriously involved.

And where was she brought up?

In Kent, father and mother were both dentists and had a farm, so dentistry became a way of affording the farm, as her grandparents had also done, though I think her grandmother was quite well-to-do but had been the first lady dentist I think in the country.

Her grandmother?

Her grandmother, and her grandfather was also a dentist, and all her relations were dentists, and her brothers, they were.

And where did the farming fit in?

It was, the farming fits in because farming is what they wanted to do, so Judy's grandparents were farmers, having been dentists, and similarly her parents became dentists to become farmers, or did both most of the time.

So they do manage and work on the farm?

They still have a farm, and they both, well the father's 80 and still very very active.

What kind of farming is it?

It's changed since I've known them from all hard fruit to mixed arable on what's, a part of the farm has been leased now. But her father's very very imaginative and very active, and when he was in his mid-seventies started a micro-propagation unit on his farm which is to do with cloning, plant cloning, so basically it's laboratory based, incredible, because it's cutting edge farming. And so her father got into that quite late on in his life and recently is into early greenhouse raspberries, this is a new thing which he has been into for three years or so.

And was Judy an only child, or...?

No, second of four, one brother, eldest. And, I go to the farm quite a lot because I use a part of the farm for making my sculpture, big sculptures. It's convenient, it's just outside of Canterbury, to have an opportunity to be able to disgorge containers of my stuff from India, be able to work there.

And how would Judy have been brought up do you think?

Well she went to boarding school.

Which one?

I can't remember, I mean several I think. But that's her story.

Well, I think we could go on to Coventry now, where you had your first job teaching didn't you? Was that 1968?

That's right. Yes. I think, well that came about probably more than anything because John Panting, who I had been doing a lot of work for, had recommended me for a job teaching in foundation studies at Coventry, he also taught at Coventry, but nevertheless I had to go for an interview. And although towards the end of my time at the Central School I had actually applied to go to college in the States, and I had done quite a lot of research into going to America to do an MFA, and of the places that I got any kind of response from was the California College of Arts and Crafts in San Francisco I think, where I had thought I would go, but then I got this, I was successful in my application for the teaching job so I ended up leaving the Central School with my Diploma of Art and Design and became a lecturer on the diploma side of the foundation course, pre-diploma course whatever it was called, at Coventry College of Art. So that was quite exciting.

At that time Coventry was the base for Art & Language wasn't it?

No, not quite at that time. In fact I went just about the time that it was about to happen, and that was really what was very very exciting. One of the things I think

that may have been the cause of this happening, the kind of, if you like the radical change in what became a fantastically innovative art educational programme at Coventry under the auspices of Art & Language, may have come about to an extent because of the success of its foundation courses, pre-diploma course, which had a very very good head of, an imaginative head of department who was a man who loved his allotment, but he's an incredibly nice man who had a fantastic vision and his name was Derek Turner. And the course that I went to teach on, the foundation course, required a higher level for entry than the degree course, the Dip.A.D. course, they required A'levels, because they were such a successful course that they were able to ask a higher level. And the degree course, the Dip.A.D. course at the time was pretty lousy, and there were some very very good people teaching on the foundation pre-diploma course.

Do you remember any of them?

Well John Mitchell, who I became very close to is now the head of painting at Wimbledon. Now, who was there? I mean to an extent...who were they, who was there? There were just some very very good young people who were very technically able. A very interesting guy was a ceramic artist called Tony Hepburn who ended up becoming head of the, well, what did he get, maybe it was a chair, or maybe he was the head of, head of fine art I think at Alfred University in New York State, which is famous for its ceramics department. But there were some very very imaginative, I mean Wally Livingston and, I mean, John Hostler. They weren't necessarily, you know, well-known people but they functioned to produce very very good students. A guy called John Mockett who has made a name for himself as a designer for Japanese motorbike companies; although he was a painter he ended up designing fairings for motorcycles and... But, you know, to an extent quite ambitious people. And the other department that was really what was particularly exciting was that people who were teaching on the degree course, the Dip.A.D. course, there was a guy called Don Foster who was the head of the department, and there were lots of people who were involved in painting but it was kind of a typical provincial kind of laissez-faire situation. A guy called Harry Weinberger and George Wall and Brian Love.

These were all teaching there?

They were teaching there.

Lots of teachers.

A lot of teachers, this was the degree department. I mean, I keep calling it the, what's it called, Dip.A.D. as it was then called. Mike Sandle taught there as well. But what was particularly significant was Terry Atkinson, of Art & Language, Mike Baldwin, not then Mike Baldwin, Dave Bainbridge, got together and they were starting to make if you like a push in the department to start introducing a very structured conceptual, or if you like philosophically orientated course, I suppose based on certain kind of premises, you know, out of Wittgenstein, you know, basically to do with the nature of, you know, that language will determine the quality of whatever it is that you were doing. So if something is outside of language it doesn't exist, it's got to be understood, there's some kind of, you know, the arch should come within the domain of the rational, and it should be teachable. And all sorts of extraordinary things happen, and basically the kind of course description started to have a language that no one except initiates could understand. They talked of hermeneutics and God knows. I mean I used to have a kind of a vocabulary that would actually enable me to deal with this, because we were leading courses etcetera. But what was exciting about it for me was that I was on the edge of this in the foundation department, and other people in the foundation department were also quite impressed by, and we all leapt to books on philosophy and God knows what else, to really get a handle on what these people were into. But they started then to structure a course which introduced a number of young people to another way of looking at art through this kind of, and what became...I mean to an extent Art & Language, specifically Art & Language, I mean it became loosely associated with Conceptual art, which one might have, you know, which one might see in the work of Sol LeWitt who would call his work Conceptual, and Carl Andre. But one of the interesting things I suppose more than anything was that this provincial college became a centre within Britain and possibly internationally for a new movement in art which was very very exciting. There was a woman called Barbara Reise who was an American art historian who taught on the art

history part of the course at Coventry, and she was quite friendly with some very significant New York artists, and invited them over. And so..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] And so artists as significant as Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt, Mel Bochner, Dorothea Rockburne, came to visit the college, and they weren't visiting other colleges in Britain, they would come specifically to talk at Coventry. As well as artists there were in fact the new sort of gallery entrepreneurs. There was a man called Seth Siegelaub who had the first gallery for Conceptual art in New York. It was quite an extraordinary place to be.

And they were attracted by Barbara...?

And they were attracted by Barbara Reise and the Art & Language group. And of course Joseph Kosuth was also there, would come, he became the editor of the American side of the Art & Language organisation.

Did that start there, or...?

It started in Coventry, and in fact the first Art & Language books were printed in Coventry with the help of a fantastic bloke called Ted Harrison who was a graphic designer at Coventry and he helped put the books together. I mean initially Terry and Dave Bainbridge and the other people in the group, a guy called Harold Hurrell who taught at Hull, and Mike Baldwin who came to teach a little bit later, were making in fact text-based art which was basically exhibited on gallery walls; I remember going with Terry once to pick up some stuff from the Ikon Gallery in Birmingham. So it was kind of happening there. But quite soon after that, I remember this extraordinary story where Terry went to Zurich, I mean Terry is a very, or was at the time quite a provincial bloke, although he had been to the Slade where he was a bit of a Mod I believe, a bit of a lad, but very much a Yorkshireman. I think he came from Barnsley. And - that's in Yorkshire isn't it? [LAUGHS] And, Terry said, `Ee, I went to Zurich,' and he said, `I went with these Art & Languages and these bits of text, and I came back with this briefcase full of money.' And, it was kind of extraordinary to see something happen, you know, at close hand, it was like a fairy story to an extent that

these chaps who had been following this, if you like ideologically orientated art with a cause, you know, started to head it in the art world, it was really extraordinary.

And very quickly.

I suppose and it happened quite quickly. I mean I'm not sure to what extent they became blockbusters but you know, the big survey shows that you might have seen at the Hayward Gallery, I've forgotten the titles of the shows, would be, Vic Burgin would have been involved and Barry Flanagan would have been involved, the new art that was coming out at the time, but certainly Art & Language was there in the forefront of all this stuff. A great big indexing files and information retrieval systems. Of course God knows what it would be like now, I suppose it would all be on microchips, but in those days it was all sitting at a desk and looking at text and pulling out drawers and, to do with sort of relationship or structures of languages and, I mean God knows really, but nevertheless it was a curious thing.

Well how did you feel about what they were doing?

Well I thought it was terribly exciting. I mean one of the things that, if you like, having come through I suppose what would have been a typical laissez-faire system at the Central School, where if you like the dominance of I suppose formalism in St. Martin's was seen as the principal effort of the art that was being produced in Britain, I mean to an extent one was on the edge of it being at the Central, but suddenly one was, although one was in a provincial college, I felt to be very very fortunate to be in a place where something quite new was happening, and it basically sort of made me ask questions about my own practice. And in that respect it was terribly important for me, very very important, because the way that I really started to ask questions about what I was doing rather more than I ever had done before. So, you know, rather than it being sort of technical or material orientated work I was getting very very interested in, if you like the notion, I think probably the first thing I started to think about the work was, in the way that I was working, that I was actually looking for rule systems in a way, I was looking for axioms, I was looking for, if you like self-evident truths in what I was doing. I wanted to actually be able to measure whether what I was doing

was of value or of significance. And so the kind of questions that I started to ask about my work on the periphery if you like, outside of Art & Language but nevertheless on the periphery close to it, I felt the value of the questions that were being asked were good and the kinds of answers I was coming out with were very different because I felt very much that I wanted to situate my practice within something of a tradition. So I really handled materials, I still felt that was a thing that I had to use as the mainstay of my practice. But I asked similar questions about the nature of that practice, at least what I considered to be similar to the kinds of questions that were basically challenging sort of precepts for art practice in the general context that Art & Language was asking and questioning in the work of what was going down, you know, principally in Britain. So there was a kind of a critique of what was going on.

Is it possible to be more specific?

Possibly not, I'm not really sure that my mind is into that at the moment. Maybe one could be more specific if...one might be...I don't know, no, well let's see, let's see how it goes.

And how did this relate to the artists that, the American artists that were coming over to visit the college?

Well, I suppose to an extent inasmuch as...I suppose what happened, the people that were coming over would have seen their work as loosely Conceptual in the sense that, you know, OK we consider conception to do with the mind, but you know, to an extent there was a way of working that both Sol LeWitt and Carl Andre would have worked in, which was to do with if you like almost to do with an idea of being outside of the art, inasmuch as, you know, you could order the pile of bricks, or you could telephone someone to make `a structure', and in that respect there was a kind of a loose...the notion of the conceptual I think in the American sense became misused, because we often talk about Art & Language as being Conceptual because it's about ideas.

But you think there's something fundamentally different between them, do you?

Well I think there's something fundamentally different but I think that probably what was, where they were related was the fact that they would be considered to be sort of the salient art of the time, the fact that, you know, it wouldn't have been that anybody was borrowing any sort of kind of pigeon-holed sort of descriptions of whatever types of work would have been; I would think that, you know, someone like LeWitt or Andre would have seen if you like the text-based work of Art & Language as being another form of expression. I mean Kosuth was working with text anyway about the same time, or they obviously saw each other's work as being inter-related. I mean Andre, Carl Andre's work at the time, in terms of the work was particularly Minimal in the sense that, you know, they were floor-based works which were made of panels of metals, and Sol LeWitt's work tended to be open frames, geometric frames etcetera.

Were they particularly important for you?

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Right. I mean Andre and LeWitt and others like Donald Judd and Richard Serra, two artists who didn't come to Coventry, were probably artists that I was more excited by, but nevertheless it was the idea that no matter, it seemed, where you were there was a kind of a closeness to the cutting edge of contemporary art; however much one may not have actually been within the specific cadre of that grouping, one was pretty close to it and one was close enough to it to be able to discuss it. And so, I mean other terrific things, you know, in terms of observation. I remember very very clearly a wonderful thing Carl Andre said when he came to address students and staff at Coventry was his total bewilderment at the beauty of flying over Britain in that it was a landscape that had evolved from man's interaction with nature, sort of an organic growth, whereas in America you kind of, an overlay of a grid, you know, a road cuts across the landscape, and the cities are built on grids, so you know, man arrived with a sense of the systematic and did things. And to an extent rather interestingly close to Andre's work and LeWitt's work in terms of that kind of geometric overlay. And it was this kind of observation which I thought was so lucid and so clear of Andre's and I've never forgotten it and I always think it's a wonder to know that an artist's vision can be so incisive and so kind of clear.

Did you have much opportunity to talk with the artists outside of their lectures?

Not a great...no, not really. I mean they were very, I suppose closely chaperoned by those who specifically invited them, so, Barbara Reise in particular would have taken care of them. And they wouldn't have really been around for long and they were terribly busy then. Lawrence Wiener was also someone...actually Lawrence Wiener was probably one of the few that I spoke to for rather, you know, rather more than just a few passing words, and I saw him several times popping up in different parts of Europe. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Different parts of Europe, waiting to meet someone with a plane ticket that would enable him to fly from one place to another rather more cheaply than otherwise he would be able.

What was his work like?

Oh his work, it was quite interesting. I suppose to an extent, although his work now is rather more text-based than it was, the kinds of things he was doing then would have been sort of excavating the wall of a gallery to cut out a square which would show the brick, brickwork, or another wall might be sort of pierced through, so it was actually sort of interacting with the stuff of the gallery itself, so if you like the source of the statement was within the gallery and within the stuff of the gallery. But frequently his work was text-based as well, and it might be to do with the kind of a definition of what was actually happening in terms of the relationship with what he was doing to art and to other spaces etcetera. And the work is still text-based, I mean, but you know, operating in the field of both inscription and in bronze casting even. There's a piece at the Dean Clough which is in fact a big weighbridge which is in cast iron, in which he has actually had words... So in fact you look at it and it looks just like a weighbridge, if you know what a weighbridge looks like, where lorries get on to be weighed, but he has actually taken a weighbridge and he's had it cast with all his own texts, so it's rather beautiful, it's like seeing a manhole cover which has got sort of an art statement on it, you know. It's rather amazing.

Apart from Weiner, Carl Andre and, who else?

Oh, I suppose quite interesting, because I think probably some of the work that I was doing, I started to see associations in the work of Mel Bochner, and all these artists who were showing, who were coming to Coventry were all showing at the Lisson Gallery, so I started to become aware of the Lisson Gallery, I mentioned Donald Judd and, well Richard Serra, I don't think he's ever shown in a private gallery in Britain, I think probably because he deals with a gallery in Germany, it just looks after Europe. But, I started to, I was looking at art, and then when I was in London I would go to the Lisson Gallery, and so I started to become aware of the Lisson Gallery being if you like the organ for these quite... But, as I say the Lisson Gallery were showing artists that I was interested in, some of whom I had met at Coventry, and Mel Bochner, as I mentioned, was someone whose work I became quite interested in because it seemed to coincide with some of my own interests. I mentioned that I was becoming interested in the idea of finding if you like self-evident truths in a way, in a

form of expression that would enable me to kind of continue making sculpture and using the traditional methods of making sculpture, plaster etcetera. And I found myself looking at Euclid's the `Elements', and much to my astonishment it was my course textbook for mathematics when I was at school. And so I had never really seen the beauty, the aesthetic purity, this extraordinary beauty of Euclid when I was, you know, having it forced down my throat in school. Well it was forced down my throat, old Bob Williams my form master who was the maths teacher used to be very eloquent in his way, but it didn't have the point. I liked geometry, it had a direct association with geometric drawing that we used to do at school as well, but I mean suddenly there was a meaning in this mathematical formulation which, although I didn't pick it up in terms of mathematics it was the notion of there being a sort of an aesthetic purity within a statement of an idea which I found to be, if you like a way in to making very very clear-cut propositions in sculpture. And Mel Bochner was doing things in a not dissimilar way in some respects. Both he and Dorothea Rockburne, it's one of those, they became like, they were a partnership in their relationship and in their work, like so many, like Alice Aycock and Dennis Oppenheim and others.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 3rd of July 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

When we last talked, Stephen, we were at Coventry, but we didn't talk about the work you were doing.

No. I suppose the work that I picked up on initially, I never really lost any momentum from having been working for my diploma exhibition, Dip.A.D., but picking up on sort of techniques and materials that I was using then, using poured resin, but using it in a very much more organised way and on a much larger scale; I was making larger open space frames in materials that I felt, suddenly I was paying for things myself and affording things myself, and I was using things on quite a large scale, and getting anodised tubes coated, anodised in Birmingham, and making pieces that sort of stretched over quite large areas of land. I say large areas, in those days,

I'm talking about sort of, still a sort of, a studio sculpture inasmuch as I was working with things that maybe covered twenty, thirty feet by twenty or thirty feet, flexible structures that, you know, would fit and change according to where one might place them. So the first things that I was doing were really in the same kind of vein as the previous work technically but becoming more ambitious in scale. I suppose something about not being a student suddenly meant that one was thinking in a broader context, I suppose trying to emulate the scale and authority of the work of people who were one day one's tutors and the next day one's colleagues.

In your catalogue raisonné you date I think the beginning of your professional work back to about 1968.

That's right. Well '68 to '72 were the four years that I taught at Coventry, and so basically we cut off from the college work and went into that work. Which in retrospect I'm perfectly happy to stand by; I don't...I've never really felt that anything can be seen in isolation in one's work, I think all things and all avenues that one has followed, even tentatively, have a bearing on how one proceeds in the rather more kind of main current of one's interest. And so the general sort of framework from those days has somehow shown a development. I mean I mentioned before the business of rediscovering mathematical theorems. I mean to an extent I don't feel that I went back into the substance of the work that I was doing as a student at Central School so much as even going back further to an extent in terms of some experiences, but in terms of techniques I had a certain kind of arsenal or vocabulary of procedures which I drew on, but I think that basically the substance of my work was changing quite dramatically from the influence of the rather more mature, let's say cutting edge artists, the younger artists, rather more young artists than my principal teachers when I was at college, although I had been working for people like John Panting, and you know, had been in contact with Barry Flanagan, and in fact the people that I'm talking about are people of the same kind of generation as Flanagan and Panting, but there were more of them and there was more of a kind of, certainly the context had changed, I was no longer a student, I was one of them, and so one was a part of a kind of a conceptual motivation that seemed to be happening.

Are they the artists you were speaking of before, Carl Andre and Carl Plackman and people?

The people that I was teaching with were the people, people I taught with specifically in the pre-diploma foundation department weren't necessarily the people that, say, influenced me specifically.

So who would they have been?

Sorry?

Who would they have been, the people that influenced you specifically?

Influenced there, well one of the people I did teach with in terms of if you like ideas was John Mitchell as a painter. A person who became very friendly, I became very friendly with was a guy called Ronnie Rees who was a close associate of Mike Baldwin who was one of the principal movers in the Art & Language group, and when Ronnie was a student at Coventry with Mike Baldwin they were like the thought police who went around the college challenging their tutors to the extent that, you know, in terms of their authority to teach them, because basically they felt that they knew more about art than they did, and in fact in the end they got thrown out of Coventry because they refused to be examined by people who knew less about art than they did. Ronnie then went off to New York and I think became an assistant to Jasper Johns for a short period of time. And when Ronnie came back to England and taught at Coventry, when Mike Baldwin also came to teach, they weren't really on the same side any more, and Ronnie although his, if you like in terms of the intellect was incredibly well read and very au fait with the motives behind Mike Baldwin's work as a member of Art & Language, he was also very very critical of it and criticised it from if you like a practitioner of painting, and his reading enabled him to if you like dismantle the sort of various strategies, which were always very interesting. So there was a good sense of kind of, of dialogue and argument going on at Coventry; it wasn't just a total kind of, sort of fascistic moving forward of a kind of a new cleansing of theoretical practice.

And which side would you have been coming down on, if that's an appropriate way...?

Well I was certainly, I was coming down on the side of the practice, simply because I suppose, well as I established quite early on in my work after let's say an initial period of making sculpture, that might have been influenced just by if you like the techniques of my earlier study, when these were superseded by other procedures I suppose I was actually dealing with the notion of a practice that established at least the activity of my making processes as being within the traditions of painting and sculpture, let's say, you know, within art practice, let's say painting and sculpture because I suppose I was looking frequently at painting, because I felt very firmly that if you like the rigours of the fine art tradition were contained within painting and sculpture practice. And to a large extent I was very very sympathetic with painting, although I was working from a sculpture background. And so my practices were always within if you like the business of making and using traditional materials, and some of the earlier paintings, I made some paintings which were actually sculptures, they were sculptures called `Paintings'.

These are the `Surfaces'?

Well they were surfaces of colour. Well, there was the `Surface' work which actually was made of plaster so they if you like fell totally within the business of if you like sculptural practice, they were in plaster, those were the `Surfaces'. But I did a series of works which were called `Painting', and these if you like dealt with the conditions of painting in terms of procedure and support, and to an extent they were dealing with a dialogue with if you like notions of the object in painting which were I suppose out of painters like Frank Stella who really saw the stretcher support business as establishing painting, and the whole I suppose Minimal painting thing developed out of the idea that a painting was an object, devoid of illusionistic nuances or connotations. So I was starting to say with my things, which were called, my sculpture was called `Paintings', is that in fact, if you take this as your argument for painting you actually have got sculpture, because sculpture deals with materials and handling those materials with a certain kind of framework, and if your painting is only

about materials then, I was arguing that this is sculpture practice, and I made a series of `Paintings' which were steel panels and the paint that I used was primer paints, different kinds of primer paints on as big a steel panel as I could make at the time, which in fact I was using, I was trying to get to a 5-foot square ideal painting size of Ad Reinhardt, I loved Ad Reinhardt's theories, practice and writings etcetera. So the idea that the ideal painting being 5 feet square was something I was deriving from Reinhardt. I made it to about 4 foot 6, I couldn't get the panels any bigger. And I had these things fabricated, and I used, if you like the rationale within the work was to protect the support, which was steel.

Which was what? Steel.

And so I used steel primers. And so there was a relationship between support and material, and these were very very if you like just painted flat surfaces that were painted with a roller again. So if you look at the whole business about, you know, the wrist and the arm of Jackson Pollock being the way that the, if you like the hand of the artist was removed from the painting surface, the idea of using a roller was also an anonymous way of putting on paint, it had no hand touch as it were. So these were the kinds of theoretical notions that I was playing around with, and one of the, I suppose the ideas that moved on into this concern, preoccupation with flat surface was to do with the idea of pushing at the boundaries of painting to if you like extend and re-establish the territory of sculpture.

And then you went on to make reliefs, didn't you?

That's right. I mean the...the thing about my practice from about '68, '69, '70 I suppose, while I was working with plaster surfaces, it was a long period of time, I mean to actually say that I moved on to relief is actually to miss out the fact that for a period I was doing `Paintings', these steel `Paintings', which were again out of the kind of preoccupation with grids.

Is that when you were...you had said that your work had been concerned with scale and measurement.

That's right.

And this was the grid work?

That's right, and which I mentioned before.

You did before the paint?

That's right. So...

I don't think you have really mentioned them, have you?

Unless I've just given so many lectures in the last two weeks I think I've already spoken to...starting to echo in my mind.

No, I don't think we've spoken about them.

We didn't? Oh, right. Because the... OK, well I think that if one looks at the development of the works, the preoccupation with... Actually can you stop there because I've..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] The `Paintings' themselves were superseded by - sorry, what am I saying? - were preceded by a series of grid works which had in fact developed out of the first works that I made from...the first works that I made after leaving the Central School which I did make in Coventry at the College of Art where facilities were made available to the staff to follow their own work. These large grid pieces were based upon, I suppose an increasing awareness of what seemed to me the sort of salient issues in the work of the American artists that I mentioned last, in a previous part of our discussion, and I mentioned the interest in artists like Carl Andre and Sol LeWitt and Dan Flavin and other artists that were showing at the Lisson Gallery, and artists like Richard Serra were very important to me too, and their concern for maths, John Judd's involvement with volume, Andre's concern for area, and there seemed to be a kind of an idea of focus that artists were involved with, and my own particular interest followed along the lines of scale and

measurement and the idea of developing a series of, if you like measuring grids that could be sited, or if not sited just to be superimposed into contexts. Whether they be outdoor or indoor places, one would just posit the idea of a measuring grid and the measuring grid was if you like almost a presentation of a ruler, and I think this is probably where we go back to the idea of if you like the interest to me of trying to find an equivalent in visual terms of something as aesthetically beautiful as a theorem of Euclid, as simple as a ruler but somehow having a presence that was kind of bringing those issues to bear within a, in a visual art context. And so these early measuring grid sculptures were of interest to me. One or two did in fact get installed, in fact I mentioned Ronnie Rees who was involved in buying a, I think probably it was one of the first artist buildings it was so long ago, and I had a studio in the same building as his studio, where I installed one work in his studio because mine was not suitable.

Where was this?

This was in Mitchell Street near Old Street in EC1.

So were you commuting from Coventry to London?

Oh no, well I always taught in Coventry and dwelt in London. At that time I lived in west London, near Portobello Road, in Oxford Gardens, and in those days I was travelling up to teach three days a week as part of the routine of being an art teacher in those days was, if you like the going backwards and forwards. We were, I suppose, like vagabonds in a way, that all the artists who worked in London would be going off all over the country to different centres to teach two or three days a week and they had to stay the night there because you couldn't really afford to go backwards and forwards, although one was given travelling expenses in those days. Those sorts of things don't seem to happen any more, but I mean those were really halcyon days of art teaching, it was really a marvellous thing to be into. Pay was high, and their facilities in terms of what was made available to you as an artist were tremendous. And those were the days of the old art schools. So anyway, the Mitchell Street studio, which was where, I suppose it was my second studio, second or third studio; at one

point I briefly shared a studio with Richard Wentworth and Carl Plackman, and prior to that I had a little studio that used to belong to John Jones, the frame-makers, which was a little studio in New North Road, around here. But these were the first big, the first big studio I had, and mature works that I was making were being made in the studio in Mitchell Street, near Old Street. And so, I suppose the thrust of the work was if you like falling into a category of works that was coming out from my own if you like emergent interest in the American school, from what was happening in New York with Minimalism and Conceptualism in particular, as opposed to a relatively, I suppose almost competitive sort of sense of what was going, had been going on in London, being a student at the Central School that was if you like in the shadow of the rather more sort of, the pre-eminence of St. Martin's. And so things had to an extent fallen into place for me because, although this was a provincial college it was very much a focus for attention of both American artists and the American scene, because of its interest in Art & Language in particular, and became very very interesting to a lot of people involved in art education simply because it was a most amazing radical change in a way to approach art education which was more intellectually rigorous than anything had been before.

And was that when you made the shift to the... I mean you were very much working between painting and sculpture, weren't you?

Yes, I suppose...

You moved away from those grid works to that, did you?

Yes that's right. Well the grid works, if you like, moved on. I think to an extent when I was talking about the `Paintings', they were a series of works that were very much about my preoccupation with if you like the dialogue that was going on around me, if you like the didactic sort of situation in Coventry, and the business about, if you like the theoretical underpinnings of what constituted painting from a Minimal stand-point if you like, and how it developed out of the painters that I mentioned. I suppose the series of works called `Paintings' were very much to do with an examination of those

things because I had doubts about the significance of, if you like, the philosophy behind that, so...

Did you ever have doubts about sculpture?

Well to an extent, because I suppose the business of Art & Language was dealing with the notion especially of, you know, if you can't contain the conceptual significance of something within language, then it can't exist. So it really, you know, everything had to be understood, and consequently if it was understood it could be verbalised; I think this is an Wittgensteinian sort of premise really. So, you know, the idea of a mystique or an inherent sort of mystery within, if you like, an aesthetic sensibility, if it couldn't be evaluated and couldn't be understood linguistically, then there was nothing there to understand. Let's say I would not have believed that if I...well I did not believe that, because I knew that whatever it was that gave me a certain kind of sensation I couldn't account for it in terms of language. And OK, if it basically meant that I was too lazy to actually work it out, then OK, let's say that it still meant that there was a currency in using art because it said so much in a much more economical way than, you know, books and books of study could have in fact, could have given it another form of expression. So let's say the business of a visual art being able to do more than language, I suppose is something that I felt quite early on, so, I did in fact think at one point when, I suppose language or the pressure of the situation that one was in amongst peers who were very much involved with this kind of theoretical position, was very much to do with I suppose a re-examination of... No, I can't. Turn it off. [BREAK IN RECORDING] OK? I suppose what I'm really trying to say is that, although I had doubts about - well not really doubts, I suppose it was in the context of, you know, trying to work things out, the business of whether or not language might eventually supersede, take over from the actual making of objects was something that was of concern, and in fact I had considered it, a little later on in fact towards the end of, or the last series of `Surface' works that I was working on, where I had sort of reduced the sculptural practice to using a traditional material, like plaster, which requires a minimal amount of interaction like mixing water with a material to turn something into a material that was then done something with, and what I was doing then wasn't to make models or whatever, shaped objects whatever,

within the tradition anyway of making sculpture; I was making surfaces and I was using this material, building plaster, and those mundane of materials being used in the building trade every day by the ton, and I was using it in exactly the same technical way. [BREAK IN RECORDING] But in, if you like, isolating surfaces as a preoccupation in the same way that I had isolated measurement as another preoccupation as a sculptural idea or an idea within art practice, surface seemed to me also something that had been, let's say in the way that I was using it, hadn't really been dealt with by other so-called Minimal artists, you know, a surface might have been something to be considered to have been done by, been looked at by Carl Andre for example, where his beautiful floor surface works were laid out. But I was particularly interested in the business of the vertical surface, and I suppose that one of the reasons I was interested in that was the way that, I mean to an extent one doesn't work something out and do it, but as these things were developing I became very interested in the notion of this idea of a tabula rasa, of the actual working in a relatively traditional material, isolating an aspect of practice. And to an extent it works back to the `Paintings' that I had been working on before using paint. This was a similar kind of preoccupation but using, if you like, a sculptural material, the business of the surface. So basically I was, if you like, competing with painting for surface as something that could fall within the sculptural domain, and amongst many of the arguments that were thrown at me about the two-dimensionality, about the marking of the surface etcetera. I remember Peter Smith in an article in `Studio International' talked about `the fortuitous marking of the surface,' which was kind of tachist in a way, I mean for me that didn't really matter; the point being as far as I was concerned that the more I looked at it within the context of tradition, it wasn't a matter of just going back to the New York school or European school, I was looking really back to the Renaissance and looking to, let's say, the first artists of the early Renaissance, and further back, the business of the relief as being something that also dealt with pictoriality. And it seemed to me that there was a very sort of 20th century notion about the specialisation within various practices, whether they were in architecture, engineering, or anything else for that matter; people tended to specialise and it seemed to be a 20th century concept. And what I was particularly interested in was the idea of, if you like, a Renaissance artist, an artist who was architect, painter and sculptor all in one. So it was a very conscious thing, on the one hand of going

back to an absolute Minimal statement, these surfaces, specifically delineated according to an arithmetical scheme, were being, if you like, inspired by, in terms of their certain historical premises, by the Renaissance. So in that respect I was looking at my practice as developing in dialogue with this tabula rasa, and from, if you like, five or six years and more of working on surface works that were done solely for myself in my studio, I would have said that it was very much an introspective activity, although the works were very very big, I was involved very much with my own kind of close studio analysis of a particular procedure, and it wasn't until I showed at the Lisson Gallery in 1976 I think was the first show I had there, so I had been working for, you know, for.....

End of F4919 Side A

F4919 Side B

So that was deliberately a long period of private experimentation and not meant to be seen by other people?

Yes. I think, you know, to a very large extent one of the things that came out of my involvement at Coventry, considering if you like the theoretical input that was surrounding one, and to an extent I wouldn't have said that my education finished, as I don't think it ever has, I mean my education, I was conscious of the fact that it hadn't really ended at Coventry - at the Central School. When I was at Coventry it seemed to me the questions that I was asking myself were rather more important questions, and one of those questions started to make me ask questions about politics, and philosophy if you like, and one of the things that became particularly interesting to me was the idea of, I suppose the commercial side, the materialism within society and the idea of the nature of the art work as something which, you know, which had currency within a commercial world. And one of the things I, if you like, followed for a long period of time was the idea that my work would not fall into the commercial domain; I didn't really see that I could possibly show my work in an art gallery. I didn't want what I did to be polluted or corrupted by exchange, and so I made objects that were destroyed, I would make something to destroy them. So the thing really only existed... In that respect it's truly Conceptual in many respects, although the actual objects had specific materiality for a particular period of time. I mean in that respect like an installation.

Even though it related to what was happening at the Lisson Gallery?

Well it wasn't until '76 that I showed at the Lisson Gallery, and I suppose after, you know, a period of so many years working in this kind of self-imposed isolation I felt that, I mean to an extent having done all that the idea of publishing one's work in the same way that people might have been publishing papers and calling it art, there was really only one gallery for me in the world anyway and that was the Lisson Gallery, because they were showing so much Conceptual art, at least I think before they even represented Art & Language. But they were showing artists who were making, like

Donald Judd installations were made specifically to fit into the gallery, and in consequence when I approached Nicholas Logsdail through Ronnie Rees in fact who was writing for `Studio International' so he knew Nicholas Logsdail, Nicholas came to my studio, liked what he saw, brought his wife for a second view, and she gave the nod of approval. The point being that, you know, it was a radical cutting-edge gallery, as it still is, not really preoccupied with, you know...I mean he was a struggling dealer, like I was, you know, an artist not particularly so preoccupied with making money out of what seemed to be an idealistic practice. So I was able to make an exhibition of three installed works that were destroyed immediately the show finished. So I was able to then, if you like, make my public statement. I mean it could have been done in a museum but, you know, in those days a young artist wouldn't be expected to be able to demand a museum exhibition let alone a commercial show.

But how did the commercial aspect of that work if there was nothing for sale and it was immediately destroyed?

Well it never seemed to be an issue. I mean that was the most extraordinary thing about working in those days with the gallery as it was then. There was one small panel work, which didn't sell either, which was in fact portable which could have been conceived of as purchasable. But that was the way that one, I suppose one connected and dealt with the business of the significance of the work that one was doing, if it was acknowledged by the Lisson Gallery then that was more important than anything else, so one could do it. I mean I was surviving through my teaching.

And what were the other works like that you exhibited there?

Well that was the one, the first show I made at the Lisson Gallery consisted of three installed plasterboard and metal beading with building plaster over them, and one small portable panel which was about two foot square, which I still have amazingly. And, that was my first show. I mean there was never really any...which is rather amazing isn't it. I suppose there might have been a possibility that one might have been able to have, if you like, dealt with the idea of the piece which then could have

been re-made anywhere else. I mean this idea picked up as well, the idea of the remakeability of the piece and consequently if anybody wanted to buy the idea, is something that happened with the LeWitt pieces for example, or it could have been Carl Andre; Carl Andre's famous for saying, you know, when I do an exhibition I telephone the brick factory, they deliver a pile of bricks to the gallery and after three or four weeks you phone them up and say they've delivered the wrong bricks and they come back up and pick them up. Exhibition's over, they haven't paid a penny. I was less involved with that particularly sort of brazen attitude and rather more involved with the physicality of making things. But nevertheless I was very very interested as well in the notion of, and I still am in a way, I think what you put into something you get back, usually with profit, and I think that the business of the tabula rasa as it was then, the surface as being an interface between the art object and my energy was something that I felt was a point at which I said, there is something happening here which I can't put down to language, and I am going to carry on. And in that respect when I talk about the tabula rasa that was the point at which I appreciated the existence of the tabula rasa as something that was going to start a dialogue for me rather that say, right, I'm not going to make sculpture any more. That's the point at which I may have completely, you know, got into using language if I'd failed[??], or given up art altogether, maybe, or maybe I would have taken up painting, I don't know, we'll see.

Had you begun to model and incise the surfaces by then?

No, these were the, it was the next stage, so...

Can I just ask you then about the reception of that Lisson show?

Yes. Well it was well received. I think at the time outside of...I think it was...it was well received. The `Studio International' article by Peter Smith at the time was a good article, and `Studio International' then was a good magazine, it was still the only proper magazine. I was totally unknown really except for people that knew me either through teaching and through other artists, contacts. And it was responded to very well simply because soon after I was invited to show in the Paris Biennale, I'm not

quite sure who the commissioner was at that time, it might have been someone like Michael Compton but I know, he emerges again much later on in my career. But I remember John McEwen was very interested in the work and was very supportive. And in general I think, you know, given the status of the Lisson Gallery, you know, the critical support came in when they saw a British artist working in this way. I mean I should think that Alan Charlton was painting grey paintings, so there was one Minimal artist; Peter Joseph was making very very plain surface paintings with bordered edges, which were to do to an extent about that tradition of painting in a very very Minimal way; Bob Law was painting black paintings, sometimes painting white paintings. So there were Minimal painters working in the Minimal field who were British. But I don't know of, I mean I'm sure there were, I mean actually, you asked me before about artists that were of interest to me, and what I didn't mention, and I ought to mention, because his work was quite Minimal but he gave up making sculpture and went to making video, was a man called David Hall, who made rather beautiful quite Minimal sort of cut-out shapes which had sort of slight nuances of perspectival suggestions in them. That's how I saw them anyway. They may have been done in a similar time that John Hoyland was, his paintings were rather more influenced then by Hofmann and the paintings had a certain kind of sense of a field with a twisted space in them rather than being expressionistic; rather more fashioned and worked out sort of surfaces, those were the things that I was quite interested in.

But your installations at the Lisson, they were large plaster surfaces weren't they?

That's right, that's right. There were three installations; there were three rooms in the gallery, one was a very low ceilinged long room and the piece in that room almost fitted within the space, I mean it fitted, obviously it had to, that was one of the things. The point about the systems that I was using, a kind of arithmetic system which determined the actual surface area, the size of the work, was to do with a play on the sizes of the panels that I put together in a certain way, I can't explain it in words, but nevertheless I had a certain option within a certain system. Usually, let's say, in a particular room, if I used a standard plasterboard that was 6 feet by 3 feet, or a standard board that was 8 feet by 4 feet, a standard height was either 6 or 8 feet, and so the length of each grouping of these panels was going to be determined by

something, and I had a system based upon these kind of multiples as panel sizes, because what I did to make the pieces stand up was to score the panel down two sides and fold them back so they became, if you like, freestanding, and although that had to be reinforced the flat that was folded back could be, you know, could be the way that I adjusted the surface that was left for me to plaster. In the end it didn't really matter about that, but at that time I still needed some kind of rational kind of structure which if anything was to do with a system, but it wasn't systems that I was involved with. And so there was, in one room there was a piece that was freestanding between two spaces, like in this room there's a beam across the middle; the panel, the surface sort of straddled slightly the space and was squareish, almost 8 feet square I would say. The one in the downstairs room was about 20 feet long and just 6 feet high, and another one in another room had a little bit more space around it and was almost like looking through a proscenium to a panel. But they had a fantastic sense of presence, the quality of the surface, the quality of this beautiful material, gypsum plaster.

What colour?

Grey, they were all grey, and they were all standard building plasters. I had been using pink plasters in my studio, and I had also been using some special surfaces which they were producing for squash courts and things like that. So I was, you know, finding that even within the kind of, the palette that was present for me to use derived from, if you like, the commercial world, was quite varied in a way. And I found that I could use, you know, if one said that the pink plaster tended a little towards yellow, and the grey plaster tended a little bit towards blue, you could even get nuances of difference by mixing them together and you would get a sort of a heathery purpley colour if you mix them sometimes. That wasn't something I followed up, but nevertheless there was a sort of, a sensitivity within the quality of the material. And there were white ones which were covered with this surfacing that was used for a special kind of, I've forgotten what it was called, bonding surfacing or something. And then there was another material which was used for squash courts called Keene's cement, which was a very whitish, hard plaster.

Were you deliberately concerned to move away from fine art materials into things from the real world?

Yes, it was to do with, it was also, I mean that was to do with the sort of notion of demystification. It was an idea that, you know, challenging the language of sculpture that I was familiar with having come out of the background that I did from Central School in London, and Formalism, you know, these were the sorts of things that one was growing up with as an artist, to a rather more conceptual approach. I mean already if you like Minimalism had left the New York school approach, you know, like Robert Ryman had left painterly expression, and he in particular was someone who became involved with painting on supports and dealing with the idea of, you know, if you like the justification that the painting was something to do with how it was fixed to the wall. Well, I mean it was against Ryman, if you like, I addressed my `Paintings', because I said to myself, well if it's about the nature of putting on a skin with a paint brush, even, and the surface isn't even a canvas, it's a piece of plastic, and it's held on the wall with brackets, I consider that practice rather more to be involved with sculpture, because sculpture can exist in two dimensions too, and the tradition of, you know, the Renaissance would suggest that we also dealt with, at that time, with pictorialism, so sculptures dealt with pictorial, even, I mean Renaissance within Alberti's discovery of perspective, it was Donatello who was using it, if not before Masaccio certainly about the same time. So perspective practice was actually introduced to relief before it was actually, or at the same time as it was introduced to painting as the little predella underneath St. George on the Orsanmichele, the first structure to produce the perspective, if it wasn't the `Trinity' of Masaccio in the Santa Maria Novella. So, I mean my argument has always been, it doesn't matter but it certainly makes one sort of want to stand up and sort of make cases, because it seemed to me that, you know, what was going on in art was about dialogue, you know, and about, like the extraordinary things that ideas about art can actually generate in terms of the same subject matter, so, these are things that excited me.

Were you already reading Vasari and Stokes?

Not at that point.

So you had this predisposition to the Renaissance a long time before that?

Oh very much so. I think probably when it came to the point at which I was saying, well I'm going to give up making art, or not, it was when, if you like, the resonance of what was happening within my surface pieces made me feel that, OK I am really relying on my subjective response to things.

Was that ever a serious possibility, that you might give it up?

I don't know, because it never happened, but my intuition, you know, made me feel...

It was an internal debate you were having?

It was my own...yes, in terms of the way that I was thinking about things, you know, I mean, could it be that I wouldn't, you know, and why not? I mean if you like the premises were set out. The point being, let's say, having made my Lisson Gallery show myself over a period of three or four, five days, when I made the exhibition, which was the next major show that I had, at the Paris Biennale, and in fact it wasn't just that show, it was another show that happened at about the same time as I was asked to put something into the Whitechapel Open, and I made another sculpture in my studio that were all the same size, so my basic objective in this particular piece was, I'm going to get somebody else to make the works for me. So I had this very very good West Indian plasterer who plastered the piece in my studio, so in fact I employed the guy to come into my studio and actually do it for me. I employed the same guy to do the same piece but using different materials at the Whitechapel; in that particular instance it was beautiful work, it was called `Shining Forth', it was called `Surface: Shining Forth to George (Jackson)'. It was a homage to Barnett Newman's great painting, which was a homage to his brother, but mine was a homage to George Jackson the black liberationist who was a jailed lover of Angela Davies and who was shot to death on the day before he was going to be given his freedom in a jail in the States. Anyway, so, I was interested in all this as well, I mean, that's another thing, maybe a sub-plot in my work that I will come back to, because I mentioned politics

before. But then the other piece that was done in Paris, at the Paris Biennale, I got this plasterer-of-Paris to plaster the piece. So I was there supervising but I specifically excluded myself from the actual making of the work, but it was still there, there was still this thing going on. So for me...

What do you mean, it was still going on?

Well there was still a resonance within the work, you know, it was something that, OK, that had to be...it was my concept that had set it all up, just as it had done with the work that I'd done myself, but in terms of the, if you like, of pushing the experiment to the total extreme of saying, OK, even if I don't do it myself, am I going to get to a point where what's happening is going to lose the kinds of qualities, the qualities that I feel are what makes this special object in the world special or not, and if it's not special then, OK, maybe I won't. But let's say that's the point at which I...this last, this series of three works that were all standing at the same time in three different places, two places in London and one place in Paris. So it was taking, it was again to do with the demystification thing; it was to do with the idea that this thing could be in two places at once, didn't have to be made by me, and, was it still saying anything? It could really only be said in this way. And my decision, my conclusion was that it was still functioning and I would carry on. And so the tabula rasa that became, you know, specifically it, I mean was my sounding board against, if you like, the dialogue between my own previous experiences, my love of previous art, that made me want to do art, if you like, the things that excited me as an artist; even as a Minimal artist I still loved art of the Renaissance and so many kinds of paintings that, you know, whether they be Abstract paintings or not. I mean I'm a pretty catholic church when it comes to my loves in art, painting and sculpture.

So does this put it purely in the realm of Conceptual art?

At that time I would have said that this was as Conceptual and as removed from it that I could be.

And who was actually executing it, what was his name?

That didn't matter. Executing the work?

Yes.

Well, the plasterer-of-Paris in one case, and I think the other guy was called Bill Goldman, who was this West Indian guy who I mentioned before.

But you don't think that mattered?

No it didn't. No. I mean it didn't matter at all, simply...I mean the art, the piece of work that I set up... No, because there was a point between the fact that I had made, for five years I had been working on a particular series of works, they existed in my studio, they had existed in the Lisson Gallery, they were now existing in different sort of forms. And if you like the most challenging way for me to say, OK, I'm not going to do these, let's see what happens. And I suppose to an extent that was really a point of making...it was a grand gesture maybe on the one hand but it was a point at which, you know, I would or would not have proceeded or not, simply because it was, if you like, essentially to do with my philosophy towards my work, I would either carry on with it or I wouldn't really. But as I say, it won.

Did you think you needed to go back to a more hands-on approach yourself?

No, I don't really think that matters. I mean I don't think the hands-on approach... I think it was to do, let's say all the work that was done in the studio before I showed at Lisson, and the show at the Lisson Gallery, was all done by me anyway. I think that as an artist that I've needed to know what the particular practice entailed, because I think only when you know how to do it do you actually know what it's capable of, even if it's to do with a relatively mundane approach like plastering. I mean I taught myself how to plaster, so I can plaster. I mean this house was mainly plastered by me. There's a piece in fact behind that curtain which is a piece from the same period we're talking about. Lift it up. And you see that's one of the pieces that developed into the reliefs, became reliefs, although this doesn't have any spacial subject matter.

So, the point, if that's the point we were at, then the next point was, OK, I've got this surface, what's it doing? It's away from the wall so it doesn't associate with architecture; it's on the floor so it associates with sculpture; and it's made of plaster. It's got a surface orientation which puts it close to the domain of painting, and in that respect I saw what I was doing to be dealing with ideas of, you know, if you like Renaissance ideas in a way, to do with architectural painting and sculpture, but for all the reasons that I had wanted to, if you like, define the practice, it was within the practice of sculpture, on the floor, away from the wall, and of materials associated with sculpture, so it couldn't be seen as painting, really. And then the next stage was how to proceed with this as a tabula rasa, and what I decided was to say, OK, I can make a panel that leans against the wall, that panel in leaning against the wall will similarly be disassociable, disassociated from the architecture associated with the floor etcetera, and what was happening in the way that this idea was developing was that I could then deal, because what was particularly interesting to me at this point was the writings of Alberti, and I introduced if you like perspective into the work for the first time by drawing a picture of the space in which the piece was standing on the piece.

What date was this?

In 1977/78 I suppose.

And what was the title of that piece?

Well the very first piece was called `Alberti I' and it was made of marble. I say...was that the first piece? I suppose it could have been, because at the same time I was working on a number of pieces in plaster which were called `Donato', and I was using the familiar names used by Alberti to talk of his friends who he wrote to in the letter announcing his discovery of perspective, and talked about how his friends Filippo Brunelleschi, Nento I think, Ghiberti, Donato Donatello, and Tommaso Masaccio, would have been interested in his discoveries.

How did you discover Alberti?

I suppose by looking for ways of associating my practice with something of the past, and I went back to the Renaissance and I went back to the early Renaissance, and I suppose I must have had some knowledge of Alberti from somewhere. But it seemed that I had to, what I was doing, I mean...I mean we know anyway, it may have come through something like, OK I've got this surface, I know from clay that if you put a dot on the page and you extend it you have a line and if you extend the line you've got a square, and you extend the square in space you've got a cube. I mean this kind of thing, I know that if I mark, I think this is also in Richard Wollheim's writings, I know he introduces in one of his essays, gosh I've forgotten what the book's called, it's so famous, where these things do in fact disappear don't they. `Art and Its Object'. And he talks about the dot on the page etcetera, you know, in a similar way about meaning.

Had you read that before Alberti?

One was familiar with Alberti, I can't remember what I actually read of Alberti specifically.

Would it have been on perspective?

Well there's the `Della Pittura' was the book that I was consulting. I didn't read it in the original but I was certainly reading tracts of it and reading books about Alberti especially, of which I still have...oh I won't say legion but nevertheless there seemed to be plenty there. And it's kind of curious in a way that there was a kind of a link back, a kind of funny spacial link, because I was passionate about the work of Malevich and less so about others at the turn of the century and, you know, through the revolutionary period up to the Thirties. But this kind of abstraction that I was involved with one minute suddenly makes a back-spring into, you know, sort of four or five hundred years previously, almost to an extent denying the kind of development and revolutionary changes that had taken place. But somehow, you know, this kind of notion of art being about art anyway, which I think is a grand and wonderful enough subject for art, that, you know, to deal with the relationship of my work to its place in history was something which, OK at that time required me to go and, you know, look

at my roots again, and I think it was rather more important for me to go and look at my roots which go back to the quattrocento rather than just go back, you know, twenty years or even fifty years or even back to the turn of the century, because you know, I appreciate I'm a product of the 20th century, as our art is a product of the 20th century.

I don't think you've mentioned Malevich before.

I didn't mention Malevich? No, because I...oh well never mind. Well I...you know, things going on, you know. [LAUGHS] Well I suppose what might be an interesting thing to do would be to talk about Malevich, you know, a little bit...well, maybe I shouldn't, I'm not quite sure actually when I can actually say that I... A lecture... I mention I think... This all seems a little muddled but, I mentioned my thesis on Futurism, and I was interested in art and politics, that was, let's say, as an undergraduate, it's rather an interesting pointer really, I hadn't really thought much about it, but I think probably more to an extent I was interested in Futurism stylistically and artistically in terms of its kind of...and revolutionary without it being necessarily political. And I think that Futurism then for me was something about an underdog in relation to Cubism, I think I mentioned that because I mentioned before that, you know, Derain was to an extent an underdog in relation to Matisse, typically English, you know, like Wimbledon.

I suppose you did say you were then also interested in Constructivism although we didn't talk about it, so maybe it would have been Malevich.

Well, that would have been it, that would have been it I suppose. And so, Malevich interested me especially, I think because he was the greatest artist to come out of the Russian revolutionary period, with Tatlin, whose work I loved too. And I suppose I became au fait with them through Futurism, because I was really following in the footsteps of, you know, what was the knock-on effect of Marinetti's, if you like, tirade through Europe at a time, you know, before the massive convulsions that took place in Europe twice in the early part of this century. And, I mean it seemed to me that, you know, what he had to say affected the Russian revolutionary spirit, even, if not in

politics, it certain did in terms of what he said about art. And so I got to be interested in Malevich through that, and I suppose obviously through Malevich and looking at his early work and its association with Cubism too. I mean to an extent it's, I mean, it doesn't have the sophistication of what was happening in Paris.

So your interest was when you were a student?

Well my student...no well I think my interest in Malevich started to develop later on. Because one of the things which links in let's say a little bit closer to what I'm talking about and mentioned earlier on in relation to the sculpture I may call `Surface: Shining Forth to George (Jackson)', I was...if I was doing any reading at the time I was reading about anarchism. Barnett Newman translated many anarchist journals; he himself was an anarchist.

From what?

From the German, or the Polish. I mean, from the German. So he was a very...it doesn't show in the work. I think it's the discreet nature of these things which I'm interested in, I've always been interested. I mean I don't believe in propaganda in art, art as propaganda, and in that respect again the writings of Ad Reinhardt are quite clear on that, and if you read any things of, you know, Barnett Newman's writing too. I mean they're very interesting because they show that they're about, if you like, an essential human belief which obviously is represented in the work in a way that the work says for itself something about these extraordinarily sort of spiritual sensations and beliefs and commitments. And I suppose in that respect what interested me, and I gave a series of lectures which were done in, I say a series inasmuch as it was done in several places, and I think I must have done them in about 1970, and it was called `Art and Ideology, the Futurist-Constructivist Ethos', and I gave it at Birmingham, the Royal College of Art and various other places. And in fact at the Royal College of Art it was in a series of lectures which.....

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It was in a series of lectures at the Royal College of Art that Richard Wollheim also gave a lecture, in fact I think his lecture was called `The End and the Edge in Painting and Sculpture'. I think it was a lot of tosh actually, but nevertheless, I don't think he came to mine so that he could have passed similar comments on my discussion. But, I was very excited about an era in which there seemed to be interesting things being said by artists, although what also became, I became aware of, let's say given the significance and the high profile of the artists that I certainly loved, like the ones I mentioned who were all artists at the Lisson Gallery, it was brought to my attention by Nicholas Logsdail that these actually were a previous generation to me, but because of the fact that one was looking at them all the time in art magazines one felt one was a part of that generation, and of course he saw me as the next generation and consequently there were kinds of differences. But to a large extent there were artists, artists like Carl Andre who set up this thing called The Art Workers' Coalition and wrote a manifesto, you know, behind the work there was still a working man with a working man ethic with certain notions about the nature of the art work and its position within the commercial world. He wrote some very interesting things, Carl Andre. Even Sol LeWitt wrote very very interesting things, and did some very very good interviews. And these were artists who were very concerned about what was going on in Vietnam. So there was a very, for me a very very strong social and political underpinning in the work of the Minimal artists, because what they were dealing with was intrinsically truth, and this truth had to have an effect within the world, and they were often quite outspoken and seen to be outspoken on the subject of, you know, what was happening, that they were very critical of American politics at the time, and in that respect, that's why, you know, I would have, as I mentioned just now, other artists that one doesn't necessarily associate with a political view like Barnett Newman, and like Ad Reinhardt, who were very very active speakers on rights of artists and rights of people, great humanitarians. In that respect, you know, I suppose there was a sense of a Renaissance spirit in a way that, you know, art was seen to be a part of a changing and developing world, you know, looking for something better; a critical as well as an aspirational view.

And were you responding to the spiritual dimension in Malevich and Reinhardt?

Yes, I mean certainly it was the point about, I suppose, about finding it in my own work, that you could reduce your activity to a very very minimal basic statement, and it could still resonate with the most amazing spiritual charge, you know, the charge that one would get from Rothko, I mean the charge that I particularly would get from Barnett Newman. I mean, you know, the charge... I mean maybe I can explain it by saying, you know, if I look at the wonderful Rembrandt `Self Portrait' at Kenwood House, I look at another artist looking at me through four or five hundred years of time, and I feel that we're speaking to each other; and I think to look at an Abstract painting that one responds to, I feel moved in the same way. I mean I feel that there's a kind of a dialogue going on as an artist with another artist, and of course you don't have to be an artist to feel that sensation. [BREAK IN RECORDING] What are you going to ask me next?

Well, maybe we can go back to talk about Alberti and how that made you move on into the relief pieces, or the connection between Alberti and the relief pieces.

Right. OK. I mean without this becoming a sort of, a history lesson, I suppose the point about Alberti as I feel about Alberti is that his discoveries, although it's thought that Arabic mathematicians had discovered perspective or the basis of perspective many many hundreds of years before - well couldn't have been that many hundreds because they wouldn't have been Muslims, but nevertheless I believe, although I've never seen the evidence, that there was some knowledge of the technical side of perspective. But Alberti's discovery really has been one of the most amazing discoveries which have affected, which has affected both our lives as artists and as human beings for a vast period of time, I mean since 1470 or whenever it was that he wrote `Della Pittura'. You know, our notion of how we see representation of the world around us has been, if you like, organised in such a way that we can see an equivalent, I suppose until photography did it for us, but certainly we still see things in the same kind of scientific structural way that was presented to us by Alberti way back then. I suppose it's to do with that priority that made me feel that this seemed to be a good place to start again. I felt also to an extent that there was an idea almost of

a, almost like a Byzantine rule system within Minimalism in a way, that, I did quite a lot of teaching as well, and there always seemed to be a way that you could approach teaching practice in relation to how things could or could not be in relation to the nature of the material, the action of the making; all these sorts of things were sort of self-evident and ought to be evident within the work. So there was a kind of a practice and a theory behind the way that you even taught art that sort of fitted in with the system. And to a certain extent I was saying to myself, well if I'm going to go back and start putting things back into my work in relation to this tabula rasa, then maybe I'm doing it in a way that I'm looking at the world again scientifically in the same way that whoever it was, you know, re-formed perception at the time of the early Renaissance in which, you know, if you like the Byzantine scheme of things, which was still living in both I suppose the Sienese and certainly trecento or quattrocento painting, and the world of course, you know, in the clutches of the way that the universe was seen through the Church, and it wasn't just art, it was in science too with Galileo, that you know, a different kind of concept of man in the universe. So the business of humanism as it developed in the 15th and 16th century was something about man asking questions about the givens in life, and I suppose I started to ask questions about those givens that had formed the nature of my work, and that seemed to be an appropriate moment in time to look at this tabula rasa and say, right, where do we go from here? And so it was a matter of saying, OK, well, maybe just a re-evaluation of what was happening and how things developed in the Renaissance and since. Probably in relation to, I suppose the things of abstraction that I've been involved with too, because although I was using if you like picturing, I was only picturing the self of the art rather than the world around it. And the first sculpture I made in Italy, the Palazzo Reale of Milan, which dealt with a leaning panel that I brought with me from my work in London, I presented the notion of a broader expanse of meaning because I made a relief, a pictorial relief that took the whole of one of the palace walls in the Palazzo Reale and made a mirror image of the leaning panel on the opposite wall. So actually, it went all the way to being a notion of a picture, an illusion, so that it dealt with an expanded sense of the picture, but it still was contained within itself, but nevertheless it posited the notion about picturing and in that respect you get the developments that took place in my work much later with kind of pictorial devices within fragmentation etcetera, which are all sorts of complex

devices for enabling one to deal with narrative picturing, materials, traditions of both the Renaissance, of looking at Alberti and Vasari; a whole kind of gamut of possibilities that somehow embraced the history, that was the history that was mine as a European artist, as opposed to if you like the conceptual theoretical thing that seemed to be rather more the initiative of American, New York orientated contemporary art.

So how did you introduce perspective into your own work?

By making pictures of leaning panels - not making pictures of leaning panels, of making pictures of the space in which my leaning panels were leaned. So they were still self-referential, and in that respect let's say my allegiance is still with the notion of the art work being self-referential, as they probably still are, but the nature of their self-referentialism has sort of expanded a bit but nevertheless they deal with the field of art practice as a subject matter for my work. In that particular instance the leaning panel pictures the space on which it stands.

Which particular instances?

In every instance, in all the pieces called relief, isolated either a drawing that represented the floor of the space in which the panel was leaning, or the wall in which the panel was leaning, or an amalgamation of the two. So it was almost saying, this panel is leaning against the wall, is obscuring your view of the wall, but at the same time you're being informed about what lay behind it rather than what's in front of it, but nevertheless there was a kind of a, a notion of this picturing taking place. So really if you like it's positing the idea of the picture, but done in the most simple way, the point being that, you know, once you can structure even this limited space, it opens up the universe in terms of how you can deal with illusion or use illusion to open up the world or represent the world. I wasn't interested in that so much as, if you like positing the idea of illusion contained within a self-referential work of art coming out of, if you like, a Minimal background that was addressing the traditions of European art into what had been an American dominated contemporary view.

And you moved into working in marble as well as plaster at that time?

That's right. I mean that was the first, the early plaster works. It's also to do with the modelling-carving dichotomy, and in that respect the plaster panels were about modelling. This was something that came up at this point or quite soon after these early works, and with the Alberti pieces too which were carved, and basically they were using what's called in this country Sicilian marble, whether it's Carrara marble used for gravestones and stuff, and I just, I went to a local monumental mason and got my slabs and asked them to carve this line. So again it was them doing that. I hadn't touched in my life - no that's true, I did in fact a very very rough piece of carving when I was a student at the Central but nevertheless the kind of skill of letter-cutting in this particular case which was a very very long line that was in fact a trapezoid. And this was done for me by this company, but it wasn't long before I started doing my own carving.

So it must have been, well, was it a logical progression into the wedges?

Yes. I suppose you could say that the wedges were the way of making sculptures free-standing, and the idea that this space that the leaning slab made could in fact be made solid was in fact another step to bring things out into space. I saw this very kind of slow development, I mean I suppose the relief pieces were over a period of a couple of years or so before I started making some wedges, although it was in 19...in 1979 I was in a show in Italy at the Palazzo Reale, and it was then that I was asked if I would go to, by the representative of the British Council there, a man called Andrews...

Julian Andrews?

Julian Andrews. Asked me if I would like to go to the then Yugoslavia to a symposium, and work in marble, and I was going to be given four cubic metres of marble. And so I basically used the concepts of four cubic metres of marble and how to work with them, and although I was making some small pieces in my studio and using wedges, this was if you like the major statement in that series of works, which

again, I suppose over a period of a year or so I think probably the wedge pieces took place. And so then that was the culmination of the involvement with those relief works.

Can you describe the pieces in the former Yugoslavia?

The piece is in a park, and it's at the end of an avenue, and it consists of a series of, I say a series, a group of wedges which are about 6½ feet, maybe 2 metres high, I think that was probably, basically there were two, each block was 2 metres in one direction, and the blocks that I was given were sawn in such a way that I could produce the maximum number of free-standing wedges, and so I think there were eventually ten. And they stand at the end of a path with a space between them, so that when you come down the path you can see beyond, there's in fact a small open-air theatre beyond. But the pathway that you walk on is picked up by the relief drawing on the surface of the wedges, which then extends if you like spatially through the wedge, so the wedge itself becomes transparent and delineates if you like a perspected or projected, almost like an extension of the pathway into and through these wedges. Which also deals with the notion of illusion and reality, which is picked up later, because you have, on the one hand the gaps between the wedges show you that there is a real space beyond, but the drawing on the surface shows you an illusionistic space which takes you into the illusion, but you're always reminded of the reality which is if you like a pushing and pulling effect that takes place. There are a couple of arcs also drawn on the surface which are suggestive of both, if you like arches on the one hand and just the linking and tension that geometry can give, because of the way that one reads a broken circle is to try and repair it, and this functioned for me in that respect.

Was that experience of working in the former Yugoslavia significant for you?

I think...difficult to say really. I mean it was significant inasmuch as it started to take more of my time, because the first year I went to make this thing, things went reasonably well, although people around me were pulling their hair out with anxiety and frustration at the sort of awful way that things had been arranged, and these people had had the experiences that went back a couple of years, and I was to be

exposed to the same frustrations. Because having gone there and spent quite a long period of time, my family came too. The resulting work was incomplete and it took another two years to finish it, and it caused a diplomatic problem because people were just not doing the work and it seemed to me there must have been quite a lot of corruption going on somewhere simply because people were saying that things were done and they weren't being done, which suggested to me that people were being paid, had been paid and hadn't done what they were supposed to do, and maybe were just hoping that eventually I and the British Council there would go away, but of course because the British Government were involved we didn't go away and we wanted to see the job concluded, and we eventually did but it was to an extent quite soul-destroying, simply because you just couldn't get done what you wanted to do in the time allotted. But, that almost, you know, going through to that particular stage in my career also jumps a vast kind of concern, because I've never mentioned my family before. [LAUGHING]

No. I was aware of that when you said that they had joined you. Because you haven't even...we haven't talked about you marrying Judy yet have we.

That's right.

I think when we spoke before you had met her.

That's right.

Well, when did you get married?

Well we didn't.

You didn't?

No. So we have in fact been met since. Pelé, our youngest daughter, was born in 1971, and our second daughter, Georgia, she's called Easterly really but we call her Georgia, she was born in 1974. So they were...it's always difficult to establish Judy's

and my relationship's beginning because by this time, you know, we've now actually sort of been together I think almost thirty years, although let's say in 1970...when was I student? '68 to '72, '68, '69, probably '69/70. '70 I think probably is when I met her, and here we are. No it's 25 years really. Yes, we spent one year apart and then we got back together again and our first daughter was born. If that has any relevance to our...

Yes it is, very.

Well they've been inspirational, and great supporters. And I suppose, I mean the point being that, you know, a lot of the, if we're talking about, you know, how things had gone, I mean by the time, you know, that I was in Italy for the first time and the children were already, you know, portable in terms of being able to go places, in '79 when I first went to Italy to work, so the children were 5 or so, and when we went to Yugoslavia which was for Judy then just a holiday, that was obviously then again in '79/80, and that was in the winter of 1979, to get things started, then I think it was in 1980 that I gave up my teaching at Brighton to go and live in Italy, but then we're going back, we're going forward too quickly. But anyway...

When did you begin to live with Judy?

Gosh, we're going right the way back now of course, because, it goes back to when I was a student at the Central, so in fact that was in 19...well as I mentioned, yes, in 1960...absolutely right, '68 to '72, and I was already living with Judy by 1967 so yes.

Would you describe it as a traditional relationship, the traditional role divisions, or...?

I think so, I think that's probably the way that Judy has, if you like, created the stability in the relationship which has shown quite a traditional mother role, especially because as far as the commitment to the family has been concerned, although, let's say I by necessity, since this period of travel extensively, the priority of the children's welfare and well-being has been Judy's principal concern, and she has given a hundred per cent of her time to the children, and that's up until let's say our eldest

daughter...our youngest daughter now is at college, and the eldest one has graduated, so if you like when...that side of the family commitment is more or less at the end, but... But from the very beginning there has been a kind of a hundred per cent commitment to, if you like a traditional role for Judy as a mother, in the best sense of the word in that respect.

Did the births of your children have a big impact on you?

Oh, yes, I think so. Well certainly, most definitely, it just had to. I think, I think to an extent, I mean if, I'm sure Judy would scream if I said I took on a role of, I suppose slightly differently to the way that I behaved previously, but, you know, the business of teaching in those days meant that, you know, going away three days a week meant that I was in fact away quite a lot, but you know, we were fortunate enough that we had a house quite early on and so we had a basic anchor in Islington, and so, you know, we've had a kind of a very very sort of stable system that we've established to enable us to live the kind of life that we've led, and it's been a phenomenal support. I mean I think that she, Judy is a very very unusual woman to give me the freedom that I've needed to develop my work, which in moments of anxiety have seemed to be a sort of selfish pursuit of my own kind of extraordinary travelling globally to do things. But I think, we both understand that this is to do with the fact that's the nature of the work rather than the nature of any kind of sense of wanting to be on permanent holiday.

Were you present when the children were born?

The first birth was a forceps delivery and I wasn't allowed to be in the room. But otherwise I think that went quite well, Judy was epiduralled with that. And I remember we were listening to Beckett's `Lessness' before she went into the delivery room, which was rather an amazing kind of run-up to the event. And for Georgia, the second birth, she wasn't born in London. Pelé the eldest was born in University College Hospital, and Georgia was born in Canterbury at Kent Hospital, Canterbury Hospital, and I was there at that.

Did that make a big impression on you?

I think...I mean it's wonderful. I suppose if one saw it on television one would think it was amazing, and being there is so involving. I mean I wasn't involved in any of the sort of pre-natal business, I mean so many people who seem to get involved with, you know, the partnership of giving birth these days seem to have to get so much more involved at the outset and be there all the time, and I suppose be a part of, you know, as much as one can to empathise with all the kind of body changes that are going on in one's partner. But, let's say I was...I felt that I was actually actively involved, you know, in helping out, because there were certain problems with the epidural and one needed to, you know, give encouragement and support and all that kind of thing. So I think it was kind of, I could never suggest it was a genuine partnership but let's say one was involved to the extent that I think one was too busy thinking about what one was doing to be able to sort of stand back and sort of think of the kind of sublime moment of all this happening. And even in retrospect I think I came out of it bruised as everybody else did. [LAUGHS]

Did it change you do you think, fatherhood?

Oh I think it has to really. Although it seems to be such a long time ago that it happened I'm not really quite sure how much it would have. I remember especially when we came back from University College with Pelé, although she wasn't named at the time, we got into a taxi and were driving home and we were both in tears simply because it was a moment when an extraordinary thing had happened and it was obviously going to change... I mean one even, you know, just the sort of things that happen are spontaneous, or a moment of extraordinary, I don't know, disbelief really I suppose that this wonderful thing had happened and nothing would be the same again.

Yes, I suppose I didn't mean, did it change, I meant how it changed.

How it changed.

Obviously it did.

No no, of course. Oh no, but I think, I mean to an extent I mean, how might it have changed one? God knows really, I mean it's...I really don't know.

They're very unusual names. What's the significance of Pelé and Easterly?

Well we couldn't really come up with names, and I suppose we were looking for something different, and if you look in the books of names you find that so many commonplace names have got the most ridiculous meanings you wonder how anybody became called whatever they might have been called in the first place. So it seemed a reasonable idea at the time to look for an unusual name. And in fact I think it was Judy who came up with Pelé, the footballer's name.

The footballer's name?

The footballer's name. It also has...I mean because his name is not Pelé, it's a nickname, and the nickname is obviously derived from his personality, or his performance.

What does it mean?

The great Pelé. Well it's a goddess of fire, it's the goddess of the volcano, and obviously, or, the spirit of the volcano probably in his case, so his explosive performance on the football pitch was obviously why he became known as Pelé. But there are, I mean in Hawaii there's a volcano called Pelé, and that seems to be if you like the origin of the name. Which is rather nice, because, you know, it still means to most people the footballer, what a strange... I was able to take her as a very tiny tot to Fulham football ground once to watch Santos play, so when she was a baby she saw Pelé actually when he was in his prime play, and I'm sure she won't remember it. Easterly is a name, again we couldn't come to any kind of agreement over this, and at the end of the day we were coming up with some conventional names which are so boring that, you know, you couldn't put another child with an ordinary name next to a child called Pelé, so I went off to a pile of old `Art Forums' that I had and I just turned

the pages and just wrote down names that came to my attention, and I gave Judy a list - I wish I still had the list. I know that the word, the name Serra, after Richard Serra as opposed to Sarah spelt like Sarah was a play on the name Sarah but not Sarah, so as an homage. But the name Easterly is a title of a Kenneth Noland painting, `Horizontal Stripes'. And, it was interesting because I suppose so much of my life has become involved since then with the East and Georgia herself has been to India and is very interested in India. Maybe, although she still doesn't use it, she is very tempted now because the name we gave her soon after

we registered the birth was Georgia, and now there are so many Georgias around she thinks that maybe Easterly was a good idea after all.

End of F4920 Side A

F4920 Side B

What do you think your attitude to parenting has been, what do you hope to pass on to your children?

I didn't realise this was supposed to be a difficult interview.

What sort of values would you hope they would take from you?

I can't say...I would say I've never thought about it. I suppose if I had to think about, you know, an off-the-cuff, if this was a television interview and I had to think of something off the cuff I would try and change the subject and, maybe I would like to think about that a little more. But, no those are kind of deep philosophical things. I think probably, let's say I mentioned before John Panting and his fantastic work ethic, let's say I work quite hard I think, and I think that's never a bad thing. I think as an artist one has principles otherwise one wouldn't make art, so I hope that they establish principles which... I suppose, I mentioned before as well, I mean if you think of anarchism's kind of involvement with the notion of if you like doing unto others as you would be done by, there's a very sort of strong kind of Christian ethic that's intrinsic to that. They haven't had any spiritual upbringing like I had had being a pupil at a church school and having if you like gone through the rituals of a relatively normal upbringing just after the war when everybody I suppose was grateful that we came through the war successfully, so I suppose a gratefulness and responsibility in Christianity and stuff was a part of, I suppose one's general kind of sense of how things were in terms of a moral responsibility. But I think...I think, you know, we have never as a family really sat down and sort of talked things out in ways that would have suggested that, you know, like this is the way you go through life, girls, you know. I was brought up in a family of boys and I'm not really, still don't really know how to deal with girls as... And then, you know, as I'm constantly shouted at, I'm not really sure that I'll ever understand. The idea of parental authority doesn't seem to actually go down very well with them either. They're often right, they're both very sensible, and if they tell me I'm wrong they're usually right, so, you know. We're pretty democratic in that respect, I think that everybody has their say quite freely.

Do you think you are not a strict father?

I'd like to be but usually I have a gang of three women against me if ever I try to make a stand on something. There's a matter of principle that I should not get...allow, let's say, having come from a background where there was probably a rather more traditional sort of male authority, which of course becomes easily assimilated as misogyny if you like. And so, you know, I think that probably I've had to change a lot of my attitudes from my background to the position I am at now in my life, and have in fact, I suppose come through the last twenty odd years.

What kinds of attitudes?

I suppose attitudes in terms of the nature of familial or hierarchical status and behaviour. I suppose, you know, a living democracy on the one hand within a family rather than a sense of, you know, you do this because I tell you. But of course we love you anyway, you know, although... But, no I think that, I think the foundation of our relationship and why Judy and I didn't get married was really to do with the idea that, you know, we loved each other and there was no need it seemed to us, or it seemed to me, I mean I'm told now that it was all to do with me rather than to do with a kind of, a totally kind of bilateral decision. But you know, I felt that if you had principles and you had belief, and you love someone, the nature of that love shouldn't be a possessive love that should be, if you like, endorsed through contractual arrangements, so-called marriage, you know, either be they spiritual or just legal. So we've had a very very longstanding and very involved and I think loving relationship for a very long time; certainly out-live most of anybody else we know who've been married. And I suppose to an extent that depends upon, you know, our upbringings as being, you know, from both unbroken backgrounds, unbroken homes, and I suppose relatively traditional attitudes to parenting and family, that you have a responsibility to your children and to each other for having brought them into the world and to each other, because, you know, because you love each other really. So I suppose if anything... I mean I think it probably can become overbearing to an extent inasmuch as the children really wish they weren't loved so much, because they really want to get

on with their own lives without too much interference. I think in that respect we all have to learn to let go at a certain point.

Your children went to public school, didn't they?

Yes. They started in London at local schools but never for long, because the local schools never... I mean let's say we were relatively pioneering coming into Islington and being amongst the sort of first of the middle class people moving into Islington, which was let's say a working class area, the kind of area, albeit slightly different geographically and architecturally to the upbringing I had in my home city of Bristol, but nevertheless let's say it's a working class area, became a working class area and now it's a very middle class area. And the schools that the children went to, by the time they were old enough to go to school we were living here in this house rather than in another house across the other side of Islington, our children could already read when they were of school age, and when they went to this local school for example they had a crazy reading system which helped, they said, children read better. Now as our children could already read...

How was that?

How? Judy was terrific at teaching the children from a very early age. They knew their tables and they could read when they were 4, before they went to school. And they were going to schools where they were expected to be re-taught how to read, which was going to set them back, and so we took them out of that school and sent them to an infant school locally, and then when they got through that we sent them to the City of London...sorry, to Prior Weston School, which was a very progressive school run by quite a well-known educationalist called Henry Pluckrose, whose kind of radical teaching technique seemed to be exactly the same as the techniques that I was brought up with in my local school in Bristol, but basically it was to do with, you know, kind of community spirit and working in little groups and doing extraordinary things that introduce you to really what was arithmetic and mathematics because you were weighing and counting cotton reels and doing embroidery and all that sort of stuff, you know. The thing that seemed to be most different about this school was

that they called the headmaster by his first name, I mean these little tots all calling Henry Henry, you know, it's rather amusing. The problem with that school was that they had a fantastic advantage because of the fantastic teaching, very very close groups, very very small groups. The point was the Henry Pluckrose teaching system only went through junior school, it didn't go into the upper school, so the point was, then you just throw them all in the deep end of local comprehensive education, and basically it was considered...I mean especially by Judy, I mean as far as I was concerned we couldn't afford it, but we made a point of trying to afford it, because Judy was so...well Judy was adamant, and it was the background, she went to public school herself; I went to a local school as I mentioned before. And she held out for, if you like the best education possible for our children. So let's say from the times when I might have been exhibiting and earning some money from both my work and from teaching, it went into the children's education. And, well we're very pleased that we did that.

Where did they go?

Well from Prior Weston, this local junior school, they both went to the City of London School for Girls in the Barbican, which was quite a sort of, a hot-house pressure-cooker for girls from anywhere that wanted, you know, high...what's the word, high achieving kids. And I think probably, given the nature of the experience of my children, although, I mean one part of their education that I missed out was that both of them whilst they were between one school, or one type of education and another, or within certain kinds of class structure, I'm not quite sure what years they were, we did in fact send them to school on the Costiera Amalfitana when we were living in Italy during 1980, so there was a moment when they had had an experience of not only having to learn elementary school curriculum, they were actually learning in Italian in a village school where they are taught to do maths in the most extraordinary way. Doing long division and multiplication in Italy, I can't understand it, and I think this is probably what set the children back when it came to a rather more scientific education. But nevertheless I think that, you know, they had been abroad as children, small children; they had been dragged around art galleries and museums and churches and cathedrals, and landscapes that were...which made them I

think unusual and quite sensitive children, and neither of them really responded to the kind of pressure academic situation at the City of London School. And so, and Judy did some research when I was away once, and I came back and found that they were being sent to Frensham Heights, which is again a very good, disreputable from its early days apparently, because it was a very very liberal school, near Bedales in fact but I think structured in a similar way, co-educational boarding school. And they both enjoyed it a great deal, it seemed. They also, it was in a beautiful setting in a beautiful house, and the eldest, Pelé, loved it very much, and... One of the ideas as well was that this would free Judy to come with me and work with me when I was in Italy or in India or in Egypt, but I'm afraid that ties of the children kept her in London because she wanted to be here if they wanted to come home at weekends. So the children had the best of both worlds in that respect; they had the boarding school, the education that was very, you know, closely managed as far as their relationship with their teachers were, and they had their mother at home on weekends, and me when I was around. But to an extent maybe I did lose a bit of contact with the children, because of the fact that I was away quite often meant that I saw even less of them than Judy, although I saw as much of them as we both would have seen of them if Judy had come with me, but, you know, I think probably because of always having had my family and my mother there every day when I was at school, I suppose I can never really get my head into the idea that, you know, children would go to boarding school. That's something obviously foreigners and Europeans find very difficult to understand is how the British can send their children to boarding schools, it's kind of an alien concept, you know. What's the point of having children if you lose your influence over them? But anyway...

What do you think your aspirations are for them?

Well I think probably, it can only be their happiness. I can't really imagine anything else. My father and mother sat me down one day when I think I had finished my O'levels and I was at school and I was just about, I think I had just got a place at art school, and my mother and father, it was the only time they sat down with me, it wasn't to tell me the facts of life or anything, but they said, `Well, we want you to know that we're behind what you want to do; if you want to go to art school then

we're behind you all the way, and we hope you'll do very very well. And all we ask is that you give the same support to your own children'. And, it's very difficult, it's the most generous thing I think anybody can ever say to their child, and it's almost to an extent obvious. If you've been given that support by your parents, given that, if you like the kind of social background that we were from you would expect parents to have their children at home and give their pay packet in at the end of the week. I mean I'm just thinking of, my eldest brother obviously was completely different, I've mentioned already that John was a high achiever in the field of the arts and the opera, but my other two brothers, you know, they lived at home before they got married and, you know, there was a kind of a regime. Interestingly even, you know, today on the radio we were listening to someone who lost their child in the awful boat disaster, was expecting to get, as a mother or parents, were expecting to get compensation related to the potential of their child's earning potential in a career. You think, how can anybody have ever expected that their child's performance would somehow give them financial benefit? If anything it's the total loss of a child's growing up, for which, you know, you can't measure it. So what's £40,000? It should have been millions, but not because of their argument that they have lost income from their child. So, one can only say that one would hope that they have happiness and are committed to what they want to do.

Did you sit down then and tell them the facts of life?

No.

You were just saying your parents didn't; I wondered if you had been much more open because of them[??].

No, I suppose because we knew, I mean there had never been any sort of secrets about things like that, I mean you know, I think probably I said to Judy once, you know, `Have you told the girls about this and that?' And, you know, I said, `I'm perfectly happy to do it.' I'm sure... Oh I'll tell you one of the reasons that maybe, and I would say that probably yes I did sit down with them, but there was a fantastic book brought

out when they were children which was about the body as machine or something, and it was...

Jonathan Miller's book was that?

No it wasn't Jonathan Miller's book. I don't think so. But it was one of these wonderful books with pull-outs and things. And so you, you know, you would just go to the pages and there's basically how babies are made, and you pull things and willies would come out and things would get aroused, and you would see little sperms swimming in the tubes, and things. [LAUGHS] It was the most easy and fun way of, you know...unless they thought it was all a joke, but nevertheless as I say, at quite an early age, I would have said when they were really quite tiny, you know, 6 and 7 and 8 and stuff, so I wouldn't have thought that there was ever any sort of... I hope, I mean I hope it hasn't taken away the mystique, but nevertheless I think probably the mechanics of the thing were probably known to them quite early on. One of the funny things that Judy and I used to experience was when we were between driving down the Autostrade del Sol Judy would be talking about the paddy fields of the strip farming and reciting Horatio kept the bridge and things like this. And the kids, because we were almost living in a big estate car I had which was known to the Italians as the Vatican-mobile, it was a purple Ford estate, and so we often spent a lot of time in this car travelling many many thousands of miles, and the kids would be in the back playing with their Barbie dolls, and of course Ken had appeared on the scene by this time, so the things that the girls used to get up to in the back of the car with Ken and Barbie, and Cindy, led us to understand that they have absolutely no problems about knowing what was to do between men and women when it came to intimacy.

Well perhaps we had better go back to Italy, if not Italy maybe Vasari, because we've talked about Alberti.

Yes.

Was it about that time that you started reading Vasari too?

Well, I suppose - is this Ken Vasari or Barbie? [LAUGHS] Barbie Vasari. I would say that my...I'll tell you...

We were up to you moving to Italy I think, weren't we?

Right. Well I suppose that if we were...I mean I was reading Vasari by '76, '77, because those were the times that the reliefs started to emerge and I was starting to get involved with that, and my second exhibition at the Lisson Gallery, which was in 1977, consisted of these new reliefs, so in fact I showed in two shows in quite quick succession at the Lisson Gallery. One if you like was, as I mentioned, like publishing the results of one's work over a period, what had been a period of about five years or so, and then the next show was if you like hot off the presses, because this was what was happening now. Also the things were portable, you know, I could actually move things into the gallery. The exhibition also consisted of some pure pigment works which were on paper, again pushing at the boundaries of painting, I was working with pure pigment on paper ground into the surface, like using pigment as a sculpture, sculptural material, taking the raw material and just sticking it onto - well not sticking, I was embedding it, I wasn't using any glues or anything because the point about this thing was to actually keep the pure material without any fixing, without any chemical bonding or binding, so the things were quite pure. As pure as the cap when you open up a jar of pigment, which is I think something that John McEwen in his review of my exhibition mentioned these things. So as well as these reliefs going on on the one hand, there was this kind of preoccupation which I suppose cuts back to the paintings business again, the paintings that were sculpture, these colour things were... I thought about Matisse, you know, cutting into colour when he was talking about the collages. So here was something that was actually pure colour, pure colour as a mineral material, something that interested me.

You had actually made some sculptures out of paper too hadn't you?

I had made a series of works called - what were they called? `Paper Stacks'. And these really developed from the grid pieces, so they were kind of rather more systemic

in the way that they were developed. And they preceded also the `Surface' pieces because there's a relationship there between the system in the paper pieces, which was to do with these common multiples, and volumes created by the application of this common multiple system on a standard paper size, so it preceded if you like the mundane materials of plaster in the building trade. I was using papers that were being purchased from paper suppliers, so I was using greased paper that was being used by the butcher as well as papers that were being used by lawyers, and paper used...what's it called? Bond, is it called bond? The coloured paper which is quite thin. And then there's..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] And there's laid paper. And I also used paper that's used for making cheques, cheque paper, so there's a kind of whole range of papers that I just buy, and using the standard sizes that they were sold in as if you like the determinant for the way that the drawing, or series of drawings, were put together and then displaced volume.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

And with those paper works, what were you addressing with those?

They were the things that directly came out of the business of the arithmetic I mentioned, the least common multiples, then I suppose they followed on from my... I mean they didn't come out of...I mean Euclid seemed to me to be something - we've gone all the way back to Euclid again. I don't really want...I mean I don't...you asked me to state any of the theorems and I probably couldn't remember any. Of course, the shortest distance between two points is a line, I think, a straight line. [LAUGHS] But nevertheless these things developed out of an idea that in working on a series of drawings that let's say might lead to a sculpture or an art work let's say, as a preparatory thing, these were drawings that were put together in such a way that they started to become volumetric and consequently became sculpture in their own right, so they weren't necessarily drawings towards, they were drawings that were a part of a volume, and the volume was determined by these common multiples. So, I mean to an extent I discovered that they were about these common multiples because I wasn't quite sure what was happening; I was doing a sequence of moves with the way that one drawing which had one line on it related to the next drawing, which followed up

that line by making it relative to the next drawing, consequently, sheet of paper, and then the next one. And what I was doing was taking the width of one sheet of paper and making a square of that dimension on the sheet of paper which left a remainder, so that remainder related to the next sheet of paper by making the square with the remainder plus the next bit to make the square which left a bigger remainder. That bigger remainder was related to the next page by making a square, so it related simply to the next drawing, and then that next remainder which became a bigger remainder was related to the next drawing or page, and so on and so on. And I found, probably it was quite luckily, that the first time I tried this I ended up with four sheets of paper; then I tried it with a different sheet size and I ended up with a drawing that I think consisted of 505 drawings, because the least common multiples of this particular dimension happened to be the sum of the multiplication of the two numbers that were, whatever. So anyway, it became a series of 500. Then I was scratching my head wondering what the hell was going on, and then, you know, by working things out it was about, I discovered, the least common multiples of the dimensions of the pages. So this then was a kind of a determining factor for a series of works. Anyway, this is going back. I suppose if there's going to be any relationship between the reliefs that we're talking about, then that is the fact that there was a line. And I suppose if...one of the things that developed in terms of my interest at the time was the incredible power of line, and if we were talking about Alberti and the nature of if you like the business of the cone of vision, the matrix within which perspective happens, the line is, if you like, that which conveys that amazing magic of spacial projection. And so the notion of drawing and its potential is something if you like I'm positing in these early relief sculptures, and I suppose that, you know, that all started happening in about 1976/77 between the period when I was making this exhibition for the Lisson, the first Lisson Gallery, doing the big show in Paris, and then moving on afterwards to if you like doing the next, the first show using the relief things.

And who came first, Stokes or Vasari?

I think...I think probably...difficult again to say which one came first. I would think...I could tell you. It was in 1970...no, then it was Stokes came first. And the reason that Stokes came first is because I was in the Lisson Gallery in my second

show giving an interview to John McEwen, talking about the show, and Sandy Nairne came into the gallery and we were talking about the work together, and he asked if I had been reading Adrian Stokes, and I said I had never heard of Adrian Stokes, would he fill me in? And apparently a series of books had just been recently published - I might be wrong on that, or he may have known about the fact that Lawrence Gowing was working on editing a book of the collected writings of Adrian Stokes which came out, published by Thames & Hudson, I'm not quite sure of the date of that but it was quite an important book anyway for me, and I did get my copies. In the meantime I had to make do with other paperback copies of Stokes's writings, which knocked me out, and I suppose I found in his writings if you like a written equivalent of something that convinced me in a way that, if you like, the written word had been convincing me through the kind of flirtation with Conceptualism. And what I found in the writings of, the early writings of Stokes anyway, in `The Quattro Cento' and `I Jesi' and `Venice Rough and Smooth', the early writings anyway, was the extraordinary perception that he had in getting into the creative, I suppose the seminal creative spirit of the artist. And he wrote about these things in a way that can only be said...I mean in a way similar for me to Reinhardt because you can't describe that feeling, you can only talk about something else and the beauty of Ad Reinhardt's art for art dogma pieces in terms of talking what art is, is by saying what art isn't, leaving you with something which you know is the kind of core of something you can't really explain. And Stokes did it in beautiful language; if you like it was the European equivalent for me of what I had really been inspired by in the writings of Ad Reinhardt. And...

Is it actually possible to be more specific?

No, because I'm not a great quoter of things. I think, you know, I've quoted Stokes frequently since I started reading him in, you know, in books or people have written about Stokes, because a lot of people when I talked about Stokes have never heard of him and go to Stokes, you know. A lot of, interestingly a lot of the work that's been, let's say pieces that have been written about my work since I started talking about Stokes, has in fact been critics who have written about late Stokes writing when he was in analysis with Melanie Klein, whose famous thing is `the good and bad breast', which has, and we haven't got this far yet, in which the kind of, there are direct

relationships to be drawn between the idea of the good and bad breast and my rather, if you like, breast-like sculptures, `The Yearning' etcetera; I think Sarah Kent took great relish in talking about those things. But in fact it was an ex-student of mine who first brought this issue up, and an ex-student of mine from Stourbridge College of Art where I used to teach who was called, gosh! now, I'd hate to do him an injustice by forgetting his name. Gosh! But maybe I'll bring it up when we get that...because we're a little...we're maybe jumping the gun a little bit here. His name is Simon something. Gosh, how awful to have forgotten his name. Very bright boy. But we're having difficulty getting out of Italy.

Well we haven't got to Italy yet.

[LAUGHS] No.

So Stokes was obviously really important for you.

Yes, I suppose that's right, we're talking about, in 1977 my first encounter with his writings through this introduction from Sandy Nairne.

And was it through Stokes that you were led to Vasari?

I think Vasari came...no it wasn't through Stokes in particular, but I would have said that I came across Vasari just through sort of general browsing, and the reason it made so much sense to me was that when I was working on my show in Italy in 1979 at the Palazzo Reale, I felt this sense of release in a way when I got to work in Italy. I mean I was trying to find ways, I mean looking for strategies of breaking out of, let's say the fetters of if you like the dominance of kind of conceptual Minimalism etcetera.

Is that why Stokes was so important for you?

Yes, I think so, because it became a different sort of rationale, it helped me, it eased me into, I suppose he's a midwife in a way, and I use it as an example sometimes, I

think it's something that Ibsen also felt, was this kind of notion of the Saint Gottard tunnel being like the uterus of kind of being reborn, you know, taking from northern Europe, you take this kind of sense of guilt with you wherever you go, but you get into this kind of total rebirth, or new birth but renaissance when you go through the Alps and you kind of encounter this completely different world. And I suppose I discovered, I was on the verge of, I mean, well I really was beginning to discover that world or beginning to discover there was a difference when I was in Milan for the first time at this show.

That happened at about the same time as you read Stokes didn't it, the Milan show?

Well that was...well specifically that was 1979 when the show took place in Milan, and I suppose I started reading Stokes in '77, '78. But Vasari came...

So was Stokes important for your move to Italy?

Well let's say that it hadn't specifically happened by that time. I suppose these things happen more slowly than can be resolved through discussing them like this. But.....

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The thing about Stokes's writing is the most...I suppose I see the writing really as poetic prose really, and I don't read much poetry, but somehow the way that he could get to, in all sorts of ways to the sort of approach that I suppose I felt that I was moving towards in my own work. I mean he would talk about the geography of a location, and he would talk about the geology of a location. He would talk about the relationship of that geology and that geography in relation to its history and the development of that history, and how those geological qualities, like he talks about the Mediterranean being a limestone basin and then he talks about, you know, the marble out of which that was metamorphosed. And the kind of metaphors related to this metamorphosis, which is also intrinsic to the creativity of the artist. The way he writes about certain materials. If you like the whole basis of `The Quattro Cento' essay is based upon his feel for the marble Rosso di Verona, red Verona marble, and how it's used in, he calls its sort of bossy qualities, used in Venice and used in Verona and in northern Italy. Its qualities in a well head that we have in the V & A, which of course is still there although it was...well it wasn't written about so long ago I suppose, I suppose it must have been in the Thirties. He writes about the stone where I suppose it touches on its association with a climate that I was beginning to experience, and I felt that it sort of said a lot. And in consequence, you know, in looking for ways of travelling around Italy and in working on Vasari's technique as an itinerary to take me around Italy after 1979 when I did my..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] Vasari was also an inventory of materials about the period I was beginning to look at, the idea that, I needed some kind of conceptual crutch if you like to enable me to make the break with the kind of work that I had been doing, what I will now say in northern Europe. And so I was using as, if you like, a technical handbook, `The Technical Treatise on Technique' by Vasari, which was itself a descriptive preamble to `The Lives of the Artist', I was using that, which I carried under one arm, and Adrian Stokes I carried under the other arm, because if you like he was my spiritual mentor at the time. And the first material I used when I first went to Italy and never having really done any carving, was red Verona marble; I went to Verona, and I went to some craftsmen in Verona and basically said, `Teach me to carve'. And, I mean there's no sort of, a great emotive thing in that; I mean I

technically needed to have a little bit of understanding of how to manipulate tools, contemporary tools, I'm not talking about hand carving, I'm talking about using pneumatics. So I went to a big company who put me onto a smaller company, and eventually I found this small workshop where there were these two brothers called Brassica, cabbages, the Brassica brothers, and...

Where was this?

This was in Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella. And they just basically said, `Well there you are, have a bench.' And I found this so often when I went to Italy after this. You turn up somewhere, you talk to someone; if they like you, they welcome you. And I went into this place and I think by the next morning I was there, then they gave me a bench and I said, `Can you show...I'd like to see some of this material,' and they gave me some, and they said, `Well here's an air line with, an air hammer and some chisels,' and basically, you know, you would watch them working with the machines and you would just learn by mimesis, is that right? Mimetically.

And how long did that last?

I was there, in fact it was during this time, and it must have been after the Milan exhibition, which was called `Pittura Ambiente' in 1979, and by this time I had given up my teaching in Brighton and I had gone... Because the other thing, the reason I gave up my teaching in Brighton, which was just sort of pro rata lectureship, I mean in that respect it was quite an important time in my life, I made a very very big decision, and in that respect I suppose Judy comes in, because she was very very supportive at a time when, you know, I had a job in a college that was relatively full, I mean it was full-time, it was a half lectureship, so in fact there was stability there. I suppose I felt that I had seen a number of my friends, good artists, become sucked in completely by their teaching commitments and become dried up by it, and I think, I've often felt that British artists who get involved with teaching, they give as much of their creative energy to teaching as they do to their work, or more, and eventually they just, they are consumed by their obligation to their duty if you like as a teacher. And I had been teaching for fourteen years by that time, I think it was fourteen years.

Was it fourteen years from 1968 until 1972 - until 1980, sorry? And I thought, well, I've really got to make a move. And I had had quite a success with this show in Milan, I had been offered two or three exhibitions, and I had been promised purchases from the exhibitions, and I had basically made a quick sum to say, well if these happen I can go and live in Italy and by selling this number of works I'm earning as much money as I make from my teaching. We were very fortunate because we were offered eventually, although at this particular moment in time, when I did make the decision to go off to Italy, to Verona, we had been offered a house by Nikos Stangos and David Plante who had a house near Cortona in a place called San Leo Bastia on the other side, between Umbertide and Cortona, which we were able to use in the winter. As it was a summer house it turned out to be quite an experience, but nevertheless... But I had gone to Italy initially to prepare the way for Judy and the children to come a little later on. And so, I had been offered a show in Milan at a gallery called Artra Studio; I had gone to make some works for that exhibition, and Judy followed me a month or so later. But in that period working with the Brassica brothers, or Bassica maybe, maybe they weren't called cabbage after all, but nevertheless, I had already begun my work for the exhibition in Milan, and that exhibition was to consist of my first works made in two stones mentioned by Stokes. So the fact, if you like my first steps after if you like liberating myself from the north and coming south again and making my first carvings in Italy, I used one stone which is referred to - well both stones are referred to by Stokes. One is a stone which is a mellow red stone, not the fiery kind but another more mellow red Verona marble which is in fact called...and by talking to these men, at this time I didn't really speak very much Italian but I managed to communicate and find out that this particular stone was called Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella, it's a particular kind of stone from this area, Sant'Ambrogio, which is reddy-orangey, buffy colour, and this piece, the first piece I made in fact was this piece which was called, `We Must Always Turn South', which if you like references the question asked by Stokes of someone sitting in a bar on the Holborn Viaduct whether a British artist must always turn South. I answer in the affirmative. And this was an image which if you like was a liberating image in a way of if you like a flaming oval which played with ideas that I had been working on before about the tondo having a quality which itself could be self-referred to. And in some works that I had been making in England before this I had made a

couple of tondos, if you like taking this subject matter of the leaning panels one step further and saying, right, traditionally there are reliefs in circles and in squares and in lunettes, and I made a series of works which if you like dealt with the idea of the circle itself becoming subject matter in the pictorial space would become an ellipse. The half circle leaned back in the same way, would become a half ellipse, and the square I had already been working with. But in the small series of works that I did which were in soft stone before I went to Italy, and it was just a small series that I did, there were three which were just discs which were tilted within their own shape, which were suggestive through carving of spatiality; these were shown at a third show I did at the Lisson Gallery. Then there were these half circles which were tilted back which if you like took the idea of an iconography of, like a Gothic Last Supper in which the table is if you like set back in within the lunette over the doorway. And so that in itself, there were two pieces called `After a Last Supper', three, maybe three pieces. And there were a couple of other tondos. But nevertheless anyway the idea of this oval then being tilted back in space, having other emblematic qualities or interpretations, was a point at which in moving away from purely the idea of the subject matter being contained within the form, which was self-referential still, these ovals then were also readable as an ellipse, as an ellipse, as an egg or seed. And so, I mean as well as if you like the tabula rasa operating in the one hand to kind of start developing this, you then have this kind of seed which then has this kind of, the growing, so in fact there was a kind of a growing in terms of involvement in my work between the dialogue that was taking place between me the contemporary artist working with a self-referential sculptural idiom out of kind of modernism into something that was drawing on, if you like the cultural roots of Italy with Stokes's guide and, well as my mentor, and Vasari as my guide as it were.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

And did the work you were doing on carving immediately feed into your own work?

Yes, I suppose in fact it was just that the pieces that I started with in terms of experimenting became the works; I mean I don't really do any test pieces. I mean in that respect I feel, I felt a natural rapport and confidence that enabled me to if you like

make a work and learn as I went, you know. The second piece of work I made there was in a stone called Bronzetto di Verona which is quite a rare stone now, in which, this piece which was titled `Tondo: Lunar Influences to Agostino' make a direct reference to Adrian Stokes's passion for the work of Agostino di Duccio, and carvings in the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini, which he writes extensively about.

Were you looking at...were you looking at a lot at work as well?

Oh, yes, I mean I was looking...I was using...I mean I was going around using the Stokes as almost a guide book in a way, and that was really what was fantastic, to actually use, instead of there being a guide book which one might have used in the past, I would go and sit and read Stokes in Venice or in Verona or in Rimini, I went to the Tempio Malatestiano, which, you know, was a fantastic experience for me. And so these were things that I was doing in those days in this kind of, this kind of, this naissance that was taking place in Italy.

What artists were particularly important for you?

Well I suppose I was looking, well, Agostino was introduced to me by Stokes, but I was looking at, you know, artists of the quattrocento and the early Renaissance, and Donatello in particular. You know, I often took, if you like, a degree of solace from the fact that, you know, in reading about the works that were being produced by these great masters is that sometimes works took six years, ten years, twelve years to make, and somehow I felt, well that seemed to fit in quite well with my, let's say the pace with which I felt it necessary to if you like publish my findings or my work if you like by having worked for such a long period when I was there before I showed at the Lisson Gallery. So I never really felt any massive urgency to get things out, and I really still don't. I mean I show very infrequently really. But, in terms of who I was looking at, I suppose I was looking at any exhibitions that were going around in terms of contemporary art.

Were you interested in the contemporary Italian art scene?

Well one was close to it because one was introduced to other artists. I did do a couple of group exhibitions, in fact the show I mentioned was predominantly American artists, I think I was the only British artist in the show, and a number of Italian artists. There was an exhibition, and this was the `Pittura Ambiente' show in 1979, was put together by, the principal curator was a man called Renato Burilli, who is himself an Italian poet, professor of Bologna University, and his young assistant called Francesca Allanovi, who if you like had done the research for the show and gone to America and encountered my work in London, and she had more or less been if you like the brains behind the exhibition. So I met a number of artists at that time, and of course one was quite close to the work because one was putting in installations and talking about work as it was going up. Again my Italian wasn't up to much at that point.

Who particularly?

No one really in particular. I mean of the stuff that one saw I wasn't really particularly taken by, I mean people, as in fact, a guy called Bonalumi who did these... [Does this pick up these voices?] Who did these kind of stretched kind of inflated interiors. I should do the research on the names actually, there are several people whose work I've got quite vivid recollections of. I mean it was quite interesting as well, there was an Italian guy who did things that were a little bit like, oh God! there's another Italian whose name eludes me right now. Painted walls, interiors, I mean basically, you know, like I had been working with the idea of destroying work, you know, people making installations that weren't going to last very long, so I mean this kind of notion of the, you know, the installation was something that seemed to be emerging in Italy at the time. A chap called Martini, another one called Pietro Colleta. Pietro Colleta was interesting, because he was working in ways that were very illusionistic and to do with line and to do with sort of spatial speculation, and I think, you know, his work looked quite interesting. In a way, there was a person who showed at the Lisson Gallery called Fred Sandback, and Fred Sandback in that beautiful sort of pristine space would pin, if you like, a piece of wool, which would go from the ceiling, let's say at an angle down to the floor, go round a little nail, go along the floor, and then go up to the ceiling and along again,

sort of delineating an area in space three-dimensionally, and it had a fantastic kind of spatial, sense of spatial displacement. I mean it would actually cut the space just by delineating this line. And they were done in very very grid-like and ordered ways in the similar way that my sculpture were kind of panels in space, he did it with a bit of wool. This fellow, Pietro Colleta, would do a very similar thing but he would actually make the things, you know, diagonally across spaces, so quite an interesting kind of suggestion of something that looked like a sheet of glass sort of suspended in space but basically it was like bits of string that were stretched across a space. And they were kind of interesting in a way, and I've seen his work since in places, even recently, Giuliano Gori has an installation by him. Not someone who really hit the very big time but nevertheless an artist who sort of works in a similar field to my own.

Do you feel that you were still pursuing the interests that you had begun with, Minimalism, at this point?

No, I think that...I mean let's say in the instance of the show in Milan in 1979, this is just before I moved out to Italy in 1980, the...in fact it's quite interesting because there was another show in Italy in 1980 before I moved out, because I didn't...I moved to Italy in 1980 after the term had finished, so it was in the winter, but I had done a show, another show in Modena ahead of that which also involved an installation, plastering directly on a wall. Again the work was, if you like it was Minimal in terms of the general dependence on, I suppose the `less saying more' notion; I suppose the work was very much about, you know, taking mundane materials etcetera and doing it in Italy as opposed to doing it in London, it hadn't been done in Italy before.

So did that fact make a big difference, doing it in Italy rather than doing it in London?

I suppose it did in a way. The point about doing it in Italy was, and this is one of the reasons why I felt that, you know, it was going to work if I left England with my family, and I suppose to an extent the business about doing the show in Milan was based upon the results of, let's say the showing in Modena, because I was offered two shows, one with this woman and one with Marilena Bonomo, in fact I had gone to

Italy quite soon after Modena. No actually I stayed in Italy; after Modena I went down to Bari and made this very important sculpture which I failed to mention called `Soglia', threshhold, which used local stone in Puglia, a very soft Tufo stone, and in fact it's this exhibition that I made in Italy which incorporated the pieces I mentioned just now, the ones of the round tondos and the lunettes. Although the show in Bari with Marilena Bonomo was in fact called `Lunette', `Lunette' [ITALIAN ACCENT]. And there were three or four of these small lunettes in Lepine stone, it's a stone from northern France used for cathedral building; it's where I was introduced to it because I bought it from a local stone merchants here using it for restoration purposes. And I took those with me. And then the piece that I made there in Marilena Bonomo's garden, which was then transported to the gallery, consisted of, if you like, local building blocks, which were the cheapest, commonest, local building blocks. Then there was a kind of a transposition of the idea of, you know, using mundane building plasters and then using these building blocks. And these building blocks being stone, although being quite light they look a bit and feel a bit like thermalite, this kind of industrially-produced material, but these are natural volcanic material. And so I built this great big wall of this stone, and I built a threshold, if you like a half circle coming out of it. I think to an extent it might be as it were, it might be possible to say that the origin of this came from an image brought to my attention by Stokes from a church in Venice, but basically it's a step, but the idea was that this half-circular step, which existed in reality as a step, but then it was continued illusionistically into the wall of this Tufo stone. And so you saw an ellipse that was made up of half of a real threshold and then it continued illusionistically into the wall, and then beyond that was if you like a kind of a cosmic in the sense of a beyond space, of a potentially sort of, you know, universal space beyond.

It has a sort of altar feel to it, doesn't it.

I suppose in a way. I mean the kind of, the fact that it draws you forward is a part of this kind of idea. But it's the business of the idea of the illusion in reality making the play, which I mentioned before in the wedge piece in Yugoslavia, that, you know, there's a sense of your place of being in the real world as artist or as spectator, of the potential of the beyond, which in the case of the piece, of the wedges with the spaces,

you were then brought back to the total illusionistic potential in this solid wall. So there was a play there. And interestingly I suppose that piece is kind of unique in a way, called `Soglia', because it does deal with a kind of a total containment of the spectator space with the threshold that takes you forward. That idea if you like was then picked up as a part of the show that I did in Milan, and this is the result of part of the work that I was doing in Verona with the carving, was that there were two pieces that were carved and then two major installation pieces in this gallery, in Artra, which were modelled, so it was again the carving-modelling dichotomy. And the big, not so big, tondo, 80 centimetres in red Verona marble, the Sant'Ambrogio marble, was complemented by a very big wall relief which was extending the space of the gallery illusionistically as I had done with the piece called `Soglia' into if you like a rather more representative notion, almost mediaeval notion of, if you like, that other universal or cosmic space, because there was like a sun, a big circle like a tondo but it also had flames around it, like the carving itself has like flames emanating from the oval.

And what was that called?

The piece I think I called...the actual thing was called `Fantasy' or `Fantasia'. And on the other end of the gallery, because it was sort of like a vaulted room, one end which was actually square because the vault was only in one half, so there was the piece `Fantasia' which was like the sunburst with the carving, `We Must Always Turn South', and then `Tondo: Lunar Influences to Agostino' which was very much lunar, so we had the male, the female, these kind of symbolisms coming in, the sun and the moon. And a grey plaster relief under the arch, the soft, the almost completely semi-elliptical vault of the building was then brought up by being extended by a line on the floor, which was again in plaster, so there was a continuation in reality of that space. It also set up kind of a, almost a territorial kind of perimeter to the piece. And then on that wall there was another circle but tilted in space, another ellipse in fact, which was supposed to be suggestive of water like a lake. And then emanating from that were rather sort of, I suppose you could say they were rather, I could say arabesque but nevertheless sort of river-like sort of emanations or whatever which were suggestive of river, water if you like. So that was a kind of lunar thing. So... And I remember

working on that show and I was in this basement, and I was singing, and I often sing when I'm working, I've sort of got quite a good voice, but I was singing, you know, sloppy pop songs or something, ballads and things, and I was working in a vault in the basement which was next door to a piano bar, and I could hear the piano playing at some point and I think they could also hear me singing, and I was working until, like 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning as I often do when, you know, I'm working late doing a, you know, cramming to get the work done. And there was a knock on the door and I looked out and there was a guy, a DJ, in bow-tie, with another fellow, and he was a pianist from next door, and he came in and he said, `I could hear you singing next door. I became interested to know what you are doing.' So he came in and I showed him. And I was covered in plaster, I had been plastering, I had my dungarees and everything, and he said, `Oh it's fantastic, terrific,' and he gave me a big hug, and he let go of me, he was completely white. [LAUGHS] It was really nice, you know, I thought, oh well I'll come and sing for you sometime, but I never got around to it, but...might have been another career if I did.

You often mention Michelangelo's `Rondanini Pietà' as being important for you.

Yes. Of course, I mean my trips to Milan since I first went, I went to see it, and always returned to it. I suppose I just think it's one of the... I mean as, you mentioned Titian earlier, I think maybe, it may have been in this interview, the late works are often the most extraordinary, of great artists anyway; it's when they let go of all that seems to be expected of them and really go into their own extraordinary sense of the mystic. We didn't get around to talking about Malevich and the mystical late works of Malevich who I suppose to an extent, you know, with all that kind of logic and spirit and thought out sort of things that are about sort of the young thrusting person who wants to change everything, in the end there becomes this kind of introspective sort of mysticism, which happened in Malevich as it happened with Titian as it happened with Michelangelo. And I just think it just, it has so much authority and yet it has so much tentativeness which is also a part of, you know, the great beyond of, and even with his great authority there was a certain sense of uncertainty too. And I think it also shows how you discover as you go, I mean the great arm that seems to come from nowhere, you know, was it a mistake? Did it become the hand of God

helping the old Michelangelo support Christ's body? I think it just is the most extraordinary thing, and I think one of the great things about it as well, let's say talking about lunar things as I was then, I often describe it as having the compositional form of a banana but what I really believe is that it's a crescent, its form, its structure is a crescent, which is if you like feminine, and consequently there's a kind of a lunar quality to it. But it's a strange thing, this form, I didn't know of it anywhere else. And I find it, I mean what can one say? I mean you can say so much about something before it starts to...before it stops making any kind of sense because it just speaks to one's soul really, and I think it's one of those things that one does in one's life to recharge one's spiritual batteries. It never ceases to, you know, fill me with such admiration.

And, could you say why Duccio and Donatello were important for you?

Well I think probably because they do certain things. I think, well obviously they do certain things. Donatello is a phenomenal, if you like, Expressionist. I mean the humanity in the work for an artist of his time I think, you know, of genuine passion. I mean probably it could only have been achieved in the Renaissance - in the early Renaissance, in the quattrocento. I think probably Michelangelo always managed to retain it; even though the work became incredibly highly finished at times there was still this great sense of emotional drama in his work and I think Donatello has this phenomenal emotional drama, not necessarily anything I've addressed but it's something I admire. And I think probably to an extent Agostino di Duccio who came a bit sooner was someone who probably had things worked out in a way which I admire, and the sorts of working out I think are kind of interesting in the sense that, you know, you see these Holbein things which deal with this kind of anthropomorphic stretching of forms, you know, which play the game.....

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So Agostino.

This anthropomorphic stretching Agostino used in a very much more subtle way, and I think it's something which we often tend to lose sight of when we see things in museums, in galleries, is the position of an art work frequently isn't where it was originally made to be seen, but in certain positions you can see that, you know, heads of figures when you're looking at them head-on look rather stretched and rather ovate rather than, you know, symmetrical or whatever, but if you get in the right place you can see that this is a part of this kind of anthropomorphic sense of how you move in space past something, and it has a potential of having life in the way that you pass by it, not as by seeing it, you know, like head-on and being as it is. And I think the brilliance of Agostino is, let's say not like in Donatello which is something else, and you can see...and I think John Pope-Hennessy talks about this in one of his short papers that he did for the V & A, and I'm not sure if it's actually in the same paper in which he talks about `St. Peter and the Keys' of Donatello, or it may in fact just be something which Adrian Stokes talks about, talking about the different form of drama within the composition. But Agostino's things were often stretched in a way that give you a sense of something being right when you don't expect it, mannered when you see it where you would expect to be looking at it, and then it changes again when you go past it. In that respect, it's something I've been interested in in my own work in terms of making reliefs, especially in the later fragmented ones that deal with the idea of parallax and fragmentation in panels, is, as you pass something it has the potential to change. I think, there's one painting by Leonardo that does this, it's the `Portrait of a Boy' in the Ambrosiano in Milan, as we're talking of Milan, and you look at that head-on and it's a bit strange, it's like the eyes are quite a long way apart, if you're standing in front of it; but you stand and look at from the side, it's together, it's a right picture. And for me, what I see there is, if that picture was made as in a gallery as somebody walking by it, you see it before you are in front of it, it's already registered in your mind then as an identifiable image. By the time you get in front of it, your mind is compensating for the slight distortions, which weren't there when you saw it before. And as you pass by the other side it re-establishes itself. So the last

sight you might have of it is in fact the image that you first saw, which has changed slightly when you've seen it in the middle. So that kind of thing, of an art work rather than being something you look at from one position, is something that lives in your passing it, and I think that Agostino did that kind of thing too. And, well, Donatello I've already said [INAUDIBLE].

And you think they influenced your own work? You've just said how Agostino did.

Well I think that they...I'm not sure that they can influence my own work. I think that probably by acknowledging the kinds of things that one sees and discovers, I mean to an extent one sometimes is finding that someone else has done it before, which is always the case, everything's been done before, sometimes it's not in art but nevertheless everything seems to have been done before, and I think that, you know, it's not that...you know, I've read about that before I did it in my own work or whatever, I mean it's just a matter of you kind of discovering these things. I mean these things were my own observations in terms of the Leonardo for example, but it's something I've come to having read John Pope-Hennessy on Agostino di Duccio for example, unless as I say, unless it was Adrian Stokes. But, I think everything has to influence one's own work really. I think to a great extent, I mean I've always argued let's say to people who don't really know anything about Minimal art, that Minimal art is about the millions of decisions you've made to get to where you are, and in fact the decisions have been what to leave out, and in that respect I think, if you've got that attitude and your work is relatively Minimal, then I think the Minimal art can be charged, as long as you've made those decisions. So yes, I mean I feel that my own work is influenced by all these things that I've seen and admired.

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 11th of July 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Stephen can I ask you about the work you did in colour in Italy, the pigments on stone.

Mhm. Yes. In fact they were shown in the Bari exhibition alongside the `Lunette' and `Soglia'. I made these works in fact in London in Lepine stone, and picking up on some of the ideas that I had when I was, from my second Lisson Gallery show in 1977 in which I had been using pure pigment, pigment ground into, burnished into paper, it..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] I was interested in those works in the, if you like the mineral qualities of colour, colour as a sculptural material, the pigments being the result of either the processing of chemicals or the mining of earth colours etcetera. So there seemed to be kind of a correspondence between colour and its origins and material processes, and sculpture. So, as I mentioned before pushing at the boundaries of painting to expand the field of sculpture, I was curious about trying to draw again more of a direct reference between, if you like colour and its mineral origin and stone, representative or symbolic of the earth certainly and of nature. And so I made a series of works which were called `Pigment Pieces', pigment in stone, and some of them were just involved with the idea of putting, if you like inscribing and hollowing an oval which in some instances as a horizontal oval would be suggestive of, let's say the lip of a circle in space in a broader sort of oval of stone, and some were ovals in a vertical form so they became if you like more emblematic, more directly associated with the identification of, if you like colour in an emblematic way. And so there was, I suppose a degree of surprise in the use of colour like this, and of course Yves Klein was using pure colour in his pigment paintings from the Forties I think, and of course historical precedents were always there as I've mentioned. Another series that developed out of that were a group of works called `Colour Crucibles' in which if you like containers, like egg-like containers which when the top was taken off would expose colour in pockets of vibrant natural state pigment that were sort of freely kind of loose, like opening the jar of a... As John McEwen, the critic, wrote of my second Lisson Gallery show in describing the pigment pieces, it was like taking the lid off a jar of pigment, the vibrancy of the colour, and in that respect it was almost like a relationship between that kind of idea. And then another thing that interested me, which goes back again to a little bit of research, as I had been interested in Vasari on technique, I became interested in something which perhaps went back to childhood, because I spoke earlier about this blue peel which was in the middle of this dug garden near my home which I took frequent expeditions up the lane to have a look across this wall because I was curious about this colour, and also

in my mind was curious about things I recall walking past in museums, and probably being rather repulsed by them because of the vulgarity of the colour, but I do have quite a strong recollection of things in the Bristol Museum. I mean Bristol blue glass being an example, maybe there's this blue thing that triggers something in my memory. But on investigation or recalling memory over those particular moments of these objects that contain this colour, I discovered that I was in fact responding to maiolica, which was I suppose a 15th and 16th century ceramic technique developed - well developed initially by the Moors and I think used in a general sort of, in fact maiolica comes out of an Arabic root in terms of what it means, I think it means...oh gosh, what does it mean? Maiolica, it's something to do with a pearl I think, I'm not sure of the Moorish origins but I've got a notion in my mind about a Baroque pearl but that wouldn't actually be able to put it in the right historical context. But anyway there were these wonderful tin glaze ceramics, earthenwares, which were developed by Arabs, moved into Spain and eventually I think the name maiolica came from Majorca where the name in fact jelled the technique and then it developed from there through Italy and through the Mediterranean as a kind of a developed style or use of tin glaze. The way that it developed in Italy I discovered through reading a transcript, a facsimile production of the works of Cipriano Picolpaso, who wrote, like Vasari, a treatise on the techniques of these great ceramic artists, and I decided that I would, if you like within Britain, as it was a project I started here, I met Alan Caiger-Smith who had written the book, and I asked him where I could find a special kind of earthenware clay that was a special...in fact in the Italian principle of schools of earthenware, of maiolica, I used a buff-coloured clay which had certain kinds of fluxing agents in them. And the place that he said that I could find this clay in England was in East Anglia somewhere, I can't even remember where it was but I just went one Saturday, I drove off into East Anglia with a map that was drawn on the back of an envelope which in fact showed this crescent of geological clay around this particular area of East Anglia, and I drove to these areas and asked if there were any sort of clay pits around the area. And eventually I found a clay pit which had been turned into a fish pond by the man who owned the land, and he's very old now, and he used to in fact dig clay and supply clay to potters. The extraordinary thing was about this was that he was happy to take me down through the reeds that were now growing around this clay pit and he dug me some clay, and I took about six bags which I

suppose weighed my car down, it was quite heavy stuff, and then he took me round and said, `In fact it's funny you should come here,' having explained my interest in Italian maiolica ware, because there were Roman remains in his garden of kilns for firing earthenware from this clay. So there was kind of an Italian connection, completely, you know, it's one of these great, the wondrous things that you know you're on the right track when you kind of, you just kind of hit on these extraordinary coincidences. So I went off with my clay and proceeded to refine it in the kind of traditional method as described in this book, which meant drying it out, pounding it, putting it through a sieve, taking all the lumps of whatever might be that were impurities. Went through this whole process, and I made some moulds to make some big dishes, and I made some, just some sort of freely-made coil elements etcetera, but basically looking at the styles and the forms of either small, if you like household wares that were used as a base for maiolica or the great `piatti di pompi' show plates which had scenes taken from the great paintings of Raphael for example when Rafael was very very popular. It's rather interesting, it's almost a Victorian notion of, you know, like Prince Albert loved Raphael, and so this kind of popularity of reproductions of Raphael in the Victorian era. But in those days the reproduction technique was in fact through maiolica, and through engravings, and the engravings were used as a basis for the artist to copy, and then they instilled into them the, if you like the colour and the form and the... Anyway, what was particularly interesting to me, that given the nature of the technique is, you get your fired earthenware and then you dip it, or you cover it with your tin glaze, which gives you basically a fresco ground, because the point about maiolica is that you take the glaze, which is in fact just a pigment, which is just mixed with water, and then you paint into what is in fact a fresco surface, which you can only do by putting a line down as if you were painting a fresco. And my notion was that, and it's kind of curious in a way because when I had this idea it fitted in with the way things were, but since then the cleaning of painting, the cleaning of frescos has taken off apace in Italy, so now we see how frescos were, but one of the notions in my mind was that given the vitrification of colour through ceramic decoration, that one was seeing a true representation of, let's say an early Raphael or whatever, because as we saw them they become patinated through grime etcetera but the maiolica ware would show you in fact how the pictures were. The point is that since we've now seen all these great paintings clean, there is a

very close correspondence between the vibrance, which is almost vulgar in a `piatti di pompi' of maiolica, the vulgarity of that almost from, let's say from a contemporary taste stand-point, is in fact corresponded to by the actual colour of the frescos that they were taken from, much to our surprise, you know.

Did you continue using maiolica work in Italy?

No, I didn't. I tried to get some interest in Italy to proceed with it, and I went to several places, I went to Deruta, I went to, oh gosh, where did I go? Faenza. I mean off the top of my head I have to try and think of the names of the great centres. But I went to all the little towns that are, where are they? Sort of north of Florence, east of Bologna, and just basically went to see if there was anywhere still working in a way that might be of use to me as a way of continuing some ideas that I had already been working on in London, but generally one was surrounded by quite sort of vulgar popular artifacts, you know, bric-a-brac and decorative material. But of course this is how it was originally anyway, but the skill was no longer there, I mean in terms of it just being mass-produced stuff. But in my many expeditions to these narrow sort of hill towns that were the centres of these places. But, I mean before I had gone I suppose I had really just done the several works, and there are three in the catalogue raisonné, and three or four have emerged since the catalogue raisonné was done, but I think to an extent they are the three pieces that are represented in the catalogue raisonné which are self-portraits and a rendering of a dish on a dish, and just a kind of utilisation of a decorative pattern, each one as being if you like fragmented in a different way. One work was if you like broken, spread apart and a pattern overlaid and then put back together again, and so there's kind of a fracture within the pattern, or there is a whole. The portrait was in fact painted as a portrait on the plate apart, so that the fragmentation, if put together, would in fact disintegrate the portrait into being, if you like, too disproportionate, because the spaces have disappeared, the spaces give if you like the scale and the proportion. And the idea of in fact, if you like a modernist self-referential image of a picture of the dish itself on the dish as a portrait of the dish. It's called `Dish Dish'. And that was done in a technique which I was trying to develop and was trying to utilise which was called `bianco sopra bianco', which is a technique of putting a white tin glaze down and then glazing it and

then drawing on top of the glaze with a white glaze, so that there's a space between the white line and the white ground, so there's a kind of a suspended kind of image of the pattern. But, so it's a beautiful technique, and it's something which I investigated for a period of time, you know, because of the notion that, you know, maybe in ceramic, if you like more of a craft than sculptural possibly, technique, was something which showed painting to be truer, if you like, the colour to be truer in the ceramic than it was in actuality in the painting. But it was a bit of, if you like, dialogue between I suppose notions of painting and how it was and how it's survived and how other things like objects, like a ceramic has a kind of a primacy even over painting, but...

It's interesting that you were using figuration fragmentation in maiolica before it came into your sculpture. I wonder how you think that maiolica related to the rest of your work.

I suppose it's a side shoot, and in that respect I think it's kind of interesting. Yes, and it was interesting. I think something at the back of one's mind all the time, you know, when you're involved in a very very sort of finite way of working like Minimalism, I suppose it's really what differentiates my position as an artist as opposed to, let's say the primary artists of Minimalism who are American, who are always trying to, I suppose out of the kind of the tenets of the New York school of trying to establish, you know, the American way of working, you know, devoid of European influence, so that the Armory exhibition suggested that wasn't necessarily the case. But, nevertheless there was a kind of an idea that my roots went back, and I think there was always a little, there is always something, you know, nagging at my conscience saying, look over your shoulder and look at what's behind you, and of course the great figurative tradition of European art is something that, you know, is why I was an artist I suppose, because one could do all those, let's say to an extent you know, one could draw and one responded to figurative art and one was excited by it, and one had moved into an area of, if you like high refinement in Minimalism which, as I explained before I suppose one was on the verge of let's say conceptually making quite a radical step in not making visual art or figurative art any more, or objects, you know, making art at all. But I think probably, you know, the idea of my roots and my

tradition is what took me back. And I suppose the maiolica pieces, which obviously have to acknowledge the nature of the work within the maiolica tradition, I suppose were the sort of seeds of using a rather more, although it never became full-blown but nevertheless an acknowledgement of the European figurative tradition.

Well by 1982, the figurative element did start to appear in the tondos, didn't they.

Yes, they did. I suppose, you know, by the time, you know, I started to work in Italy and the release if you like of working in Italy, at least enabled certain kinds of symbolism to be acknowledged, you know, if any oval can be an egg then an egg can grow, or a seed can grow into something else. And I suppose the thing that started to happen was to acknowledge if you like the rather more, I suppose developed symbolic idea of what a pair of ovals can mean if one looks at it in sort of simple sort of symbolic terms, and I suppose in the context of the tondos where a breast became a particularly kind of potent image in one of the first things I made called `Ruma', other things that were if you like titled after lakes in the area north of Rome in the Etruscan region of Etruria, you know, the idea that there is a relationship between, if you like almost mother nature and the idea of a mother, a mother goddess if you like. I suppose these are...to an extent speaking about it like that one almost kind of leaps forward another fifteen years to when I was working in India, but I suppose that the idea of the, you know, the rounded landscape analogies between, you know, what might be symbolised in simple geometric forms being taken away towards nature rather than being towards geometry, it's pure geometry, were things that enabled me to, I suppose realise the potential of a rather more developed figuration there, and I started to play with, you know, what principal symbols could emerge from other symbols, if an oval became something like the earth, as in a kind of mediaeval image of, or, I suppose concepts or cosmology where a disc or a flat earth and a canopy of heaven. That kind of mediaeval sort of simple, a simple mediaeval kind of definition and description of the cosmos I suppose is a way that, or something that informed the work that came for the next few years in terms of what these simple forms could mean. So yes, I think probably the most important thing that happened in a way was the fact that I started to make things from fragments, and although I had been working with these broken dishes I suppose one has to say that, well, historically in the context

of my work it's rather interesting because they do inform the breaking of stones or the use of broken stones and how one can use one's imagination to complete pictures. I think, you know, it's complicated in a way to say how it works because I suppose in making it a kind of sequential series of descriptions of the work, you know, it sort of takes away from the fact that this kind of somehow happened through time and space in a way that eventually emerged as something like `Gethsemane'. `Gethsemane' came about from, I suppose several influences in a way. The broken stones I felt gave me an opportunity of working on a very large scale which I had found in the `Soglia' piece in terms of individual blocks in buildings, which were a very very commonplace kind of building technique, building architectural technique. And even at that time of making that sculpture, if you like there are certain kinds of feasibility things of showing in a gallery, and there was a great fear at one point that when we moved the `Soglia' sculpture from the garden of Marilena Bonomo into her gallery, as the stones were going up the stairs it didn't occur to me, it occurred to her actually, as we just carried them up one by one by one, and there were maybe fifty or maybe even a hundred stones, no maybe there were a hundred stones, she was thinking, well this is the first floor, and those hundred stones, although they're quite light, they must weigh quite a lot, and she hurriedly called her brother who was an engineer who came to check on the weights and distribution in the gallery. But it seemed the floor was getting tight like a drum as we piled these stones into the gallery to build this wall. But it hadn't occurred to me. But nevertheless, there seemed to be another way, and I'm not...this isn't...the strategy wasn't to use fragments but it just was amazing that in terms of the circumstances and how things evolved that I kind of invented this way of working with fragments, which of course also draw all sorts of analogies to archaeology. I suppose for me to an extent, having gone back to Italy as a contemporary artist and been preoccupied with the past, I felt that, you know, the past wasn't really redundant; I mean I saw the past as a living thing within the context of art and my own experience. And so I suppose I looked at museums as much a part of contemporary life as being about past life. And I was quite interested in the idea of how ciphers worked in terms of a bit of mark, a certain kind of mark or characteristic of a piece of stone, can give you so much information about the past as well as it having this kind of, you know, it's like a vocal point that speaks in the present about the past; in that respect it's like a cipher or a vehicle of information. And, I'm not

quite sure what the sequence of events was. I was terribly fortunate when I was driving around near Viterbo looking for stone amongst the stones that I had been reading about in Vasari, and the stone called Peperino was one stone listed which was used for rusticated building work, but however was in fact one of the original building stones of Rome, and it seemed to be a good place to start, although if you like spiritually I had already been working in Verona with Verona red marble because of, you know, for me it was one way of starting into Italy using Stokes as a guide and using `The Quattro Cento' as a beginning. But another beginning of course was in Rome in terms of Italian culture. And so I went to Viterbo and I went to several places looking for quarries, and basically I would just go to an Italian town and ask where things were, where places were, and I was directed along this road to a stone quarry. And it's not the...well I mentioned with the Brassicas in Verona, I turned up at this factory and I met this youngish fellow who was in the office, and I explained what I wanted, I said I was looking for stones and told him a little about the history of what I was involved with, and I think it was about 12 o'clock and they were just going off for their lunch, and he said, `Well, why don't you just...there's some stone here, you know, just experiment, you know, just take some bits and pieces from there, and if you need an air hammer there's a guy there'. And, `Luigi, help this gentleman with an air line and an air hammer.' And they went off for their lunch and they left me there working on these stones. And there were some interesting stones, some interesting off-cuts and fragments, and I started working around on this material. I don't even think I'd checked into a hotel or anything at this point, but I'd found a place, and it was a place, when they came back from lunch I said, `Look, this is terribly kind of you, I'd like maybe to do some work here for a while, is it possible that you could give me a corner and I could pay for my materials and I would just like to kind of carry on?' And, fine, terrific, yes, no problem. So, off we went, I mean off I went. I was with this company called Anselmi, and they just let me work in their factory, absolutely nothing was asked of me, I just worked. It was like something to do with them having maybe a kind of a role to play in terms of supporting art, and I just was there, you know.

Did you have to pay them at all?

Nothing. In fact I think probably the first half a dozen works that I made in that particular factory I paid nothing for, they just gave me materials. In fact I was working with off-cuts. The business was that you know, the fragment then became a way of working, not because it was free but because it actually fitted in with a whole kind of new development in my work. And, I mean from that.....

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I mean, yes from that point working in Viterbo was, it was an amazing sort of opening up of potential, you know, I was back in the beginning in this sort of Roman context in what I suppose to an extent was almost like a latterday grand tour. I was living with my family on Lake Bracciano in a place called Anguillara, in a house that was given to us, lent to us, by a professoressa of fine art, of art history at Rome University, a lady called Simonetta Lux, and I was involved with making an exhibition for her in a group exhibition. But everything was kind of coming together as a very very kind of good jump-off point for, if you like rather than a wandering artist in Italy, to someone who actually is staying somewhere in a working, a good working environment. And so at this particular juncture with my family in Anguillara, which was quite close to Viterbo, I was travelling daily from there, and working at the factory, through the most magnificent countryside, past these wonderful volcanic lakes which if you like influenced the titles of some of the initial works that I made. But at the same time a very dear friend, a painter, an American painter, who had a studio at the American Academy, suggested that as there was a studio available I might like to take it. So I then was commuting between Viterbo and Rome, Anguillara and Rome, a sort of three-point kind of journey between where my materials were coming from, and I remember loading my car, the purple hearse, up with this great stack of slabs of stone and taking them to the American Academy where I began working on `Gethsemane' in particular, as well as a couple of the other tondos, like `Ruma' which I began to work on in Viterbo. And one of the things that was curious to me, that I suppose was a profound influence on the work, was, although when I began working, let's say, and I suppose I never really let go of the analytical way of approaching from my Conceptual Minimal days if you like, the idea, I think I wrote somewhere, that my procedure would not obviate my working with figuration or narrative; it's a way of saying if I was focusing on surface at one point, or surfacing on measurement at one point, let's say the ingredients of sculpture, I would look and focus on aspects of sculpture. And I remember in particular, I was looking at an exhibition of early David at the Villa Medici in Rome, and as a scholar at the Villa Medici when it was the Académie Francaise, he was on his grand tour, and I was quite taken by the fact that, you know, these early paintings were if you like

less than accomplished in a way, but nevertheless I felt that there must be a lot more going into a kind of reading of this painting, especially if one had a working understanding of Greek mythology, and I think there was a particular painting to do with Hector and something, I can't remember exactly what the connection was, but I thought this painting means a lot more than is actually apparent to me, because I just don't have a grasp of the narrative drama. And it triggered this idea that, you know, what was happening to our vocabulary of narratives as a civilisation, as a culture. And having had at least the benefit of a background and a Church of England or religious upbringing in school, of course one felt that within the narratives of the Bible, both in Old Testament and New Testament, there was in fact, we still had this context and this source of things which are stories of narratives which were in us that could actually inform our reading, and obviously religious painting. So, if you like, if Greek mythology or Roman mythology was a little bit mystifying in terms of its context and content, then religious metaphors were still available through our knowledge of the Bible. So I was working on this idea of drawing together sort of like threads in relation to this big half circle that I was working on, this lunette, expanded lunette in fragments, because if you like the piece called `Lunette', the lunette `Soglia' which was made for Bari, this great arch through which one saw if you like a perspective, totally kind of spatial, cosmic space, and making a rather more particular statement in the form of, you know, of a landscape, and I was looking at the stone which was kind of a greenish hue, the olive landscape, olive-strewn landscape of middle and southern Italy, an olivy-coloured stone, a landscape, I was looking at the idea of a landscape making, drawing the fragments together in a landscape. And having decided to if you like inscribe in relief on to these fragments through an archway olive trees, which were like fossils almost, like the images of fossil plants, to draw into it an additional drama by calling it `Gethsemane', drew in a whole context it was if you like external to what you were seeing, and demanded of the spectator to see an additional layer. And it was picked up for the exhibition that I was working towards when I was at the American Academy, which was at the Gallery La Salita, a good gallery that did a lot of work with very very cutting-edge art of the Fifties and Sixties, I was working on the show. When the show was eventually up and reviewed, an Italian critic talked about the `Pietra Ferita', the title of this piece was the `Pietra Ferita of Stephen Cox', the wounded stone, and the central element within this

landscape had a natural oxide of red on this stone which was the stain of the blood if you like. So, it was picked up on amazingly, and it resonated through things like this, sort of clues, the clues that, you know, hadn't necessarily been sort of specific but this critic had drawn his own experience into the general context within which one wanted the work to be seen.

But it was in fact fortuitous, was it?

Well, I mean compositionally I had put this stone in with this red stain in it because it was to do with if you like the nature of the stone, and in that respect, apart of it, I suppose even then I was interested in the kind of natural history of the stone, the history, like there's a drill hole where it was quarried, there were other marks where it was split, the ragged edges anyway; the fact that there was a natural piece of oxidation on the stone was something else. The fact that in the method that they used to saw the stone meant that there was like an oxidised, without being red it was a kind of a darker oxidisation on the surface so that when you cut into it you expose the kind of different tonal colour in the stone. And in that respect if you look at the sculpture there is if you like a field of colour which has been cut into, so it gives more strength to the line that was cut into.

But it was formal rather than thematic?

It was formal rather than thematic at that point, although the point about the whole thing was that one should read into it this drama, and of course the drama was picked up and, if you like it was amplified by the recognition of this blood-coloured stain.

How did you relate personally to the biblical themes, which appeared increasingly in your work from this point, didn't it?

Yes. Well I suppose it was to do with working in Italy and to do with the notion of working with narratives and working along the lines of, let's say familiar narratives. I mean the point being that one could then look without having to have some kind of description about what it was all about, you know, in the context of, I suppose a

relatively kind of global philosophy that Christianity has offered, then there's still a kind of a universality in the use of themes and narratives from this period.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Did it relate to any personal religious feelings?

Oh right. [PAUSE FOR THOUGHT] No. Are you running? Oh, sorry. [LAUGHS] We didn't get the howling scream of the tape, I wasn't sure. No, I don't think so. I suppose...I suppose there's a correspondence between the history of art and the history of my understanding of art, and the relationship of that to the great art of our culture being especially out of religious art. I mean I suppose I would equate the sort of kind of idea of a moving spirituality in myself through looking at art, an art which is frequently to do with religion. I think that probably the notion of the artist as having been if you like a tool in the hands of those who wish to present and perpetuate a certain dogma or whatever, you know, in the great church building, the great cathedral building; I mean these are places that if you like instil wonder into a flock, or fear. And I think, you know, one must say that, you know, great art has been put at the service of religion in any culture, in any civilisation, and I think that if you like the embodiment of the spiritual in terms of feeling can be identified in the objects of great artists. I think to an extent sometimes things are just symbolically functioning objects, but I think, you know, the thrill of an art work is something I suppose which I would equate as a spiritual feeling, of something that's transcendent. And so I think all along, although let's say, I mean there are moments in terms of my own I suppose spirituality that I would feel is located in art, I still have to admit that there are, I mean a sensation, you know, if that is religious it is spiritual, and I would prefer to think that my, if you like my spirituality in being an artist is something that might be close to what might be a differently defined sense of religion that might be described in other terms. I'm not sure, it's, let's say it's a felt thing rather than a describable thing, and I suppose in the context of this you're not going to get a definition of what I think religion is or my spirituality might be. Ask me another.

Well you continued to make fragments using stains for the figuration, didn't you?

Yes, that's right.

I'm not calling them paintings.

No. Well I suppose, I mean if I talk about, you know, the way that things went, I suppose in going to Italy and if you like setting up, bringing my family out of England for a period of time, I suppose I thought that, you know, to an extent Italy might be a promised land, I mentioned before that I was offered several exhibitions and the opportunity of perhaps giving up teaching and supplementing my income, or if you like exchanging income from one source, from teaching, into, making it as a professional artist. So Italy really was an opening of a doorway, and I suppose it would be easier for me to say that, you know, having been in Rome, the situation in Italy was changing a bit. Milan had been very very dominant in the world of contemporary art, and Italy was changing a bit, the axis if you like of the Trans-Avantguardia was pushing an axis through the middle of Italy rather than through if you like European Milan and consequently if you like European Milan and its association with the world. So the galleries in the north of Italy at Torino and Milano were if you like basically lined up with the area of art that I was moving away from, that which was American influenced. And so I suppose to an extent I found myself in the right place at the right time again, being in Rome when I was there, and the exhibition that I did at La Salita which included the `Gethsemane' piece and some other small fragment pieces, and the little series of tondos called `Bolzeno', `Vico', `Bracciano' and `Viterbo', they were seen by a very very eminent critic and art historian writer called Giovanni Carandente, and he was responsible for the great exhibition at Spoleto twenty odd years before I had met him, in which he had invited one of my great heroes who I haven't mentioned yet, David Smith. David Smith probably a hero not necessarily from his kind of formalist sculpture, but David Smith as a hero from his writings on art and his attitude as an artist, a man who wrote beautifully about being an artist and being a sculptor, and a painter, I mean he was again someone like Michelangelo who called himself an artist rather than a sculptor or a painter.

What aspects particularly did you like?

Of David Smith's writing? Well it was to do with little things, if you read about...I haven't got the...I think they are called his `Diaries', in fact as I look up now to my book shelf I can see David Smith poking out of the book shelf as if I've just put it back in but I haven't, and I can't remember exactly what the title is, but I think it's, it might have been `David Smith's Diaries' or something. But he writes about, I mean one of the simplest things to say was that, you know, an artist thinks about his art in his sleeping moments and in his waking moments, and I felt that that's what it was like, you know. If you like the summary of the day's work, the problems that you were going to bed with, and waking up in and thinking about the next move, were things that I think, I mentioned John Panting before was someone who had a phenomenal work ethic and I found it in, if you like verbalised in David Smith, and it was something that I felt also in myself that was happening and it was one of the things that if you like made me a part of the family of artists, that made me know that I was on the right track or I was in the right place with the right precedents and the right, what can I say, thoroughbred, breeding, whatever, you know. Anyway, Giovanni Carandente had, having seen my show, invited me, it was breathtaking because he invited me to exhibit at the Spoleto festival, the Festivale dei Due Mondi, and this was the first exhibition he had organised, big exhibition, since he did the show in which David Smith did the `Voltri' series in, whenever it was, 1955 or something; it was, I think it was 21 or 25 years after that exhibition, I did my exhibition in 1982.

Was that a one person show?

It was, but what Carandente had done was that he did four principal shows for this exhibition. He had two masters, two great modern masters, he had Henry Moore and Balthus, and he chose me to be the young artist opposite Moore and he chose a painter from Florence called Roberto Barní to be opposite Balthus. And we each had individual shows that were if you like brought together by...I mean they were kind of individual shows, there wasn't a kind of a catalogue which drew that conceptual thing together but basically the shows I think were entitled `Two Young and Two Old'.

And that was very exciting, and the point about that meeting then was, I mean it was kind of disruptive as far as the family were concerned because we had just, having been living in Anguillara, I think it was becoming summer time and the professoressa at the university wanted her house back because that's when people wanted to move into the country from Rome, and I had been asked by Marilena Bonomo if I would like to take with my family the house belonging to Sol LeWitt's wife, which was in Priano on the Costiera Amalfitana. She had been left...she was now an American, Italo-American, she was living in New York, but her granny had left her her house in Priano, and much to the chagrin of the local family in the area, so they were all threatening to take the house over, so we were asked if we would like to take the house. So we moved there, and just after I had moved there, a magnificent place to be, my God! I mean we were on a hillside just overlooking the sea high above Priano, and it was just the most beautiful place to find oneself. I mean one was really at the mercy of whatever was going to happen, but it just happened at, you know, whoever offered us help, helped us with a beautiful house in Bracciano, and Nikos Stangos had given us this wonderful house in, you know...the wrong seasons in fact, Nikos's house in Umbria was freezing, it had a little tiny stove, you know, to take the chill off a cool summer evening, we were living there through the winter, hoar-frost four inches thick in the mornings, I had a young family, and I spent most of my time in Milan leaving my family to be frozen. My wife is a goddess, I mean what my family went through. You know, they would find the rubbish bags savaged in the morning and wonder if it was wild boars, you know, it was a sort of a mile walk to the nearest shop, not along a road but through the countryside across a pathway over a river.

God! absolutely wonderful.

And, I mentioned I think before, this was a house that, when Nikos was spending summers there that Richard Wollheim had stayed in and Adrian Stokes had visited, and Anne Stokes, and so it was a kind of lovely feeling to know that people that one admired had been there. And so this house in Bracciano was also magnificent, high up on the village, in the village just near the lake, and that was wonderful.

Is that the house near Rome?

That was the house near Rome.

And you moved there from...

From there, yes. In fact in the mean...we in fact went back to England at one point. After we were living in Umbria we went back to England where I had been invited to show in the 20th Century British Sculpture show by Nick Serota, and exhibited the two works that I had shown in Artra Studio, and it was quite an important exhibition for me inasmuch as it was work that had been seen for the first time of what I had been doing in Italy, and I think, I felt very much that, you know, this was a reinforcement of my notion that, you know, British artists are really only recognised when they go away, and I came back with two works that were kind of so different from what I had been doing and different from what anybody else was doing in terms of being works in carved Italian stone. This was `We Must Always Turn South' and `Tondo Shining Forth' - sorry, `Tondo: Lunar Influences to Agostino (Di Duccio)'. And it caused quite, you know, rather more than a ripple, because it was from that show that the Tate bought `We Must Always Turn South', and a lot of other people were interested in the work that I was doing at that point. So we went back to Italy with a kind of a sense of confidence and excitement that the work was being recognised, you know, since, for the first time since the shows I did at the Lisson Gallery, and in fact was starting to sell some objects, because I wasn't making objects before, I was making ideas that were destructible.

Were your children with you?

Our children were with us, yes.

So how would you have been living?

Sorry?

How would you have been living?

In terms of...well in those days, I think I mentioned before that we left...the children were both at certain kinds of ages that made them able to leave school. We left at a time, I suppose it was the beginning of the summer, so we went to Italy at a time when, I think probably Judy was in fact responsible for teaching the children for about a term, and she was good. But when we went - well how were we living? I mean we were living at a wonderful house in the middle of the countryside and it was freezing. And we lived well. I mean we loved Italy, we dearly loved Italy. We had people who were friends of Nikos's who were responsible for looking after the house who we saw reasonably frequently, so there were people that we could relate to within Cortona, which was the nearest big town. San Leo Bastìa was a little village on the east side of Cortona towards Trestina, which was an area near Umbertide, just north of Umbertide. And we had, our dear friend from Rome also had a house in Umbertide so we kind of got to meet people, it wasn't as if we were totally isolated.

Your dear friend was the professoressa, was she?

She lived in...no, my dear friend Richard Piccolo, the painter, was the one who lived in Umbertide.

You haven't mentioned him.

I haven't mentioned him yet, but he was one of the reasons. Anyway...no he was my artist friend who had the studio at the American Academy who suggested I take a studio there. He's still a dear friend. So, we had gone back to England, and then when we got back to Italy from the exhibition, `Twentieth Century British Sculpture', to if you like begin again, at that point as well I was in contact with Simonetta Lux of the University of Rome to include a piece of work in an exhibition that she was doing, a group show.

What year are we in?

We're in 1981 I think. Yes, 1981. And, the show at the university included, it was a good show, it was called `Generazione in Confronto', I think, which included Francis Bacon of all people, but I suppose those were paintings that were borrowed from dealers and collectors in Rome as a part of this exhibition at the University of Rome, and included quite a broad swathe of new Italian artists, as well as living older contemporary artists. So it was a good introduction to me as well of what was going on in Rome, you know, and the work didn't seem to be, you know, it wasn't so out of place, it was a part of the mainstream to an extent. I mean one of the things that I suppose I discovered was that, you know, Chia was doing process paintings, he was making, you know, loading a paintbrush with blue paint and stabbing the canvas until the paintbrush ran out of colour, finish. But soon after that he got involved with Achille Bonito Oliva and the others of the Trans-Avanguardia and became more figuratively orientated. But at the time I suppose, amongst the other people that were there were people like Paolini in my show. There was also some evidence I think of what was a new group called the Anacronisti, who were if you like the chickens of the head, the chief, the professor of art history at Rome University, a man called Mauritzio Calvese. But anyway there seemed to be, you know, there was quite a wide spread.

What did you feel about that Trans-Avanguardia group?

I thought, I suppose I thought it was really very interesting, and I thought that, yes, it did express certainly very much a feeling of the time. I think probably to an extent there was a degree of shock in the almost kind of total acknowledgement at that time of quite an unbridled figuration, you know, a kind of to do with sensuality and to do with myth, all the things that were totally kind of taboo to the background of Conceptualism and Minimalism, so you know, I suppose it was quite an explosive thing to happen. It caused however I suppose certain kinds of difficulties and problems in a way, because at the time, and this I suppose goes back a little bit in a way, because we've talked before of the shows that I was doing in Milan, the Milan Triennale in which I did the sculpture which was dedicated to my mother for example.

We haven't talked about that.

Oh gosh, we must have. We must have, because it's miles back isn't it?

We've only talked about that early time when you were showing at the Palazzo Reale.

Yes. No but I did...didn't I talk about the...I'm sure I did. I can't imagine, as I say, when...

I don't think so Stephen actually.

I did, I did, I did. I did, I'm sure I did. So I'll carry on as if I did. But anyway, I will mention it briefly now because it goes back a couple of years. But the point being that there was an amazing rivalry in Italy between certain critics. I mentioned for example that I had been in the exhibition at the Palazzo Reale in Milan which was an exhibition organised by Renato Burilli and his assistant, Francesca Allanovi. The exhibition that I was involved in next in Milan, which I think was possibly in the next year, 1980 I think it was, was organised by Flavio Caroli. Now Flavio Caroli was on the commission for the Venice Biennale of 1980, which was a seminal biennale because it's what launched the Trans-Avanguardia, and what happened there was that in this commission meeting where Flavio Caroli was sitting opposite Achille Bonito Oliva, the mentor of the group, Trans-Avanguardia, he said the only interesting art being done in the world at the moment is by his group, Trans-Avanguardia, and they would rattle off the four or five names who were, Clemente, Chia, Paladino. Basta. Nothing else in the world is of any significance at all. And this is the kind of, if you like the selling point, this was the wildness, the new savage, if you like critic, taking over from the artist; in fact it's almost like picking up the mantle of Marinetti in saying, `Right, I will lead the artist forward. I will create the agenda.' And I think this is what's happened to, you know, even to this day I think Achille set up the notion of the superstar critic. And having set the agenda, he takes on board his managed group of artists and he packages those artists in a way that makes them who the principal dealers in the world would have to need, and they have to deal with him as a critic. My God! I mean this is an academic, a professor of a university as well, Achille. Anyway this upset Flavio Caroli to the extent that he said, `I resign from this

committee, but I will show you that there are other artists in this world who are as good as or more interesting or better than the ones you are saying.' And Flavio had a much much broader agenda. He could speak English for a start, Achille at the time couldn't speak English, and Flavio was known internationally, and travelled extensively in Europe, London and New York. And I met Flavio when I was showing at the Lisson Gallery first of all. And I was one of the artists that he said were one of the best artists working around, but you know, it's just one of these things. And so he said, `I will set up, I will re-institute the Milan Triennale,' which up until that point had more or less been forgotten. It became a trade show. But Flavio went back to Milan and said, `Right...' And this was possible in those days that the city states almost who were either in the hands of the socialists or the Christian Democrats or, whoever, the Communists, yes, in some cases, and there was a competitiveness about who could make the most interesting cultural festivals or whatever. And, you know, those were the days when there were great banners flying in the streets, you know, saying such-and-such exhibition by such-and-such, you know, with the sponsorship by the Comune, and everybody knew who the Comune was in the hands of, you know, so the Comunes were really fantastic sponsors and patrons of the arts in Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. So the Milan Triennale was set up, and it included just about everybody else who was ever to do anything in contemporary art from Julian Schnabel, Robert Longo, David Salle. You know, you could just, just about everybody who had been anybody in art. And eventually I must say that Achille had to admit that there were some additional artists to his Trans-Avanguardia group but he had already made I think the phenomenal thrust in, if you like unleashing on the world this particular group of artists who I think were very very good, and I think they got better and better because of course they had the phenomenal opportunity of having if you like the time and the support. I mean they were all.....

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Basically they were free to do their work and develop their work, and it was I think a great thing to have happened for contemporary art in that respect.

And what did you show at the Triennale, was this the work for your mother?

In the Triennale I exhibited a work which was called...it was called...what was it called? It was called...my God! what was it called? I can look it up quickly. It was called...I can't remember what it was called. Surface...just bear with me. How maddening. I'm looking at it. [PAUSE, LOOKING AT CATALOGUE] How extraordinary. No it must be back here. Must be back here. My gosh it was ages before... Sorry, it was called `Relief: Luciano I (In Memory of my Mother)'; Luciano Lorano, the architect who was written about extensively by Adrian Stokes especially for the courtyard of the ducal palace in Urbino, the duke being...being...come on Stephen. Being Federico. Federico Sigismondo Malatesta Montefeltro. Yes, OK. Federico Montefeltro, great patron of the arts and a builder of this wonderful palace which was engineered and built by Luciano Lorano and by...oh gosh, now I've forgotten, I can't remember. Anyway that was going back to 19...no, it took such a long time to get back, that was going back to 1980.

And that was the relief work?

And that was still a relief work with some leaning, at the first, amongst the first of the leaning stone pieces that I made.

You mentioned the figuration, sensuality and the Trans-Avanguardia.

Yes.

But those actually were elements that were appearing in your own work, weren't they?

Yes they were, and I suppose in that respect it was...I suppose to an extent they're a surprise in a way because, as I say this was opening up for me; I mean the time that I did my show at La Salita, a show that included if you like fragmentation, acknowledgement of the past, a kind of, the idea of narratives etcetera, I suppose it was at a time when these considerations were also moving in Italy in the work of artists like Clemente and Paladino possibly, and of course in Cuchi that I mentioned, because his background seemed to be similarly to do with, if you like an orientation towards Conceptualism. Of course Italy, Rome in particular, had been a place where a lot of, you know, quite radical cutting-edge art that might be considered Conceptual was being done in the Fifties and Sixties. Anyway, I suppose we've deviated to an extent from talking about Spoleto.

What did you show there?

At Spoleto I exhibited a series of works that I made having been the guest of a big marble company called IMEG di Viareggio, Industria Marmo e Granito who, if you like co-sponsored my show with the Henry Moore show at Spoleto. But I worked at their factory in Viareggio at a time when, I suppose this is at the point at which we started to deviate, I talked about the, if you like the paradisial situation that we found ourselves in overlooking the Gulf of Amalfi from the mountains, hillside above the village of Priano, and I was promptly invited to go and make work in Viareggio which was about two hundred miles north, which meant leaving the family again. I spent, if you like, fourteen years teaching in England, spending three or four days a week away from my family travelling around, and we went to Italy to be together, and I found myself spending as much time or more time away. But the point being that the Viareggio company, IMEG, were able I suppose in terms of their budget to accommodate me in a local hotel and give me all the kind of support I needed, but that didn't extend to a family. They occasionally, however, came to visit me and we managed to sort of include that in the arrangements for their hospitality.

So how long were you in Viareggio?

I suppose I was there for, maybe two or three months in a way. It may have been less, it's difficult to remember in a way. But it was a fantastic opportunity because this was one of the biggest marble companies in the country, I was greeted by the director, a man called Mazzi who just took me to the production area and said, `This is it, take what you want'. And I was looking at acres upon acres of blocks of marble which stood about twenty feet high in terms of blocks, the most advanced equipment for processing granite and marble in the world, and I set about with some ambitious ideas. However, the problem became that rather than have a site where I could if you like really exploit the mass of this volume of this material, the venue for my show, rather than being a big open space became rather a smaller space than I had originally expected. But nevertheless it was a terrific space, which was a barrel-vaulted cantina it would be called, underneath the Palazzo of Spoleto Comune, the Palazzo del Comune, and a stairway which led up from the road, from the stairway at the top of the main piazza in Spoleto up into the Comune, the Palazzo del Comune. There was one, if you like, quite good space in terms of its volume, but the other was a difficult space inasmuch as it was a stairway of about 12, 10 feet across, in which I had, you know, the walls to work with. And so, I suppose having dealt with, if you like the ideas of fragmentation in the work in Rome I carried that with me, and I introduced colour, and I suppose one of the reasons I introduced colour was because I wanted to violate the purity of this white marble that I was being offered. I felt that I didn't want to fall into a trap of, if you like, or be seduced into an idea of a kind of, a kind of a gratuitous classicism because of the sumptuousness of this material. In fact to an extent, of all the materials that I had thought that I was going to be working with when I was in Italy, I wasn't really very interested in working in white marble; in fact in my list of stones, you know, in Vasari, obviously I was going to have to address white marble, but I was rather more interested in the kind of characterful stones like the Peperino that I mentioned and the stones talked about by Adrian Stokes, and the Verona marbles and the Travertines, which had a certain kind of resonance for me that maybe the white marble didn't, you know. You know, but it was sad for example that, you know, Michelangelo used to kind of patinate his marble with horse manure and urine to give it a honey colour, so I suppose to an extent that whiteness was, although it's something that one saw everywhere and felt kind of sickened by, you know, in terms of lots of American artists would come to Pietra Santa and work and

make all these awful white abstract art sculptures, and there was a bit of it around in the factory where I worked, because there was one other artist who worked, employed the factory to make some big public sculptures for him. But my attitude then was to be able to use the white marbles and then abuse them in a way which was astonishing to the people in the factory, because what I started to do was if you like use the idea of, let's say in the Bernini fountain in the Piazza di Spagna in Rome, you know, the fountain would become stained, although it was in Travertine, with copper from, you know, copper piping, or you know, the pins that would sort of bleed red, red oxide into the stone. And I thought I would like to work with those materials as a way of, if you like, abusing the stone, but somehow using it in a way that might enable me to do certain things pictorially. And I suppose at the back of my mind always was the idea that, you know, even the Greeks used to paint the marble anyway, you know, so there's a kind of a tradition of colouring the stone. Not that one felt necessarily fettered by tradition in that respect. But the first work that I made was a piece called `Landscape with Ruins', and it was a matter of bringing together I suppose the ideas that were already emerging in the `Gethsemane' piece which was the idea of the artist as a Renaissance figure, as someone who worked with, you know, as architect, painter and sculptor, as Michelangelo had been in bringing it a little bit in painting, but nevertheless, I mean there's a kind of idea of, you know, not being kind of contained. But let's say as a sculptor I wanted to address the idea of the Renaissance idea of the artist, and so the idea of making images that were made of stuff of what one was representing. So the idea of if you like rendering a relief that was, if you like, a picture of an arch, the arch would be made in the stuff that you would expect to see an arch made of. So in this particular sculpture, `Landscape with Ruins', I used as a forum for my arch the arch of the Masaccio painting of the Trinity in Santa Maria Novella. So I used that structure as my frame, and if you like went through into a landscape, so one was involved in a kind of a time thing of looking back, a spectator in the present, looking back through a Renaissance or quattrocento archway into antiquity. And so the idea of that looking back, looking through was something that I was particularly interested in in this particular instance, and the idea of working on a landscape as a sculptor was again a kind of an ironic position to take. I mean I'd been very very excited by the landscape in `St. Peter With The Keys' for example, the little relief we have by Donatello in the V & A, and very excited by a sculpture called

`Allegorical Landscape' by Agostino di Duccio, which is in the Castello Sforzesco in Milan, and the idea of landscapes, you know, without the figures was something I was quite interested in, because if one in relief, in schiacciato in particular, was if you like interested in the idea of what you can do with drawing, as I had been doing with my reliefs before, in the plaster reliefs from some years before, the idea that you can, if you like, you can with the most minimal means, or economical means, create the most extraordinary space. So I suppose given the nature of, I suppose sculpture being about an object and a certain kind of real spatiality, the idea of actually being able to deal as a sculptor with a vast space, as I mentioned from the thing, the cosmic becoming more particular in the landscape of `Gethsemane', and if you like playing with the idea of the cyclical notion of how we go back in times, like neo-classicism came from an idea of classicism, and I suppose there was, you know, within the kind of contemporary new wave out of which let's say I might, or from which I might have been considered associated, in the Eighties it was kind of a looking back again, you know, so there was a kind of neo-neo-neo antiquity. And of course the Romans themselves were looking back at the Greeks. And so in the `Landscape With Ruins' one was looking from the present through Renaissance art at a Greek landscape with strewn ruins which were in fact to do with a play on the idea of how the fragments themselves are read. Because, you know, if you think of a fragment in the context of `Gethsemane' they are disparate fragments that don't seem to have any relationship with each other, and in fact that's very much the case, they were disparate fragments brought together from different pieces of stone and put together and united, unified, brought together by my structure of my work. This develops then in a number of works, and I suppose during the time that I was working on the `Landscape With Ruins', which was a big work, I developed certain other ideas using in tondos as well which I made at the factory of IMEG, `Tondo With Ruins' was in fact a tondo which also had a ruined landscape which was in relief without any colour, and if you like in classical white marble which showed a classical landscape or a classical grouping of ruins. But in that particular piece you can see that the fragments of my tondo would fit together. Another piece in fact which was `From An Allegorical Landscape' after Agostino di Duccio's in fact oblong relief in the Castello Sforzesco, I had actually taken a fragment from that which shows horses and figures, and that also is a piece in

white marble which if you like is fragmented but shows that the pieces could be put back together.

How were you introducing the figurative element, technically?

Technically by bas-relief, by carving it with an air hammer so using if you like, the kind of hammer that one would use these days if you're working in Carrara, you wouldn't necessarily, for even fine work you would use a machine that's driven by compressed air.

And the colour element?

The colour element in those, if you like preparatory pieces, if you like working on those preparatory pieces that I mention, the `Allegorical Landscape' which was just white marble, `Tondo With Ruins' which was white marble, and another tondo called `Tondo Nuvole', which if you like plays on the idea of Agostino di Duccio's clouds, you know, racing above a still ellipse, which is if you like suggestive of the world, I mean the marking in the marble itself is sort of very suggestive and evocative of if you like rivers and land and maps and clouds. Nuvole is clouds. And in association I suppose those things were being worked alongside of the big `Landscape With Ruins' and as I say I suppose I was, in making those things I was also considering that they were something perhaps insipid in the kind of whiteness of the marble, and scale which were about 2 metre diameter tondos were, you know, were things that to an extent were able to be worked through quite quickly. The big pieces, I mean the `Landscape With Ruins' was 5 metres high and sort of 3½ metres wide, it was a big work, and it was my principal sculpture for the exhibition at Spoleto. But the nature of the fragmentation in that was that there was a block which had a fault, and out of that block I selected a number of fragments which were about four, but they all had the same flaw, so as fragments they looked rather odd because they were all the same, which is a kind of a contradiction in terms in a way. So I reversed them in a way that enabled me to sort of juxtapose them as similar or like fragments, almost like a pattern repeat, which also enables a kind of, an assertion of the flat because of the way that they sit together. And at the same time one was saying, these slabs exist in a

block and consequently in their origin were side by side, and have an association, and what I did with them when they were upright was that I gave one if you like a foreground position and one a middle ground position and one a distant position, and gave them a correspondingly close, middle and distant image of the same fragment of landscape. So there was a kind of a layering in it which is, you know, which isn't necessarily kind of spoiling it by telling it.

What I'm trying to get at it is, it's not painted, it's actually stained is it?

It's stained.

That's the technique I'd like to know about.

Yes, the... Right. I mean the technique being that I was just if you like making solutions of oxides that are normally kept as far away from marble as possible, and I was pouring them, drawing with them; I wasn't using a brush, and I suppose in that respect I as very careful not to if you like make a picture through painting, I was colouring through relief and pouring my colour, my stain, onto the surface. I mean one was looking, although the blue of copper, copper sulphate one was getting to an extent a true representation of what one was going to see, but my solutions of red oxide were just kind of black and after a time these were going to rust and stain into the stone itself, into the marble.

And can you control it as carefully as paint?

Well I suppose in the same way that Jackson Pollock controlled through his wrist and arm where he, through his colour I suppose to an extent I was using a similar kind of, you know, distance from my canvas, in brackets. [BREAK IN RECORDING] So the `Landscape With Ruins' if you like constituted one element of the Spoleto Festival exhibition which was in the cantina, this very very big vaulted under-croft I suppose of the Palazzo Comunale. And in the main stairway I developed the theme that I mentioned before that I had been working on in Rome which was if you like fragments of a figure. Although the four sculptures, the four tondos, which were

called `Vico', `Bolzeno', `Bracciano' and `Viterbo', if you like are parts of the female figure, they're breasts, buttocks and head, whatever, I must have missed something out, the stomach, and what I did was if you like, again, I mean Agostino as my mentor, I mentioned, I must have mentioned, yes I did mention the business of the anamorphic sort of stretching of figures and forms. The point is that in this rising stairway in which one has got very little room to get away from the image, it's something I was curious about once talking to one of my students whose name would elude me, but he was interested in something about the stretching images in a corridor that they have to do[??] a piece of work in, and so I've had something in my mind about having sort of thought about this problem in the past, the idea of, you know, how you approach something that is going to disappear if you're looking at it from the side. And I mentioned before about the `Portrait of a Young Man' in the Ambrosiano by Leonardo, so, these kinds of things were sort of informing what I decided to do, which was to take a tondo and just stretch it, stretch it diagonally and lengthways in a way that would enable one to see more of it when one was approaching it up a staircase from a relatively narrow angle. So I took my circular idea and just stretched it in the way that maybe Agostino might have done it. And I used the theme, there was a very very, I suppose very sensual for me sculpture of a little Romanesque figure called `Figura Femminile Impudica' which is how it's described in the rather lengthy description by an anonymous sculptor-carver in the Castello Sforzesco, and it's a curious thing of a woman lifting her dress, and she has an item in her hand, and it's a very strange thing. And I used a kind of an idea of that to inform the sculpture, the sculpture's entitled `Figura Femminile Impudica', and the lower part consisted of if you like thighs with draperies being drawn back with something in the hand, which I saw as a knife but it could have been anything, who knows, a threatening thing or even an item of pleasure. And then the next... On opposite walls so as to give each sculpture a full amount of space opposite, so the thighs were on one side low down on the wall and on the next, upper, on the right-hand side just further up was if you like a stomach, again draped with a drapery flowing down as if it was to connect with the lower sculpture that was on the opposite wall, and then on the next wall up through an archway as I recall was a pair of great ovals which were like large, maybe, if you have the imagination, large breasts which were again kind of, perhaps dressed or draped slightly or caressed with hair. On the next image on the right-hand side going up on

the top of the staircase was in fact a head with voluminous hair, voluptuous hair flowing down from that. The sculpture was made in bardiglio imperiale, which is a beautiful dark grey - it can be light grey but this was particularly dark blue-grey - stone which came from one of the quarries of the IMEG company. And it sort of sat on the yellowish ochry walls of the Comune palazzo, and they're still there, they were purchased by the Comune. I had to take my children with no shoes on to the mayor's office one day to say, `Look, you've got to pay for this sculpture,' and that my children haven't got any shoes, and they paid, I think it was the day before they closed for Ferragosto. [LAUGHS] The things you have to do as artists is pantomime. But anyway it was a terrific experience the whole of the Spoleto thing. It was also very very amusing, because having been invited by Gianni Carandente to be in this exhibition it just so happened that when I was working on the exhibition, who should be walking up the road one day but Gian Carlo Menotti, who had no idea that I was actually working at his festival, and I think to an extent he was a little bit peeved that I was there without his knowledge, and I think that's always been a bit of a kind of, a bit of a competitiveness between he and Gianni Carandente, as they're both I suppose... I mean Gianni lives in Spoleto and I think, I'm not sure if he's lived there all his life or what, but nevertheless he's a man of the area, and I suppose he feels to an extent that's his territory, and of course Gian Carlo would think it was his territory too. But it was lovely to see him and he invited myself and the family to go and visit him.

So now you're coming full circle.

It was again one of those wonderful circles that seem to happen that make life kind of great. I don't know, events - well, not great, great for me, things happen, because you can be in different sides of the world and you meet people and things happen in this kind of extraordinary way as if they're meant to happen. So that in itself was really very exciting. And it was also very exciting for me to meet Balthus who was just recovering from malaria at the time but he was very interested in the `Figura Femminile Impudica', which he lingered to look at. So that was terrific. Unfortunately Henry Moore was ill at the time and wasn't able to make it to that

exhibition, but it was through that that I did meet Moore at Much Hadham through Gianni who set up a meeting for us to meet.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Shall we continue talking about the figure fragments?

Yes. I suppose initially the idea of the figure being fragmented was in the context of, you know, how one developed, might develop the idea of the tondo, and I suppose that portions of the figure being focused upon within tondos that became stretched tondos was something that eventually became fragmented figures. I suppose the idea of fragmentation was something that was always going to be, have to be addressed simply because I suppose within the context of archaeology and the history of art from ancient times, so many fragments have come to us which still have an intrinsic beauty despite their lack of wholeness. But I suppose to an extent one of the things that started to come into the work was the idea that within the business of the narratives and within the business of the Christian story, I was interested in the idea of fragmentation in the sense, in the context of the figure because of the idea of the fragmented figure. And I suppose in looking for examples of where, you know, the figure has been mutilated within the context of Christian history and Christian iconography, the idea of St. Agatha, whose breasts were severed as a part of her torture she was subjected to for her faith, it was one idea of dealing with an idea of sensuality which was if you like coming out of the earlier work in Verona marble which I did in Verona, which I had access to in the factory at IMEG. So having set up if you like the situation of working in the factory for the exhibition I continued to work there for a little while afterwards developing a few new ideas, so there was a sort of welcome for me to stay there and continue working, not necessarily under their auspices but certainly using their facilities, and at that point I was working if you like as a client, paying for works. But the idea of the sensuality, the innate sensuality in Verona marble that was coming out in the tondo, `We Must Always Turn South', developed into a couple of other works, one sculpture called `The Fiery Kind', another called `Disc' which was like a severed head, or not a head at all but just a disc with if you like this burst of flame almost like an aurora, developed into this sculpture called

`Ecstasy: St. Agatha'. And a part of the idea of, if you like I suppose the things that one thinks about as a sculpture when one's working I suppose is the idea that in relation to this idea of martyrdom and the awful anguish, anxiety, pain that goes, that accompanies martyrdom, the idea that within it to transcend the pain there must be some extraordinary sense of ecstasy, and if you like the nature of ecstasy as one might experience it, without being subjected to martyrdom I suppose, is through if you like the ecstasy through sexual experience. And so there was a kind of a linking of that, and I suppose to an extent, you know, to put that in some kind of historical context one might say, if one looks at the Bernini statues of St. Teresa for example, you know, this kind of extraordinary facial expression of giving of one's self to God if you like in the sense of that ecstasy, I suppose informed the idea that, you know, that there could have been, I mean it's speculation obviously, but I was very interested to read in Umberto Eco's `The Name of the Rose', there's a sequence in which the young novice has been through Florence and sees, it could have Savonarola, I don't think he names the person in question who it is being put to death through burning, and describes the extraordinary sense of tranquillity on the face of this person. So, there was something in that. There was a beautiful exhibition in the department of painting at the Royal Academy some years ago in which there was a, again a beautiful image of, a portrait of St. Agatha; with all its horror, implicit horror, there is still the kind of the transcendent quality, which I was curious about and curious about addressing it. And so that prompted the `Ecstasy: St. Agatha', as well as a later work which was called `Cloaca Maxima' which deals with the idea of the martyrdom of St. Sebastian, which in itself, if you like as we know it, the idea of them being shot to death by arrows tied to a tree is how we see it, again usually a very sort of sensuous figure pierced by arrows with an ecstatic look on his face. And in that respect it was again an opportunity to deal with fragmentation because in terms of the little bit of research, you know, having dealt with fragmentation in so many ways in the context of this particular subject, and in the context of my work, I had never made a piece in which I had made an image and then fragmented it, and when I got round to working on the `Cloaca Maxima' piece I dealt with the idea of, if you like drawing out and colouring an image of a man carrying his arrows as attributes of St. Sebastian. Because the actual story is, which is amazing that we don't know it generally, is that St. Sebastian wasn't shot to death by arrows, but having been taken down from the tree was taken

by St. Irene and her associate, who also is sainted but his name eludes me, and healed, and it was at this point that St.

Sebastian went back to Diocletian, who had ordered his death and said, `Now you must believe in the Resurrection'.

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We have to believe in the Resurrection, and so Diocletian had him beaten to death and chopped into pieces and thrown into the Cloaca Maxima, which was the principal, the primary sewer of Rome. So, the idea of fragmentation within the context of the figure, I was able to deal with, if you like in connection with my work and in connection with, if you like a development or a narrative, a theme within the Christian story, although an obscure theme which we're not necessarily too familiar with. But a number of works, as I say, developed using those themes of both the fragmented figure and then other themes, again, you know, developed through the landscape. So there was a kind of a...I mean rather than there being if you like a completely linear development in my work I found that, you know, according to where I was or ideas that were developing that, you know, I might deal with a fragmented figure and be working on a fragmented landscape at the same time, and it was...I suppose I was working on the fragmented landscape similar to the `Gethsemane' piece a couple of years later, although to an extent, you know, the ideas were emerging all around the same, at the same time; it's difficult when you put things together, let's say in the context of a chronology, whether the chronology is more important than the themic in terms of putting things together.

It's interesting that both the Mediterranean and the Indian religion have this sort of underlying sensuality. Are you particularly attracted to that?

Yes, well I suppose it's something which does emerge, and I suppose, you know, if you think of the cults, especially, I think the Madonna del latte was a very very sort of especially...that followed in southern France, the idea that there is almost something...I don't know how to look at it, I mean if I said it was sort of pornographic I wouldn't mean it, but you know, but you know, in the sense that there is a kind of, an erotic relationship between, yes the, you know, the Indian attitude to an extent. I mean you can't categorise completely but let's say the themes and undercurrents are so complex that one does find undercurrents that do suggest certain themes and aspects that enable maybe, you know, a certain route to be followed within one's devotion in Catholicism as there is a certain route that you can follow in India if that is your way

to salvation and a transcendent state. So I suppose, and it's something I've discovered, you know, having worked in Egypt too, that there are people, intellectuals, who are working let's say, and having I suppose to be confronted by the business of fundamentalism in the context of Egypt for example, where people are looking at the esoteric aspects of their own position. I've met intellectuals in Egypt who have been particularly interested and preoccupied with Sufism; they also look at the Cabbala and they're also interested in things like the esoteric aspects of Christianity as would have come through Rosicrucianism in the sort of early mystic kind of aspects of cults within Christianity I suppose since the days of the Crusades, and I suppose in that respect, if you think of it in those terms that you know, if Crusaders were going to the East and meeting Islam, probably on a very intellectual and mystic level they would probably be quite affected by it; they were also going to the source and roots of Christianity as well, you know, and consequently being in an area that had been, I suppose pagan up to a point. And I suppose, you know, I think probably underpinning all religion is man's need to deal with the mystical or the mysterious, and there are probably undercurrents which underpin formal religion which make a kind of a universality of these kinds of less organised ways of coming to terms with either the hereafter or the spiritual or the transcendent.

And to go back to your work, you did a sort of different form of fragmented landscapes a bit later, didn't you?

Yes, I think probably to polish off the fragmented landscapes, to an extent, although they do keep reoccurring, it's sort of interesting, as I said, you know, when I talk about time and place and doing things in different ways and I was, as you mentioned India, you know, an idea would emerge which would be unable to be completed because of my going to India and I would do things in India and come back. But prior to that, I mean certainly, you know, having worked in Italy and being developing certain ideas in Italy I came back to London at one point and went to the Tate and was having a look round in the Tate and came across a Turner painting which was called `View from the Loggia', Raphael, with the Farnarina selecting paintings for the Loggia, or the Vatican, but anyway. And what startled me about the picture in its vast kind of vista was the extraordinary way that Turner had twisted the perspective to

give an amazing interior vista, or, it's not exactly an interior but an architectural vista along a flank of the Vatican in one direction and twisted the main arch which leaps out of the picture towards the spectator, which if you like almost sucks you in to the panorama beyond St. Peter's Square and to the Appennines beyond. An extraordinary device, and I stole it immediately and went back to Italy with the notion of using if you like devices of this other great grand tourist, which I was sort of seeing myself as in a way, working my way through Italy in quarries rather than if you like taking notation in diaries. And I used the idea rather than the sort of frontal perspective of if you like the threshold step to take you into the images that was the case with `Soglia', `Gethsemane' and `Landscape With Ruins', to give a diagonal route into the image, and in that respect I used the flat fragmented form which was just pushed apart so there was a relationship if you like across the matrix of the potential for the fragments to relate back to each other, but give my image a vaulting diagonal thrust out towards the spectator. So if you like the illusion of the arch was picked up and taken from, if you like the reality of the space, the spectator, into a diagonal space inside the landscape that I was playing around with, this Travertine piece. So that sort of, it was I suppose looking at painting, looking at, you know, grand tourism, and I suppose feeling to an extent as well the idea of embracing painting within sculpture was something that I suppose was reinforced by this.

Were these actually painted rather than stained?

No they were stained. I suppose to an extent what I started to do was if you like, it was to deal with a very very, if you like hierarchical use of relief, inasmuch as, you know, the distance was shallower relief than the foreground, and what I did was, if it had a very shallow relief it depended very much upon, you know, the line drawing and kind of perspective devices, and then I would pour in these solutions which would pool and meet the edge of the, you know, the point at which the stone arch would be significant. [BACKGROUND NOISE] It's true, they're exploding. The caper plant is exploding over our shoulder. The colour would then, you know, would make its own route to the perimeter of a particular recessed area. So again I was avoiding doing what one might call painting, I mean, I might not use my hand, I might use a sponge or something, but I mean those are the kind of, I tried not to use

brushes simply because I wanted to say, right, I'm not...you know, I'm working with sculpture and not painting. But of course there's no reason why one shouldn't, I mean I don't know why I should be so kind of dogmatic about maintaining this particular approach.

And also you began to use the Crucifixion theme as well, didn't you?

Yes, that was a little bit later. I suppose the, you know, preceding that was...and I suppose, I mean if I mention quickly the fact that aspects of colour came into the work, I mean in Vasari as well, let's say, there were a couple of things which I followed up. I was asked to be in the show, a British sculpture show at the Hayward Gallery and I was commissioned to make two sculptures in Italy for the exhibition, and I picked up on the theme of, out of Vasari in which Vasari talks of two stones that are used as grounds for painting. They're ardisia, which is slate, of which I've only found a few pictures, one in the Campidoglio in Rome. I mean they do exist, in fact I was at Burghley House recently, or it might have been Leeds Castle in Kent when there was a very... It's interesting actually, it gives a kind of a quality of Dutch still life painting, because there's this kind of dense black upon which things are happening, and the black is slate. I didn't...yes I did, I did work with slate at one point. But at this particular juncture I was inquiring through friends at the Rome University through the art history department, did they know of any extant painting on peperino, which is mentioned by Vasari, and they knew of them, so I was determined to make what would be an extant painting on peperino. And I made two pieces, one was called `Ascent' which was like a great rusticated doorway 4 metres square, big panels of peperino stone with rusticated incisions, suggestive of architecture, with a gateway through, and a big tondo that really picked up on the theme of `Gethsemane' which was called `Ascension', again with absent figures. And in this, in those two images I dealt with the introduction of colour in a more formal painting way, so I suppose this has to link up with my trying to avoid painting, because I painted specifically. And in `Ascent' I took...I've been...I put in one of my sketch-books many many years before, it might have been many years before, a pretty horrendous picture which showed a man being bound to be hung, I think it was in the Lebanon, and this person was being if you like prepared for execution, and it was the

first time I think there had been a capital punishment in Lebanon, amazingly in Lebanon, and I'm not sure what his sins were, I think maybe he had murdered his wife or several people, I'm not quite sure. But it was a pretty horrendous image of these people attending to the business of tying this man and putting a bag over his head to hang him on a gibbet. And I used this as a kind of a metaphor if you like for the ascent to the cross of Christ and within the context of this gateway through what was a castellated, or a castle-like structure. And I painted it in oil paint.

With a brush?

With a brush, using vibrant violent colours; I used sort of purple and lemon yellow. And I suppose...well it was interesting really because, I don't suppose I painted since I was, you know, since I was a pre-diploma student or something. And the other, the `Ascension' I used egg tempera on the stone, and this piece now is mounted on the wall of the Royal Festival Hall, that's a sort of 3½ metre wide tondo that was exhibited originally in the exhibition at the Hayward Gallery. So if you like there was this kind of underlying examination and investigation into, research into both, you know, the traditions of the practice, you know, I suppose still very much an art about art but an art about art and with an accompanying idea of using narratives. A social comment even, who knows? But nevertheless a kind of a conscious use of narrative and image and subject matter. So that was a way of if you like dealing with colour, painting in in association with Vasari's book of making my own route using I suppose my own very early sort of method of working with colour in association with stone, I think it's kind of unique. And I suppose that point really brings me up to I suppose a point at which there was...a couple of things happened I suppose. One was the opportunity of doing a commission for a free-standing sculpture, and one of the things that went through my mind was, well I've been working on relief now for about twelve years, and I had never really addressed the idea of a free-standing sculpture, and I took up the challenge, if it was a challenge, with ideas that, OK, Donatello had taken twelve years and Ghiberti twelve years or fourteen years to do the `Gates of Paradise' all working in relief and if you like not necessarily within the main field of sculpture, I thought it was about time I addressed the business of making a sculpture, and I was working in Viterbo at the time so I used the opportunity of making a big

free-standing sculpture for the Liverpool International Garden Festival, making a big sculpture in peperino stone which was like a globe with some kind of, someone said it was like an aorta but it also was like an emblem for a tree, I suppose taking the ideas of...the Della Roveres had the symbol of the oak, and one came across rather nice sort of mediaeval sort of emblematic trees, and I think to make that into a sort of three-dimensional object, the sculpture itself consisted of if you like all the evidence of the excavation of the stone, and in this quarry they used to have these beautiful machines that had, they were like massive chain-saws which cut through the bed of the quarry to take out these kind of great cubes of stone which were then cut to lengths. And so there's a sort of evidence of this in the sculpture. There is also the evidence of the flow of the molten lava that went to make the volcanic stone, and the sculpture's called `Palanzana' which is after the volcanic, the defunct, what's it called? The dead volcano that overlooks the town that was called Palanzana. And this particular sculpture on one side shows this kind of flow of natural molten rock and it's got the drill holes of the, some of the cutting, it's got some of the saw marks from this extraordinary saw, and it's also kind of developed into if you like the natural form of the tree, this trunk and the branches and its roots which enclose a globe like an emblem for the Earth. And that was if you like the first free-standing sculpture. But it was kind of in the middle of other sculptures which dealt with, I suppose fragmentation, and I suppose, just briefly going back I suppose to Spoleto, because all these things seemed to be happening in a period of a year or so, which were quite important to the development of my work, that I met on the doorstep of Gianni Carandente's house one day Roberto Barní, the Italian painter who has become a long-standing friend, and his then dealer Piero Carini, who had a gallery in San Giovanni Valdarno. And having met Piero there, he's become a dear friend ever since and my dealer in Italy, and at the time his operation in terms of his dealing was from the town of San Giovanni Valdarno, which was the birthplace of Masaccio. And he asked me if I would do an exhibition in the house of Masaccio, his birthplace, and so my next kind of, really sort of intensive period of work was to work towards an exhibition in the house of Masaccio, and I worked in the town of San Giovanni Valdarno, just outside in an area that was taken for me by Piero with a house on this lake, and I worked there for a few months making a number of pieces for that installation, and

that in itself was quite an important and interesting development because it meant a kind of variety of stones, new imagery, in particular interior...

What pieces did you make for it?

The pieces I made, I suppose picking up, but there was...`Through the Portal' is a big travertine piece which shows if you like the execution of, say Sabastian again; I think this preceded in fact, I mean my interest in this work in preceding `Cloaca Maxima' was where I if you like in doing the research into St. Sebastian found out what had actually happened to St. Sebastian, but in actual fact `Through the Portal' is like the sculpture I just mentioned called `Ascent', deals with a view through a large doorway and shows, I suppose like in the Pollaiuolo in the National Gallery of figures preparing crossbows to execute St. Sebastian. Another sculpture in pietra serena is a big sculpture which again, uses again the kind of special qualities that you find in certain stones when they're in their natural state, and there was a particular block of stone that again had had a fragment of quartz or a line of quartz through it which gave a very very beautiful sinuous shape to a series of slabs that I found in the stone yard in San Giovanni Valdarno, and I organised these into very sloping fragments which picked up in their sort of sinuousness of the slab the idea of the sinuousness of the lily, the white lily, the attribute of the virgin. And then I incorporated if you like a scene, a narrative, that was informed by a very special interpretation of the Annunciation by another local artist to San Giovanni Valdarno called Giovanni da San Giovanni, who in the 16th century, later 16th century, he had in fact been quite famous for the painting of the ceilings in the Sala di Argento in the Palazzo Pitti. But on the walls are two little recesses on the interesting steps up to the main body of the church in San Giovanni, the Duomo, the principal church in San Giovanni, which has this Mussolini dome on it, I'm not sure if it was built by Mussolini, the dome, I think it probably had got bombed in the war and it ended up with the Mussolini-esque dome because I suppose all the architects in Italy at the time were kind of into this sort of, instilled with Mussolini-esque or fascist architecture. But it's an extraordinary church which has the, which you have to go up above the crypt as it were to the raised level of the nave, because in fact it's, San Giovanni is interesting because it was built on a marsh, and so they couldn't dig in to build a crypt, it had to be built up above the

crypt. But as you go up to the nave on the outside of the church you come to two recesses, and one of the panels of Giovanni shows, which can be seen in earlier Alinari photographs, are they called, the name of the black and white archival photographs, you know, of the whole of the Italian sort of cultural heritage, is an angel going to visit Mary to give her the news and the angel is incinta, is pregnant. So it's a kind of another interpretation of how Mary became pregnant, the angel carried the baby to her. That's the way it appears in the painting. The painting has now disappeared, so I think to an extent the concepts in the painting, which is gone, has disappeared in the most extraordinary short amount of time. I don't know what happened but between when I was there working in 1981/82 the paintings disappeared, and it was very very badly damaged in terms of atmosphere kind of destroying the fresco, but in going back there it was gone completely. I'm not sure if it was taken off the wall in its state, and no one seems to know where it's gone. But I picked up on that idea, which seems to be, well, an interesting thing. What I did was then play with the idea of narratives but dealing with them in a slightly profane way.

What's the title of your work?

My work was called `Interior with Figures: Dream', and it shows, I suppose an interior, a Tuscan interior with a naked woman in a state of if you like afternoon ecstasy on a sweltery afternoon dreaming about a boy, and the boy in this case is a boy flying through the window obviously pregnant. So it's the idea of a dream, you know, in the sense that, you know, I suppose, a less spiritual view of the Annunciation as someone dreaming, getting pregnant, or whatever, however it happened. And that was `Interior with Figures'. So that was one, two, a couple of pictures. I also picked up on the idea of working in ardisia, I made another sculpture called `Figures Through A Window' for the exhibition, which consisted of the idea of fragmentation, again in another way, the idea of taking... I had been using the idea of if you like incising into reliefs, the idea of rusticated architecture, but they were I suppose to do with illusion inasmuch, illusionistic inasmuch as you know that they were about drawing, suggesting, and in `Figures Through A Window' what I wanted to do was actually to take the idea of taking what could conceivably have been the real stone of a window, and if you like moving it in time and space, and so `Figures

Through A Window' consists of great slabs of stone which are very thick travertine, very very rough, and over the window is an iron grille which came from a palazzo that had fallen down because of under-mining in the region where they do...well it's a region where they do mining, it was from a castle that was written about by Boccaccio. So there's this real iron grille over this window, and slotted into the back is a piece of slate, ardisia, with an oil painting on it of the decapitation of John the Baptist with a Salome figure in it. So again it sort of links the idea of this kind of extraordinary relationship between sensuality, sexuality and death. And I did two works based upon that theme, another `Figure Through A Window' which I did using my own sort of method of staining a slab rather than using slate. Other pieces again just dealt with the idea of different themes and ideas of fragmentation and landscape. And also there was a series which, three or four pieces called `Figures...' `Sotto La Loggia', under the Loggia, which were to do with, basically I had done some studies, drawings from the statues, sculptures, in the Loggia da Lanzi in the Piazza Signoria, and I made a series of if you like extended drawings using sgraffito technique making fragmented pietra serena and pietra forte stones come together, covering them with plaster and, pigmented plaster and then drawing through as the technique is often used for decoration on palazzi. So that was another thing of using, again, the Vasarian kind of technique, or, not Vasarian in any other sense than that it was written about by him in the `Tecnica'. So again I suppose it shows a kind of a research into techniques and practices which, you know, which was developing in the work.

A lot of your work seemed to have the polished and yet unpolished, I was thinking...

Yes.

Going right back to what you were saying about `Palanzana' made me think of that.

Yes, the rough and smooth.

Still it seems to have carried right through many of the works right up to now.

Yes I think so. I mean as I say, I think I mentioned this before in the nature of the work, I've just described it in the `Palanzana' in terms of wanting to sort of show where I can the history of the stone. I mean to an extent the history of what I do with the stone is only as valid as the history of the stone itself, and I suppose there's the business that, the business of the idea of the extraordinary geology is implicit in the stone which is suggestive of time; the extent to which man has quarried this stone, which involves risk and physical work, and the final refinement to the point at which it becomes a part of, let's say a new and hopefully refined kind of cultural expression, somehow is responsive and respectful of those layers of history, geology making and final kind of, I suppose bringing out a kind of conceptual motive of some meaning for me and perhaps others.

What year was the show in Masaccio's house?

1982, I think. '84. Yes I suppose it must have been 1984, yes.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

And was this work that you were doing in Italy seen outside of Italy at this point?

Yes. Although when I moved to Italy in I think 1980 with my family we had been backwards and forwards to England a little, but we had really lived in Italy for a couple of years and the shows that I have mentioned with Marilena Bonomo and with Artra Studio, the couple of group exhibitions in the Palazzo Reale and in Palazzo del Comune in Modena, and the Spoleto show, there were a couple of shows outside of Italy in which if you like the work was brought home and the grand tour returned. One of the exhibitions, in fact I suppose the first and probably, possibly the most important for me was an exhibition that was curated by Martin Kunzt of the Kunstmuseum in Lucerne who in his introduction talks about his interest in contemporary British sculpture and from his knowledge of my work and Tony Cragg's work in Italy, he mentions that he was curious about what was going on in British sculpture that could enable these things to be going on. So he went to England

and discovered various other artists that he felt would make an interesting exhibition. So there was a show in Lucerne which was called `Neue Plastik Heute', which...

When was that?

Which was in, that was in '82 in fact, I think I went from my show at Spoleto in 1982, that's right, because what happened in 1982, I showed at La Salita, the sculpture `Gethsemane' was then shown at the Aperto in Venice, with a piece called `Ruma' which I didn't show in Rome at the time, and then at the same time there was this exhibition in Lucerne later in the year which included Tony Cragg as I mentioned, Richard Deacon, Bill Woodrow, and Anish Kapoor and myself. At that time, having been in the British Sculpture Show which seemed to cause some excitement, I went to my then dealer at the Lisson Gallery, Nicholas Logsdail at the Lisson Gallery, and explained that I had to work as a professional artist from then on, and I couldn't conceive of doing an exhibition any more with a gallery unless it paid for a catalogue, paid for transport, bought works in, because up until that point of having been working in England and I was living through teaching and I wasn't going back to teaching, so if I was going to show in England I had to live from my work. And to an extent I was delivering an ultimatum to someone who didn't really want any ultimatums given to them. But that was the point at which really I started to move away from working with the Lisson Gallery.

And what was his response to that?

The response was slightly problematic to the extent that I think, you know, ever since there's been quite a lot of vindictiveness about the fact that I left the gallery when things were going well for me; I think the point however was for me that I hadn't been doing.....

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The gallery is in some degree of flux. When I joined the gallery I was if you like looking at the gallery as the home of my mentors, the Minimal artists that I mentioned, and although I was moving away, quite distinctively and I suppose to an extent that's why I felt that things weren't exactly going to be the way that they had been, I suppose I still maintained a sense of, an understanding or not, a feeling that the Minimalism that I responded to was very classical work, and I've mentioned it as kind of Byzantine in its kind of programme before. But, I suppose I still felt to a degree an association with a kind of classical approach to the making of art, and at the time I suppose there were aspects of Tony Cragg's work that I didn't necessarily identify with; in fact we had several arguments, Tony and I, about the nature of culture, and I mean I remember Tony made a very amusing, good work at that Modena which consisted of a goalkeeper made of little plastic toys or fragments of plastic diving through space, catching a ball, the ball consisted of a rubbing from a tomb, a Roman tomb. But basically this was the ball of culture; Tony's kind of attitude was to keep, if you like, classical culture out of his art at the time, and for me that was really what had to go into it. So that was a kind of a position that we took. I think he's a very very good artist without question, and you know, the way the board was going at the time and we were if you like on different sides of a fence to an extent. However the gallery itself was moving towards other artists who were working in a rather more, if you like humoristic way, and although I think there's a great deal of irony in Bill Woodrow's work and I've come to like Bill Woodrow's work more now than I liked it when he first joined the gallery, I suppose I felt it was actually moving away from a kind of a classical mainstream as I saw it. So I felt to a degree at ease with having said to Nicholas that I wouldn't show with him unless... So I mean there were kind of political as well as sort of economic reasons I suppose.

How did you feel about being sort of grouped together with the young British sculptors that were being promoted at that time?

Well, I felt particularly happy about it because I was if you like seen by the curator of the show as a person who prompted the notion of there being a radical move that was

distinctly English, British, in the way that sculpture was developing at the time. And there was diversity, quite a diversity; I mean you wouldn't have necessarily associated Anish Kapoor's work with Bill Woodrow's work, and I don't think, you know, you would see necessarily a very strong relationship between Tony Cragg and Richard Deacon.

Do you think it was genuinely a group?

The group with me included in it was not a group because I was the only person at that time who wasn't with the Lisson Gallery, but what happened in terms of the politics of the whole thing was that from that point forward Nicholas Logsdail was in total control of new British sculpture and made it an absolute point that if anybody wanted a show of new British sculpture, Stephen Cox wasn't going to be included in it. And I know from several curators throughout the world at the time when the British Council was being approached to make exhibitions of new British sculpture that the exhibition wouldn't take place if I was going to be included in it. So the kind of Machiavellian attitude of the gallery that I left in fact became quite a, you know, a painful tool to have to... I was going through my phase of torture I suppose. And I think that's been the case ever since, there's been an extraordinary, I suppose manipulation through a sense of a cartel operating in international art, which I've discussed when we were talking about Achille Bonito Oliva that, you know, there can be the power of a particular person to promote something which if endorsed by the right people can be extraordinarily exclusive to the point at which, and I know for a fact that a certain Zurich dealer mentioned to a dealer that I knew in London that his particular interest was setting up a cartel that would totally control through I think about six principal world galleries the management and control of prices of a dozen artists that would be inclusive. And so a certain list of galleries would have been seen to be a part of that group. So there's an extraordinary, well I mean it's an extraordinary phenomenon that I think in fact to a very large extent did take place within the art world that made it almost impenetrable to people outside it, with dealers and other artists.

Do you feel it's had a lasting detrimental effect?

It had a detrimental effect I think on the economy, on the economics of being an independent artist outside of a group. I mean right from the point at which I was associated with Flavio Caroli's group of artists as opposed to Achille Bonito Oliva's group of artists, you know, as I was one of the half a dozen people quoted in these kind of confrontations between the two of them in conferences I would have been associated directly with Flavio Caroli's group, although other people in his group like Schnabel and Longo and Salle became associated with Achille later on, but they were associated with the, you know, the great, the big and influential galleries from New York and wherever. So I think it's been very very difficult to survive independently of teaching as an artist who is if you like, I mean I think to an extent I would say I've been victimised by the Lisson Gallery, by Nicholas Logsdail and his influence on the contemporary art scene both in this country and abroad.

Do you in fact regret leaving the gallery because of this?

I'm not sure. No, I don't think I do regret it. I suppose if one realises that that sort of thing takes place I'd rather not be a part of it, than a part of it. I know that certain artists have been embarrassed by the obviousness of the manipulation, the idea of how painfully obvious it is that the only British sculptors that has been represented in certain international exhibitions have been Lisson Gallery artists, at the exclusion of all others, has caused certain embarrassment to a number of the artists. I know that Tony Cragg once said to me that Nicholas will shoot himself in the foot one day by this kind of absurd paranoia, and Anish Kapoor said to Christopher Lebrun in the past that, you know, it was extraordinary, it was embarrassing not to feel that other artists were included in what was called the field of British sculpture, which excluded as well people like Anthony Gormley, David Nash in particular. I mean I know, I've had their names quoted to me by curators from abroad who have been listed as blacked and excluded in the artists that were considered by Nicholas Logsdail to be the only ones allowable to be shown next to his own group. So it's an example of the power politics of...oh it's just a fact of life, I suppose it happens just about anywhere, you know. I mean one, you know, to be fair if one is involved in a group exhibition you might ask who else is in the show, and if they're good people in the show you say OK

and if there are no good people in the show you say no, but it's kind of unusual that the artists themselves aren't necessarily being asked about how they feel, it's being left in the hands of the dealer, and in that respect the dealers are extraordinarily manipulative.

Is this what you were referring to when you said about a period of torture?

I suppose so, because it's very painful to be visited by curators organising exhibitions who have come to me and said, you are on our list to visit, but we've been told that we can't do the show if we include you. Why should this be? And so we've discussed it. At one point I phoned Tony Cragg in Germany to say, `What is this?'

Tony...? Oh, Tony Cragg.

Tony Cragg in Germany to clarify this situation, and it was proven to be the, if you like the motives of the gallery. Anyway, the point, I mean one of the things I think is extraordinary about it is that it doesn't really make any difference to the way that one works, it's disappointing to think that, you know, these things can happen, you know. I found often that, you know, I've met people who are influential British Council people abroad in various countries, and I can be involved with British Council projects, and I can also find that at the same time when I'm abroad working on a British Council project, an exhibition of British sculpture will be going off to another part of the world and I won't be included, and I will feel that, well why aren't you taking care of my interests, because I'm doing this for you over here, there's no one there looking after me, why don't you include my work? `Well we have to do exhibitions that are given to us by other people.' And I know that a number of people have managed to, if you like persuade themselves back into the situation because they'll confront curators directly about, you know, the way that things have been manipulated.

You never confronted Nicholas Logsdail directly?

No, I haven't, and I think it's a weakness on my part really. We've only, we've met on a couple of occasions, briefly. But I mean you know, I think you know, to an extent one is dependent on the fact that one was with the gallery at one point in the past which was particularly influential, so you know, the fact that one has had any association with that gallery is, you know, is a plus. I mean I still admire the gallery's resolve to survive and to put into if you like the consciousness of a not particularly art literate public work that wouldn't otherwise have been seen by, you know, the cutting edge of contemporary art for the past twenty odd years, and without him it wouldn't have been the case.

How do you feel about his group now?

Well I suppose it's...I suppose one just has to look at it as being, you know, there are very very good artists. I mean Bill Woodrow no longer shows with him, he's been...I'm not quite sure what the politics of that was, but I mean considering Bill was a particularly loyal member of the gallery and for some reason felt it was no longer viable to be with the gallery, doing some of his best work there. Tony Cragg has supported the gallery phenomenally through periods of the gallery's difficulties, because his own, Tony's own success has enabled him to almost sort of sponsor the gallery by, you know, as I've understood it from Tony.

And what about Anish Kapoor?

And Anish? Well I mean they're just terribly successful, you know, it's kind of an interesting thing. I suppose, I mean my own feelings about other artists' work aren't things that I would bring into this, I think, you know, Anish has got a degree of talent and I think he often goes down the wrong road, I think he's down it at the moment, but it doesn't...you know, I'm...you know, for me to suggest that as someone who's outside it who might be considered not expressing something other than a position of someone with a degree of jealousy or something. But, you know, I'm frequently... I mean it's interesting that in the introduction to the British exhibition in Lucerne that Martin Kunzt mentions, my use of pigments for example, which are prior to Anish Kapoor's use of pigment, and it's one of the kind of items that he brings up which

suggests that, you know, I don't think if I said Anish Kapoor never had an original idea in his life I would be telling the truth, but I think he does quite well with what he does. And it's again one of those things, I suppose, you know the politics of getting on, it's just one of those things really. There's only room it seems in this country for about a handful of people to survive. I often remember with a degree of, what can I say, I mean, inspiration to an extent, there was a man whose name I've forgotten, he used to be, I think he was the cousin of Iliana Sonnabend, and I had met him in New York when I showed there with the Lisson Gallery, and I also met him in Paris at the Biennale that I was in, the Biennale Jeune in '77, and we were at that time, that's after I had been working if you like in isolation in my own studio, so he was able to say to me as we walked around looking at all this young art, he was saying, `I don't really go for all this young art, I don't really think anyone's got anything to say. What I think is, an artist ought to have a rock put on his chest for the first ten years and life should be made difficult, and eventually, like a palm tree in the desert it will grow out strong and straight.' And, I think I often feel that I've been working with a rock on my chest and I kind of, I feel that, you know, one day this palm tree will grow. [LAUGHS] So I mean, you know, I get, you know, I get sort of solace from those kinds of things. You know, I would admit that, you know, I've worked in Italy and seen the Trans-Avanguardia take off, and I've worked in this country and seen Nicholas Logsdail's Lisson Gallery take off, but at the same time I'm fabulously fortunate, and I've had tremendous support, I've had support from the British Council in many respects because of the public commissions that I've been doing, and I've been supported by a gallery that's loved my work in Italy and you know, I've had almost like a brother in Piero Carini who believes in my work. And I've also been very very fortunate to have the tremendous support from the Henry Moore Foundation and Alan Bowness and Robert Hopper. And so I'm lucky, I've very very fortunate, you know, but at the same time you know, there's been, there have been moments of struggle, and it's a sort of a struggle that makes one sort of feel that one may be, you know, that a world of art which I feel is a kind of, a repository for idealism if you like for me a museum is for the aspirations of humanity as realised through if you like the, through the will and the desire of artists who have a...I mean probably as people no necessarily other agenda or ulterior motive into kind of realise things like pure thought or great ideas, and in that respect I see, you know, the field of art being a place where one can still

be idealistic. If you look at what's happened as far as religion is concerned in the world in terms of wars and history, I mean art seems to deal with the great sort of vaulting aspirations of man, and I feel wonderful to be a part of that, and it hurts me to think that there can be sort of mischief and vindictiveness going on as well.

Were there other exhibitions outside Italy at that time that were important?

Yes, the other, I suppose the other, the important show for me was if you like having been without a gallery for four years was, I joined up with Nigel Greenwood when he was in Sloane Street and I was able then to show a series of works that I had been working on in Italy at the time, and so I think 1983 I had a show with Nigel which was called `Fragments From A Grand Tour' which included `A View From The Loggia', some of the tondos, `Nuvole', `Ecstasy: St. Agatha'. Quite big works in quite a small gallery. And it was terrific really because again I think it seemed to show that so much more interest was generated by the fact that, you know, I had disappeared for a couple of years and re-emerged with work that was so different from what ever else was being done. And that show then in a similar form went to Geneva, to Eric Franck, again with the same title, and received quite a lot of good attention. And I suppose it was at that point, you know, because I had come back that other possibilities started to occur. I was asked through one of the British Council officers at the time who is now in the independent sector, Ian Barker, to propose a sculpture for, a sculpture event that takes place annually, it's called the Hakone open-air museum, Utsukushi-Ga-Hara exhibition. What was wonderful there was to actually...

Where is this?

It's in Japan, Hakone, outside of, I think it's outside of Tokyo. And, I never went there unfortunately but it was quite extraordinary to work on a very big sculpture, the biggest free-standing sculpture I had worked on at the time. Again I was working on the idea, it was a caryatid, and I thought to an extent that was kind of the conjunction of sculpture and architecture. And it was over 3 metres long and weighed about 10 tons. And finally working on it in Viterbo with Poletti and Ghio, the people I had done work with in Carrara, in fact that's where I made `Palanzana', they couldn't make

it for me in the factory in Viterbo, they didn't have the assistants who actually had the skills to do scaling from a model, so I took it to Carrara. So they worked on that for me, and then they worked on this piece which was called `Caryatid: Daphne'. So again there was a female figure and the capital if you like of the columns like branches of a tree. And at the end we were more concerned in terms - well not more concerned, but in the end we were concerned in terms of its dimensions, that one dimension had to be small enough to go into the loading bay doors of a jumbo jet, so this was a sculpture that weighed over 10 tons that was going to be flown to Japan, and that was quite an extraordinary thing in itself, that's was the most wonderful kind of thing to have to be concerned about when you're working on, if you like, a carved sculpture that had to fit into an aeroplane.

Is your normal working method to work with scaled-down models and then they're made up in a factory?

No. I suppose one would avail oneself of techniques that are available. When I worked on the `Palanzana' sculpture I worked on - did I have a model? Yes I did have a small model that I had carved myself. Then I gave that stone piece which was in Portland stone to the workshop in Carrara that had been recommended to me by an engineer friend of mine who was in the diamond cutting blade business, and I came across this group of brothers and an associate who carved monumental masonry. Interestingly enough I discovered one other artist who worked there called Luciano Fabbro, and again quite independently, so they had an understanding of very very conceptual cutting-edge Arte Povera kind of Conceptual sculpture, and myself, and they were kind of amused by the fact that actually I had worked my sculptures and he never touched the thing. So, the technique in that respect was that, both in the context of, let's say the `Palanzana' piece I worked on a small carving which they scaled up for me. We made in fact three smaller versions of that 1-metre before it went up to 3 metres. I was probably thinking about Henry Moore in those respects, because I mean some time before I had been asked by the Henry Moore Foundation as I was in Querceta in the region of Versilia, would I go to cut a pattern for the foundation for the big arch that's in the Serpentine, and I got to meet the people who worked on Moore's sculptures and talked to them about his techniques, methods etcetera, which

are always rather amusing to hear, if you like a craftman's attitude to the artist, which wasn't very generous in fact I must say.

I suppose you won't tell me more about that.

[LAUGHS] Well they were always a bit surprised that Moore might come to the factory. In fact interestingly enough I suppose there was a slight link-up, as I mentioned before, that Moore was in the same Spoleto show as me and the... Gosh, look at that! [BREAK IN RECORDING] Actually on second thought I should say I was in the same exhibition as Moore at Spoleto. And the company that Moore worked with in Versilia was called Enro of Querceta, where his great patron if you like, or sympathetic to his work in that factory was a man called Lavaggi, and Lavaggi was chairman of IMEG, and Mazzi who I mentioned was chairman of Enro. And so they kind of co-sponsored myself and the Moore exhibition at Spoleto. So maybe it was something to do with the fact that, you know, I was working there and I was known by the Enro people, but anyway I was asked to take this pattern back to London. And talking to these guys they were saying, `Well it's a bit...you know, we're a bit disappointed really, Moore would come with a model about 6 inches big and ask us to scale it up to maybe a metre, and he would go away and come back after three weeks and give us the nod to go ahead again, to put it up to 4 metres, and we wouldn't really see very much of him.' So they were kind of disappointed in a way that, you know, he didn't interact much more with the stages of the scaling up. And, I mean to an extent maybe this is something that some people feel, I mean maybe with some justification, about Moore's work, the more popular and the more public his work became the less actual touch of the hands of the great man were on the work itself. And I suppose that happens to an extent with anybody who works in that way. But let's say in knowing that it was possible to work from scale models etcetera, you know, I put that into operation; in the case of `Palanzana' that was the case, but I always insisted that, you know, I would go over the whole surface, and I always wanted more stone left than, you know, was eventually let's say on the model, because I wanted to leave my hand on the surface as much as was necessary. I mean there was always enough room for me to be able to interact. And that was the case also with the big caryatid sculpture; in fact the whole of the surface is mine simply because it's the

way I feel that tension is achieved in a surface, because you just have to leave your mark on it. And I'm always astonished when I go to a workshop, whether it's in India or in Italy, and the work is being prepared for me, how things change with the most minimal interaction, you know; to make it one's own requires not necessarily a massive amount but that amount is crucial, absolutely crucial. So, although the technique of using the scaling system in Italy is something that I've used when it's been necessary to work on a large-scale public sculpture, it's absolutely necessary because there aren't enough hours in a day and time in one's life, and it's a part of a much more ancient tradition than let's say modern masters who have also used the same technique. And it's also a part of the phenomenal tribute to the skill of Carrara, especially Carrara carvers who have throughout, I mean since Roman times, worked alongside sculptors to realise the sculptor's concept. And the wonderful men don't really see themselves as anything other than artificers, they see themselves as operatives; they just know that they can copy anything, and they know that if they do it themselves, or invent themselves or something it won't really have any meaning for them, you know. And in that respect it's a part of an on-going tradition to work in the way that deals with scaling system. And when I went to India I discovered a completely different approach.

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F4924 Side A

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 21st of September 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Stephen can we talk about India, and in fact how did you come to go to India in the first place?

Oh, I was invited by the British Council to represent Britain at the Indian Triennale in Delhi in 1985. And it was a new development for them because although they had been very active in triennales in India in the past, they had never invited someone to go and work in India, they had always taken work before, transported and put on an exhibition of the actual artist. So this particular initiative was for me to go and work in India, and I think to an extent it was because of my, if you like independence from teaching and the fact that I had been travelling in Italy, I think, you know, there are people who were quite familiar with my work at the British Council and probably saw, the going to India might have been an extension of my sort of grand tour activities that had taken me to Italy. I went to...in fact I had also been invited to be in an exhibition in Australia and I went to Australia to set up some work there, a touring show of British art, and then came back to India and did a short reconnaissance trip in 1985 which started in Delhi where I was introduced to several artists who suggested where I might go to look for places to work in stone, which included the red sandstone quarries at Chunar near Varanasi, which I was unable to get to because there was a strike of an airline which meant that I couldn't get there for five hours and would have cut short my visit to half an hour, so that was in the end confounded by circumstances. I was then due to visit Baroda, which has a very famous art department, but there was a riot going on at that particular moment in time which enabled me to go to Ellora and Ajanta, the wonderful archaeological sites. So I never got to another possible venue or institute where I might have worked. I did however go to Macrana which was considered to be India's Carrara, and it was the most God-awful place I've ever been to, it was really something out of hell in the middle of the Rajasthan desert, and there were holes in the ground with stone being hauled up by hand, the heat and the dust was extraordinary, the filth and the stench just amazing,

and although I had met an artist who worked there, he's since died, he was quite a young man, I'm glad in fact that I didn't fall in love with Macrana, but it was, you know, hell on earth. And..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] And from there I was recommended to visit the south of India, to pay a visit to Mahabalipuram, again a wonderful archaeological site, but the centre for temple carving, Dravidian temple carving, in India, which has seen a renaissance in the last fifty years or so. I know that because of a particular man, the father of the stapati, called Ganapathi Stapati. A stapati is a Renaissance type man, a Renaissance man who is both architect and sculptor, designer, draughtsman, scholar. Ganapathi Stapati who was the principal of the College of Sculpture and Architecture in Mahabalipuram had held this position since his father had set up the college, having encouraged the Tamil Nadu government to try and save Dravidian temple carving from total loss, because it was in a crisis fifty odd years ago or maybe it was more. Ganapathi Stapati was in fact on the verge of retiring, without a son unfortunately so in fact the lineage of that kind of oral tradition of these stapatis going back thousands of years, I think the lineage of Ganapathi Stapati himself in fact could be traced back thousands of years, a thousand years I think he boasted. But nevertheless the tradition goes back a long long way, the oral traditions having been written down eventually in what were called the Silpa sastras, and one of the, if you like the treaties on the, what's called the Vastu tradition, which is the Dravidian scheme of carving, in fact is written by Ganapathi Stapati who has become quite a celebrity since he retired as being someone who is the greatest scholar on the subject. So, having visited Mahabalipuram, I mean I knew from the moment almost as I was landing in Madras I knew this was probably the place I was going to be, I felt something about my arriving there which made me know that it was going to be what I was looking for. And having been working in great factories in Italy, to find the place that could handle big stone and ambitious projects that I had, because initially when I went to India the plan was that the Triennale was going to be in these great big show-grounds in Delhi of enormous scale, and so I went to Mahabalipuram with the notion that I was going to be making some pretty massive sculpture. In fact they ended up changing the venue and I ended up making much smaller and more portable sculptures made of several elements. But my visit to Madras, and subsequent visit to Mahabalipuram, was really the start of what's become quite a long relationship with the village of Mahabalipuram where I've worked for the

last ten years. I think probably amongst the things that excited me about India and sculpture in India was how it related to my activities in Italy, the kind of grand tour idea that I mentioned. The thing in particular which I was excited by was - well there were several things. One of the things was that I was if you like putting a foot into what was an antique tradition, it was a living tradition, techniques etcetera, and the rationale of the aesthetic linked into a spirituality, into religion, as a part of if you like the life blood of southern India in particular as really the Hindu heartland, which has been changed little, although, you know, Madras is a Victorian city, the influence of obviously Britain and the Empire is there, as the influence of mogul princes has been obviously there to affect the history, but nevertheless there is more than anywhere else in India a sense of the past, a living past if you like; seems a kind of contradiction to say that but nevertheless there is something really extraordinary about southern India. The other thing that I suppose excited me was the idea that it was a culture and an aesthetic within which architecture was subordinate to sculpture. The temple for example was like a plinth, the table was if you like a metaphor for the mountain upon which the gods dwell, and so sculpture if you like populated the plinth of the temple. And so there was that interesting kind of reversal of how one was used to seeing one's work, let's say within a kind of architectural context, and I suppose in an increasing way that my work was being drawn towards public commissions etcetera, you know, one was actually looking at sculpture in the context outside of the gallery too. So there were some quite interesting aesthetic propositions which were enough, which have been sustaining for quite a long time, and from the work you will see so many sort of developments which have involved oiling, the idea of libation, the idea that...it's kind of interesting in a way because I suppose the devotional object is in fact a functional object, and consequently maybe shouldn't be seen as sculpture, and one of these things I've fallen foul of people like Ganapathi Stapati because I consider what they do to be a craft-orientated activity because they are dealing with something which is rigidly written within the Silpa sastras that things have to be a specific measure, a specific proportion, the attributes are what determine one figure from another. The size of an eye and its shape, like a fish, or like an almond, these are how you make references to how a thing should be. An arm is like a bamboo, the measurements are so precise that even a nipple is a certain size in relation to a tala, which is the hand. And it is in itself extraordinary, as an outsider, to see this rigidity,

and of course it has an aesthetic interest, if you are looking at it as an outsider. And so the kind of excitement for me to look at something which is sculptural, like an idol, it has a functional property which perhaps makes it not sculpture, but what I found interesting was the idea of libation, that this sculpture is touched, it's adored, it is a focus of meditation, like a Western object of art might be a focus of meditation arguably. I mean, I'm very very interested, I mean my mentors if you like are artists like Ad Reinhardt and Barnett Newman who are also if you like in the development of their work affected by Eastern philosophy, and abstraction, ideas of abstraction. And so the idea of the meditation I think is a kind of, obviously an aspect of contemporary, the way one views a contemporary work of art. But the idea that you don't touch is something that in India where you see, you know, an idol being bathed, it's fed almost, it's the libation of honey or milk poured over the idol, the gifting, you know, even the poor, you know, it becomes the god, the god that is given something which, you know, becomes in the domain of the spiritual. And let's say aesthetically the way an object changes when it's had oil poured on it, you know, the colour of stone changes, as well as the kind of spiritual resonance, and these are the things that, you know, are still enthralling to me which makes the kind of use of certain of these ideas I suppose for me a kind of an innovation in terms of the way that we deal in a Western aesthetic with an object of contemporary art.

What was it particularly in the philosophy that was attracting you?

Well, as...I'm never with someone who if you like becomes a scholar or a specialist within other philosophic traditions. You know, I've read some of the Gitas and the Vedas and, you know, scan them, I couldn't probably quote anything from them, but you know, one gets a sense or a picture, one synthesises to an extent aspects of attitudes. I mean an understanding doesn't necessarily come from scholarship, it can come from if you like being there and knowing people and spending time. And so, you know, I understand some of the basic premises and principles of Hinduism which I suppose gives one an insight in terms of behaviour which may be offensive or degrading or, you know, which cause some Western people never to be able to kind of cope in India with poverty and caste and these extraordinary, an extraordinary sort of fatalism that Indian people have, which enables it I suppose to be the oldest

civilisation on earth, unchanged in several thousand years, because there is this fatalism. There is still a kind of a profound and fundamental belief in the passing of a soul from a dead person into someone else, which means that, you know, your next chance is going to be better if you're good, you know, it's one of these kinds of, the fatalism is a kind of a functioning aspect of the way this culture has continued. You know, there is a lot of superstition, but nevertheless it's, you know, there is a mystifying charm about India which I don't suppose one will ever really sort out, and maybe, you know, maybe one can't if one is rationalistic, but nevertheless it's other people's belief is something which is kind of thrilling in a way.

How did you fall foul of this man, do you want to say?

I think probably if I have to take a stab at it, he is someone who is probably, he saw himself as a bureaucrat when he was principal of this college and saw it as his duty to be my host, but he I think was probably curious about why such a young person should be feted by the British Government, being given an opportunity to travel, being looked after, given hotels, paid for everything, to be there as a relative, you know, sort of, you know, VIP, whereas, you know, he saw himself obviously as someone who was the number one person within his tradition, who probably had an income of, you know, £10 a month or £20 a month, something like that. He actually travelled a great deal, but I just think there was a degree of jealousy in a way. I have a very very serious respect for him, and still do. He has actually said things about me which, you know, I just think which suggest that he doesn't really understand contemporary art. I know I gave him as a gift once a catalogue of a Henry Moore exhibition in Delhi which he was absolutely flabbergasted that, you know, this stuff was considered so significant and important and should justify a big fat book with coloured pictures, you know. I really don't think he understood contemporary art, although he had friends who were principles of the College of Art in Madras which was, you know, there were Abstract painters etcetera, I just don't really think he saw much in it. And I suppose, I mean to an extent really, I mean as I say I used to, you know, sit and listen to him discussing issues and talking to other people about his ideas etcetera. People, you know, used to travel from all over the world and sort of visit his office and I would often be there, and you know, he was considered a terribly

significant person, and I really...he really is a scholar in his field, in Sanskrit and in Tamil, and I liked him a lot, but somehow he just kind of really didn't have any serious thought for contemporary art and wondered what it was all about, so basically I didn't really come up for the count, it would seem. You know, we didn't argue, but he certainly said things about me which I think was, you know, descriptive of his misunderstanding of my being there. I mean he said to someone once that, you know, I couldn't carve a Ganesha or something, you know. So what, you know. Or if he gave, they sent him someone at 15 he would actually turn them into someone who could do something useful like carve something that was a part of that tradition. Well I wasn't there for that, you know, I was only there to, you know, sort of react to the kind of, to the, or, you know, to the catalyst of this kind of cultural thing, this culturally diverse fountain of extraordinary material. Anyway, I just got on with it, you know. He was very, he was supportive in terms of his duty, and as long as I had the support of the British Council and the Tamil Nadu Government he was perfectly happy to treat me with respect or, you know, at least publicly anyway.

In what way do you think that exposure to that culture did affect your work?

Well I suppose the way that I work is basically to do with working wherever I go, it's to do with the notion of responding to where I find myself. When I went to Italy I was responding to things I saw around me, either in terms of the surprise or the familiarity of things. In India amongst the first things I did were to draw together things that I was familiar with from Europe which I saw similar aspects of iconography or whatever. For example the first thing I made which was a sculpture which actually makes that connection in terms of title is `Etruscan', and I drew on some images that I had seen in Italy which was to do with the idea of, it was a shield with eyes, I think I may have mentioned this before, but there was a hypnotic effect in this particular thing which I had seen on a building in Viterbo, and I just drew the notion of eyes, ears, mouth, and basically things to do with the senses in relation to the head and made a sculpture which was to do with this idea of senses. But at the same time I was reading an introduction to the Bhagavad Gita in which I found a cosmic diagram related to Samkhya philosophy which talked about earth, air, fire and water, the elements, as we would know them, but in addition they used ether, so there

were five elements within an Indian, or this philosophical cosmology. And each of those elements had a relationship to the senses, earth being sensed by smell, taste sensing water, sight sensing fire, sound sensing ether and touch sensing air. And it was rather a kind of a beautiful thing. I mean there was a beautiful symmetry obviously in being able to say, especially within the context of Hinduism which, you know, has this notion about everything is an illusion, it kind of draws in a notion that I suppose we had to wait until the sort of advent of Einstein and, you know, kind of atomic particles theory or whatever to actually think that everything is in fact, you know, not stuck together but everything's swirling in space. I mean this has been a part of the Hindu philosophy for thousands of years. And there's obviously in terms of I suppose the Mediaeval notion of alchemy that, you know, earth, air, fire and water are the stuff of what things are made of; in India this was also, you know, an ancient concept, but directly related to how we perceive the world. So that, if you like the contact between an idea that was germinating in Europe from Viterbo became something that drew me into a much broader kind of cosmological view which if you like through the work introduced me to an aspect of Hinduism that I wouldn't have otherwise I suppose come to terms with, you know, it's something to do I think, they talk about the idea of being able to sense the elephant from feeling its toe-nail, you know. So the fragment which I had been working with can give you an introduction to the way that the whole is, so, little kind of things like this were kind of making connections for me. The biggest problem of all was for me to if you like draw, the ideas of fragmentation that were a fundamental part of my work in Europe, which was dealing with both the ideas of fragmentation within a cultural context as well as within a kind of materials context, into a culture that had a continuity that stretched back so far that there was no fracture, no rupture, no sort of sense of, kind of classicism, a neo-classicism in, you know, going back again into kind of, oh gosh what was the term the Italians used? Anacronistum, anacronisti, the idea of, you know, looking back again. The cycles of looking back in European art and aesthetics has sort of gone on, but certainly within the context of let's say, as I was looking at Indian art as it emerges through its art and religion, was a kind of, there was a continuity. I was in this respect obviously looking at 20th century Indian art or art from the days of the Raj, you know, looking at if you like traditional, a traditional purely Indian aesthetic in sculpture in particular. And one of the sculptures I made

drew together two aspects of notions of fragmentation; one was the idea of, the extraordinary wonder with which temples were cut from mountains in a kind of a reverse carving process, carving to make building, carving building by starting at the top and ending up at the bottom; carving an interior out of a rock by carving the lintel then the ceiling then carving the capital, carving away the floor until you've actually made the interior void. Obviously, you know, in relation to, I suppose built buildings, but nevertheless I was absolutely stupefied by it. I mentioned Ellora and Ajanta before, these magnificent cave temples, of which there are a number in Mahabalipuram which many of the temple carvers came from and went to the other side of India to Ellora and Ajanta which is in Maharashtra. And one of the sculptures I made called `Rock Cut Holy Family' drew together the idea of the Holy Family group, so familiar to us in Western art, to a form in particular beloved it would seem of the Palavas, who were the great dynasty of southern India around the 6th, 7th century and which lasted for several centuries, I think until about the 11th or 12th century. Very very tender group of Siva, Parvati and Child, whether he be Ganesha or Subrahmaniya, known generally as Skandha. And this configuration is called Somaskandamurti. So tenderly represented, and so naturalistic, unlike so much other more kind of rigid and sort of mannered later Indian carving, that I made a sculpture which, if you like, in reference to that, so, it's called `Holy Family' but it has a tendency to sort of synthesise through the title and through the acknowledgement of that tender relationship of this, I suppose the nuclear family as a principle that long ago in south India represented through the gods. An interesting thing however, I mean one of the, again I suppose the things that I mentioned before in relation to my visits to Italy in terms of, you know, the Normans having been in southern Italy and, you know, in Naples, in Bari, obvious realisation of course that Romans too had spread all over Europe, and it was brought to my attention by some scholars who suggested that, also that the Romans had influenced southern Indian carving. They said that Indian carving of that period could not have been the way that it was without the influence of the Romans who had a trading post in southern India from the 1st century B.C. So that kind of suggestion was also corroborated by a wonderful man who's a publisher, a company that publishes Montessori books in India called, he's called, it's called the Kalakshetra Press, but this man called Nachiapan who runs a, is also a very close friend of Francesco Clemente, and prints Francesco's books. And he

said to me that this was an interesting point because he had been to Pompeii with Francesco and when he saw the ground plans of the villas there the similarity to the ground plans of buildings in his own area near Madurai had to suggest that these designs came from the Romans, you know, building villas to be cool in very very hot climates. They were suggesting it was that way round rather than the other way round, I mean you know, whether Indian influence came into Italy. There are suggestions, there is in fact a beautiful, I think it's a Lakshmi in ivory that was found at Pompeii, so there was, you know, those slight tenuous connections, but certainly obviously being on the coast and the trading that did take place obviously there are connections. Very very little however, I mean I do know there's a very beautiful little ruby ring in the Bargello in Florence which has on it the tiny image of Vishnu, Sri Devi and Bho Devi. And you know, they are just so few instances but they're things that excite me when I find them. Another thing that I have a particular interest in in talking of these connections between cultures is that one of my favourite paintings is the `Madonna del Parto' of Piero della Francesca, and its relationship to an aspect of, or let's say within the iconometry of Hinduism, and certainly in association with Siva, the phalluses, the principal manifestation of Siva within the temple form, the lingam it's called. And in relation to that, there's another image called a Lingodbhovam, which is the Siva lingam, the phallus, which has carved into its side the form of the female principal, the Yoni, the vulva, which is like a slit, and then standing within that is Siva himself. So you have an idea of godhead within the godhead if you like. How does this relate to the `Madonna del Parto'? Well, if you look at the tent it's like the glans of a phallus, which is often very highly refined and defined in Hindu iconography. The curtains are being pulled back by two angels to create this also if you like triangle, triangular shape, and in it stands the Virgin pregnant, incinta, and she is if you like holding or pointing to her stomach. So you have not only, you have the god within the godhead being carried by the vehicle, the Madonna herself. And I think there's a kind of a, almost a trilogy or, you know, within that piece which, you know, who knows? You know, there is suggestion, there are suggestions, as I don't read Arabic but there's a portrait, a Madonna, by Masaccio which has a halo and written on the halo in Arabic is `Allah Akbar', and it is suggested that a maiolica dish was used or copied by Masaccio as a halo for the Madonna. It's kind of curious little things. I'm not sure that's...as I say, I have to get an Arabic reader to tell me that it's

true, because it's sounds so extraordinary. But you know, these little connections. And developing that back to India, I suppose, you know, that one is constantly surprised by cultural influences. I see them as cultural connections or cultural collisions, and if you think that Alexander arrived in northern India, the Gandharan art of the Buddhist era from about the 2nd and 3rd century B.C. is in fact Greek in its style, this then had an influence upon Gupta etcetera. So you have a kind of a naturalistic art coming in from the north as well as having another kind of influence through trade in the south. So these connections are absolutely extraordinary and wonderful, and I love these things. I love the idea of cultural exchange that happened so long ago. And you know, we think of it as surprising, I suppose.....

End of F4924 Side A

F4924 Side B

I'll leave you to ask me a question.

Well, if we can go back. I wondered, that first one, which I think was your first main work in India, `Etruscan', and it seems to lead on very seamlessly to the `Tanmatras' and the `Taumatras'.

That's right. Yes, `Tanmatras' in particular actually if you like is the manifestation of the idea that I discussed earlier of earth, air, fire, water and ether, the subtle elements. And in relation to that cosmology, you know, if you like that is a manifestation. One of the things about it that I suppose I'm interested in, because within India there are five temples that actually focus on earth, air, fire, water and ether, but within them you don't find anything that actually makes any kind of reference sculpturally to the kinds of things...though it's kind of surprising in a way, I mean that no one has come up with, you know, within the iconography of Dravidian or the Vastu tradition, this visualisation, this idea, you know, it doesn't exist. So it's almost to an extent of kind of filling in a gap as well, you know, within the work. It's a sort of also I suppose a notion of fragmentation in a different way. I mean the images are egg-like in way, they're also, I mean the idea within that was that they were also lingi, lingams, egg-like, because a lingam can be both quite descriptive of a phallus as it can be like an egg, so it's a generative image, a symbol of generative, the generative of birth, of life. But I suppose other things that that might relate to are the ideas of genesis which also preoccupied me in my work, the idea that let's say sculpture is like origin, the idea of splitting open a stone, the idea that once you split open a stone, I mean one's done it, you know, I've split open a Forest of Dean stone and found the most extraordinary dribble of red sandstone, almost liquid into a grey mass, and you think, how did it get there? And the reason can never really be told; the stone itself could tell you if it could speak. The idea of splitting open a stone is like for me liberating the genies of knowledge, you know, it's, you know. This stone in particular that I used in south India is called charnockite and it's a dolerite, it's not really a granite, it's always referred to as granite and we always describe it as granite, and in the book it's granite but in fact it's not a granite. But it's an ancient stone, it's a stone which actually was

formed near the molten core of the earth, and the Dravidian plateau is amongst the oldest, if you like, the oldest of the earth's crust exposed, you know. And so there's a kind of a sense for me of it having a knowingness about the creation, the great mysteries are never really told, or never really ever discovered, but somehow when you open up a piece of stone it knows because it was there when it was created, you know. So `Origin' deals with that idea, but other sculptures like, a big sculpture called `The Annunciation', it's called that in a perverse kind of way but basically it's to do with one of the aspects of creation that's used within Hinduism which is Ardanarisvara, which is of Siva with the god splitting himself in two to create woman and consequently then procreation can take place. Again within Hinduism you can talk about that as being to do with creation, but then you have the notion within the great sort of triumvirate of the gods you have Brahma who was the creator, you have the preserver in Vishnu and the destroyer in Siva, so within these three however they are all creators, they are all destroyers, they are all sustainers, according to whichever kind of cult you might follow it seems. And Shakti of course, the great mother goddess, seems to sort of pre-empt all of them because of course how can you have birth without the female force first? So, you know, you can take your pick really of, you can go at it from all angles. It's wonderful. [LAUGHS]

And there's `Taumatras', what's the philosophy behind that?

`Tanmatras'?

But we were talking about `Tanmatras'.

Yes but the `Tanmatras' is what I've described in terms of the idea of earth, air, fire, water and ether, and that links up with the notion of...

But isn't there a `Taumatras' too?

Oh that's `Taumatras', that comes later.

Sorry.

Yes, `Taumatras' comes later. But `Taumatras', if, well I'll mention it now as it's brought up, because it's in the ologism[ph] inasmuch as we used the idea of `Tanmatras' when I went back to Italy, it's one of those instances of being in two cultures at the same time really, and I took the idea back to the Etruscan idea, so the Etruscan idea was where it all started from, and I had four faces. I had made the `Tanmatras' which was a development out of that, then I took that back to Italy and made the sculpture in peperino stone back in Italy and called it `Taumatros' which was a mixture from the Sanskrit and the Latin of thaumaturgical. I don't know what they are in English, but a thaumaturgist is a wonder-worker, like Jesus or Moses were thaumaturgists, thaumaturges, and `Taumatras' is a kind of, so `Taumatros' is a mixture between, I suppose it's Greek, between Greek and Sanskrit; thaumaturgic and `Taumatras', so, it's a made-up word. But it was bringing that kind of, the origin of the idea back to where it came from and the sculpture later followed in the work that you're talking about.

But you did a series of `Taumatras' in India, didn't you?

No, `Tanmatras' was made in India, and it developed into... I suppose one of the things I was interested in doing was that, I mean working with Indian carvers, and I suppose I really ought to talk about that a little, because the process of carving in India is totally different to the process of carving in Italy. You can imagine that since Roman times places like Carrara really developed carving technique, and the principles of carving for a sculptor on behalf of a sculptor if you like, being in the service of a sculptor, is something that's been, I suppose it's been a concept in Italy for a couple of thousand years, the naturalism of Western art has depended upon a system being developed which enables figures to be represented by carvers working for an artist. So working from models in a three-dimensional way is something which enables a carver in Italy of today to take something as complex as a wash-basin tap and carve it in marble whatever size you'd like. I mean there's nothing more complex than a figure but nevertheless they can do anything because you can just give them a piece of, like Barry Flanagan would wedge up some clay in his hands and give this to his workshops there and they would scale it up in marble with all the kind of detail of

thumb print and clay surface because they have this phenomenal skill to be able to do that. In India they can't or don't work like that. In India working with the carvers that I was working with, they are used to working with the stapati, the master if you like, who, once the stone has been procured, draws on the stone, and then they carve away and if you like, let's call it front to back, it's to do with if you like relief carving, and when you make something in the round - well in Indian art you don't really make something in the round, it's usually for, you know, a temple wall or whatever, or a niche, so you know, you would never actually get round the back anyway. And the way the carving is done, is done by drawing on the stone and carving back if you like in profile, and then you carve from the side again another profile. So it's done in sort of elevations. If I gave a model to my workshop in India they wouldn't know how to proceed, they would have no idea how to proceed, and if you see sort of figurative art being produced by these temple carvers of if you like latterday gurus or famous, you know, famous people, which is done quite often, you can see that there's absolutely no understanding of naturalism, because their whole system is based upon a kind of geometry, an iconometry which is derived from the sastras which says everything has to be a certain way. So when I work in India I'm working within the kind of Silpi tradition, the Silpi sastra, Silpi, Silpi's a carver. I'm working like a stapati who draws on the stone, I supervise my workers, or my assistant will supervise them, and then I refine the work, you know, I go away maybe for a number of months and come back, refine the work, maybe start other work. So there's a kind of a system of roughing out going on on the one hand, medium work on the other hand, and then finishing work being done at the same time. So the working process having gone to India in the first place, having worked there for three months I thought well, you know, I've set something up and it would be a shame just to let it go, because obviously I don't feel either that I've...I've scratched the surface, you know, you can't do anything with a tradition if you just kind of go there for three months. So I then stayed for six months, I did my show at the Tate Gallery, it was called `South Indian Sculpture', so I was able to develop my initial three months into six months, and having done that I felt, well, there's a lot more to learn, and so I just stayed on, continued to work there.

So it's a much more hands-on process for you?

It's a very much more hands-on process. I mean I have made sculptures in Italy using models, presenting models, in fact I've made some models in India and sent them to Italy. The sculpture `Baltic Wharf' was made from a very very small model initially which was scaled up and then inspected and then proceeded with as the `Caryatid: Daphne' was made from a small model, smaller model then scaled up and then scaled up again. But I would say I always have to work on the final thing to a very large extent.

You talking about still in Italy?

In Italy. But of course I do that in India anyway, I mean, a lot of the work that's brought back from India does require a great deal of additional work, you know.

So do you never work from these sort of scaled-up models in India?

Not in India, no. But one of the things, if you like the, in talking of `Tanmatras' there are a number of works which depend upon series, there are groups of sculptures called `Throng' for example which use the idea of, it's like a mask in a way, a blind mask, but using the `Tanmatras' groups of ears, nose, mouth, eyes and something that represents a hand in touch, a mark. My workers who if you like work for me who would otherwise be working in other workshops making copies of deities, they produce for me large numbers of an image that I have developed so that they actually use the reproductive process of carving like they would carve an idol, and so, you know, hundreds of lotuses have been carved for the sculpture, `Tank', as there have been hundreds of `Tanmatras' like heads for sculptures like `Throng'. And it's a way of if you like plugging into the tradition of, you know, of reproduction of an image, of an icon, of a form.

Are they very shocked by the liberties that you take with the traditional form?

No, it's kind of interesting in a way that one, if you're talking to Ganapathi Stapati he has a kind of an idealism about the way that people work. I mean we in our workshop, if we're to start work on a major sculpture we have a puja, we say a prayer

and you know, we would go through a ritual with the stone. Each man will, you know, make a small carving and say a prayer and wish for good fortune in the production of the sculpture. [BREAK IN RECORDING] But the men in general if they're working on idols etcetera, I mean they're men who have the same kinds of interests as workers here, I mean they gamble, they buy lottery tickets and you know, they joke and laugh, but you know there isn't the kind of, a total solemnity that some people think goes on, you know, in the making of sculpture, even for temples, I mean they're human beings, and there are moments when, you know, the ritual has to be done, as we ourselves do in our work. I mean to an extent it's to do with the men's own devotional attitudes to what they do rather than it being necessarily to do with whatever might be the meaning in my work. And I suppose to clarify, I don't really take liberties with their forms. I have a great deal of respect for the forms of, if you like within Hindu devotion, and although I might if you like technically use something that they might be familiar with as a shape, it won't be playing around with forms. Although there's an Ardanarisvara form that I've used which actually was carved mainly in England, its real interpretation which even, you know, it doesn't really cut across their belief, I mean it's done as a way of saying, well you know, it could be done this way, so to have a piece of stone that's been split in two with having, you know, a male form on one side and a female form on the other, is a way of doing what Ardanarisvara is about, it's a splitting in two and it's dealing with male and female, but it's doing it in a different way. So I'm not taking, you know, if I'm taking liberties with their forms it's only by saying, you know, it's an alternative way of doing something, but it isn't disrespectful in that sense.

How many craftsmen in fact do you work with?

Well it varies. We've had large numbers working on big projects. The project that I did for the British Council's new headquarters in Delhi, a sculpture called `Mantra', took over a year and we had about twenty men working. And similarly for the big sculpture at Ludgate called `Echo' we had twenty men working for about a year. But at the moment, you know, things are just ticking over with about four men, and my assistant, Arumachalam, who is a young man who had just graduated as a student when I first went to Mahabalipuram and he was given over to me because he spoke

some English, and we struck up a relationship which, you know, work-wise has given us a good kind of on-going working system. [BREAK IN RECORDING] The system that I suppose is very much a part of the working, traditional working process is borne out in the way that I work with Arumachalam who if you like supervises work for me. The way things changed since I first went to India was that I was working under the auspices of the various ministries of education, the Tamil Nadu Government and the College of Sculpture and Architecture, but after six months or so, after the Tate exhibition, I became independent of those organisations and set up a workshop with Aramachalam who had a small plot of land which happened to be very close to the hotel I always stay at, so in fact I've set up home, if one can call it that, in a little beach resort hotel, Indian beach resort hotel which is very very simple and very nice and I'm known to everyone as a kind of regular visitor. And so it's a very very kind of convenient working process in which Aramachalam if you like fields my phone calls and deals with the issues of the production of the works and supervises in my absence. Helps procure stone, and we have a very good rapport with local quarrymen. And so we have a good sort of manager-artist relationship in that respect that's enabled the working process to go off quite smoothly.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

How much time do you in fact spend in India?

Well I've now been working in India for ten years; I'm just in the process of marking that with an exhibition next January which will consist of several very large-scale works that have been in process for the past year or so. The amount of time each year varies but I might go in busy times three, four, even five times a year for a month or two at a time. Last year I spent a great deal of time in Egypt so I didn't go very much at all, but now I will be spending a great deal of time again simply because of the demands of the work. So it's a kind of on and off, but mostly on-going thing, and you know, it's been responsible for taking a great deal of my time up, living away from home in the past ten years.

But it's now no longer that you do work there which is for India is it? It's like your main studio.

Well when I started working in India the exhibition for the Triennale became an exhibition which came back to England; I then worked there on several public commissions and continued to if you like develop my own sort of studio practice in India, but at the same time I was working here, a little in Italy earlier but Italy has almost gone off the map recently. Egypt became an issue a few years ago as well and we'll talk about that in depth later. But...in fact I've lost my thread; what was I...what was...our question was...?

Well I asked whether it was your main studio.

Oh right, my main studio. I suppose if you think about how much time I've been spending in England, yes, you would have to say it was my main studio, but a great deal of work is brought back in containers, unloaded in Kent at my wife's parents' farm, and I do quite a lot of work there too, and certainly in the last couple of months I've been working quite intensively down there finishing some works that have been around for some time just because...

Does you family go with you to India?

Yes they do, we've spent several Christmases there and Judy comes occasionally and we'll be spending some more time there in the future. But my daughters have both made a number of visits to India, I think they kind of understand my obsession, I think, but that's something you'll have to ask them.

How much have you become involved in local life?

Well not really very much. I've become very very concerned about the way that, I suppose local self interests, especially in my last visit I hadn't been back for almost a year until a month or so ago, and I was absolutely astounded by the mushrooming of building adjacent to where my studio is, and the studio was the first studio on the road

into Mahabalipuram, a mile outside of Mahabalipuram, and we've been there now, well for nine years or so. But now, as well as other studios having been put up near us, so people basically, this means, you know, a hut with a palm roof and then lots of stone and workers carving on rocks that are just spread out on the sand, it's kind of a sand dune, it's like a sand bar, it's an interesting sort of little peninsular that stretches out south of Madras which has got a big water inlet, semi-fresh water inlet on one side and the sea, the Bay of Bengal on the other. But this sand bar, which has got a great deal of granite rock underneath it, has some strange extraordinary phenomenon like it has fantastic fresh water, you can dig down six feet and you'll get fresh water. Amazing because you're really so close to the sea. But buildings are starting to be thrown up now, and the cost of land is extraordinary, you know, it costs £10,000 maybe for an acre of sand, you know, without building permission, and people will just build on it and no one will stop them.

And this is a recent development is it, on the [INAUDIBLE]?

Well I think the way things have always been in India but it's terribly sad to see such a beautiful, simple area which just used to have some, you know, grass huts and, well it's one of those things, there has to be development. It's not actually being developed for local people; I mean these are people who have a lot of money, black money in particular, people from the local film industry. I mean Madras, if you say Bombay, known as Bollywood, makes more movies than Hollywood, Madras makes more movies than Bollywood and Hollywood put together; Madras is the centre for the movie industry for several states, I think both Kerala, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, possibly Karnataka too, all make their movies in Madras, and the movie culture is one of the biggest things in India, I mean really, I mean besides the temple, the cinema is the great temple of culture in India, and cine posters are extraordinary. But it's all changing so dramatically since the advent of satellite television just two years ago, eighteen months ago, phenomenal change, frightening change.

And the opening up of the economy?

The opening up of the economy obviously coinciding with that means that, you know, you have this kind of extraordinary, almost tidal wave of business interests who see just pure population number as being a market to be exploited, and India's middle class which in if you like a percentage of the population is small, is a phenomenal number of millions of people who've got buying power, and that is basically swamping the culture. And I'm horrified that the culture may not be able to resist it, it's a part of, if you like, the grey porridge that this global culture is going to become because of, I don't know, what can I say about Rupert Murdoch except I think he's the most dangerous man since Hitler.

When you've talked about development in Mahabalipuram you just mentioned studios, but presumably you mean a lot of other things as well.

Building houses, you know, the stars I mentioned. I meandered off in talking about the building that was going on in this rather beautiful area. I mean it's a world heritage protected area, and the only thing that they've done actually to protect it is to ruin the way that it looks. You know, they build walls and put gates up so you can't actually see the great vistas that you could see before, rather than control the kind of general plan of the way that the village is. You know, there has been if you like unauthorised development of small shacks and shops which started off as being a shack and then someone put a brick up and they don't see it, and then another sort of grass wall becomes another brick wall, and eventually there's a roof put on it and you've then got a kind of a brick shed which then develops into something else, you know. So there's a kind of creeping, well, I suppose one has to call it a cancer which actually starts the effect of the destruction of what was a wonderful kind of planal area adjacent to a sea, the temples, which was all open, and I've got friends who've not been to Mahabalipuram maybe for twenty years and been back recently and they just cannot believe what's happened. And no one really exercises an authoritative control simply because there's always someone prepared to bribe somebody to let something happen. I mean there was a most horrendous situation last month in which the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu paid something like, don't get me...you know, I might be exaggerating but if I'm exaggerating it's only in the numbers of millions, I think it was fifteen million dollars worth, or it may have been thirty million dollars,

which she spent on her girlfriend's son's wedding, and it required the closing down of all energy to other parts of Madras except for where this party was. The whole of this area of Madras was lit up at the expense of the rest of Madras, and it was the most kind of disgusting orgy of wealth, of corrupt black money, ever seen, from a woman who has actually at the moment got her back against the wall because she's been accused of corruption, and she can still do this. She is supposed to earn something like ten rupees a month as the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. And she's been involved in acid attacks on her critics, and most recently, I've forgotten, some absolutely extraordinary thing. But, I mean she was...she is someone, I mean she is a phenomenal story, I suppose a movie must be made one day, but it won't be made in Madras, about this woman who was the mistress of the previous Chief Minister. And it's, oh it's just a phenomenal story of phenomenal billions of rupees, hundreds of thousands of dollars, salted away by her lover who was a previous Chief Minister in Swiss bank accounts which she inherited, which she uses of course. She's not supposed to have anything at all, but she just has phenomenal wealth. And this is the way Ministers work in India.

I don't think you really answered my question about how much you were involved in local life. Is that part of it all?

Oh no, no I couldn't. I mean I'm not involved in local life, I'm just a character who sort of turns up, who is known in the village because I go so often. I mean there are probably half a dozen people who go as often as I do who, you know, who everybody says hello to when you walk down the street. I wear a dhoti and I look, you know, in terms of dress like people used to look, because less and less people are dressing traditionally, but I respectfully wear local dress, but I don't really become involved in local life.

How do you think they view you?

Just as an artist who visits often. I really have got no concept at all. And people are very respectful, they're always very very happy to see one; I don't really feel I've got enemies, not really. In fact, I mean if you like my greatest enemy, Ganapathi Stapati,

who let's say I have no ill feeling for at all, no longer lives in Mahabalipuram, and so I've probably got more friends there than he has.

Do you think you've had any impact on the town?

No, I don't. Though when I first went there I heard that there were people making copies of my work in local places because they had, you know, it was mentioned somewhere about how much my work might cost, but given that I never really sold anything in India that would have been speculation. But there have been instances I know when film stars have been kind of passing by, local film stars, and they've seen something of mine that's been produced by my workshop, the general rule is that my workshop will of course not make anything that isn't for me, but then the person who's seen what I do will tell someone else who's a carver to come and see, just because you can just walk in, they see what is being produced for me and they'll go away and make something like it. These are the kinds of things that happen, you know, it's just one of those things really.

How do you feel about that?

Well I suppose it's a kind of, I suppose it might be a form of flattery. But Arumachalam is kind of amusing in a way; there are people that he has to make, you know, he makes a living besides what he does for me, and recently he's had people coming from Kerala, people who had been introduced to him as being a carver who does things for a contemporary artist. And really, I mean there are one or two American blokes have come through the town and set up workshops for short periods of time, since I've been there, but I think probably you could say quite, you know, that I was the first European really to spend any time there, and working on sculpture, probably the only person making contemporary art in any way, but there have been two Americans passing through. But anyway, so Arumachalam has got this reputation for making modern sculpture and so people come to him with photographs and say can they make one of those, and he's actually made half a dozen Isamu Noguchi sculptures from photo.....

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Arumachalam's been asked to make some copies of...of Isamu Noguchi sculptures from photographs which give you an image of a sculpture on one side but not on the other, so he has to use his imagination I suppose. But, that's the kind of mentality that people have. I mean they will pay for the stone etcetera, but they're obviously not paying for the art. The art market in India is not highly developed but there are one or two artists who fetch very very high prices indeed, like, you know, I mean international sculptures, one man called Husain whose prices might be in the range of $40,000 perhaps for a biggish picture, so that puts him, you know, in a reasonable sort of international scale of things, but he's quite a big personality. But otherwise there's really very very, you know, little activity in a serious art market.

How much are you involved in the contemporary Indian art scene?

Outside of knowing Indian artists, I'm not really involved with it. I mean I do my thing, I talk to people about what I do when they want to speak to me, but usually, I don't think outside of one or two instances, no one's ever really bothered to visit my studio or come to see me because they're interested in what I'm doing. I think there's a degree of professional jealousy in some respects, you know, because maybe I'm doing what they might be doing. I've been told by architects and people in Delhi who on occasions of seeing my work, sort of embrace me and say, why don't our own artists make work that is so, if you like out of and dependent upon our own culture like you have found a way of, you know, drawing upon, you know. And you know, it's kind of strange, I suppose contemporary artists in India feel they've got to cut that past off, although we've got Indian artists in this country, like Dhruva Mistry, who depend very very much on Indian cultural background, but the work probably wouldn't be seen in the same light in India because it's so close to their own background, they wound see it probably as a very very, you know, hardly enough of a nuance away from the traditional forms for it to actually come up for the count. Although, you know, he's a very very good draughtsman and a very very good artist, in India I'm not even sure he's shown anything since he was a student in Baroda many years ago.

But do you visit artists' studios when you go to, say, Delhi?

Very very occasionally, I must say I'm probably guilty in fact of the same thing; I'm maybe intonating criticism with others. But I go to exhibitions, I talk to artists about their work in exhibitions.

Is anyone particularly interesting?

No one whose studio that I've visited really. I would say, I have met recently in London Bhupen Khakar, he's got an exhibition coming up soon in London, I think he's probably the most significant contemporary Indian artist. He showed with Kasmin some years ago and has shown I think in Knoedler in New York, is now showing with Kapil Jariwala in his new gallery. But I think he's a very interesting artist, and one only occasionally sees things that really for me have what it takes to register.

I wanted to ask you about Mark Tully, because in his book, `No Full Stops', didn't he accuse you of neo-colonialism?

Yes, all that sort of thing. I suppose that's all related to the, we're going back really to Ganapathi Stapati, because Mark Tully in his book, `No Full Stops in India', spoke to me of his sabbatical when I first met him during the opening of the Henry Moore exhibition in Delhi it must have been, 1988 perhaps, I can't remember exactly when, and he told me that he was interested in Western artists, or Western people working in India, because he was writing a book. So we decided that we would get together and talk. I was quite flattered that he wanted to, you know, because I listened to, obviously, his reports and I thought he was a very very good radio journalist. He's the voice of India of course to anybody in this country who listens to World Service or BBC news programmes. So, he didn't contact me surprisingly, and then he did apparently make, he did make an attempt to contact me, and I was getting sort of some information from the British Council. But eventually having tried to take up the initiative and say, look, if you want to meet me I'm going to be in India or I'm going

to be here, we didn't meet, and I went back to India and I got an envelope in the post which was a text of the chapter. He said that this is just going...the letter, the covering letter said, `This is just going to press but I thought I ought to let you see it first.' So I read through this thing and was absolutely incensed. It transpired that a few weeks before he had been to Mahabalipuram without telling me, I'd missed him; he had spoken to my studio manager, Arumachalam, had spoken to him, and apparently from what Arumachalam said, completely misrepresented what he said, but more importantly he had spoken to Ganapathi Stapati who vented his kind of outrage against me, again, you know, Mark Tully's very famous there, fed by a vitriolic minion, someone he used to spend her time around this fellow, she was an architect who sort of protected him and kind of introduced him to modern ideas and thought, as well as kind of tried to protect him from, you know, bad influences etcetera, and...

Who?

She's this woman, I think she's called Sasikala[ph] or somebody.

But who did she protect?

Ganapathi Stapati. And she basically sort of fuelled his...fuelled anything that he wanted to say derisory about me and my work. But basically it was all to do with the business of craft, and I was criticised because I considered craft to be of lesser significance or whatever than fine art or painting and sculpture. I mean I would say that, you know, for me that's true, I mean you know, there is a difference between craft and art, and there are points at which one must say about a tradition that depends upon a rule system which leaves very little latitude for creativity as being something that was, if you like a definition of craft and less important than, or less creative, or not coming up for the count as art, with capital letters. I would stand by all that, I mean but basically it was the way that, you know, Mark Tully wrote about it in the book, it was basically to do with criticisms of my arrogance of being, you know, thinking what I did was more important than what local carvers did. Well, within, you know, the tradition of Hinduism, what they did was obviously without question terribly important, but it didn't come up for the count for me as art. At the same time I

would say there are magnificent examples of craft which do come up for the count as art, and there are great sculptures produced within the tradition of Hinduism and the so-called Vastu tradition, usually I think from the early dynasties if you like, the Palava period and the Chola period mainly, then the work gets very very mannered when the sastras were written, an increasing mannerism depended upon a rule system developed, whereas if you look at Palava sculpture it's done from observation, men who were carving were looking at life around them in carving, you know, and they weren't restricted. So you know, I've got my, you know, for me, there is little argument except the way that Mark Tully who knows nothing about art interpreted this, was to say that, you know, it was arrogant of me to say I was putting my art, or art, above craft, and that I was using local cheap labour and exploiting them, just like, you know, an imperialist would do within the kind of empire system. Well, you know, I bring, just as in the history people have travelled far and wide to do good deals or get things that one can't get somewhere else; I mean I work in India because India is a place where I get a certain kind of work done, it's within a certain kind of cultural context which interests me as a contemporary artist. I do not exploit the workers, I work with them in a way which is compatible with the local, if you like, system of economy. The rates of pay are phenomenally low, and I pay them only as much more as is justified without if you like rocking the boat of the local economy. You know, I've bought my men bicycles, I've bought them watches and stuff, you know, related to if you like work, because we're a mile out of the town. And we generally get on very very well, and you know, recently in fact rather more than anything the kind of disruption that's been caused by these two Americans who have come into Mahabalipuram, they've stolen my workers by paying them double, they do that and it has a reverberating effect on other workers and stapatis. And now there is a big project for Rajiv Gandhi going on in the town where he was assassinated and workers are getting, because they need the job done and they're coming from all over the place, rates of pay have kind of doubled because these other kind of considerations have started. But you know, we keep pace with what the local economy requires, you know, just the same as anybody else, so I'm not really exploiting, for me I'm not exploiting anybody.

You took on certain aspects from Indian sculpture to your own work didn't you. You talked about anointing[??] before.

Mm.

Also you began applying colour and clothing to the statues.

Yes, that's right.

And we call them statues now you see.

[LAUGHS] Yes. Yes, basically, I suppose it's just, it's acquiring aspects of the treatments of stone and, you know, and I suppose in relation to what we're talking about, I mean I'm actually taking something out of a craft context in a way, or a devotional context, and bringing it into if you like a contemporary context, if what I'm doing is considered, you know, significant as contemporary. I mean to an extent I'm going back to the well of history to if you like draw some kind of buckets of interesting material to bring into a contemporary context. I suppose because I feel within my work there, there are certain kinds of, well, what can I say? There are certain things that I consider significant I suppose within the notion of the classical. I mean for example, if you like one of the principles underlying my work is the idea that there is a kind of, there is a classicism that underpins work of quite great cultural diversity for example within Egyptian art, and let's say transitional art from let's say Minoan or early Greek art, you know, like the Kouros; Indian art if you strip away all its decoration gets back to something which is kind of purely classical, like the broad shoulders of the kind of...there's something which let's say before it gets into the Greek, naturalism. You're dealing with a kind of a stylisation which suggests that the sculpture is something above being human or, you know, I mean a part of let's say what happens within the kind of Greek kind of philosophical context, and so this idea that the stones somehow embody something above, you know, the everyday and the mundane where shoulders become broader, movement becomes stately, this is something which is there in Indian art, as it is in Cambodian, which obviously comes out of sort of Hindu background as well. But there's something which I think is

universal in terms of sculptural language underpinning these things. The torsos for example have depended upon an idea of, let's say Jain figures, these kind of highly polished stylised broad-shouldered, narrow-wasted forms which have a quality of uniqueness to, let's say the Indian sub-continent, that somehow have a kind of an association with, you know, Western ideas, Western ideas and the sources of Western aesthetic as well.

By your sort of anointing colouring and clothing, I mean you're obviously treating your own work as something...I mean we're not talking about anything formal there are we?

No, right. I mean in the formulae things happen, obviously if you have something which looks grey and you pour oil on it, if it goes black, you know, it splits the form in two or does something completely different in terms of the way that, the gravity of the work, you know the visual gravity. You can talk about visual gravity, yes, things look heavy or things look light. Those are the sorts of things which actually do change. But I mean implying the kind of spiritual nature of these things, yes, I mean you know, what one is if you like implying or acknowledging, and maybe what's already there, maybe it's only demonstrative of what we know if as a Western, within a Western culture you look at sculpture or look at painting because you know it's not really about looking at a picture or whatever, it's about experience. So I suppose I'm drawing on my experience and introducing that experience to a different cultural context from where those ideas came.

What do you feel about people touching your work?

It's something which is strange to behold. Sometimes when something gets polished, yes, people are attracted to touching. Some of the...only very infrequently I suppose with regard to the Indian work, because one of the things I'm particularly interested in in the way that the idea of libation can also have an effect on the stone is the way that, you know, the very very light grey appearance of a carved black granite dolerite, whatever you want to call this stone, is that if you polish it it goes black, and there are one or two sculptures which are polished and touchable; if you oil the sculpture and it

goes black and you touch it, fine, I don't mind if you do, but you tend to be repulsed because it's sticky, cold, which is, it's just one of those things. I'm not really introducing the idea of, if you like handling as an issue. I mean the pouring on means that, you know, that it's not if you like sacrosanct in the way that an object in a Western museum might be, because I like the idea within an Eastern context that, you know, the meditation that you've had as a devotee in relation to an object is if you like mirrored by what you've left on it, or how you, you know, whether it might be flowers or whatever. I'm not sure, you know, I mean within the context of a museum here of course the things have to fall back into the category, so you basically ask questions about, not really...because you can't - well you can in a public place but people just generally would be repulsed by the contact they would have with a sticky cold back object, which tends to protect it.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

So would you say you neither encourage nor discourage touching?

No, I neither...no. I don't, but I think... I mean if you owned a piece and you wanted to pour oil on the piece, fine. In the sense that public sculptures are frequently serviced, cleaned etcetera annually, bronzes have the bird muck taken off them and you know, sometimes their patina might be serviced, similarly my works are cleaned and re-oiled. So that kind of involvement if you like or activity without my specific interaction is fine. I'm not really sure about my reaction to graffiti because I haven't had to experience it yet, but the business of oil and what it does to a surface isn't really something that I put on to actually encourage touching. It doesn't matter really, I mean, not exactly a red herring but I suppose if something touches something... If someone touches a carved sculpture and leaves a greasy finger print then it spoils it, so, I mean I'm, you know, let's say however, whatever I say about it in terms of libation etcetera in the context of what I...the minute... You see that is then being recontextualised, it's coming back into a Western context, so I suppose if you know it's oiled, or you see that it's got a black line down what would otherwise be a kind of a grey finish, then you can see that it is libation, it has something poured on it. So the touching isn't a significant factor for me at all really. If, you know, sometimes people

put a sculpture into an exhibition for blind people, and I've had some interesting meetings with blind art afficionados who say how much they enjoy my sculpture, I'm not sure they've tackled anything tacky yet, you know.

To go back to your themes we were talking about, androgyny is particular significant, isn't it?

Yes, I suppose that relates back to what I was saying about Ardanarisvara, the idea of the male and female, and in that respect, you know, by saying that there is this kind of genesis idea within the context of the male and female in one that brings up obviously the issue of androgyny too, the idea of the hermaphroditic form is something which has been of occasional curiosity I suppose to, you know, people who have commissioned works. I mean there's a beautiful figure of an hermaphrodite in the Villa Borghese, in the Villa Borghese in Rome. I don't know of many, but of course within Surrealism you get this kind of androgynous thing. Androgyny also seems to be of particular interest for a lot of people at the moment, and within the context of our own popular culture. But the idea of if you like a form containing both male and female is something which I think is both beautiful, curious and does have historical precedent, and in the context of Indian art, I suppose it's a manifestation of, you know, kind of Freudian ideas as well in the context of our 20th century society. I think probably one of the things, again I keep on talking about how if you like particles, physics, let's say it was speculated on by ancient Indian philosophers, I mean this is also if you like represented in my sculptures called `Mayan's Principle' and `Mayan's Cube', is an ancient Tamil philosopher who had some notion about particles being infinitessimally small and they themselves being divided into even smaller particles, those kinds of ideas. So I'm kind of interested in Ardanarisvara if you like containing notions of Freudianism, you know, within, you know, the idea of the male and the female. And I'm also very very curious, there's one sculpture I've made which consists of several kind of divided forms which plays with the idea also of Hari-Hara and Hari-Hara is the conjunction of Siva and Vishnu, and they then have issue in Ayapa. So there's the idea of a male-female conjunction within the deity, which will suggest almost if you like an acceptance of homosexuality perhaps. And the idea that there is issue, this is a cult which is becoming increasingly, let's say

popular in south India, it's a wonderful time of the year when men bathe especially frequently and don't cut their hair and they go to temple early, they cover themselves with ashes, and they wear black dhotis and black shirts, and they all go to a forest in Kerala where, you know, there are wild animals and tigers and things, and they kind of go at this particular time of the year specially. It's just amazing, you know, like Hinduism seems to colour all aspects of all life, because it's kind of addressed those issues kind of conceptually, it seems, you know, because there are these sorts of manifestations within the godhead if you like, or within the theology.

The little bronze figures were a new departure for you weren't they?

They were. I think probably one of the greatest manifestations in world art are Chola bronzes, the Chola period in south India stretches from about the 12th century to about the 15th century, and the absolutely extraordinary - well there's both a naturalism and not a naturalism within these bronzes, but fabulous sensitivity. Like the synthesis of material and form is extraordinary. I suppose to an extent it may be also dependant upon...again I talked before about Somaskandamurti, there are some of the most beautifully tender images of God with, you know, or of God as male and female, man and wife, the most beautiful sorts of relationships and a fantastic sensuality of surface and modelling-handling. Wonderful things, absolutely wonderful, and these things were being done 200 years, 300 years before the Renaissance, fabulous, you know. Interesting inasmuch as they're all solid. The deities for the temple, and we're talking about temple statuary here, not temple sculpture. I mean how evocative these things are of love and of, I mean I suppose aesthetic transcendent wonder of these objects. It's extraordinary that they're solid, you know, there can't be a hollow god, it's like a simple kind of, you know, use of language, and so these things were solid. And the other amazing thing about them is that, because they're solid you can't actually model detail, so they produce a wax form very very quickly often, beautiful handling even today, these things were made. And the detail is put into the wax so you see in wax what you will get eventually, but if it was cast like that, solid, the shrinkage would kind of cause all the detail to disappear and become distorted. So what they do and have done for centuries, thousands, well thousands of years, is they make the thing in wax and then they obliterate the detail

with a slab of wax. So once the thing is finished the face is completely covered with a dollop of wax like a solid mask, and parts of the hands or some of the decoration, anything where there's anything really fine, is completely obliterated. And it's cast from the lost-wax process and then the bronze worker carves the bronze back to the way that it was in wax. So the casting process in bronze requires carving. Now, you know, Donatello used to spend years and years and years, you could say that, you know, you know what's been chased by Donatello in the great pulpits of San Lorenzo for example, and Ghiberti also, they took years, I mean probably much of the work, you know, for the Great Doors of Paradise etcetera, and pieces by Donatello, many of them took twelve years, fourteen years to make a single statement, was probably to do with the finishing and chasing, but it was, you know, kind of cleaning up. But here it was kind of, it was an intentional thing. Because they don't have the very very thin casting or because of the, you can't have a hollow god, they carve bronze with the most phenomenal finesse. There's no sense of it having been carved, which is kind of interesting in a way because it's not, you know, truth to material or process, you don't actually see...sometimes you find a rippling effect on modern bronzes where they've been working at the sort of scrapers. They still use, you know, the old techniques and carve beautiful forms.

How did this relate to your own bronzes?

Oh, well I suppose the few bronzes that I've made basically I suppose deal with the idea of a sensuous...I'm just kind of interested in the idea of small sensuous objects. Some are solid, some are not so solid, I mean basically if, you know, you asked them to do a hollow cast they will actually make something which doesn't really conform to, if you like the hollow lost-wax process, because they don't have the knowledge of how to do it. They don't use cores in the same way that we would use cores. Once you've got a form you don't make a mould with rubber which, or gelatine which is then filled with wax, you to know a certain thickness, and then the core introduced later; they kind of make a core and suspend it in two halves of the mould which... So you don't use so much bronze basically, but it's a small economy in something more to do with carrying them around because they're jolly heavy to carry if you're carrying an edition of six bronzes, even if they're six inches high they're terribly heavy, so, I

make them hollow, but they're not deities anyway. But I do have...my own, if you like, first, my own artist's proof is solid, and I have, of the pieces I then sort of[??]...those particular works that are solid.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Those bronzes seem much closer really to the Indian tradition than the other works that you do there.

Yes. I suppose it's because I haven't done very much in the way of bronzes and I've wanted to, maybe by just getting, as a way of getting perhaps something of an insight into the processes. There is very little of if you like what I talked about in terms of carving, it's something probably that I'll approach one day if, you know, a preoccupation with bronzes comes to sort of preeminence in some way, and I think probably the idea of carving bronze could be quite an interesting thing to look at. But the small things are really if you like a response to, as I say, the kind of extraordinary sort of sensuality, and I suppose these are sensual in a rather overt way, I mean in terms of, I suppose the sexual sensuality rather than just sort of surface sensuality.

Are they entirely conceptual or do you ever use models?

Oh they're...actually it sounds rather complimentary to call it conceptual, yes. No they're...let's say they're imaginary or idealistic, idealised. [LAUGHS] No, but I don't use...I don't really use models. I mean, let's say, it's interesting I suppose, that's what I was saying earlier, just saying about these models, if I need to sort something out I look around me, and in India, you know, there's enough nakedness around. I mean not with women particularly, although women bathe, you know, occasionally you might see a woman bathing in a tank or in a village area, you know, in the countryside, but men are often naked just wearing a string around their waist, and so the body is unashamedly in evidence in India, certainly with male figures you just have to look around you. So I do use models in that respect.

Well perhaps we could move to talk about Egypt now.

Yes. It seems to be going back and going sideways.

Because you've also set up a studio there, haven't you?

Yes, I did set up a studio there, it's rather more past tense I suppose. Again the British Council must be considered to be, I suppose influential to an extent, and I suppose the reason for my going to Egypt is something you would like to know. I was commissioned by the Foreign Office to produce a sculpture that was to be a gift from the British Government, or the British people, to the Eygptian people, the Egyptian Government, for their new opera house in Cairo. It was built by the Japanese, I think probably they wanted to open a Honda factory or something, and I think although the British Government were probably invited to contribute a sculpture because they thought that as the Japanese were building this thing for $30 million that the British might have at least given a Henry Moore, but they asked me to make a piece. So the British Council had recommended me through their offices to be someone who might do this. I didn't have to give it very much thought because, like with India I had always loved Indian sculpture, and it was a great opportunity to go to a source, similarly Egyptian sculpture has to have been an influence on any sculptor. And so, I gave it a bit of thought in terms of what I might do, and one of the things that was very very exciting to me was that, having been particularly interested in the stones of Vasari from his technique, one of the stones listed discussed and described in depth and something of a mystery was imperial.....

End of F4925 Side A

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And when asked to produce a sculpture I approached the Foreign Office to ask them if they would contact the authorities in Egypt to see if it might be possible for me to work, or find or excavate some imperial porphyry from the Roman quarries. The extraordinary thing about imperial porphyry, the hardest stone in the world, reserved for Roman emperors and later I suppose used pretty much exclusively for the sort of early manifestations of church furniture through Constantine who was the last Roman emperor who then became a holy, if you like a Christian emperor. I'm talking about the idea of the emperor as god, the Roman emperor as god, and of course Constantine took the Empire into Christianity. So there's a wonderful sort of resonance both in terms of intractability of material and phenomenal symbolism which I was interested in. I was fortunate enough to be introduced to the Minister of Culture in Egypt, and we got on very very well because we spoke in Italian together, he doesn't speak English, and one of his great friends in Rome happens to be Giovanni Carandente who had curated my exhibition at Casa di Masaccio and also at the Festivale dei Due Mondi. He had previously, the Minister, through Hosni been the Director of the Egyptian Academy in Rome. So we sort of had a bit of a rapport. My introducing him to imperial porphyry was for him previously unknown, and he was very excited by the project and gave me all the support that I needed to go ahead, take an expedition, firstly a reconnaissance expedition into the Gebel Dokhan, the Mountains of Smoke in the western mountains of Egypt, the only place in the world that this stone comes from. That was a phenomenal experience, absolutely wonderful, because it is so out of the way. Things have changed to an extent because, you know, when people wrote on imperial porphyry in the early part of this century, or let's say up until about the Thirties, there was no road anywhere near Mons Porphyrites, this area on the Gebel Dokhan, but now there's a coastal road which takes you within about forty miles of the site, but it's still, you know, through a desert pass, a desert road, through a mountain pass. So, I went there. I was also given access to material from a place called Mons Claudianus, which was another Roman quarry where the white diorite which was used by the Romans for the columns of the Pantheon in Rome, the columns of Trojan's Forum, the Temple of Diocletian is split. Interestingly enough one of the last statues ever to be made in imperial porphyry which is actually in the

Alexandria Museum is a Diocletian, it's a wonderful headless block of a seated figure on a throne. And, so this was kind of curious in a way because these were stones discovered by the Romans in Egypt and are stones that were not used by the Pharoahs, which is interesting. And then there was one other site just further, just a little bit further south, in the Wadi Hammamat where this magnificent green stone came from, a breccia, which was probably from the oldest stone quarry in the world inasmuch as it was used by pre-dynastic kings of Egypt for objects, for funerary objects, the Pharoahs, and later Xerxes and Darius from Persia sent expeditions there. Philip of Macedon also. And the extraordinary thing about, we know all this, is because they all left inscriptions on the walls of the quarries, so there is this sort of fine graffiti, many magnificently refined, some pornographic of, you know, quarrymen who were stuck in the desert for God knows how long sort of excavating away, just saying who they were, what they were there for, right down to inventories of animals that they had or how often the bread was delivered or, you know, they were...maybe a camel ride from Qena, which is in the Nile valley, probably only a day or so. So although it was in the middle of the desert they weren't so far away. Also Wadi Hammamat is the source of the great gold wealth of the early Egyptians; it was in fact the fabled land of Koptos; fabled, well it wasn't really a fable, it's like El Dorado may or may not be a fable, we have yet to discover. But if you like the El Dorado of Egypt was in fact at Wadi Hammamat. So there were slaves excavating if you like gold, and, well they say that they weren't necessarily slaves who actually quarried because it was a skilled job, whereas quarrying for gold or mining for gold was not a skilled job, so they basically used to...the gold miners were if you like almost put to death by mining gold, but the quarrymen actually were skilled, and so people came and went with these expeditions to procure large blocks of stone. And my sculpture at the opera house in Cairo was going to if you like incorporate these three stones, which unfortunately the Wadi, the Hammamat breccia was not incorporated in the opera house sculpture from the, probably a whim of the Minister, Farouk Hosni, who chose one sculpture out of a series that I produced. The story in terms of what happened was that I went to Egypt and found that the Red Sea town of Hurghada, which had an airport and had some old oil company buildings, I was able to rent from the local governor through the ministry a building that became a studio. Now, I suppose the interesting aspects about all this, sounds quite easy, you know,

India as a place that you associate with sculpture, and I suppose you do associate Egypt with sculpture too, the problem is that no one works in hard stone in Egypt, and probably since the 5th or 6th century, since the rise of Islam, there's been no tradition of carving in hard stone because of the, if you like the Arabesque nature of the literary forms of decoration within Islam didn't lend itself to, or stone didn't lend itself to being manipulated in that way. So the carving of my stone, which had to be done with assistance, was if you like affected by finding quarrymen from Aswan in Luxor who were brought to the workshops in Hurghada, and they worked with me for several months carving stone, and it was basically almost a kind of a training process in a way. I mean these were men who were used to quarrying stones, splitting blocks, dressing stones for, you know, for crude architectural forms. They had also done quite a lot of work when the Aswan Dam was being built, so there was something, you know, of a continuation of the use of hard stones, but not in an artistic tradition. And so I was bringing from India the ancient manual traditions that had possibly originated in Egypt and been forgotten, so the living tradition of India has been if you like, was being grafted back into Egypt. I was able to show, if you like, I had men, you know, sort of saying, well I would want that dressed, something dressed flat, and you would get a couple of guys sitting on the tops smashing away with you know, hammers and chisels, and you know, they would be using a bit of straight edge to sort of make it flat, and I would say, `Well look, you can't make it flat because you don't have any coordinants. What we've got to do is set up the coordinants'. So I would show them how we do it in India, and it would mean you would have a guy at one end with a piece of string and a stick and another guy at the other end of a block with a piece of string and a stick, and you would make a line on one end of the block and then you take the stick, like a lollipop stick, and you put that at a particular position. And there's a guy in the middle who has another lollipop stick but is independent of the string, and there's a guy at the other end who has also got a piece of string at the same level as the guy at the other end. And there's someone in the middle that will say, right, we need, because we have the sticks all the same length, we need to go down so far. So the guy in the middle will say, well he's going that far so he'll make a mark in the middle to go down to that level, and then you would do that somewhere else and you would go down to the middle. So you make spots, points, across the stone. And, I showed them how to do it. They wouldn't listen. Egyptians do not

listen. You tell them how to something... And so, I had a photograph of, it was a model from a tomb, from the Cairo Museum, and the model showed early Egyptian carvers in dhotis doing exactly what we do in India for dressing a block, so I was showing these people, look, I said, `This is how Egyptians did it, and they did it before India'. So I was trying to encourage them that, you know, their tradition was in fact what I was showing them, you know, to try and get them to do it the way they used to do it. They looked at this picture of this model, they thought it was a photograph from the television and they thought, you know, these little models were so wonderful. But anyway, in Hurghada we set up this studio and we produced four sculptures, three that were sort of serious contenders for the public sculpture outside of the Opera House, and the piece that was selected by the Minister was `Song', the other pieces, one of which now is at the Tate is called `Chrysalis', and another piece called `Flask', which was recently shown in the British Museum, which was made of Hammamat breccia, has recently been sold to Hong Kong, so that's now away somewhere. And I've got one or two other pieces, again yet to be finished, which are in Kent. The studio in Hurghada if you like came to an end finally; the Governor who used to live just down the road from the studio used to complain that my workers started at sort of 8 o'clock in the morning and they used to wake him up even on a Saturday, which was - no Friday, Friday, Muslim holiday. But although I maintained, you know, strong ties with Hurghada, especially because one of my dear friends there is the Sheikh of one of the local tribal Bedouin lives in Hurghada; unfortunately his mother however still lives in the desert. I've been back, well I suppose I should say, I mean I also made sculptures for, a public sculpture for Stockley Park near Heathrow Airport which consisted of a, what was I suppose a 60-ton block of granite that we worked on again, the same carvers were enlisted from Luxor in Aswan, and we set up a year or so after the Cairo opera house project, a workshop in the desert. We had a camp, and we're talking about oven temperatures, just working under a few boards that had been put up over the stones, which made it actually quite bearable, quite dry, not unpleasant, and we worked there for several months.

Was that in order to be near the source of material?

To be right next...well yes, the stones were so heavy we couldn't move them, so we had to work on them in situ. The stone, which was called, the sculpture which was called `Osirisisis', was again using the notion of the genesis idea. We split the block, we did that Egyptian style using the compressor, so in fact there were great kind of lines of kind of drill holes through the block which were split open, and then that was formed into if you like a very very simple fundamental male sort of rough part and a softer female part that both came from the same block, and the kind of conjunction of the idea of Osiris and Isis, they're brother and sister gods who also, it's a part of I suppose this great tradition in Egyptian Pharaonic behaviour that, you know, often brothers and sisters married, you know, to continue the divine align. So that was an extraordinary experience. That was wonderful, in fact I was told that the Bedouin referred to this area we worked in as Wadi Stephen, because it's where my workers and where we had the camp, which was rather nice, charming.

Had the expedition to the imperial porphyry quarries been very arduous?

Was it very...?

Arduous.

No, not at all. It's one of the things that, you know, one had expected it to be when we set the thing up. I was also very very fortunate to have such a fantastic man who was the, I suppose he was the head of, or director of operations for an organisation called EGMSA, Egyptian Geological Mapping and Surveying Authority. This man called Dr. Atef Kardir was a man who was said by his students to have known every stone in Egypt, and I somehow kind of believed that that might be possible somehow, because once you know the principal kind of skeleton of Egypt, you know, it's possible to know, you know. But it's a very very complex geological area, Egypt, with the most phenomenal outcrops of extraordinary stones. Anyway, so I had the assistance of this body, this government body, and we took initially just, well there was one engineer, a couple of Land Rovers when we went on our reconnaissance trip, and then we took a number of quarrymen from the south of Egypt, a place called Marselalam, they came up to meet me, and we took an expedition to the desert

thinking that we were going to be there for maybe a week, maybe two, to quarry or expose some stone and bring it down from the mountain top. Well considering the amount of time I had to produce the sculpture, we found some scattered stones that had been left by the Romans, obviously they had been brought down from the top quarry, and so it seemed, you know, appropriate to use these stones rather than quarry. But we had discussed the feasibility of quarrying from the top quarry, and when I'm talking about the top quarry we're talking about mountain top, one of the highest points in the eastern mountains. It's where the, absolutely fabulous, it's right at the top of this mountain. We, when I first went there on the reconnaissance trip I had no idea where we were going except I knew we had to take two Land Rovers or two four-wheel drives just in case something went wrong. And we set off, this sort of portly engineer and myself, a young fellow from the surveys department, and he had never been there but it had been described to him by Dr. Atef how to get there, so we pulled our vehicles out and there was a Roman loading bay, there was a ramp that had been built up the side of this mountain to start with by the Romans, a fabulous place to have been. There's a city which has just tumbled down, I mean it's intact inasmuch as it's been left and fallen down; there's never been anybody there to, you know, to sort of pull it apart or kind of destroy it or take things away from it. A beautiful little temple which has fallen down, I think probably a few elements of that have probably been stolen by people, and damage has been done to it in the last few years. But we set off walking up this ramp and by the time we had gone about half a kilometre, and we didn't have any water with us, we thought, shall we go back or shall we go on? We could see where we were going so, and off we set. Well, sort of a few hundred feet in height and several kilometres later, in the middle of June, in the middle of the desert, we were climbing up the ramp to the uppermost and the principal quarry for the prime imperial porphyry. Ah! it was the most stunning experience. Just wonderful. And very few people I suppose had ever been there, you know, since those times. And you can sort of, it's one of those places where you sort of hear the tapping of hammers, it's like someone said one day, you know, like someone's not come with the pay cheque, you know, the Roman Empire has finished, you know, and people just kind of dissolved and that was it. But one of those magical places, similar experience as you get at Mons Claudianus where the white diorite came from. So, it wasn't really, you know, one knew how severe the conditions were, so when we went

with the expedition, which included about five men, a lorry, two things, we took more provisions for a long period of time. We also took with us my Bedouin friend, Sheikh Abd El Zameer Soliman Ouda, and he was a kind of a road building contractor and he had a Caterpillar loader, which is a kind of big, absolutely, you know, independent drive vehicle with wheels sort of six feet in diameter and great treads, and a lifting bucket which could lift several tons. And we went with him not knowing, you know, what we were going to expect, but we ended up identifying some stones and we just kind of lifted them, you know, within a couple of days we had done all the work we needed to do, so the expedition was, you know, in principle there but it didn't last so long. And really I would love to have spent more time there but, you know, there's no point because one had to get on with the job. So the expedition was, you know, effected pretty swiftly, and the job was done, and we took the stone to Hurghada where we started working with the carvers that I mentioned before. My most recent interest in fact, which brings us let's say, we've other things to talk about but that concept of expeditions and discoveries being, if you like continued with a project I have to excavate the diorite quarries of Chephren, which is in the southern desert of Egypt which I made a reconnaissance trip to and made some sculptures with stone that hasn't been used for 5,000 years. But between the project for the opera house and the piece I mentioned at Stockley Park, I made some pieces for the church, which we can talk about now or we can talk about as a separate item.

Well perhaps we ought to, you know, talk about Egypt as a whole, because I know you did a small work there for the Leeds exhibition, didn't you? And also `The Sight of Chephren'.

That's right, that's right, the site of Chephren was the...

Oh that's Chephren.

That's Chephren who I just mentioned briefly. But Egypt, let's say since I first went to Egypt in 1988, and the sculpture was installed in '89, I've maintained a kind of a continuing interest there. I kept the studio going for about a year in Hurghada, then I made friends with a man who owns a factory in Cairo which is the most sophisticated

granite processing factory in Egypt, and he's been a great help to me to realise sculptures that are made in a different way. Rather than being if you like purely to do with the carving or fashioning of stone by hand or with hand machines, I've been able to realise projects with a very very large scale using if you like big industrial machines.

Which works are they?

The work for the church in principle, I was commissioned in, whenever it was, to produce a sculpture, pieces for a church. And more recently a work for the Henry Moore Institute in...

Was that the large, I call it the tomb, I can't remember what...

The tomb. It's called `Interior Space'. It's a sculpture I made in Hammamat breccia. Interesting Hammamat breccia has become just recently through this company I mentioned called Marmonil and Claude Abdula who is the owner of the company, they've started to market Hammamat breccia, not from the archaeological site but from the adjacent quarries. And so with some massive blocks that I found there I was able to if you like process two stunningly large blocks of stone into the sculpture called `Interior Space', which was a part of the exhibition called `Surfaces and Stones of Egypt' that I did at the Henry Moore Institute, was a show curated by Robert Hopper, the director there. And the sculpture consisted, really I suppose of drawing together aspects of, I suppose Egypt that I had already dealt with before but something that had been on my mind for a very very long time. And one of the things that really most impressed me, I mean there are moments let's say in one's life when you get really knocked sideways by something you see, and let's say the great aesthetic milestones in one's life. And I mean given that, you know, I have a history in Minimalism there is one place in Sakkara, Sakkara is one of my most favourite places on earth, the Step Pyramid of Zoser is a fantastic, fantastic place. And one of my great heroes of all time is Imhotep, the architect who became a god, the architect who was the first architect in stone in history, and to be able to say this man built the first buildings in stone, and his name is Imhotep, I think it's just wonderful to be able

to go there and actually walk through corridors that were built by this man, the most... I mean the conceptualisation if you like of taking a hut that might have been built with papyrus and palms, and to build in stone by carving if you like those forms, so you have roof lintels that are like refined forms of palm trees, door-posts, again that are developed from these, the papyrus, which has got this beautiful, sort of curved triangular form became a pillar motif. And the sophistication that the first stone building has is just beyond belief. And the Step Pyramid of Zoser is again a knock-out. But one of the things that really knocked me sideways besides all this is the, what's called the Serepaeum, which is the tombs of the Appis, and these are kind of late dynastic period and even runs into the Roman period in Egypt. They had, I mean the devotional, if you like the bulls of Appis were holy and they were entombed like Pharaohs, and you go underground through these sort of what look like railway arches underground, and in each one there are sixty odd of them, is a tomb, or a sarcophagus, of a bull, and the sarcophagi are about 3 metres long by about 2 metres wide and 2 metres high with a lid, and every one has actually just been broken open, either been slid open and someone's gone in and, you know, pulled...because they were buried with all the honour of a Pharaoh these bulls so they had lots of gold in them, and they were either blasted open or pushed open by tomb robbers. But the kind of minimal presence of these fabulous blocks, minimal kind of blocks that had been hollowed out to become tombs have always been breathtaking. It's one of those things where, you know, as an artist you wonder when or how you can use an image like that or a form like that that's been of such breathtaking kind of...breathtakingly extraordinary. Anyway, so eventually, well, I had hoped to make three sarcophagi, one in imperial porphyry and one in this material I mentioned, Chephren diorite, and I made the one in Hammamat breccia, but unfortunately the funding of it wasn't there to make more, and I wanted to kind of make a sense of there being a kind of a sequential presence of large sarcophagal forms. But the one that was made I called `Interior Space' in Hammamat breccia, which is 4 metres long and 2 metres high and 2 metres wide, was made in the factory using if you like whatever the...the hi-tec equipment of a modern granite processing factory; great gang-saws that cut these great 20 centimetre thick slabs for me that were over 2 metres by 2 metres by 2 metres, and then they were polished on these great machines and then we cut them to size and they were drilled and pinned. The lids themselves were 3 tons each and if you like the natural crust of

the earth, and the sheer polished sides are like something's been sort of sliced by laser and lifted out of the ground. Exciting piece for me to have made.

Did you make `Chrysalis' in a studio?

I made `Chrysalis' in Hurghada.

Because that also has lots of Egyptian overtones and similar forms.

Yes. Well the piece `Chrysalis' I suppose was important. I mean one of the things as an artist, let's say, I felt I had to address obviously, I was making a public sculpture in a country where fundamentalism is a problem, Islamic fundamentalism. There's a very very strong lobby, there's a lot of if you like artistic jealousy. My work had to I suppose skirt through the difficult areas. Within Islam you shouldn't really make anything that's figurative. I mean let's say within a context of contemporary art in Egypt, and it's quite sophisticated, people make figurative art, they don't find it problematic, but in the context of the public manifestation as opposed to, you know, the freedom in an artist's studio, it had, I felt I had to take on board certain things. But the sculpture if you like...

Can you be more specific on that?

More specific?

Well what you had to take on board.

Well I suppose I had to...well I...I had to take on board not doing anything that let's say might offend, otherwise I would have been wasting my time in terms of the commission, and obviously, you know, I was doing something for a client, which was the Foreign Office, for somebody else, and so I had two clients, one was Western and one was if you like Middle Eastern. One from a Christian, if you like, cultural background, the other for Islamic. Those kinds of things really, you know, seriously had to be considered. To an extent I think I was playing with the idea of a synthesis

in the eventual sculpture that I made; I mean we're talking about `Chrysalis' and at the same time we're talking about `Song', the piece outside the opera house, the two figures, a male and a female figure. Let's say `Chrysalis', we'll talk about `Chrysalis' first. In `Chrysalis' I was looking at the idea of where cultures cross, and the idea of mummification within, if you like ancient Egyptian culture, is one thing. The idea of a chrysalis and of resurrection is contained within the notion of a chrysalis becoming a butterfly if you like. I think it probably contains both Christian and Islamic theology. So the form that `Chrysalis' took was something that enabled me to actually come out of a sculptural tradition that's rooted in Egypt and had resonances that were kind of cross-cultural. `Song' was something that deals with the idea of cultural collision, cultural convergence, both for own time and in relation to the materials that I was using. Imperial porphyry, as I mentioned, was a reserve of the Roman emperors that was frequently used to kind of test skill, so it was used often for drapery in a bust for example; infrequently used for a portrait head. So what I did was use the notion of the bust, so I used these blocks of imperial porphyry with the upper torso, shoulders, with drapery. Atop, a diorite element that was part base part sculpture, inasmuch as the pedestal if you like became a leg, and that had a, if you like a reference to I suppose either, Osiris forms, kind of, particular kind of use of the figure, but obviously also like the foot, the mummified figure. And so you have something which draws on the idea of the late period of Egyptian art, Ptolemaic, which if you like deals with the cultural collision of the Roman and the Egyptian, and my sculpture if you like deals with the idea of the Roman and the bust, the pedestal within the kind of Osiris form, the cultural collision of the path being brought together in a cultural collision of the past, as a contemporary artist using these forms. And so that obviously there is a.....

End of F4925 Side B

F4926 Side A

[INAUDIBLE]

Yes, I think I was talking about the cultural collision of...

Yes.

Of if you like the Roman in the bust, Osiris form of the pedestal-cum-leg, in a form that draws upon a contemporary artist's if you like expression and freedom to synthesise and bring together male and female, if you like attributes. Interest...well, yes, yes. So, no, that piece which was chosen for this site also if you like contained elements that were in `Chrysalis' inasmuch as if you like there was the notion of synthesis of both cultures, and it was probably less symbolic religiously than `Chrysalis' which we were discussing as being something, you know, that deals with the idea of transition and resurrection.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

The exhibition in Leeds very much sort of like came a full circle, didn't it, bringing back the Seventies Minimalist work with the new work.

Yes.

Which was an interesting approach.

Yes it was. I think it was quite a strongly curated exhibition, I spent quite a lot of time with Robert Hopper discussing the work, and of course the involvement of the Henry Moore Foundation with the production of my book..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] .....meant that, you know, we had been focusing on aspects of my ideas over the years, and Robert was particularly interested in my Minimal sculpture and the fact that it hasn't really been seen since the days that I was making it twenty years ago I suppose. And the..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] Yes, so the bringing

together of the Minimal, if you like, with the new work, which was in itself a very Minimal statement, the early surface works particularly orientated towards the flat, which we've discussed earlier, and this new void, volume, which obviously has a concern for surface in the way that the object itself is highly refined, highly finished and highly defined, although being a specific volume, deals with ideas I suppose of space in the context of an interior space, it deals not so much with the idea of its obvious kind of interiorness but obviously the idea of I suppose self reflection, and I suppose the ultimate in the context of it being tomb-like or sarcophagus-like is in fact what that suggests in terms of if you like thought about a beyond, in the way that the sculpture is orientated with a slit which you can see through into in the way that certain quartzite lines that I've if you like orchestrated in a particular way around the piece, if you like draw you into a void inside the sculpture. I think probably, you know, in terms of the way that that sculpture itself relates to the early sculpture is if you like an observational point from the curator stand-point, and I think it's kind of interesting that it was actually brought out and brought about in that way. It was like, you know, two piers of a bridge, you know, something's gone on in between the two and the current and what happened 25 years ago. And that was followed on soon after with a little exhibition I did at Michael Hue-Williams' gallery called `Sight of Chephren', which is if you like a project that I've yet to complete but was to do with the idea of excavation and archaeology which is an aspect of Stephen Bann's essay, the archaeological aspects in my sort of endeavours as a sculptor, as an artist, in which the extraordinary material, Chephren diorite, which was used to produce one of the greatest classic sculptures of Egyptian antiquity, the statue of the great Pharaoh of Chephren who built the second of the great pyramids at Giza, the son of Cheops. This magnificent naturalistic sculpture is in this kind of streaky dark black greeny whitey sort of material, and it comes from the southernmost part of Egypt beyond, well close to Nubia near Abu Simbel. I took again a small reconnaissance expedition there to locate the site with a view to both excavating it archaeologically and procuring some stone to produce a new sculpture. We did take some samples and the samples became the exhibition `The Sight of Chephren' which if you like really, for me if you like the first investigations into the material, which has been unused for the last 5,000 years, it hasn't been used since Chephren's funerary statues.

And there was a knee-like shape in the exhibition I remember.

Yes. Right.

What does that relate to?

What does it relate to? I suppose it was rather more phallic-orientated than a knee. It was like a thigh from one side. The thing about Michael's window gallery is that you see an exhibition like a vitrine in a museum, and I think it's a rather interesting kind of relationship between if you like the resonances that I hoped to get from the work and the sort of vase-like shapes, some kind of torso-like shapes, and eye-type shapes, hence the archaeological site of Chephren. And this kind of thigh-like shape which, according to the way you look at it, from one side it looks a bit like a thigh and the other side looks rather more phallic, and that is called, oh God! which part of Chephren was that? I've forgotten. But each of the pieces was titled as a part of Chephren.

Do you feel that you became as involved with Egypt and Egyptian life as you have with India?

It's a more difficult society to become a part of in a way. A strength of Islam within everyday life, the, I suppose the effect that it has on the behaviour of Egyptians, and the Egyptians I've worked with are working men, my lack of ability to communicate with the men I suppose was a difficult part, though I picked up a few words of Arabic, and I had a very very strong emotional, if you like...well what can I say? I mean let's say I find I have a rapport with people I can't necessarily speak to, like Sheikh Abd El Zameer Soliman Ouda I mentioned, this Bedouin, we're like brothers if you like, I can't speak to him but we have an understanding; maybe we speak with our eyes, something like that. One of my carvers in Egypt is called Ali Ahmed, and I say that in previous lives he would have carved great statues for the Pharaohs, because he is a quarryman, I've seen him in Aswan recently just carving bits of, you know, lintels and stuff, but when he was working for me helping me on the `Chrysalis', he has a kind of a feel for form and sensitivity that I felt that he was able to give to me when it was

demanded of him, and took extraordinary pride in the kinds of things he was doing for me. And whenever I see him, you know, we sort of have an understanding. So there's always a kind of a camaraderie between, as I've said in my book introduction, there's a camaraderie between the men of stone throughout the world, in Carrara, in India, and in Egypt. But, I mean if I said that, you know, Egyptian life, could I get into it? I mean I have friends in Egypt, in Cairo, who lead the most sophisticated lifestyle imaginable, you know, whose lifestyles are just, you know, just the lifestyles of incredibly wealthy people, very sophisticated, very intelligent, knowledgeable people whose, if you like grasp, knowledge of Western as well as Eastern sort of ideas, aesthetics and philosophy are, you know, are probably more profound than, you know, you might find at a dinner party or a cocktail party or a pub here in Britain, you know. And I will admit, you know, that certain aspects of the lifestyle that I have in both India and in Egypt tends to be orientated towards let's say an intellectual, and life of probably an upper middle class rather than, you know, a life, you know, under canvas like Gaddafi amongst the troops you know. I mean to an extent if you're working with people you gain respect by not being one of them, although you are respected for being there and for being sympathetic and for doing things that you wouldn't necessarily... You know, I'm not aloof, I'll pick up a broom to show that I am not, you know, I don't consider it something that is a disgrace, you know, because the caste system in India means that you shouldn't pick up, you know you shouldn't pick up a broom, that's a job for a cleaner, you know, certain things you just don't do. But I show, it's my sort of thing, you can do it, it's not a problem, you know, it's a way of saying, tidy the place up, you know.

[BREAK IN RECORDING - 1 MIN 10 SEC PAUSE]

They're both traditional societies, does that mean it's necessarily far harder to have communication with the women?

I suppose, communication with women in both cases I find that, let's say, amongst the people that I mix with socially of course there's no difference, there is no...there's no kind of prejudice or whatever in terms of social relationships of women in the society that I mix in in Egypt and in India. Women seem to have more of an influence in

India, although actually, no, they seem to participate more within the kind of family in terms of decision-making etcetera in India than they do in Egypt, but I would say they seem to, because, you know, women are by the very definition of, I suppose fundamentalist society, completely excluded from anybody's attention but the husband, so you can't communicate with a woman. The wives of my workers, probably I might meet, because they're not that, they're not fundamentalists, but let's say within a society where, you know, a lot of women are a part of the order of a male-dominated and...a male-dominated order anyway, you can't even communicate, you can't even look at, you know, a woman.

End of F4926 Side A

F4926 Side B

[Interview with Stephen Cox at his home on the 5th of November 1995. Interviewer Denise Hooker.]

Stephen can we talk about your commission for the church of St. Paul's at Harringay and how did it come about?

Yes. It came about through a mutual friend who I had taught with many years before in Coventry, an architect called Stuart Knight[ph], who passed on my name to an architect friend of his called Peter Jenkins, who in turn passed on the suggestion to the vicar of St. Paul's, Harringay, John Seeley, the idea of going to visit my work at the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford. At the time I had an exhibition which had been on, an exhibition called `We Must Always Turn South' which was exhibited at, a retrospective show which was exhibited at the Arnolfini in Bristol and then went to the Midland Group Gallery in Nottingham and then to the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, and that's where the most recent work that I had done, which was a fragmented sculpture called `Cloaca Maxima' which I may have mentioned before, which if you like was an example of my current interest in religious themes, the exhibition also consisted of works that I had made in Italy like `Interior With Figures', `Dream'. And I suppose the fact that I was a contemporary artist who was looking at narratives, theological or religious narratives within a mainstream concern was something which maybe set my work apart from many other artists working in sculpture in particular, and I think the fact that Peter Jenkins was interested in if you like a contemporary artist rather than if you like an ecclesiastical artist. So their vicar and Peter went to see the show, and they came back to me and expressed an interest in working together. When I went to visit the church for the very first time the church of St. Paul which actually had been burnt to the ground ten years ago, I'm not exactly sure, round about maybe, about 1981, '82, the foundations were in, so what was rather good was actually being asked to consider a sculpture for a church that was just in foundations stage, and I was given more or less total freedom to produce a reredos panel initially, and as time went by I was asked if I would also consider producing an altar. The budget for the whole project was very very low, and at the time I was

doing quite a lot of work in public commissions and I felt that I had the time and the space to be able to address the idea of working for a church, and I suppose it's one of those things I felt that, you know, one might get one chance in a lifetime to do something like that. I mean I felt maybe it was a little premature considering the great works of Matisse and Rothko, I didn't really want to be so precocious as to think that one was going into those realms, but who knows when was one going to be asked again, so I felt that it was just one of those opportunities and I really grasped it to do something which I felt... Because, I suppose if you like the spiritual aspect of my work is something I've always felt underpinned my desire in terms of if you like achievement for the work is if it actually gave a strong sort of spiritual charge. The fact that I had previously produced some small studies for crucifixions which were part of the fragmentation idea, enabled me to kind of proceed with an idea that I could take on if you like the great themes of Christianity in a way that didn't compromise my, if you like my ambitions for my work as a contemporary artist. And it was a marvellous opportunity to actually do something on a very large scale dealing with the ideas of Crucifixion or Deposition, Deposition in particular was a form that I was...I made three or four works including one piece that did in fact travel to Australia for the Sidney Biennale.

Were these pieces connected to the chapel or the early work you had done in Italy?

These were the works that I had done in Italy, just as a part of my, if you like desire to approach and address if you like the great themes in Western art. Depositions I've worked on, for example I turned the whole structure of if you like a Renaissance composition or a reredos or a chapel form with an arched upper part and turning this image upside-down, worked on the idea of the power of a Deposition having a descending shape, cupped and caught in the..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] Cupped in the inverted arch. I was particularly impressed by works of Rosso Fiorentino in particular which, possibly because his paintings, rather more than any other artist of the period, had this extraordinary luminescence of the sort of turquoise blue, the colour that I used from my copper sulphate staining of stone, and the marvellous ladder effects contrasted against this kind of brilliant blue, was a form of image that I tried to use, because it's a highly charged form. The idea of being able to use a ladder

to suggest upward and downward movement within the context of Deposition. And although these pieces I suppose were current for me in the early Eighties, in fact by the time the church was finished it was another ten years on, and I think to an extent my drawings and studies had gone through very many phases which in fact had moved away from the ideas of crucifixions to the idea of using as a focal theme an idea of St. Paul himself, an idealised kind of image had gone through my mind as a possibility, the idea of also of imprisonment and the idea of bars being sort of superimposed over an image of a face, but in the end I ended up with an image that was either very sort of Buddha-like in terms of its power, but then to an extent it may have been confused with the idea of if you like the Byzantine idea of Christ which if you like wasn't in fact a Christ image at all. So they became a kind of a confusion, a notion of a supreme icon and of course the placement of a supreme icon of anyone other than Christ over an altar would have been maybe heresy. And so I did return to what seemed to be the obvious theme of a crucifixion above an altar as a part of the reredos. And the whole thing then really fell into place, because when asked to produce an altar too I happened, well I happened, I happened to have a piece of porphyry in Egypt which I felt would be a marvellous thing to use for a sacrificial table, and in that respect I didn't want to pull any punches about the way that I felt about what the Crucifixion meant as a sacrifice, and the concepts of the altar and the development of the idea of the Crucifixion itself became very very closely related.

Could you say something more about that, about the idea of sacrifice, Stephen?

Yes. The idea of, well I suppose within the Christian-Judaic faith anyway the notions of sacrifice have kind of been a recurrent theme, and I suppose Abraham and Isaac were in particular I suppose one of those great challenges of sacrifice to I suppose man's devotion to his god, and obviously the more supreme sacrifice of God's own son as a saviour of the world is also quite an extraordinary concept. I was also quite taken by the idea of the Last Supper, and within certain kind of interpretations of the theme of the Last Supper in which within the symbolism of Christ breaking the bread and using wine as a symbol of his own blood, that the breaking of the bread which was his body, and the drinking of the blood which was...the drinking of the wine which was his blood was the point within the first, if you like the First Sacrament

Christ also took of his own body and blood which is the most extraordinary kind of image. The idea of the stone itself of imperial porphyry and its association as initially with Roman emperors and then with the following holy Roman emperors and the porphyro genetori, the symbolism of the stone itself as being blood-like, so the idea of an altar that was if you like a table of sacrifice that was in fact if you like the colour symbolically of blood, was for me a very very powerful and potent form to work with. And then there was the relationship then between the way that I worked the stone, the boulder itself was cut into four, and if you like its interfaces were opened out to make the table. The cross form that I used then to support the fragments echoed if you like structurally the negative and if you like spiritual theoretical forms in the reredos panel itself, which consists of three negative crosses that are interlinked which if you like show the cross without it being a cross, and that's I suppose the point at which I was able to talk about the work as being if you like about the currency for me as a contemporary thing, with the idea of fragmentation being able to be if you like represented in a way that didn't show a cross in particular but a cross that may have been...I think there probably might... A way that I might illustrate this is something which came to me much later when last year I went to Jerusalem, I went to Jerusalem because I felt that I could go to Jerusalem for the first time in my life, because I had vowed I would never go to Jerusalem until there was a Palestine, and it was the month or two after the peace accord when Jericho had just been made a part of Palestine as Gaza. And as a part of that if you like pilgrimage, Jerusalem was very very moving to if you like go to places obviously that are a part of the Passion, were the things that one would do as a tourist, but nevertheless my profound interest in the spirituality of stones, became something that was two-fold. One it was to do with the presence of stone and the significance, especially in the Via Dolorosa, street of pain, which had been followed by Christ and all the pilgrims since, has a very very powerful effect on me. The Wailing Wall itself is another thing where if you like the voices of, through the millennia of a dispossessed people have somehow caused a resonance within the stone, and one of the great moving things for me was to actually at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to actually go and put my arm in the space where the cross had been, which you can do as a part of the devotional thing; under the altar is the gap where the foot of the cross stood. And this took me right back to my sculpture where the negatives make the cross, and here was the negative where the cross actually was, so

there was a kind of a, if you like a reinforcement of that idea in actuality to...the symbol was there and the symbol of the cross not necessarily having to be specifically there. So in fact the non-representation became more powerful because it wasn't an illusion, it was an allusion to. So, I felt that there was, you know, that the sense of the absence was something that was very powerful.

In what sense was that a pilgrimage for you, that visit to Jerusalem?

Well I suppose it was two-fold. As I say, I felt that things had moved forward, and on this day when Itzhak Rabin has been murdered I suppose one's worried very much for the future of Palestine and Israel as, I suppose as a co-existent thing. But I suppose to an extent I've always been, I suppose had quite strong beliefs about the dispossessed and I suppose I felt that the Palestinian cause was a just cause in a way; I think the way that the Palestinians have been dispossessed, and I suppose it was a gesture on my part to if you like acknowledge that at last something had been reversed historically and I thought that was a very extraordinary event to have taken place in that period, and I think that's why today is a sort of a double distressing event with the death of Itzhak Rabin. And I suppose obviously the fact that however much one, you know, people ask me what religion I am, I usually say that I'm atheist and agnostic, or a Hindu, or a Christian; according to whoever asks me I tend to take on a position that's maybe antagonistic. It's something which I've probably felt uncomfortable with declaring that I was a Christian, but having been to church school and been brought up let's say within a faith to an extent, although I was never confirmed, I don't really think those things matter, but I suppose one's whole attitude to life, if one looks at it, has actually been based upon the principles of Christianity and I think in that respect, without necessarily having to adopt the tenets of the dogma I certainly believe that the teaching of Christ is probably without equal as a teaching for if you like peaceful coexistence and, I suppose just, I suppose the basic tenets of love as a philosophy, which I think probably has been the case in so many if you like universal religions. So I suppose Jerusalem in that respect, yes, of course was a place I think anybody who has had any kind of connection with Christianity, and I have had a connection with Christianity obviously... I mean I can't understand really why I suppose anybody or everybody must make it. I mean I know in - make that pilgrimage. I didn't go

necessarily, I suppose, feeling that it was a pilgrimage of devotion, it may have been one of curiosity, but I do feel as well if the pilgrimage was anything, let's say it was as an artist who feels that stone has a phenomenal power to both be a focus for attention of the devout and my notion that a material can resonate with a response to that devotion. I mean it might be fanciful but you know, the notion for example that six times a day Muslims fall to their knees and mike[ph] the Kaaba, it's like a lodestone, and people just point towards it sort of like magnets. And in that respect, so, you know, this stone, which is apparently just...actually it's been subject to so much kind of attack or destruction or disintegration and deterioration both I suppose from devotion and from fire, accident or whatever, that now apparently it's just a blackened piece of stone bound together by silver bands stuck in the side of a wall of the Kaaba. And I think it's that kind of idea of a stone having such a phenomenal sense of power as a thing which if you like again it's a...I mean it's an ultimate icon on the one hand which is as a sculptor I feel has a special quality, but again as a sculptor, I mean it doesn't necessarily have to be stone, it could be anything really, and I suppose in that respect one would think of any precious object, whether they be, you know, the traces of landscape that might be powerful to Aboriginals in Australia or certain ritual masks from the Polynesian islands that certain islanders are being asking to be returned from the British Museum for example. I suppose just like the Pantheon's [sic? Parthenon's] reliefs have been seen to be a part of the heart of Greece that need to be returned. All these things I think are extraordinary testament to the power of stone which is I suppose where I stand at the moment as an artist curious about this extraordinary quality of a material which is pretty commonplace in many respects, but can become so special and precious, due to a sort of a focus of attention. So, as I say Jerusalem was a place where there's a lot of that, you know, there's the Dome of the Rock which is holy to Muslims, I think probably for quite fanciful reasons as it was a place where Muhammad is supposed to have alighted on a winged horse on a trip from Mecca one evening. But then obviously within the context of the Jewish faith I mentioned the, well the temple, the Great Temple of Solomon's remains are still there and the Wailing Wall the only existing sort of part of it has been such a focal point, as well as the stones in the road of the Passion for Christians. So it is an amazing place, claims of which I suppose are made by all sorts of New Age and I suppose earth scientists about it in being a particularly special spot on the surface of the earth, and those are

again interesting things. So that was the nature of the pilgrimage really. There are all sorts of aesthetic and spiritual reasons.

Maybe if we just go back to the rest of the work you did for the chapel, apart from the reredos and the altar.

Yes. I suppose by the time that I was really into working on the church, then the Stations of the Cross became an issue, so I worked on the Stations of the Cross which I was very pleased to find could be the most minimal statement, and working with John Seeley was really quite a revelation in a way because of, I suppose aspects of his aspirations for the church meant that the kind of church that he wanted was a very sort of simple early basilica form of church, but especially he wanted a church where his incense could rise, and it's a C of E church, it's in fact High Church, and so the trappings of Catholicism are still sort of an aspect of the way that this church functions, and so its height was an important factor. At the same time it was working with a vicar who felt that simplicity was also of paramount importance, so the idea of a series of the Stations of the Cross, which is very very simple crosses, just four inches I think or six inches in each direction just very very symmetrical crosses, these were just embedded in the wall around the church, and these were churches which mark the body of the...the crosses which mark the body of the church, which are the crosses that were if you like marked in the ceremony for the...what's the word? I don't mean the initiation of the church, I mean the blessing of the church do I mean? During the initial ceremony. And then the other I suppose principal part was in fact the font, which was made from elements of the altar, so it was the idea of the altar being the body of the church in a way, the central feature, and the fact that these off-cuts for want of a better term were then brought together again using a cross to actually bring those fragments together again. So the idea of fragmentation, the idea of a cross bringing together, of uniting both in the body of the altar and in the font were ideas that were very good, if you like sculptural ideas as well as being incredibly symbolic.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Did you have a free hand with the designs of the church?

Yes, I did. That was a wonderful thing really. I think I felt that probably most of the commissions I've done I've been given a very very free hand. Certainly what I felt was, I think if you like it was a perfect commission inasmuch as that I was asked to do the commission, my clients having seen what I had done, and in that respect left me to do what I felt was right, and in that respect I think that's the greatest kind of commission I think that, you know, I hate competitions, and the idea that you know, no one seems to be prepared to make a decision about anything, you know, and wants to keep control, you know, all the way through a project, these sorts of things happen, and I think that they're not an ideal world when you try to produce work that is continually being vetted or screened by committees in particular. So this was quite a special situation to be able to work like this.

How do you feel about the role of the artist for the church now?

Well I think there's an increasing interest from churches to incorporate contemporary art there. I mean what seems to have happened over the last...I think there may be, I think to an extent there haven't been very many commissions for churches, or very many new churches which have acknowledged the contributions from contemporary artists. Certainly the Coventry Cathedral project which I suppose everybody was aware of and which involved many major artists, British artists, in I suppose a fantastic celebration of contemporary art in the context of the church, the theological setting. But there seems to have been a kind of, there's a kind of a profession of ecclesiastical sculptures and painters who don't do anything else but, and these things have a kind of a feel of kind of ironmongery about them, you know, you get your little statue in bronze from the local supplier and you get catalogues showing, you know, crosses and furniture and candle holders and stuff like that. And in that respect I suppose it's, the church as patrons have really missed their role, I mean given in the past they weren't principal patrons of, if not the church themselves then the church's patrons who have patronised the church by registering their presence by commissioning artists. We seem to have forgotten all about it, I don't know why.

Have there been some notable people this century, you know, like Walter Hussey and people?

Oh, yes, like Walter Hussey. [LAUGHS] You know, I know that for example Cecil Collins did a big stained-glass window which was inaugurated only, I think three years before he died, and John Piper has done things which he did at Coventry Cathedral too. But I do think, I think possibly it's to do with the economics of things. I mean, you know, artists tend to charge a lot of money and I suppose churches feel that they can get away with things. Coupled with the fact that I think probably the influence of if you like organisations of, you know, committees of church wardens who are responsible for what goes into the church are not necessarily people with any informed idea, and I think in that respect, you know, browsing through a catalogue like a Littlewoods catalogue or whatever is a sort of, just about the [INAUDIBLE] of your run-of-the-mill church warden.

Do you think there's any interesting work being done in church today?

Is there any more...is there interesting work being done? I don't...I mean I know for example that Christopher Lebrun, a very good friend of mine, is doing a, was doing a tapestry for Liverpool Cathedral which has actually now been changed to panel paintings which are I think around the corner, and I'm sure that will be interesting, he's a very accomplished artist. I mean Dame Elizabeth Frink did something over one of the portals of the cathedral two or three years ago, in Liverpool. But the fact that the churches or curators have been introducing to churches the idea of exhibitions, I was involved in an exhibition at Lincoln Cathedral which included Richard Long and other artists of, not necessarily major repute but nevertheless I think quite well-known artists and some of the work was really very interesting. A piece of my work that was shown there which was in a cloister was in fact a piece that I made in India which was if you like stretching the imagination for, I suppose the church authorities inasmuch as it was a Siva, Parvati and Skandha, but the whole point about the piece when I made it was that it was about the relationship of an aspect of Hindu Shaivism which was very very akin to if you like the sentiments of the Holy Family in our own traditions. So there was a kind of a link there in terms of my intention. There was

also recently an exhibition organised for Northampton, in fact it was to do with an anniversary, I'm not sure if it was the anniversary of the commission of Henry Moore's sculpture of the Madonna and Child, so that was at Northampton Art Gallery and the church, and I had some drawings in that which were drawings for my work at St. Paul's, and that then went on to St. Paul's Cathedral. So the idea of contemporary art in churches is something which is becoming more, it's becoming more, I can't say commonplace, anyway it's happening, and I think possibly this is introducing to church authorities the potential for work in churches. In fact currently I'm involved in two projects, one in which I won a competition for - again I don't do competitions but anyway, I did a proposal for Newcastle Cathedral, St. Nicholas's, which won, and now I'm having the problem of having to discuss other ideas with my clients, right? The idea that I gave them which I felt was absolutely spot on is now something which doesn't have enough literal references in it for the - actually it's not the bishop, I've forgotten his name, anyway the head of the church in St. Nicholas's. And so I'm involved with the dialogue now with him if I want to continue, but I mean to an extent he wants me to look as aspects of the Trinity, but he's got in his own mind an idea of an image, and of course it's not something that I will readily take on board unless it happens to satisfy me as an idea, but in terms of the descriptions and the figurative connotations of this particular idea I can't really see myself being able to proceed with it. So there will be I suppose, there might be a confrontation between my original proposal and, you know, something which is trying to be sort of put on to me by somebody from outside. And I'm also involved with St. Luke's in Chelsea, which was also a competition - I don't do competitions - in which I have now, they've narrowed the list down to myself and one other. Again not an ideal situation; there should have been enough if you like evidence in the work that I have done and in the maquette that I offered, or everybody else offered, for them to have made a decision, and in that respect one seems to be in a sort of political situation of reputations and obviously influences from committees and panels, I should think anyway. But, I think it's encouraging that the church is opening up to new possibilities.

End of F4926 Side B

F4927 Side A

Are you a churchgoer at all yourself?

I go frequently but not to pray, really. No I frequent churches because of...but usually churches of some historical or artistic merit, but no, I'm not a churchgoer for prayer. Yes, I don't think there really is any defence for that. [LAUGHS] I've had some moving experiences but let's say, in the context of my piece at St. Paul's, when the church was consecrated the Bishop of Edmonton proceeded to go... There's a very very unusual, quite rare occurrence for a new church, of course it happens, but this was done if you like within the context of High Church, and it was a wonderful ceremony, quite mediaeval, and given it's a relatively small church of about 150 capacity, whereas it replaced a church that had about a 1,000 capacity congregation, but it was very very moving in the context of the interface between an object that I had seen evolve for me as something that was mine, as a sculpture, as an object like the altar, which was if you like full of my own kind of aspirations and ambitions for an object that if you like transcended the materials that it was made of, although the materials themselves were incredibly powerful, both the Hammamat breccia and the imperial porphyry which was the top of the altar, but it was amazing to see, and there was an extraordinary sensation when my sculpture was taken from me and became God's, and the anointing of the stone, of the altar, made me think of the washing of the gods in India. It was an extraordinary ceremony of the stone being bathed and washed and taken into if you like God's ambience. The stone was then oiled and anointed, again something which happens in India with the deities. And the kind of ritual around it was extraordinarily moving, and to see something actually move from if you like the mundane world into the world of the spiritual, a rare experience and something which is, I mean the mystification if you like, happens in front of one's eyes. I mean it's an extraordinary exchange of, I don't know, of reverberation in terms of what was going on. Maybe I can't really explain it, maybe I can explain it quite easily, you know, but let's say it's...it's...when things move one spiritually like that, and I think it can happen in front of a painting, and it can happen, let's say it has a deeply moving sensation when it happens in that context, which was new for me, I don't suppose it happens to many artists very often to actually have something that is

made, you know, wasn't a piece of furniture really, not for me as an artist, you know, and maybe in the context as well of the fact that within the modern liturgy altars are frowned upon if they're not sort of tables, gate-leg tables that are easily sort of put up and taken down in the heart of the church; this, and I'm very very pleased that the vicar, or priest, of St. Paul Harringay was someone who really devoutly believes in the idea of the altar being something that I believed in, and in that respect I found a kind of, a kindred spirit with the vicar in wanting to accept that this was a sacrificial altar. My reredos panel had skulls and bones which for me also had a sense of, you know, Neapolitan churches where bones are stacked in crypts and around the churches, around the church, the idea of the ages of man, of man woman and child, about mortality, about Golgotha, the place of death. You know, this kind of, this presence of death is something which to an extent has been sanitised out of religion in the West. The vicar again didn't want a bungalow church that, you know, with sort of carpet on the floor which is the sort of church that is usually given by, you know, the architects that do work for, you know, for modern churches. In this respect we're talking about something that was about the nuts and bolts of sacrifice, of a special presence that could be generated from the artifacts in the church, and not just if you like ideas that are divulged or disgorged weekly by the vicar from a book; we were talking about objects that somehow have a presence that reinforce the spiritual in man.

Were you very conscious when you were working on it that you were working within a, you know, huge tradition?

Yes I think so. I think it's...it's quite a responsibility when you are putting something on a wall that's going to be there, who knows for how long? Maybe forever. I hope it stays there. And to put something there, well, you know, the fact that it's under examination and close scrutiny, not necessarily by people who are fond of art or love art necessarily, but in that respect it has to function in a way that can give things of itself slowly, which is another aspect of the thing that I wanted; I wanted it to be if you like pedagogic in a way, but at the same time be full of things that would be available to those if meditated upon, you know, as a regular church-goer may well, you know, may well do if they have a point of focus. I mean the church itself is very

very Minimal in its form, and a Minimal church is a place where contemplation and meditation can actually take place.

Were you inspired by any of the other important ecclesiastical works? It's interesting that you mentioned Matisse for...

Mhm. Unfortunately I haven't seen the Matisse show. I think..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] .....Rothkos. What can I say? No, of work produced for churches in this century I don't think I've seen anything necessarily that wasn't Coventry Cathedral, which I think has got some amazing things in. But of course, I suppose it's...in relation to the fact, you know, how I felt about putting things on the walls, yes there is a tradition which probably hasn't really been examined enough or followed enough in our own century, although I suppose there was quite a lot of rebuilding after the war but it just seems to me to have gone into the area of populism, and I think that, I mean for me the idea of the esoteric is something which, as an artist I think probably it's not necessarily something, I don't necessarily want to mystify for the sake of it, but I don't think necessarily the thing can be so explicit as to be boring. And I think that signs can be, signs and symbols can be multi-layered, and as I say, if things happen slowly and the mysteries unfold by one's being drawn into a kind of magic of a configuration of stones, lines and colours, then I think that the art work has a life, and I hope that's what my work does. Let's see what happens. I've seen enough very very moving spiritual work, and you mentioned Rothko, I think as so many young fledgling artists, emergent artists have been so moved by Rothko's paintings, for the Seagram Building and the Tate Gallery. And I've been moved by all sorts of contemporary art, often with a spiritual direction. Barnett Newman's work for example, the Stations of the Cross and Shining Forths and, you know, there are things which come out of both cabbalistic and I suppose traditional, even Christian, I mean he is a Jew, an anarchist and an artist, saw a great deal of power in the themes of both the Western church and in the mysticism of cabbalistic thought of which I know nothing.

What would you say the contemporary artists are that you most admire?

Minimalist artists especially I like, but let's say if I started with, let's say modern artists, we'd have to just, well it goes without saying, Matisse, Picasso and, well, I suppose you really want to know, I suppose Ad Reinhardt's a particularly special figure for me, and I mentioned Barnett Newman as well. I should jump back and say Malevich is someone I've been very very greatly moved by both as an intellect and an eccentric, and as a painter. Tatlin as well. I mean some of my heroes have been from the Supremists in the Constructivist era, and I was very very fond of Futurists too, and I liked the idea of, I suppose the notion of influence of artists having influence societally, for good or bad, nevertheless the fact that, you know, Futurism had a profound influence upon its time, and on many many movements throughout Europe, in a rather more if you like broader social context than Cubism did which was if you like a higher order of high art, but if you look at Futurism's association with Constructivism, and of course developments in Italy, both before the Second World War - well I mean especially before the Second World War, and I suppose before the First World War in actual fact, 1905 through to, whatever, 1920.

What about more contemporary?

My contemporaries? I don't know. I think, I would say of my contemporaries, one of my favourite artists, who died recently, is Donald Judd, and Minimal artists I like very much like Carl Andre, Richard Serra, contemporary.

We have talked about those before.

Mm.

You are still working on Harringay church aren't you?

Yes. Talking about church patronage earlier on, I suppose one of the organisations called the Jerusalem Trust, which is a Sainsbury organisation, have asked me for additional pieces for the church, which includes, which has included some candelabra which in fact became rather more like bowls, like I think might be oil lamps, in that respect they kind of, it reinforces the idea of a more Byzantine notion of the church.

They in their turn commissioned a work by John Makepeace which was again an idea that the place should be a repository for highly crafted and, you know, extraordinary works rather than just, you know, just purchased by the congregation from the catalogues. And I've also embarked upon the decoration of the aumbry, which is in fact a porphyry mosaic which is if you like a symbol for, a tableau symbol for `Golgotha' in imperial porphyry, which is a place that holds the, oh golly, now I'll have to try and remember the name of these things. I've forgotten the name of the thing which holds the holy bread. I've forgotten what it's called. Oh dear, never mind.

What is the decoration for?

The aumbry is the place where the Host is kept, given that this is High Church and the Host is kept, and it's a lamp outside, again the lamp is, I made the lamp for the aumbry which stands adjacent to it and the lamp is always kept alight when there is a sanctified Host in the aumbry. The aumbry door I made, which is the stone door which has the Cairo[??] engraved in the door, and then inside the door half finished at the moment is a mosaic which is like an impression with three very very mystic and hardly recognisable crosses embedded in the mosaic of imperial porphyry, and then there's a stone like a quattrocento stone outcrop upon which the cross might have been. And on the top of that stands the cup, it's not the chalice it's the thing for the - oh dear, I've forgotten the name of it. For the Host itself. And then I've got to work on the lower section, I'm still involved with that.

It sounds like a project that's very close to you.

Yes it is. Maybe I won't let it go. [LAUGHS] We're hoping very much that the vicar who is now in the process of not just retiring but becoming a Catholic, we're worried that without him then the church may degenerate into a who knows what in terms of decoration, because we know for a fact that he is holding on to the ideas that are implicit in both the architect's and my ambitions for the church, but we know that the congregation want wall-hangings and carpets.

You didn't actually mention the bowls, Stephen, that [INAUDIBLE], it sounds as if [INAUDIBLE].

No, right. I suppose the...I mentioned the candelabra that were for the altar at the church were I suppose a development out of sort of devotion or libation bowls of which I made a series in Egypt using very very hard stones, picking up the idea of pre-dynastic bowls which were made in the hardest of stones, I mean inconceivable how they were fashioned with the primitive tools available to ancient Egyptians. But then bowls, certainly porphyry bowls were as receptacles for water, holy water, and oil were used by the ancient Romans, by the Romans anyway, during the imperial period, and I was...just my kind of involvement with the forms and the hardness of the material, I just had to make some bowls, but of course using diamond disc cutters makes the job much easier, but nevertheless it was the kind of involvement with the idea of a libation bowl, a special bowl made from the hardest of materials, sort of wrought incredibly thin and sort of both fragile and very strong. The kinds of ideas I like very much. I also made a series of pieces in imperial porphyry when I was working on the altar in which I was following the idea of attributes of saints rendered in imperial porphyry, and a number of pieces which appear quite Minimal are called `Griddles'; one is called `Griddle', two are called `Griddle: To St. Lawrence', but then I played around with the idea of giving kind of the opposite kind of feel, so one piece became a structure just like the most commonplace and disposable object, a palette that's used for loading, and one sculpture took on this form, and another sculpture called a cross again is a griddle form but it's about an idea both of landscape and enclosing and a kind of Minimal idea of rough and smooth.

Are these the works in Leeds?

That's right, they were a series of pieces put together in a special room. I was trying to give a, evoke a sense of, you know, the nursery of the infant porphyro genetori, by having a room full of porphyr artifacts. Again something which can be built on I hope for as long as I've got the fragments of porphyry left to continue. I save every little bit and these little bits I'm saving are for the next phase of the aumbry for

example, and I hope very much to be able to persuade the Egyptian Government to give me a little more when I need it.

You talked about drawings and maquettes when we were talking about the church commission. Do you normally work like that?

I didn't use maquettes for the church of St. Paul, and basically I was left to carry on with what I wanted to do. When it came to the last two commissions I've been involved with, yes I've had to make maquettes, and I don't normally make maquettes, and I don't like the idea of models really. A couple of times in the past for a sculpture I've made which went to Japan, I used a clay model which was then transported to - did I take it? No I took it with me to Italy, and that was then scaled up to about a foot, 2 feet, 2 feet, and then that was checked through and then that was used again for scaling up to make a piece that was about 3½ metres high in peperino stone, that was a sculpture called `Caryatid: Daphne'. And another sculpture I made for the International Garden Festival in Liverpool was made with a small model which was, yes which was in, gosh, what was that made of? I can't remember. Maybe that was in clay too. No, actually I made that, I made that figure in stone, a small sculpture in Portland stone, that was then used as a maquette. And then, one other thing for, I made a sculpture for Baltic Wharf in Bristol called `Atyeo', which was named after my footballing hero when I was a small boy who was a centre-forward for Bristol City. Anyway this kind of globe-like shape which I suppose drew on certain kind of ideas of, at least my recollections of Bristol's coat-of-arms, ships and waves and castles, which was made in red Verona marble. And that was a plaster, a small plaster model which was used as a maquette blown up once and then blown up again.

Do you make the maquette?

I make the maquette. I suppose you could say I've made three maquettes that have ended up as public sculptures, and recently due to, I suppose requirements of a couple of competitions - I don't do competitions - which I've actually been persuaded for various reasons to participate in, I've made small models.

But normally you just work from drawings?

My working process is a mixture of, you know, direct, working directly with stone or working through drawing, sketching, developing ideas as they go. I mean as a kind of form of visual notation, my sketch-books have enabled me to develop ideas, but sometimes, you know, major sculptures will be almost devoid of any kind of supporting drawing, it's just a question of, you know, how the ideas develop. If I've got a clear idea of what I want to do beforehand, then I don't need to make drawings. I mean the only fragmented sculptures tended to be almost made directly, both direct drawing and directly organised; I mean fragments of stone would be laid out, drawing might be sort of loosely drawn onto the surface, but I tended to draw with the most unwieldy equipment like a large cutting disc, you know, revving at about 8,000 revs, I'd use that to cut quite fine. But it's a way if you like of kind of restricting and being bold about shape and form. It's the idea of drawing with an unwieldy machine was something which I felt gave one a degree of obscure discipline I suppose.

But you're talking about drawing straight onto the stone rather than preparatory drawing on paper.

That's right, that's right, yes.

What do you do then?

Occasionally, in the context of the church for example I would say that, I mean I knew that certain aspects of the drawing were going to be very very free, like the figure itself is made free without really any preparatory study. To an extent the materials and the processes determine the way that the form will come out, in that respect it's you know...I suppose on close analysis one might see that, you know, the forms are very very loosely drawn but nevertheless they have a kind of emblematic quality. But I think to an extent because I was working on something for which, I don't know, maybe that's a kind of a bit of a cop-out to say that because it was going to be there forever I wanted to make sure that certain things were right, but I did do a number of scale drawings given the availability of material etcetera that I certainly

wanted to make sure that I didn't, if I made a mistake I was going to be able to recover. Working in Italy one would have a kind of a supply, a ready supply of material, a limitless supply of materials, but materials that I have in England in my studio are relatively limited.

I wasn't just talking about the church actually, I meant your [INAUDIBLE].

In general terms. No, well I would say that I don't necessarily. I mean even when it came to the altar, you know, I made a model for the altar, just to kind of sort things out in my own mind, and I made lots of drawings, but at the end of the day I was working on the machine in the factory in Cairo and I just stopped and said, that's it, you know, it was if you like the creative decision. You can't do it, I mean for me as a creative artist, if you're working from models you are being deprived of, if you like the connection of the growth of the idea and the object, and even if you're working with a machine and you're working with specific instructions to somebody you've got to be there to say stop if you feel that you've actually hit something, otherwise I think you're just, you do end up with larger versions of a smaller object that's been made, and I think that then you end up with a, you can end up with a, you know, a sterile form if you don't really hold onto it as it develops as an idea.

Do you usually have a clear idea of the form before you begin, or do you find it in the making?

Both really. I think that, you know, stone has got such an extraordinary life of its own that you have to respond to it if something is exposed in the making. And again I suppose you have to have the sort of strength to be able to go through with something, you know, because so many possibilities are occurring all the time. And one of the pieces for the...well the piece for the church of St. Nicholas, the cathedral of Newcastle, it's an idea of the Host; I think it's, you know, for me it's an extraordinary idea that if you like to symbolise God, whether you look at, you know, Christ as God manifest on earth or Christ the Son of God, but the idea of the bread, the Host, going back to the idea of the Sacrifice as being if you like the symbol of God or the Son of

God, is a beautiful abstract thing and an incredibly powerful abstract idea, and it's something which has if you like developed in the most simple abstract form, but...

I don't think you mentioned actually what you were doing for that church.

No I didn't, maybe because it hasn't happened yet and maybe it will be disappointing if it doesn't. But the idea is that I would make if you like a representation of a symbol. I mean the point is that it isn't, you see; the point is, you think, and this is something I've learned from, I suppose from Father Seeley at the church of St. Paul Harringay, is that the Host is God, which is taken by communicants, so to make a representation of God is a kind of a rare thing to be able to do, you know. I mean Michelangelo was bold enough to do it in the form of the old man with the beard, but the idea that it should be a disc, in this particular case alabaster, so it would be filled with light, opposite a window where there's the Last Supper, which as the sun shines through might reflect even at certain times of the day upon the Host itself. There are certain things kind of fall into place when you're working on an idea, and... Yes, so I mean for me this was, you know, it became, everything became absolutely made as if one was, as an artist one was just a vehicle really for something that was actually, actually had to happen.

In general would you say that your sculpture comes easily to you?

Yes, I think so. Yes. I don't think I'm short of good ideas. [LAUGHS]

Mm?

I don't think I'm short of good ideas. I think Picasso said you only have one or two good ideas in a lifetime; I wonder what he was doing. [LAUGHS]

So have you destroyed much work?

No I don't, that's one of my bad, I'm a bad editor. So, I mean the fact that, the book that's recently been published, the last 25 years of my work, I mean there might have

been more if I hadn't have allowed certain things to disappear, but you know, storage was a problem or whatever. But I think, you know, I feel that to an extent the way that my work proceeds, and maybe this is maybe a criticism of it, is that I tend to have quite a strong kind of conceptual grasp of the implications of my work, and where it's come from, and in that respect, you know, the ideas are a part of a kind of a, a part of a process, and it's a kind of a fundamental part of the process. And although I mention, you know, obviously things come out of one's rapport with the work, I feel that there is always for me a sense of meaning if you like, or a sense of rationality, maybe I'm too much of a rationalist. But I think probably in sculpture you have to have control rather than in painting where you can be, if you like have the freedom to express through materials rather more directly. I think I was, in mentioning about the way that I was drawing with machines, I was, you know, the idea of being able to if you like make a relief by drawing directly onto stone without any preparatory drawing, was a kind of way of yearning for a kind of a form of direct expression, which is very very difficult to come by in sculpture, to be able to see something, and in that respect I was using if you like as my teacher Donatello, who I mentioned before, schiacciato, where you have the kind of notion that the finest relief can give you the greatest depth of space, and in that respect I think drawing has a phenomenal power inasmuch as it can lead you so far in the sense of, you know, in a sense of illusion, and I think that goes back to my early reliefs of, you know, the idea of kind of almost cosmic spaces that were generated by just a curved line, or in `Soglia' the idea of a step and then a beyond just by the merest interaction with the material and form of drawing.

End of F4927 Side A

F4927 Side B

Can you say something about the tools that you like to use?

I suppose the tools I like to use most are south Indian carvers. [LAUGHS] I think, I mean the tools I've liked to use, I have liked to use, in the past tense, inasmuch as I can say that I like to use tools that enable one to achieve what one is after, and I mean my most used tool in the early days, my reliefs, were plastering trowels, industrially-used plastering trowels, as a way of I suppose achieving the most minimum, or minimal expression by manipulating materials. I think in that respect there's a beautiful idea that a tool has been devised and developed to enable one to get from A to B the most quickly. And, well, what happened? I suppose when I started to work in Italy when I started looking at carving I was then looking at the simplest, most primitive I suppose form of carving, just hammers and chisels, you know, that might have been purchased from Taranti[ph]. And then when I went to work in Italy for the very first time and started to learn about carving marble in a, I suppose in that respect that was quite an interesting development, because I used pneumatic tools, and you can use pneumatic tools in a way that you can't use hammer and chisel in a more conventional, traditional sense. Using a pneumatic tool you can actually draw, using quite a high-powered tool with tungsten tip chisels you can actually draw in stone in quite a complex way, so you can actually, you can realise a line and develop a shape very very quickly, whereas by hand it's a much much slower process, so in that respect you probably have to hold on in your mind much more in fact clearly as a carver if you're working by hand, than...like myself I'm very impatient, I like to see something happen quite quickly. And you might say, well if that's the case why do you work in such hard materials, but let's say that's the nature of the perversity of me. But carving in marbles and in slab stones when I was working in reliefs, being able to if you like convert a surface into, a flat surface into something that had a spatiality and shallow form to be able to evoke whatever it was I might want to do, whether it be landscape figures or abstract shapes, and this also would be enabled by the use of the power, the kind of diamond-disc power tools that I mentioned too. The thing is that with stone these days you can actually use modern materials, modern equipment to actually realise ideas much more quickly, and I'm not averse to doing that. It was

said by John Pope-Hennessy that Donatello would not, didn't flinch from using contemporary means to do things, and there's an example of the Madonna and Child in the V & A which is in fact a bronze on one side which from the other side is a complete negative which was used for casting glass. So the idea of casting glass was a relatively I think new idea within the Renaissance consciousness, probably because they were rediscovering Roman methods, Donatello made this thing because he had an idea of if you like reproducing three-dimensional sculptural forms through plaster and mould, which were... So, I don't really flinch from the idea of using modern materials. But that suggests that one is then talking about using modern tools in the context of making relatively traditional forms. I think, I feel to an extent that working in stone isn't necessarily turning my back on modern materials; I think it's been a necessary part of my own education to if you like reinvestigate the roots of my own aesthetic sensibility, and I mean increasingly when I'm working in India with carvers assisting me, I'm working also by introducing modern materials and machines, so I'm using machines in sculptures, I'm using ready-made products like stainless steel buckets in sculptures, I'm using the ideas of reflectivity and mechanisation. So there's a kind of, I think probably, I've almost gone back in what might seem to be, just to sound like in a reactionary way in using traditional materials and things, I've never really lost sight of the fact that I wasn't being reactionary, I'm not, I believe in the earlier work that I did and its significance. And who knows what I might be doing next, although I'm also working using computer imaging to help realise sculpture, but one can also see there are all sorts of other potential there, and one is also very very aware of the power of the media, or the new medians within, well that are available to contemporary art, and really where that kind of material and those kinds of information sort of techniques can actually be used, you know, the idea that something like a picture can be stored on a digital disk and it can be put in a television. But I'm a believer in the idea that, you know, to make sculpture you can't turn it off with a switch, so, you know, maybe I'm going to the extreme of my kind of, my kind of beliefs by saying that I'm using machines to realise a sculpture, a sculpture particularly which is a kinetic sculpture which involves purchased machines that are used in Indian domestic kitchens.

You've been using computers?

I've been using computers to help visualise and realise complex geometric forms that are being carved for me in the villages in India, so there's a kind of a contradiction on the one hand by using, if you like the forms of simple pestles that are used for grinding in primitive or if you like everyday local and village homes in India, and I'm using those forms to build if you like complex cylindrical and domed shapes. The point is that when it comes down to it there's quite a complex kind of structure involved in making a dome out of these particular shapes, less simple than an igloo made by Inuit.

Are you working on that here or in India?

I'm working on the computers here, but the work's being produced in India, and that will be on show later, well, at the beginning of next year.

And when do you title the works?

About titling?

At what point do you title the work? [INAUDIBLE].

Yes. I think I title things really at the end, and I think I use titles according to where I am, which will either shock or not shock or..... [BREAK IN RECORDING] Yes? Or titles that might just be descriptive or might have some sort of social sort of, social meaning, or may have an autobiographical... I mean they can be anything, I mean I suppose titles can mean all sorts of things to all sorts of people, so, I don't really know. I think I probably go through a real gamut of things, I don't just usually give things kind of code numbers and `Untitled' necessarily. I mean occasionally those things happen, but I usually try to point to some underlying theme within the work which is either, it can be underlying or it can be quite explicit. And pieces, some of the big public sculptures I've made have used the idea of sound or a voice, like `Song', which was a sculpture for the Opera House in Cairo; `Hymn', which was the piece for the University of Kent; and `Mantra' which was the work for the British Council's

new building in Delhi; and `Echo' which was the piece at Ludgate. So, if you like there's a degree of perversity in calling sculptures that don't necessarily have any representational quality after sounds or voices or songs.

Can we talk about some of those public commissions?

Yes. I suppose the first, I think the first public commission I did was for the International Garden Festival.

Yes I think we talked in some detail about that.

That, called `Palanzana'.

And also about the Egyptian one.

Yes, `Osirisisis'. Before that, I just mentioned before, `Caryatid: Daphne' kind of linking ideas of, if you like the architectural and the sculptural in `Caryatid'. More recently I think I first... Well one of the things that India enabled me to do was to work on an incredibly large scale, if you like on the scale of public sculpture, monumental sculpture, without it necessarily having been commissioned. I was able just if you like as my own studio practice to produce some very very large sculptures, and works that were if you like purchased off the shelf from an exhibition I did at the Bath Festival for the Artsite organisation, consisted of a sculpture called `Ganapathi and Devi', which was purchased by the developers of Broadgate. This started up quite an interesting liaison with, for me a very significant patron in Stuart Lipton, whose company, Stanhope, were involved with a number of developments of different organisations, with British Rail or with Godfrey Brabhan's organisation, Rosehaugh. And I did a number of commissions including `Osirisisis' which was for the Stockley Park development which came after the `Ganapathi and Devi' at Broadgate, and then after that the sculpture, `Echo', which was for another development of Stuart Lipton's at Ludgate, and now under Broadgate Properties. The British Council, who have been very supportive over the years, took from me as a part of, I think they called it a commissioning fee, something they haven't done before, but when I went to India for

the very first time the sculpture that was the first sculpture I made in India called `Etruscans' was taken, is now on the building of their Madras office. [BREAK IN RECORDING] This was a piece that was in the Indian Triennale in New Delhi, so I suppose it constitutes a public sculpture because it's in a public space. When I first went to India in fact there was discussion of the new building that was eventually going to be built in Delhi, and then it was during the time of the Henry Moore exhibition in Delhi I was approached by the now Sir John Hanson who was the Minister for the British Council in Delhi, and Alan Bowness invited to consider producing a sculpture for the new building that was to be built in New Delhi, which was rather nice because they approached two artists who have in fact had close ties with India, and so Howard Hodgkin, Sir Howard Hodgkin was commissioned to make a work for the front of the building and my sculpture was in a courtyard in the rear of the building, which could be seen from the road right the way through the building, which was part of the whole scheme of things. And the British Council also introduced me, I suppose as an artist to the Foreign Office when I was commissioned for the sculpture, which was `Song' eventually, which was commissioned for the Opera House in Cairo which was a gift from the British people to the Egyptians for their new opera house. And I suppose to an extent what's been rather fortunate for me is that since the, I suppose the descent of, or the disintegration of the commercial market for the visual arts, I seem to have been quite busy working on public commissions. I suppose those few in question have in fact kept me busy over the last few years since, and I had one or two commissions during that time. `Hymn' again was an important commission for me, it was commissioned by a significant, let's say critic and historian, Stephen Bann, who was eventually commissioned to write the principal essay for my book by the Henry Moore Foundation and Lund Humphreys. And that commemorated the 25th anniversary of the founding of the University of Kent at Canterbury. And I think probably those are the principle pieces that have constituted my public sculpture.

And `Hymn' seemed to come out as almost slightly different to the rest of the work you were doing at that time.

Yes I think it probably... Yes, I think if one looks at a number of other pieces that really depend upon, if you like the power of the stone for its own sake, there was a piece which is currently on show at Kew Gardens called `Mayan's Cube', and there was another thing called `Mayan's Principle' which are basically about stone and splitting stone, if you like the power that's locked into stone until it's released from the earth. And I think in that piece it was to do rather more with, I suppose principles of male and female are often used as an example. If you like Mondrian's idea of the horizontal being a female and the vertical being a male, and I suppose to an extent one can see that in I suppose the incidence of the male and female principles within Indian sculpture. And I think probably `Hymn' in its own right is something which I suppose involves an interaction of both male and female forms to create a force which I suppose is evocative of so many things; it's both, you know, like a torso on the one hand, and it can also be seen as almost, as being truth to form on the hill outside of Canterbury looking down upon the cathedral.

But did you not have that in mind when you made it?

Which?

The cruciform. Connotations of [INAUDIBLE].

I don't know. I think probably the way that it was extended, I mean there is in fact one sculpture for which I made quite a lot of drawings, and I suppose I was aware of that fact that you know, if one went a certain degree further in one direction, reducing the form further for example, it would become more cross-like than torso-like. And I suppose to an extent the way that it read in the end as a powerful image was to do with the way that one pushed it as far as one dare without losing contact with the other, and I think to an extent that kind of tension between, it's becoming something else as a part of its success, if it is that.

And what part do you think the siting plays in it?

I think the siting is significant in it. I think probably the idea of its sort of intrinsic force as, almost as a standing stone almost, this sort of suggests something of another, or an other spirituality, to the spirituality of the great cathedral below it, and I suppose in my mind there is an idea of, if you like the power in stone, if you like the force of a sign as opposed to if you like the complex building that the great cathedrals sort of evoke.

I don't think we've said very much about the commission for the British Council building in Delhi.

I can't remember. I suppose since it was commissioned there were, I suppose, let's say it's one of those instances where one did something that was perfectly, I mean would have been a perfectly fine solution to the principles that I consider to be significant in the building as a contemporary building in a modern India that was to symbolise a part of the history of India.

It was called `Mantra' wasn't it?

Yes, the sculpture was called `Mantra'. The building was designed by Charles Corea, and we discussed earlier on the fact that it was a modern building in modern Delhi that somehow through its layering would be symbolic of both aspects of the modern and the rural and the hi-tec and the Mogul, and certainly when I met Charles for the first time my proposal for my piece was in fact the level that I don't think they had considered before, and that was really the, if you like the Hindu, the deep ancient spirituality of, which I don't think they had envisaged being able to introduce into the building. And so my contribution, which was to be something that was about that spirituality, started off as being something else. In fact there are a number of pieces which I made which were small elements called `Descending Torsos' which is in the piece called `Axe Man', another piece called `Ram'. This form, which was derived from an idea of a Jain torso, very very highly stylised and refined shape, was a form that I was looking at when I initially made my proposals, and all these proposals seemed to be passed, and then suddenly, not out of the blue but only two days after my meeting with Corea, I got a letter from the client at the British Council saying

they thought that the form was too sexually explicit for an Indian public building and they would like me to consider an alternative. So I jumped up and down and said, `How can you talk about anything being overly sexually explicit in India? That's the whole point about the culture that you're in.' But it transpired that the architect, you know, appeared to be a bit of a prude and he was trying to hide his own taste and sensibilities in the matter, and maybe from that point on we didn't really see eye to eye on things. But at the end of the day I felt that the form that we arrived at, I arrived at, the form of this `Mantra', was derived from a series of smaller sculptures that I had made which was to do with the idea of, if you like a spirituality within stone, and if you like the form of, if you like a face emerging from a granite mass which actually happened to be if you like a perimeter wall, that became a perimeter wall of the building, was something that for me said something about my ideas about stone, said something about architecture bringing architecture and sculpture together. And also I wanted it to try to echo certain ideas of Hinduism's and southern India's kind of earlier colonising ambitions, because the influence of Hinduism went through the, around the Bay of Bengal, and then down through the archipelago through to Borneo and Java, and so there was a point...and especially where I reached this high point, where one of the biggest religious building in the world happens to be Angkor, Angkor Wat in Cambodia, and there are some wonderful sort of temple domes which are actually faces. And I was trying to evoke a sense of both the architecture and the figural, and I suppose something that might echo also, you know, a period of Hinduism's greatness in the world stage.

Was there a problem with it being specific to Hinduism?

No, none at all. I mean there was the Muslim, a courtyard if you like, the Islamic courtyard, which took care of that element within the building. No, I think in the end that was the bit that was applauded really. It's achieved a status of being referred to by one writer on modern Delhi as one of the seven wonders of modern Delhi. At least I don't think that was a figment of my imagination, I think I read that in a newspaper article. But anyway, I think to an extent, certainly whenever I'm in India now people recall it with some degree of complimentariness. What do I mean? I mean, I am complimented by the fact that people refer to it because they've been to receptions at

the British Council, and it seems to be, it seems to feature in their receptions. It's in the courtyard which is used in the open air and in the evening it's illuminated, and it apparently captures people's imagination.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

You mentioned Stephen Bann. I wondered what you think about the critical interpretations that there have been of your work.

Difficult. Who am I?

The way people have written about it.

Well it's interesting in a way. I suppose to an extent I don't really feel that my work has been, I mean since Stephen Bann's essay I don't think anybody has ever really approached it in any kind of depth. I think probably in 25 years of showing my work, or 20 years of showing my work, there have been reviews.

Well what about the level of reviewing?

The level of reviewing? Well, of course...the level of reviewing.

How do you feel about the way you've been reviewed?

I've always been...I've always...generally I would say that I've been very fortunate to have had terrific support from British critics in general. I can't recall many exhibitions that in fact I've been panned, if I had been panned there's...of critics in general who have been very supportive, I would say that Richard Cork, Richard Dorment, John Russell-Taylor, Marina Vaizey, David Shepherd? David...no, is it David Shepherd, in the `Telegraph'? Bill Packer. They've often been, you know, very very complimentary or generally supportive.

Do you think that anyone's been particularly insightful?

Insightful? I think possibly, well Richard Cork and Richard Dorment have probably written more fully than anyone. I should also say people like, in certain periods of being, who have done kind of in-depth work, have been someone like Sarah Kent for example has written an article that was actually an article in `Artscribe', I think that's really the only article that's actually ever been written. David Cohen recently did an article on three sculptors who have an association with India, Anish Kapoor, Dhruva Mistry and myself, who come at, out of and from India in various forms, and he's been relatively supportive. In depth, insightful. Difficult to say really. I've got my...I mean let's say one of course is always chuffed when someone like Richard Cork does an article in the press, and Richard Dorment too has written on the church as well as mentioned my name in complimentary, or often critical way. But I don't know, maybe it's not for me to say really. Yes. I would say that there's been...I would say there's been a...I feel that I haven't, there hasn't been a great deal of in-depth analysis of my work, which I think the work can take, and I think until the essay by Stephen Bann is really the first time the work has been addressed in depth. Michael Compton in his catalogue essay for the British council-cum-Tate Gallery catalogue I think wrote well, and in my Arnolfini catalogue Ronnie Rees, who is an old friend, a very good writer and painter, wrote I think very, I think he has great insight, and Sarah Kent did the other essay which I think was OK, it was good.

Are you still teaching art?

No I'm not teaching art. I haven't taught since 1980. In fact one of the things that I've been able to do since I gave up teaching in, when I had a half lectureship at Brighton, which was the first time I had ever taken on a full-time job, when I started teaching in 1968 which was as soon as I left college I was fortunate enough to get a teaching position, which enabled me if you like to develop my work in my studio, I taught two, three days a week for, I suppose, I think, well it must have been about fourteen years, maybe twelve years. '68 until 1980, twelve years.

But you are for instance still teaching at Wimbledon now, aren't you, or you have a connection with it?

No, no. I'm not teaching. I am a senior researcher there at Wimbledon.

Yes.

For which I give a termly lecture for which I will prepare papers, which I want to do anyway which is one of the nice things about it, on three aspects of my work, if you like, three aspects of my work being let's say Egypt, India and the sacredness of stones, which is something I will hopefully be preparing over the next year. So my associationship with Wimbledon is if you like a researcher rather than as a teacher.

My apologies.

But I do lecture occasionally.

Yes. Well I think that's what confused me, because often when we've tried to set up meetings you seem to be lecturing all over the country one way and another.

Well, not really. No I've...my daughter who has just begun, my two daughters, one who has graduated from, having done art history at Nottingham, and the other one who is currently in her second year at Chelsea, suggested that I should do more teaching, so in fact I was asked by Nottingham University art gallery to do an exhibition, for which I offered to do some lecturing, and my other daughter said that I really ought to talk to students, and I think I listened to them really and thought that maybe it was a good idea, because having not really had any contact with young artists or students for the last fourteen years - my God! wasn't...no, hang on, 1980 till now, yes, fifteen years - I was missing a point of contact, and I think to an extent even the knowledge of my work, given that my work wasn't really being represented either in the press or publications very much, it was a necessary thing really just to let people know that there was someone working with a certain set of ideas here there and everywhere. So I thought I would do more lecturing.

Do you have a sense of having something specific that you want to communicate, Stephen, by your work, or in general?

No I think it's rather more general. I think probably it's just the fact that, you know, there is someone doing a certain type of work. Maybe no one else is working like it, and I suppose given that, I mean maybe it's because I'm not around so much, maybe those people who are writers on art just have forgotten who I am. And I think that's probably why the...it was important to do the show at Leeds which Robert Hopper curated, the `Surfaces and Stones of Egypt', because it puts current work into a context, and although, you know, and I suppose Leeds, that, there's a massive gap if you like inasmuch as the work I did in Britain was my surface work and the current work that I have done, although it's done in Egypt, is actually looking at a certain kind of similarity of approach in a way, inasmuch as I say, stylistically let's say is rather more Minimal than newer work that I've been doing, and I suppose the great gap in between can be looked at in a way as being something which covers quite a range of interpretations. But I think to an extent there's always a kind of an underlying sort of investigation into sculpture, its expression and its history, which is I suppose where I see that I am coming from.

End of F4927 Side B

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You said that your work in Italy and in Egypt and India did very much feed into each other, have a sense of that.

Yes, I'm not sure if they...well let's say I think that there's something which, that's probably going to be coming. I suppose in travelling and working in other countries I open myself up to the influence of the culture and the art as...so, I suppose as a receiver, a receptacle for data and stimulus. I suppose one of the underlying themes within my work is to do with the idea that there is a universality that underpins the work of contemporary artists with artists of the past and artists of antiquity. I think we share a common language, and I suppose making a point about that is something that I feel that I'm doing by going into India and stripping away extraneous material to get to a kind of a sculptural essence, which is what I've also been doing in Egypt. And other things flood in too. I don't feel that I'm an artist with a mission who's going around sort of saying, this is how it should be, but rather more someone who is, let's say responding to things, and I suppose responding to other potential and stimulus which I suppose is unexpected. I mean to an extent one can't be in receipt of all knowledge and make a statement from that position, and I think to an extent that, let's say being open to influence is something that feeds the diversity within my work, and I think that for me is a significant factor. And, I think, I don't consider that I will spend the rest of my life zooming round from here there and everywhere working in that way; I think, I mean for example the work `Echo', which was made in India with Indian stone has a certain kind of resonance of Egypt, having made the sculpture called `Flask' which is a very similar form, but then again plays with an idea of that kind of shared kind of essential sculptural quality within the figure as a vessel if you like, or the figure as a container of something. And I suppose having gone to India and coming back to work in Italy the sculpture called `Taumatros' played with certain concepts of `Tanmatras', with ideas of the `Etruscan', which is where that idea initially came from. And I think, you know, if I think to the future and how things might develop I would think that, you know, as time goes by I will spend more time in one place rather than another, and maybe, you know, these influences will have a rather more, I suppose synthetic kind of form of expression. But who knows, you know,

what will happen? I can't say that, you know, what I'm going to be doing in the next...well I know what I'm doing in the next month because I'm working flat out in India for an exhibition drawing together half a dozen sculptures which are in progress, and to an extent I'm looking upon it as being a result of ten years of working in India, which seems to be a reasonable kind of bubble to put things into. And then...

Are they all new works?

They're works that have been in progress for the last year and a half, some are quite massive, they're quite complex. So I'm looking to get those together, and a book we hope will be published in India on my ten years' work in India. And then I'm going to Egypt where I've been invited to participate in a symposium, but I also would look upon that as being an opportunity of if not fulfilling a year-long, two-year-long held ambition to follow up a series of sculptures I made called `Sight of Chephren', I made five small sculptures, which were from stones that I took from the Chephren quarries in the southern desert of Egypt and I want to return to make some more if you like major statements using that stone. The first time the stone quarry's been visited in, well, the stone quarry's been visited by geologists, but nothing has been made out of the stone in the last 5,000 years and so an exciting prospect. So these pieces that I made which I showed last year in a small gallery of Michael Hue-Williams were kind of, sort of, I hope quite potent but abstract forms, bowl or figure shapes.

Did you say anything about the new work that you're doing in India?

Well the new work I think I've, if I haven't already mentioned it, consists of a number of pieces, I think probably to an extent as diverse as the works that I've done in India in the past. I mean it would be quite interesting in producing a book that one might be able to kind of put things together in a way which there's, in the last ten years there have been ten sculptures which deal with that idea, you know, in ten different times in ten sculptures dealing with that issue which were done at different times. Otherwise I suppose one will look at quite a rich kind of diversity of imagery. And of the sculptures that are being produced, a piece called, well there's another version of that sculpture called `Tank' which is a much bigger version, consisting of about 150

lotuses and buckets; another piece called `New Domestic Rituals' which will include these machines and these carved pestles; a big Buddha-like figure which is to do with the idea of absence of the representation of the figure, the Buddha initially was represented by an empty throne or two footmarks, and then the Buddha became a full-flown very very ethereal flame-like figure, and I've been playing around with an idea of, of this idea, the flame-like figure but with an absence of identity. And, another figure which I suppose is the most important I suppose for me of all, which is this large igloo cylinder shaped figure which is like a cell which is returning to a theme which I've been after for, I suppose six or seven years, which is an idea of the, and if I haven't mentioned this I'd be surprised, but the idea of Piero della Francesca's `Madonna del Parto' in which the godhead within the god which is in a form in India of, it's called `Lingodbhovam'. If I haven't mentioned this before, quickly, a lingodbhovam is the symbol of the phallus of Siva which has a female principle, the yoni, carved within it, and then standing within that is the form of Siva himself. I have this idea that in the `Madonna del Parto' of Piero, you have a very powerful symbol for the phallus in the form of a tent; you have the curtains being drawn back exposing the Virgin who is incinta, is pregnant. She has an unbuttoned section on the top of her swollen stomach which is very much like the yoni shape of the lingodbhovam, and the idea that she is carrying God, the Son of God, within the form of the godhead, and it's an idea that I've had...since the idea that, which someone suggested, that in one of Masaccio's Madonnas, the head of, the halo around the Madonna was in fact a copy of a maiolica dish in which was inscribed `Allah Akbar' in Arabic, and it's something to do with the idea, this kind of links some ideas of, if you like communication of ideas in the ancient world, let's say unknowingly in the case of the Masaccio I believe. If it's true, I don't read Arabic to be able to say that that's what it does say, but nevertheless it has been suggested that that's what this halo actually is written, because he's taken a dish to actually... But then again he may have known. And the idea that, you know, within the ancient world there were motorways, great superhighways of communication in the silk routes which although may have taken six months or a year for a camel train to get from China to Athens, or let's say smith stops on the way and the trade having taken place, but nevertheless the relays of communications...

We did talk about this before, I remember.

We did talk about before. So, double whammy.

And, the exhibition in India is going to be held somewhere rather special, isn't it?

Yes. The exhibition is going to be held at a place called Jamali-Kamali, which is the tomb of a Sufi poet. It was chosen really because I was looking for a particular site, which in fact for this very reason I may not in the end be able to show the sculpture that I particularly wanted to exhibit, because although this is a monument and it's a non-functioning mosque which is adjacent to the tomb, it could be for Archaeological Survey of India intentions not possible to actually put something, although it doesn't require anything more than a placement of the object in the space, that it may be considered inappropriate. I'm still working on that. But having chosen this site, because I was looking for a site in Delhi which was basically a kind of ruin that had some kind of cover for this particular sculpture, and in finding this rather overgrown rather beautiful kind of piece of desolate history in a way, totally forgotten, a kind of overgrown bit of jungle, in fact since I found it has actually been cleaned up quite a bit, and is less of a jungle than I originally had thought that it would be, but I quite like the idea of an exhibition of contemporary art that's about Indian ideas in something that's got all sorts of cultural cross-overs. And for those very reasons the controversy may be something that will be too much, because this mosque is actually built from the ruins of demolished Hindu temples. So we're back to the Ayodhya problem. If there were those, you know, within that particular area of Delhi who wish to point to it as being an issue, but of course the thing survives there anyway, and even the great, another great monument close by at Qutab Minar, which is this sort of 300-foot high mogul tower is all built from the ruins of Hindu temples that were demolished by the moguls in the 16th century. It's just a part of the rich pattern of Indian history I'm afraid that I suppose we've all been a part of as the British as well.

I don't know whether you want to talk about any of the other work you're doing in India.

I think that's probably all of it really. About the last six pieces are around those themes, and there's...I'm also working on another version of a sculpture that I have just yesterday been involved with down at Hat Hill, the thing called `Catamarans on a Granite Wave', so I'm in the process of making another version of `Catamarans on a Granite Wave' for that same exhibition.

[BREAK IN RECORDING

You've got an exhibition on at Kew at the moment as well haven't you. What work have you got there?

I think there are six or seven sculptures in this exhibition at Kew. It's the first time that Kew have ever, the first time that Kew has ever had an exhibition of contemporary sculpture, although there are sort of a few kind of classical pieces littered around the place. I was asked at quite short notice to do a show, and the Contemporary Art Society approached my dealer Michael Hue-Williams about the possibility of doing something, and it just so happened that I had a few pieces, quite large pieces, that were at various stages of finishing, pieces that in fact, well two pieces had been shown before but several pieces which I was very very pleased to have the opportunity of finishing, because they'd been sitting in Kent for about five years now, since they were disgorged from one of the numerous containers that's come back from India. And so it was a terrific opportunity really to finish off some pieces with the Contemporary Art, some of Contemporary Art Society sponsorship, and I suppose to an extent I see this almost associated with the show that I'm doing in India at the moment, which is again sort of finishing some pieces off. It's almost, this kind of ten-year cycle or ten-year period is kind of coming to some kind of climax, culmination. I don't know what will happen in the future, I'm not sure whether I will continue to work with the same intensity in India. But the pieces that are at Kew consist of a sculpture which, of which I've mentioned before called `Mayan's Cube'; `The Kani' sculpture, which is the seven dressed figures; a sculpture called `Primal Torso' which is set amongst some very very tall trees, almost like an apse in a church, this form also is very very high, almost tree-like, and it's about sort of 17 feet high and consists of a column with a figure on the top. A sculpture called `Holy Family II',

a sort of an abstraction of the Somaskandamurti form that's frequently used in south Indian carving and bronzes. And then the sculpture, `Tank', consisting of, in this case of 48 lotuses in stainless steel buckets that reflect themselves as you walk through them. This is actually in one of the greenhouses so it's rather a nice connection that amongst these pieces is a flower sculpture which sits in its own large greenhouse in this great field of granite chippings. That sculpture, that exhibition will be on until next spring, so it's kind of nice, it's such a long exhibition it will go through the seasons, it was if you like the last, it's called Indian Summer the exhibition, so that if you like it did turn out to be very much a part of the end of our summer which I think probably has gone on until about two weeks ago, and now autumn is changing, the colours of the girls' dresses are changing like autumn colours of the trees, and as the trees become denuded, I suppose the sculptures will change in their relationship to their environment, and then of course the growth of spring will come around, and hopefully all these seasons will be documented in the photography that will I hope take place during this next few months.

What do you like to do when you're not working?

I don't not work. Unfortunately when my, when Judy and I went to Hat Hill the other day it was noted that we really don't have much time for life. And I would say that outside of a very occasional game of golf, a visit to the opera, and occasional visits to the cinema, I work all the time, seven days a week really. And when I'm in India I have a regime which is, I think I may have mentioned, I get up in the morning, I go to work, at lunchtime I swim, I have a kind of an obsession to...it's not an obsession but nevertheless a little response to an idea of exercise, I do a bit of yoga in the morning and I do a bit of yoga in the evening. And I swim as if it's yogic, because I suppose there's this sort of repetition thing about it which is so boring that I feel that it's actually good for the soul. It's more easy to put something that might be considered recreational into my regime when I'm in India rather more than when I'm here, as everything seems to be so frantic when it comes to, if you like living and surviving as an artist in the current economic climate.

What do you think your attitude or relationship with money is?

Well my attitude towards it is with [INAUDIBLE]. What can I say? My problem is that I feel I'm perhaps quite irresponsible because I don't really feel ruled by money, although, and this is probably one of the reasons one is working so hard at the moment, I think probably I've worked so much in the past and not been aware of the expense, and I am now catching up for the extravagances of my kind of involvement with my work over the past ten years. I think in every instance when I've been working on big projects that at least might have been seen to be quite expensive sculptures that I've poured the money back into making more sculpture, and I've been oblivious to the fact that there have been changes taking place in the economy of this country which has if you like seen to it that artists can survive if you like in moments of fatness, you know, when the economy is on an up. And when the economy went down, the artists were the first to suffer, and we are now the last to recover if there is any recovery in the recession. So in that respect maybe I've had an innocence towards money, and I've had fantastic support from Judy, who has always if you like encouraged me to realise my ambitions in my work which has I suppose caused a great deal of hardship as far as she is concerned, and my children too in a way, although they've benefited from the, if you like the better years because they've had quite good educations, public school, completely different to my own education. So, we've had, you know, we've had good times, and I think things are...things are looking up again really. But, yes, money isn't...money just makes things, enables things to happen as far as I'm concerned, and happen in the field of my own work.

Would you describe yourself as political?

I suppose political means all sorts of things. I mean if it means, do I see myself as someone who operates within my field politically, I would say I don't. If I see myself as idealistic, I would say I am political.

Are you interested in politics?

I used to be more interested in politics, but then I suppose that was to do with my own kind of emergent ideas on ideology and art. I think probably I feel less preoccupied

than I did with the ideology of art, but I still think that, you know, what one is made of is actually tempered by the ideas that one has held in the past, but I don't really feel that I've thrown overboard any of those ideas, I just think I'm going through a different phase, maybe something to do with the way that one's life changes. I think one becomes more political when one is at a certain age in one's life; I think that probably has applied to many artists in history. And I suppose my period of, I suppose an artist as idealist probably went from a phase of early twenties to my thirties, and I suppose when you're in your thirties and you have a family you start thinking of other things. And I suppose you become more pragmatic in a way. And, then I suppose you start thinking of all sorts of other things, and I suppose other rather more esoteric aspects of one's art and...I don't know. So yes, it's just, I suppose it's an organic process really.

Are friends important to you?

Friends? I don't know. I think, you know...I really don't know. It's kind of odd. I mean if I think about how many friends I've got, I would say that they're very very few, very few; if you can count them on one hand I would be amazed. I mean my, if you like my companion, my partner, my love and my best friend is Judy, and I have a very dear friend in my eldest brother John, and of course I love my other brothers too but I would say we have more of a kind of, a kind of a rapport in terms of our own sensibilities. Then I am very fond of a couple of artists - a couple, I say one artist, Christopher Lebrun I think is a person who I would say was a friend. Hugh O'Donell is another artist who I have a great deal of respect for but now he lives in America we see so little of him, but he's a wonderful man, very very, terrific enthusiast and a very very good artist.

Perhaps you could tell me something about Christopher Lebrun?

I think you have to wait for his own interview, he would probably give you a much better account of himself. But I think he's a very very...I think he's very talented and, I mean in terms of...he's...he's a terrific personality. He's certainly a very very bright

guy, he's very very humorous. I think it's a rare combination to have somebody who's really bright and has a fantastic sense of humour.

Do you see very much of him?

Not recently. It's rather strange. I suppose in the last few months especially possibly, I would say probably since he joined Marlborough I've seen the most of him. But I'm very fond of him, and I'd say the same as I say of Hugh, whenever he's around. I would...it's always perhaps a mistake to say that one is very friendly with one's dealer, and I've always been quite close and friendly to my dealers, but at the end of the day who knows what's going to happen? So, I think... It's funny, friends. I mean it's embarrassing to say I don't really have very many friends, but I think it's kind of curious in a way, artists in this country have often yearned for a place where they could meet, and you know, the Cedar Bar in New York, we may have mentioned this before, is a place where people in New York school artists used to get together, but then again, you know, going in a pub and getting absolutely [INAUDIBLE] smashed, drunk and out of your head, was something I suppose that used to happen in New York with artists when they were at a certain age, or maybe until they died; in this country there has always, as I say, been a yearning for a place where artists can meet, but I don't think they do. We don't. I mean there's not a place where you can say... I think the Eagle pub is recently, in Islington, has been a place where younger artists have tended to congregate, beneath the Eagle Gallery; I've not really been involved with that. But, I have friends in India and I have friends in Egypt, very dear friends who are very generous to me in their friendship, as someone who kind of comes and goes, you know. In that respect I feel like I don't really contribute as much to them as they do to me in a way, but I suppose it's one of those oddities of travelling as much as I do.

Talking about meeting artists, you were going to tell me about your meeting with Henry Moore.

Oh yes. Well, yes, I mean it's a shame, it was a bit of a non-event in a way. I remember visiting Much Hadham when I was a student at Loughborough, and, I mean

one saw the great man. Much later on, in fact it must have been 1982/1983, I'm not a great one for remembering dates, but I had my exhibition in '82 - it must have been - I had had my exhibition at Spoleto, which was curated by Giovanni Carandente, and the exhibition consisted of two young and two old, it was myself - I may, I must have mentioned this, it was myself and Roberto Barní and Balthus and Henry Moore. And after that exhibition, I mean it was a great sadness, I met Balthus in Spoleto and Moore had in fact not been well and was unable to come, so I was very sorry not to have met him in the context of our exhibiting in the same town where he would have seen my work, and I felt a sense of loss about this, so I asked Giovanni Carandente if he would be able to arrange a meeting for me and Moore, and so he did and I went along to Much Hadham, and waited for my appointment, and took my slides to show, my big transparencies to show Henry Moore of the work that I had on show in Spoleto. And we sat down to talk, and I think we had an hour set aside for our meeting, and an archivist who was involved with cataloguing some of his drawings just interrupted our meeting, commandeered Moore for most of the hour, and then the meeting was over. I was furious. This man was there every day and he just couldn't bear to not have his attention. So, it was, you know, we sat down together, he was on two sticks, and you know, he smiled and we spoke, and that was that, and unfortunately it's...it was one of those things that just passed. [LAUGHS]

Not inspiring?

Oh, I think it was nice to certainly be in his presence for an amount of time. It's one of those things about an artist, artists in this country, I think, you know, I mean I remember I bumped into Francis Bacon in the street in Paris and I thought, I mean that was...just that moment was extraordinary, I mean just to see him really, and I think, it's funny, I think probably it's when you're older you tend to acknowledge your heroes more than rather when you're younger, because I think probably you tend to be more rebellious when you're younger, you know, I could have probably met Moore when I was much younger, I mentioned when I was a student, but I probably didn't know enough about things then, and probably had never had enough sense of my own kind of creative power if one could call it that to actually feel that I would have been rebellious, but I suppose, well let's say as a young artist up until I suppose not so long

ago one pooh-poohed I suppose what would have been considered rather a conservative nature of Moore's abstraction in the face of Minimalism in Conceptualism if you like. But one of course can see, you know, the power of the man, I think you know, that we come to acknowledge our great artists. I mean I may have been a bit reluctant to say earlier when you asked me who my favourite contemporary artists were, it's funny, I mean we have a, you know, I think that the status of British sculpture at the moment is well deserved. I still don't somehow see it alongside the work of my great heroes like Judd, Andre and Serra and people of that era, the previous era. And of course I remember when Nicholas Logsdail said to me, of course these artists are, you know, a previous generation, the artists that I loved and I thought that I would be rubbing shoulders with and kind of exchanging ideas with, you know, basically they would have been considered to be the different generation and consequently not really want to have any contact with artists of my generation at all, and maybe that was true. One thing I noticed especially however, which I felt was rather touching, when I went to work, when I worked on the show, `Pittura Ambiente' at the Palazzo Reale in Milan, I was the only English artist in the show, but all the Americans were terribly friendly and supportive to each other, it was like a kind of, an amazing kind of group of friends, and they stuck to each other, helped each other and discussed things. I was told in actual fact they all knife each other in the back when they're at home, but they were very very good together then. And I suppose it's something which I've never really witnessed. There seems to be such a kind of competitiveness in this country, we are such a small pond and there is not enough room for the big egos that swim around in it, you know, to coexist, that we tend to be rather less than generous to each other. I've had, you know, quite profound criticisms, or maybe they're not so profound, of certain artists who have done very very well, but at the same time, you know, when you consider in the light of what else is going on there are some very very interesting artists which have to be acknowledged, and you know, people like Tony Cragg and Anish Kapoor, Bill Woodrow, Richard Deacon, I think with justification they have their reputations. But I think the nature of the competitiveness and the factionalism and the Machiavellianism of certain galleries, mainly their gallery, which I used to be a member of, causes an unnecessary friction between artists, because there is such a kind of, I don't.....

End of F4928 Side A

F4928 Side B

I can't remember what I was saying.

About the fear among artists.

Oh right. Right. [BREAK IN RECORDING] I think there's a degree of, can one say fear? There's...I think there's a protectionism. I mentioned, you know, there is a small pond with big egos, I think I was talking about the artists, but I think as far as the dealers are concerned they consider that there are very very few fishermen around the pond, and one doesn't want to spread the, what can I say, maybe it was a bad metaphor. They're jealous of too many, those few... How can I say? There are...I'm getting caught up in my metaphor, I'd better forget my metaphor and go back to the idea that, the market's so small that you can't be too generous about artists that don't actually exist in your own stable, just like, you know, it's like if a horse race only consisted of horses from the same stable, you know, no one can lose, and in that respect it's quite easy for a gallery, in particular in this country, to have actually manipulated the scene. So, you know, I think there are some very good artists represented by one gallery in particular, and I think that, you know, English art has been represented by them, and I think to an extent the reputation of British art hasn't been well served by the fact that there's been so much protection of that particular group of artists. But...

We're talking about the Lisson?

Yes. That having been said, it's quite extraordinary that, you know, other new young artists are doing so well, and let's say in terms of reputation someone like Damien Hirst is doing incredibly well. I mean I'm not necessarily enamoured with the work, but you know, one must applaud the business of how the work has become hailed as something significant.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Well Stephen we've covered a lot of ground over all these different interviews. I wondered, do you think we've left anything out?

[LAUGHS] I think it's been so thorough I shudder to think that there's anything that's been left out. No I really don't...I really don't think so. I mean, it's been an extraordinary process. As you say it's gone on now for several months, with my going backwards and forwards and not being able to be pinned down for any length of time, I suppose, I expect it's become rather more protracted than it might otherwise have been, and I'm sure we've gone over several things a number of times. But I think probably if it goes on any longer there'll be even more to talk about.

Well it's been absolutely fascinating and very interesting Stephen, so thank you very much.

End of F4928 Side B

End of Interview

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Interviewer's name»Hooker, Denise

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[Interview 12th May 1995]

Born in Bristol in 1946. Grandparents: only knew maternal grandmother; father's mother died of cancer, doesn't know anything about paternal grandfather. Mother's father in Navy, gassed in First World War before he was born. Memories of maternal grandmother. Father's family; mother's family. Christmas and bank holidays, family gatherings. SC youngest of four sons. Mother's sister recalls early family relationships: grandmother married her half-brother. Family not spoken about a great deal possibly because of this. Maternal grandfather was time-serving sailor and instructor in the Nautical School at Portishead. He was a physical training instructor and an accomplished sportsman. Stigma over history of family.

Bristol-based family. SC's mother (maiden name Gill). Three of mother's family married three of father's family. Father sacrificed his potential as he had to give up school to nurse his mother who was dying of cancer. Grandmother played little role in SC's life; his sense of pride in grandfather's athleticism. Family tension when grandmother lived with one of his uncles. Grandmother living with SC's parents when she died. Memories of grandmother's house, SC used to do her shopping from an early age. Not a wealthy background; grandmother had nine children, one died. Memories of Christmas. Aunts and uncles. Mother had a little job in a sweet shop occasionally. Traditional family roles. Mother was housewife taking care of family, father worked for the Prudential. Mother worked at Wills's cigarette factory during war. Parents met through family connections.

Father gunnery instructor in Navy during war. His naval career. Finally posted to India. Father spoke about his memories of India and used odd bits of Hindi at home. SC's attraction to India. Relationship with brothers: John, 12 years older, David Leonard 10 years older, Reginald Dudley 6 years older. Their occupations. John is director of opera, his career.

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John's career continued. David's career: now has own company dealing with market promotion in the Middle East. Reginald - parents would call him black sheep of the family. First childhood memories of being in a pram. Earliest memories from 2 or 3 years old. Recollections of objects from just after war. Sense of being cared for, product of Welfare State.

Very close to mother. SC taken to school on first day but then went alone from age of 5. Remembers being in kitchen, washing with Lifebuoy soap, getting in line for bath. Memories of making Christmas puddings as a family. Thrift of post-war Britain; making rag rugs, knotted wool rugs, trimming wallpaper. Christmas was highlight of year. Memories of recent return visit to Bristol. Neighbours would be dropping by, close friends referred to as uncle and aunt. Parents not strict, but there were certain ways of doing things. Father was district supervisor, collecting money from people paying their insurance or supervising others doing the same. Kept irregular hours, often not around in the evening but around during the day. Worked at home. Description of house. Favourite radio and television programmes.

SC close to father, liked him; moments of confrontation. Recollections of holidays and family trips in car. Sunday outings to collect fruit. Father liked pub life. Bristol pubs. Parents' relationship. Father was selfish, his misogyny; mother's family thought he treated her badly because, eg. they didn't own their own house. Father earned about £1,000 a year. Father's head into figures rather than certain aspects of status; had simple idea of what was satisfying as a life.

Father said to SC when 17: `We don't want you to do anything for us, we want you to do whatever you want to do. We only ask that you give the same choice to your children'. Limited aspirations of sort of people they lived among, but at the same time amazing actual achievement in his area. The Richards family; youngest daughter was SC's supposed girlfriend. Sunday roasts. Father made Sunday tea with some pomp. Father good-looking, trademark was a trilby. SC very observant child. Jo Hanniford, fathers' friend with whom SC went for walks in countryside. Might go to watch brothers play cricket with his father.

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Family holidays; outings in the car to the seaside. Memories of Weymouth, sand castles of architectural wonders. Stayed in caravans and bed and breakfasts. West Bay. Touring holidays in Austin A40. Family games and songs in the car. Morris 8 about 1950, then Ford 8, then Austin A40. Good rapport with brothers. Description of street games. Used to play cricket in tiny garden. Family proud of having 4 sons: John academic and successful, others rowdy and athletic, good at sports. Breaking a neighbour's window, telling dirty jokes to girls at school got him into trouble. He was a good child with quite severe sense of right and wrong; educated to be well-mannered, courteous. Affectionate demonstrative family: men kiss. Attitudes to sex. Childhood experiments.

Shared double bed with a brother. Memories of early toys. Books. Early religious upbringing. Mother taught him the Lord's Prayer; family went to church infrequently. Memories of Sunday school. Service every day at school.

Mother could pick out a tune on the piano, used to tap dance in Bristol pub before she married. Quite a liberated young woman, athletic, liked fun, singing, dancing.

Description of the neighbourhood. Family considered themselves middle class. People of different financial status in the area. SC's family didn't go without, had rented TV as soon as it was available, hire purchase bicycle. But never surplus of money. SC tried to play guitar. Music in the family was playing records, mainly pop music. Brother David's crepe-soled shoes; some famous Teddy boys in the area. Enjoyed going to museums and art galleries with John from young age. Remembers seeing works by Alma-Tadema, Barbara Hepworth. SC drew at infants school.

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Recollections of drawing at early age. Went to school at 4. First year praised for making a clay seal with a ball on its nose. Father drew ducks which SC took to

school. Parents had no cultural input into his life but brother John did. No pictures at home: family photographs, plaster cast of a water mill, ducks. John brought back a book on the nude, source of titillation rather than cultural interest. John made him read `Winnie the Pooh'. John's friends at university took an interest in him. Recollections of Luckwell infants school; his teachers Mrs Fox and Miss Nicholls. Modern teaching methods. Remembers spoiling an experiment. Projects on Holland, the crown jewels. Memory of neighbourhood party for Coronation, wore his brother's sailor-suit. Interested in painting at infants school. Hasn't kept any school friends, has extended family through his children's friendships; wife has contact with school friends. Remembers fury at being given the bells to jingle and not tambourine to play. Pretty good all-rounder, wrote neatly, didn't get into trouble much, but memory of being disciplined once by headmistress Mrs Withers. He was commando net monitor, went to school very early in the morning. At infants school age 4-8.

South Street Junior School 8-12. Description. Spanked on first day. Teacher Mr Thomas. Went to school early, used to run the travel agency, playing job of arranging people's travelling trips. Didn't feel travel was out of reach; father and brothers had travelled. Won Brooke Bond painting competition with painting of a boy. Thrown out of Cubs. Loved going to woods, `Observer' and `I Spy' books, train-spotting. John had book of British birds, SC particularly remembers the bittern. Family played with words. SC known as Bannockburn (after the battle); brothers' nicknames. John's life at school was a mystery to family; his uniform. Very good friends with John, shared interests; his influence, support. Normal childhood, loved sport. Did oil painting at secondary school but not obsessively involved with art. Captained South Street Junior School cricket team, played football at junior school: description of the kit, football boots. Gymnastics. Sense of security. Pretty near top of class, in top 10; always top or second in art, but not considered extraordinary. Remembers infants school building, smells.

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[Interview 23rd May 1995]

Memories of Mr Lane, general teacher at junior school who also taught country dancing. Strong image of the building, location of the classrooms. His teachers. Did embroidery in Miss Nicholls' class; description of a TV mat. Amazingly liberal education. His cats. Brother John was at Queen Elizabeth's Hospital, a Bluecoats school. His uniform. SC sat an entrance exam at 10 or 11 but didn't succeed. Not competitive with his brother, felt pride at his academic achievement. SC's attitudes to success, failure, the nature of competitiveness.

Having failed 11-plus went to St. Mary Redcliffe school, attached to St. Mary Redcliffe Church, where two elder brothers had been. Pride at age of school and ancient church. Description of church, which had profound effect on his life as an artist. School's historical traditions. Bristol's historic centre, mercantile and maritime tradition, sense of trading and slavery. A comprehensive school, believed in notion of late developers. Headmaster Stan Lowes perpetuated sense of religious and moral philosophy, regular prayers. Great reputation for rugby and cricket. High standard of choral achievement. SC went on school choir's second tour to Spain, aged 14 or 15.

In lower sixth, SC didn't take A'levels, marked time for year before going to art school. Brother John was assistant to Gian Carlo Menotti, premiering his opera `Martin's Lie' at Bath Festival. John Hayley, one of the top singers at school, became little star of the production, and school choir was chorus for opera. SC introduced headmaster to his brother to set it up. Met Menotti at 15 or 16. When he was at West of England College of Art, Menotti bought small abstract gouache from him. Menotti inspirational with young people, took an interest in him. SC visited him in Venice, saw Tito Gobbi in `Otelo' at Doge's Palace. Surprised Menotti when he turned up at Spoleto Festival through Giovanni Carandente. SC later visited Menotti at Spoleto and at Gifford in East Lothian. Occasional contact over the years. Relations between Menotti and John.

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SC's visit to Spain with a friend year before. Art history paper part of Art O'level. Hobby-horse about way art in schools not taught as part of cultural history.

At school played club cricket. His uniform. Enjoyed school. Impressed with all his teachers, hungry for information. Excited by history, the stories of the city. Father's sense of history. Historical pubs, the ships. Had to make choice between history and geography and chose geography. Chose art over French in third year. History project on Industrial Revolution, wrote on art and culture at the time. Excited by Greeks, spark of interest and delight has stayed with him. Shipwreck of `The Flying Enterprise' in early Fifties. Seeing the tug `The Turmoil' gave him a sense of the reality of history and events seen on TV. Father concerned about Formosa and `yellow peril'. Father would never say who he voted for, probably Conservative; mother voted Labour like her father. Never any burning issues. John is left-wing. Other brothers' views. Pub was forum for discussing politics, not the living-room.

Grandmother living with family when SC was 13 or 14. Her death.

His teachers. O'level woodwork. Describes objects made. Liked science. Still uses copper sulphate to stain his sculpture. His conceptually orientated sculpture of late Seventies: interested in axioms, rule systems within art, using as a model Euclid's `Elements'. When he later bought a copy of Euclid's `Elements' he found he had bought first course maths book from school. Maths then had meaning for him because it was associated with art rather than geometry. Teachers were young enough to interact with their pupils. SC loved English, writing essays.

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Favourite books. Art in the ascendancy by 3rd or 4th year. Description of brilliant art teachers, Roger Watson and Ron Keynes. His school became particularly well known for sculpture. He made a couple of Kendo fighters, very Futuristic. Was familiar with Cubism. Doing painting, collages, sculpture. One sculpture taken by head of Bristol's art education department to a conference on what was achievable in schools. Bought by Gerald Forcey[ph]. His influence, career. Cultural network from brother's public school. Met Brian Baron. High achievers from Bedminster. Learnt through drawing and observation. Drew a cornflower, took on difficult subjects.

Interested in the Fleet Air Arm, farming and art. His friend Andy Shepherd. SC good at sport, took rugby very seriously. Art teachers encouraging him to go on with art. Looking at Picasso, Henry Moore. Didn't have clear idea he was going to be an artist, might have gone into graphic art or industrial design. Tried playing the guitar. Family's aspirations. Cousin Mike was king of the Teds in Bristol: shame for family. Mother's younger sister Irene. His godparents Aunt Mildred and Uncle Frank. SC interested in nature, walking in the countryside. Grandmother was an understairs maid at big country house belonging to the Smythe family as a girl (her maiden name was Bush).

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Aunt Rene and her husband Frank Fraser. SC's mother died of cancer in 1980, father in 1984. Father's life after retirement from Prudential.

Young old boys' society at school. Organised caving and hiking trips across the Mendips, parties and events. SC designed and painted posters for jazz club where art teachers played. Used to drink with the teachers. No girls until art school.

West of England College of Art. The building. The teaching. Life drawing class was an event. SC's early sculptural objects. Loved plaster. Release to main college at Clifton. David Hockney made big impact on SC, lectured to a massed college. Influence of his teachers (Paul Fyler, Ernie Pascoe) and students Paul Rogers, Richard Long, Carl Plackman. Change in art education from N.D.D. to Dip. A.D. SC found art education incredibly stimulating. Fell in love with Julie Buchanan, a fellow student. Dennis Curry's influence; Neil Murrison[ph]. Hopps[ph] came to give a talk which was significant for SC in terms of freedom to experiment.

Julie Buchanan, her appearance and background. Hitchhiked to Italy together. Social life, weekends at her parents. Her mother. Mary Quant came to lecture. Liberal attitude to life in mid-60s. Students were extras in film with the Dave Clark Five, `Catch Us if you Can'. SC wanted to go to St. Martin's; his girlfriend accepted but he

failed. Went to Italy in summer and then his life collapsed because his girlfriend went to London and he went to Loughborough. He was devastated, isolated, nursing a broken collar bone so he couldn't play rugby.

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Trip to Italy when he left West of England Art College: Venice, Rome. Visited Spain between school and college. Hitchhiked with Geoff Keynes to Barcelona. Very impressed by Gaudì. His attitude to Miró.

Loughborough College of Art. Emotionally distressing period. Nothing he could identify with. Determined not to stay there longer than necessary. Made enough work to apply to Royal College and Slade: got into Central as transfer candidate to second year. Miserable concluding two terms at Loughborough. The other students.

Description of his work at Loughborough. Ciment fondue casting. Idea of men in space. His later tondo of simple curved horizon: cosmic view which comes from a view from space. Idea of cosmologies and views and simple symbols. His altarpiece in church in Haringey is conjunction of idea of mediaeval view of world as one may see a mediaeval map and how we now know things are. Continues discussion of Loughborough work - man and his place in the cosmos, idea of vulnerability, imaginings of a young person just beginning to find their feet. Exhibition as 1st year student at Loughborough. Aluminium casting. Made a purple fibreglass flower. Influenced by students at West of England College of Art. Roland Piché was influential.

His life at Loughborough. Living in digs. Drugs at Loughborough and Bristol. Social life was pub-based. David Phillips taught art history. SC took up André Derain's cause in a seminar. Later did Dip. A.D. thesis on Futurism at Central. When collar bone mended took up rugby training. Girlfriends.

1966 went to Central School of Art. Brian Wall, the head of the department, was making and showing sculpture.

F4917 Side B

Brian Wall came round the studios. Teaching system at Central. John Warren Davies was his personal tutor. Outside tutors. William Turnbull particularly interested SC. Spent first couple of terms working on full-size life figure. His response to conversations between William Turnbull and Barry Flanagan in the life room. Flanagan's work. SC very excited by Roland Piché's work. Piché's career.

SC's brothers called him Beadbrain: used to collect beads as a child and make unwearable bits of jewellery for his mother. His fascination with a mysterious piece of something blue, maybe piece of blue ceramic, in the earth, aged 7 or 8. His first flat in Covent Garden shared with actor Johnny Kirsten[ph], who taught him how to cook. Covent Garden tube station had big red disc on the curved wall of the tube and he made a facsimile of it in fibreglass because it knocked him out: something about the taste of the red. Reminded him of the `blue peel'. Taste memory. 1980 he became particularly interested in maiolica, found cobalt blue of maiolica inspirational, led him into making some ceramics.

His friends at art school. The allocation of the budget for projects. Rationale behind people who taught and managed the departments. Quite ambitious work was produced (generally by the male students), always money available to do it. Central style: movement towards using welded steel, but SC mainly working in fibreglass. No house style. St. Martin's was still dominant sculpture school through Caro's reputation. Resentment at this. Brian Wall's and Turnbull's work. SC's close relationship with John Panting. SC interested in materials and how they behaved. Day release into ceramics department. Studies of turtle shell. Made couple of sculptures abstracted from this very simple shell shape dealing with identity, relationship of two like objects. Dealing with ideas in broader sense. Arguments with technical staff about techniques. Interested in experimentation. John Panting's death. SC's attitude to mentors and British art teaching. Dangers of teaching for artists.

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1967 college trip to Paris and Picasso show. Technical assistants at Central: Neil Rutherford and Henry Abercrombie. Bronze foundry and welding in the basement, which was the social centre. Picasso's greatness. Remembers doing some things in school based on Picasso's Blue Period images. Frequently visited British Museum, West End private views. Impressed by Claes Oldenburg's show at Robert Fraser Gallery. Continually aware of the parameters of the discipline being pushed at or attacked. His response to Caro's exhibition at the Hayward. Attitude to Henry Moore. Caro's later reputation. Phillip King.

Description of work in his degree exhibition, experimenting with materials. Looking at Archigram. Barry Flanagan. What he gained from the Central. Sense of tradition and history. Work came easily to him.

Attitude to women students at Central. Camaraderie. SC not political. Art students didn't tend to be particularly political. Hornsey sit-in. Strike at Central in 1968 on basis of democracy, representation. No revolution at Central. Very diplomatic, politically aware Principal. Hornsey seemed like another world. Good teachers in liberal studies. 20th century literature.

F4918 Side B

Studied 20th century American literature. Donald Judd was his favourite writer on American art. Books he admired. Art history. Thesis on Futurism, its socio-political interaction; extended it later in lectures on art and ideology, Futurism and Constructivism.

Social life at Central; close grouping of staff and students. Met his partner Judith Atkins at a party in Kensington. Her background. SC works at her family's farm.

Teaching job at Coventry 1968. Had applied to go to college in U.S. to do M.F.A. Teaching pre-diploma course at Coventry College of Art. Terry Atkinson and Dave

Bainbridge of Art & Language became loosely associated with Conceptual art. Coventry became centre for new movement in art. Barbara Reise, American art historian, who taught art history, invited significant New York artists over to talk at Coventry: Sol LeWitt, Carl Andre, Mel Bochner, Dorothea Rockburne, plus new gallery entrepreneurs, eg. Seth Siegelaub. Joseph Kosuth also there. First Art & Language books were printed in Coventry. Harold Hurrell, Mike Baldwin were other members of Art & Language. Text-based art exhibited on gallery walls.

Ideologically-oriented art with a cause. Made SC ask important questions about his own practice. Looking for rule systems, axioms, self-evident truths in what he was doing. Wanted to situate his practice within a tradition. Still felt that he had to use handled materials as the mainstay of his practice.

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Closeness to the cutting edge of contemporary art: Andre, LeWitt, Donald Judd and Richard Serra. SC admired Carl Andre's lucid observations on British and American landscape. Lawrence Weiner also came to Coventry: his work. With some of the work he was doing SC started to see associations with Mel Bochner. He became aware of the Lisson Gallery. Found himself looking at Euclid's `Elements': notion of there being an aesthetic purity within a statement of an idea which was a way into making very clear-cut propositions in sculpture.

[Interview 3rd July 1995]

Work he was doing at Coventry using poured resin, large open space frames was in same vein as previous work technically. Substance of his work changing from influence of cutting edge artists. Good sense of dialogue and argument at Coventry. SC coming down on side of art practice using traditional materials. Made series of `Paintings' which were actually sculptures which dealt with the conditions of painting. Loved Ad Reinhardt. Preoccupation with flat surface to do with idea of pushing at the boundaries of painting to extend and re-establish the territory of sculpture. 1968-70 working with plaster surfaces.

`Paintings' preceded by series of grid works which developed out of first works made after leaving Central. Increasing awareness of salient issues in work of American Minimalist artists: mass, volume, area. Interested in scale and measurement, developing series of measuring grids, almost a presentation of a ruler. Trying to find visual equivalent of a Euclid theorem. Taught three days a week in Coventry and lived in West London. His studios. `Paintings' came out of the didactic situation in Coventry. Art & Language's philosophy: everything had to be understood and could be verbalised. SC felt a visual art could do more than language. Concerned that language would take over from making of objects.

In last series of `Surface' works he reduced the sculptural practice to using a traditional material like plaster, isolating surface as a preoccupation which hadn't been dealt with by other Minimal artists. Interested in the vertical surface, idea of a tabula rasa, competing with painting for surface as something which could fall within the sculptural domain. Looking to the Renaissance and further back, the relief also dealt with pictoriality. Interested in idea of Renaissance artist who was architect, painter and sculptor. He spent 5 or 6 years making surface works solely for himself in his studio. Lisson Gallery show in 1976.

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Asked questions about politics and philosophy at Coventry, the nature of the art work as something which had currency within a commercial world. Didn't see that he could possibly show his work in an art gallery, didn't want what he did to be polluted or corrupted by exchange. Made objects which were destroyed. Self-imposed isolation.

Approached Nicholas Logsdail at Lisson Gallery. Exhibition of three installed works which were destroyed immediately the show finished and one small portable panel. Significance of acknowledgement by a gallery like the Lisson. Surviving through his teaching. Idea of remakeability of the piece as with LeWitt and Carl Andre. SC was more involved with the physicality of making things. Idea of the tabula rasa, the surface, as interface between the art object and his energy started a dialogue for him.

Lisson show was well received. Article in `Studio International'. Invited to show in Paris Biennale. British Minimal painters working in the field. David Hall's[??] sculptures; John Hoyland's paintings. Description of SC's installations at the Lisson based on an arithmetic system. Palette derived from the commercial world. Sensitivity within the quality of the material. Notion of demystification, challenging familiar language of sculpture with a more conceptual approach. It was against Robert Ryman that he addressed his `Paintings'. Sculpture can exist in two dimensions too; Renaissance tradition dealing with pictorialism, perspective. Surface pieces relying on SC's subjective response to things.

Showed work at the Paris Biennale and the Whitechapel Open. Objective was to get someone else to make the works for him: same piece in both shows, different materials. `Surface: Shining Forth to George (Jackson)' in Whitechapel. Interested in politics. Plasterer of Paris plastered the piece in Paris. SC supervised the piece but specifically excluded himself from the actual making of the work. Still a resonance within the work, it was his concept which had set it up. Dealing with Renaissance ideas of architecture, painting and sculpture, but working within the practice of sculpture.

Led to panels which leant against the wall. Interested in writings of Alberti. Introduced perspective into his work 1977-8 in `Alberti I' and `Donato'. Richard Wollheim's `Art and Its Object'. Link back to Malevich. Notion of art being about art. Dealing with relationship of his work to history, roots go back to quattrocento. Thesis on Futurism. Knock-on effect of Marinetti's tirade through Europe. Reading about anarchism at time of `Surface: Shining Forth to George (Jackson)'. Doesn't believe in art as propaganda. 1970 series of lectures on `Art and Ideology, the Futurist-Constructivist Ethos'.

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Excited by an era in which there seemed to be interesting things being said by artists: Carl Andre, Sol LeWitt. Strong social and political underpinning in work of Minimal artists. Art seen to be part of a changing and developing world. Very minimal, basic

statements could still resonate with an amazing spiritual charge, eg Rothko, Barnett Newman. Rembrandt's `Self Portrait' in Kenwood House. Dialogue as an artist with another artist.

Alberti's discovery of perspective. Idea of Byzantine rule system within Minimalism. Introduction of perspective into SC's work. Leaning panel in Palazzo Reale in Milan. Mirror image on opposite wall. Posited notion of picturing. Relationship to later developments in his work. Allegiance still with notion of art work as being self-referential. The leaning panel reliefs picture the space in which they stand. Positing the idea of illusion contained within self-referential work of art; coming out of Minimal background it was addressing the traditions of European art. Modelling-carving dichotomy in plaster and marble works. `Alberti' pieces using Carrara marble carved by local monumental mason. Not long before he started doing his own carving. `Wedges' were the way of making sculptures free-standing: idea that space that leaning slab made could be made solid.

1979 invited to symposium in former Yugoslavia, working in marble. Used concept of four cubic metres of marble and how to work with them. Culmination of his involvement with relief works. Description of piece. Frustrations of working there.

Judy. Daughter Pelé born in 1971; Georgia (Easterly) born in 1974. 1979 SC first went to Italy to work, took children. 1980 gave up teaching in Brighton to live in Italy. Began to live with Judy in 1967. Traditional role divisions. Judy's phenomenal support. Children's birth. Impact of fatherhood. Children's unusual names.

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Work ethic. Hopes children will establish principles. Christian ethic. Children haven't had spiritual upbringing like he did. Doesn't know how to deal with girls. Democratic. Had to change a lot of his attitudes from his background: nature of familial, hierarchical status and behaviour. Reasons for not getting married. His relationship with Judy. Relatively traditional attitudes to parenting and family. Children's schooling. Pioneering in living in Islington. Ties of the children kept Judy

in London. He was often away. His aspirations for them: their happiness. His parents' generous attitude to him. Sat down with children with `Body as Machine'.

Reading Vasari 1976-7. Showed reliefs at his second exhibition at Lisson Gallery 1977. Pure pigment works on paper. `Paper Stacks' developed from grid pieces, preceded `Surface' pieces. Power of line. Notion of drawing and its potential posited in early relief sculptures 1976-7.

Introduced to Adrian Stokes's writings by Sandy Nairne 1977. European equivalent to what had inspired him in Ad Reinhardt's writings. Critics have made connections between SC's work and late Stokes's writing when he was in analysis with Melanie Klein, who was concerned with `the good and bad breast'. Ex-student from Stourbridge College of Art first brought this up. Came across Vasari through general browsing. Sense of release when he got to work in Italy in 1979. Looking for strategies to break out of fetters of dominance of conceptual Minimalism. Stokes helped him, was a mid-wife. New birth when you go through Alps and encounter this completely different world.

F4921 Side A

Stokes's writing is poetic prose. He could get to the sort of approach SC was moving towards in his own work. Vasari was also an inventory of materials. SC needed Conceptual crutch to make the break with kind of work he had been doing in Northern Europe. Using Vasari on technique and Stokes as his spiritual mentor. First material he used in Italy was red Verona marble. Went to some craftsmen in Verona and learnt to carve with contemporary tools. Learnt with the Brassica brothers in Sant'Ambrogio di Valpolicella. After `Pittura Ambiente' 1979 in Milan, big decision to give up teaching in Brighton. Offered two or three exhibitions and had been promised purchases from the exhibitions so he could earn as much money as he would from his teaching. Eventually offered a house by Nikos Stangos and David Plante near Cortona to use in the winter. Offered a show at Artra Studio in Milan. Judy followed month or so later. Exhibition to consist of first works made in two stones mentioned by Stokes: St. Ambrogio de Valpolicella (`We Must Always Turn

South'). Had already begun to make tondos in England taking the subject matter of the leaning panels one step further. Idea of the circle itself becoming subject matter, in the pictorial space it would become an ellipse. Work in third show at Lisson Gallery. Three pieces `After a Last Supper'. Drawing on cultural roots of Italy with Stokes as his mentor and Vasari as his guide. Felt natural rapport and confidence with carving. Second piece made of Bronzetto di Verona: `Tondo: Lunar Influences to Agostino'.

Using Stokes as a guide book. Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini was a fantastic experience for him. Looking at Agostino di Duccio, artists of the quattrocento and early Renaissance, Donatello in particular. Never felt urgency to get things out. Close to contemporary Italian art scene, did couple of group exhibitions. `Pittura Ambiente' 1979 put together by Renato Burilli and his assistant Francesca Allanovi. Met Italian artists Bonalumi, Martini and Pietro Colleta, whose work was similar to Fred Sandback who showed at the Lisson.

In shows in Milan 1979 and Modena 1980 his work was Minimal in terms of dependence on notion of less saying more. Made `Soglia' in Bari which used local stone in Puglia, very soft Tufo stone. Work shown in `Lunette' with Marilena Bonomo in Bari. Idea of illusion and reality in `Soglia'. Work in exhibition at Artra Gallery in Milan 1981. Remembers singing while he was working in basement next door to a piano bar and the pianist coming in to see what he was doing and getting covered in white plaster when he hugged him. Michelangelo's `Rondanini Pietà' recharges his spiritual batteries, fills him with admiration. Donatello is phenomenal expressionist. Admires emotional drama in Michelangelo and Donatello. Duccio had things worked out in a way which he admires.

<u>F4921 Side B</u>

Positions of art works. Anamorphosis. SC's later fragmented reliefs which deal with idea of parallax, fragmentation in panels. As you pass something it has the potential for change. Leonardo's `Portrait of a Boy' in the Ambrosiano in Milan. Everything

influences one's work. Minimal art is about millions of decisions you've made to get to where you are. Minimal art can be charged.

[Interview 11th July 1995]

Pigments on stone: colour as a sculptural material. Pushing at the boundaries of painting to expand the field of sculpture. Curious about trying to draw direct reference between colour and its mineral origin and stone, representative or symbolic of the earth and nature. Made series of pigment pieces, pigment in stone. Yves Klein using pure colour in his pigment paintings from the Forties. SC's `Colour Crucibles' like taking the lid off a jar of pigment. Became interested in maiolica and its development. Found a clay pit in East Anglia. Italian connection because owner of pit had found remains of Roman kilns in his garden for firing earthenware from this clay. SC refined the clay in the traditional method and experimented with styles and forms of either small household wares or great `piatti di pompi' with scenes taken from Raphael. His technique. Close correspondence between vibrant colours of maiolica and actual colours of frescos they were taken from. Didn't continue maiolica work in Italy. His three pieces in the catalogue raisonné. Trying to utilise `bianco sopra bianco' technique. Notion that object - like ceramic - has primacy over painting. Idea that his roots went back to figurative tradition of European art. Minimalism was area of high refinement: he was on verge of conceptually taking radical step in not making visual or figurative art any more or making art at all, but idea of his roots and tradition was what took him back. Maiolica pieces were seeds of acknowledgement of the European figurative tradition.

Release of working in Italy enabled certain kinds of symbolism to be acknowledged. `Ruma'. Relationship between mother nature, mother, goddess. Realised potential of more developed figuration. Simple mediaeval definition and description of cosmos informed his work for next few years in terms of what simple forms could mean. Started to make things from fragments. One can use one's imagination to complete pictures. Genesis of `Gethsemane'. `Soglia'. Analogies to archaeology. Past was a living thing within the context of art and his own experience. Found a stone quarry in Viterbo and worked there with off-cuts.

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Working in Viterbo was amazing opening up of potential. Living with his family in Anguillara on Lake Bracciano. Travelled daily to Viterbo through magnificent countryside with volcanic lakes which influenced the titles of some of the initial works he made. Obtained studio at American Academy in Rome. Commuting between Viterbo, Anguillara and Rome. Began working on `Gethsemane'. Impact of exhibition of early David. Ideas about our culture's vocabulary of narratives. Italian critic talked about the `Pietra Ferita', the wounded stone, because of red oxide on the stone, the stain of the blood. SC interested in the natural history of the stone. Drama amplified by recognition of this blood coloured stain. Biblical themes to do with working in Italy and working with familiar narratives. His attitude to art and religion. Artist as a tool in the hands of those who wish to perpetuate a certain dogma. His spirituality.

Thought of Italy as a promised land, the opening of a doorway. Situation in Italian art world. Exhibition at La Salita in Rome seen by Giovanni Carandente. David Smith's writings on art. Carandente invited him to exhibit at the Festivale dei Due Mondi at Spoleto in 1982. Had just taken house belonging to Sol LeWitt's wife in Priano on Costiera Amalfitana. Nikos Stangos' house in Umbria. The house in Bracciano. Returned to England for Twentieth Century British Sculpture Show in which he exhibited `Tondo: Lunar Influences to Agostino (Di Duccio)' and `We Must Always Turn South'. The Tate bought the latter and he returned to Italy with sense of confidence and excitement. Judy was teaching the children for about a term. Their life in Italy 1981. His work included an exhibition at the University of Rome `Generazione in Confronto'(sic). The contemporary Italian art scene. Rivalry between Italian art critics. 1980 Venice Biennale launched the transvanguardia. Flavio Caroli reinstituted the Milan Triennale.

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Exhibited `Relief: Luciano I (In Memory of my Mother)' at the Milan Triennale 1980. After Luciano Lorano the architect. Work in his show at La Salita included fragmentation, acknowledgement of the past, idea of narratives etc at a time when these considerations were also in work of Clemente, Paladino, Cuchi.

Work exhibited at the Spoleto Festival made at Industria Marmo e Granito at Viareggio who co-sponsored the show. Stayed in a local hotel, family came to visit him occasionally. His experience of working at one of the biggest marble companies in Italy. The exhibition venue in Spoleto. Introduced colour to violate the purity of the white marble. Tradition of colouring stone from the Greeks. `Landscape With Ruins': idea of artist as Renaissance figure who worked as architect, painter and sculptor. Very excited by landscape in Donatello's relief `St. Peter with the Keys' in the V & A and `Allegorical Landscape' by Agostino di Duccio in Castello Sforzesco in Milan. Interested in idea of landscapes without the figures. Playing with idea of cyclical notion of how we go back in times. Play on idea of how the fragments are read. `Tondo With Ruins'. `From An Allegorical Landscape (After Agostino di Duccio)'. `Tondo Nuvole'. Nature of the fragmentation in `Landscape With Ruins', the principal piece for the Spoleto exhibition. Staining technique. Four tondos: `Vico', `Bozeno', `Bracciano' and `Viterbo'; fragments of the female figure. Anamorphic stretching of figures and forms. `Figura Femminile Impudica' in the Castello Sforzesco, Milan. Sculpture was bought by the Comune. Met Gian Carlo Menotti who had slight competitiveness with Carandente. Met Balthus. Met Moore at Much Hadham through Carandente.

Fragmentation of the figure within the context of Christian history and iconography: St. Agatha. Continued work at IMEG. Innate sensuality in Verona marble developed into `The Fiery Kind', `Disc', and `Ecstasy: St. Agatha'. Ecstasy of martyrdom linked to ecstasy of sexual experience as in Bernini's `Ecstasy of St. Teresa'. `Cloaca Maxima' deals with idea of martyrdom of St. Sebastian.

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Fragmentation in the context of the figure and landscape. Erotic undercurrents in Catholicism and India. In Egypt too intellectuals are looking at the esoteric aspects of their own position. Man's need to deal with the mystical and the mysterious underpinning all religion.

Impact of seeing Turner's `View from the Loggia'. Idea of embracing painting within sculpture. Started to deal with very hierarchical use of relief. Avoiding doing `painting'. Aspects of colour came into the work. Vasari talks of two stones used as grounds for painting: ardisia and peperino. Made two pieces in peperino, `Ascent' and `Ascension': introduction of colour in more formal painting way. Underlying examination into the traditions of the practice, an art about art with an accompanying idea of using narratives. Conscious use of narrative and image and subject matter.

Commission for a free-standing sculpture for the Liverpool International Garden Festival: `Palanzana'. Met Roberto Barni at Spoleto and his dealer Piero Carini, who became SC's dealer in Italy. Piero Carini asked him to do exhibition in Masaccio's birthplace in San Giovanni Valdarno in 1984. Variety of stones and new imagery: `Through the Portal'. Relationship between sensuality, sexuality and death. Series of figures: `Sotto La Loggia'. Sgraffito technique. Research into techniques and practices was developing the work. Wants to show the history of the stone.

Exhibition at Kunstmuseum, Lucerne, curated by Martin Kunzt 1982. Moving away from working with the Lisson Gallery.

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Relationship with the Lisson Gallery. Arguments with Tony Craff over the nature of culture. Felt Lisson moving away from a classical mainstream: political as well as economic reasons for leaving the Lisson. Diversity of British sculpture at the time. Nicholas Logsdail in total control of new British sculpture, excluded SC from exhibitions. Sense of a cartel operating in international art. Power politics. Period of torture for SC. Feels it's a weakness that he hasn't confronted Nicholas Logsdail. His attitude to the Lisson Gallery and its artists now. Moments of struggle. Field of art as

place where one can still be idealistic: hurts him that there can be mischief and vindictiveness going on as well.

1983 exhibition `Fragments from a Grand Tour' at Nigel Greenwood's. Show went in similar form to Eric Franck in Geneva. Ian Barker of the British Council asked him to propose working methods. With `Palanzana' he gave a small model which he had carved himself to a marble workshop in Carrara. Luciano Fabbro also worked there. He worked on small carving which they scaled up for him. Was thinking about Henry Moore because he had met the people who worked on his sculptures and talked about his techniques and methods at Enro Qacetta, co-sponsors with IMEG of Spoleto exhibition. They were disappointed that Moore didn't interact more with the stages of the scaling-up. SC worked from scaled models but always went over the whole surface to leave his hand on the surface. He is always astonished how things change with the most minimal interaction to make it one's own. Tribute to skill of Carrara carvers who see themselves as artificers, operatives who can copy anything. Part of on-going tradition to work with scaling system. He discovered a completely different approach in India.

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SC invited by British Council to represent Britain at the Indian Triennale in Delhi in 1985. It was the first time they had invited an artist to work in India. He went to Australia for a touring show of British art and then did a short reconnaissance trip to India in 1985. He was recommended to Mahabalipuram, a centre for Dravidian temple carving which had seen a renaissance in the last fifty years due to the father of Ganapathi Stapati, the principal of the College of Sculpture and Architecture and a great scholar. Start of SC's long relationship with the village of Mahabalipuram. Discusses the things which excited him about India and sculpture in India, and how it related to his activities in Italy. He responded to the great sense of a living past in southern India and the way in which architecture was subordinate to sculpture. Fell foul of Ganapathi Stapati because SC considers what they do to be a craft-orientated activity. Interested in idea of libation, of sculpture as focus of meditation. Ad

Reinhardt and Barnett Newman are his mentors: idea of the meditational is aspect of way one views contemporary art.

Understands some of the basic premises and principles of Hinduism, eg fatalism. Mystifying charm about India for him. Discusses his relationship with Ganapathi Stapati. Way he responded to India in his work, eg `Etruscan'. His biggest problem was to draw the ideas of fragmentation he had been working with in Europe into a culture that had a continuity which stretched back so far. Stupified by cave temples. His `Rock Cut Holy Family'. Influence of Romans on southern Indian carving. Excited by connections between cultures: discusses Piero della Francesca's `Madonna del Parto'. Constantly surprised by cultural influences which he sees as cultural connections or collisions.

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Discusses the `Tanmatras' which relate to his preoccupation with fragmentation and genesis, with origin. `Origin'; `The Annunciation'. The `Taumatras'. Process of carving in India differs from process of carving in Italy. No understanding of naturalism in India. Describes his way of working in India. `Baltic Wharf' and `Caryatid: Daphne' were made from scaled-up models in Italy.

Number of his works in India depend on series, eg `Throng', `Tank'. Tradition of reproduction of an image in India. Workers say a puja, or prayer, before beginning to work on a major sculpture. Sees his work as an interpretation of traditional forms, an alternative way of doing something. Number of workers vary. His working system with his assistant Arumachalam who supervises work for him. SC has set up home in beach resort hotel in Mahabalipuram. Frequency of his visits to India depends on demands of work. Work is brought back in containers to wife's family's farm in Kent where he also works. Family accompanies him to India sometimes. His involvement with local life in Mahabalipuram, concern at mushrooming of building adjacent to his studio. Description of Mahabalipuram and recent changes. Horrified that the culture may not be able to resist advent of satellite TV. Local corruption. Scandal involving

Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu. SC wears traditional dress. People ask Arumachalam to make copies of sculptures from photographs.

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Art market in India. His relationship with the contemporary Indian art scene. Experiences a degree of professional jealousy. His opinion of Dhruva Mistry and Bhupen Khakar. Discusses Mark Tully's accusations in `No Full Stops in India'. SC's attitude to the difference between craft and art. The economics of working in India.

In his work SC is taking something out of a craft or devotional context and bringing it into a contemporary context. Feels he's going back to the well of history. Considers that there is a classicism that underpins work of great cultural diversity. Stone embodies something above the everyday and the mundane. Universal sculptural language. Effect of annointing stone. Within Western culture looking at art is about experience. His attitude to people touching his work. Theme of androgyny in his work. `Mayan's Principle'. Idea of Hari-Hara. SC's bronze figures are response to Chola bronzes. Casting process in bronze requires carving. SC interested in idea of small, sensuous objects.

Egypt. Commissioned by Foreign Office to produce a sculpture as a gift to the Egyptian people for the new opera house in Cairo.

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His fascination with imperial porphyry, its history and symbolism. Relationship with the Egyptian Minister of Culture. Reconnaissance expedition to imperial porphyry quarries. Given access to material from Mons Claudianus, Roman white diorite quarry, as well as breccia from possibly oldest stone quarry in the world. Set up studio at Hurghada. No artistic tradition of carving in hard stone in Egypt. Difficulties of setting up a training process. Produced `Song', `Chrysalis', `Flask' and `Osirisisis'. Expedition to the imperial porphyry quarries.

Has made large-scale works for the Haringey church and the Leeds exhibition using big industrial machines at a granite processing factory in Cairo. Discusses the work he made for the exhibition `Surfaces and Stones of Egypt' at the Henry Moore Institute, Leeds: the genesis and making of `Interior Space', `Chrysalis' and `Song'. Problem of Islamic Fundamentalism had to be considered.

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`Song'. Discusses Leeds exhibition which brought together his early Minimal and recent work. Followed by discussion of work in exhibition `Sight of Chephren' at Michael Hue-Williams' gallery, to do with excavation and archaeology. His reconnaissance expedition to the Chephren quarries in Egypt. More difficult to become involved with Egyptian life than Indian. His life-style in Egypt and in India. [LONG PAUSE ON TAPE] Social relations with women in India and Egypt.

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[Interview 5th November 1995]

Discusses his commission for the church of St. Paul at Haringey. His exhibition, `We Must Always Turn South', which started at the Arnolfini, Bristol. The spiritual aspect of his work. His previous interest in the theme of the Crucifixion and Deposition. Impressed by works of Rosso Fiorentino. The reredos and altar fo the chapel. The idea of sacrifice. His visit to Jerusalem in 1994. Profound interest in the spirituality of stones. His feelings for the Palestinian cause. His attitude to religion and Christianity. The Kaaba. The power of stone. The Stations of the Cross for St. Paul's. The font. He was given a free hand with the church commission. His hatred for competitions. The role of the artist and contemporary art in the Church. Ecclesiastical artists. Exhibitions in churches. Currently involved in two projects: for Newcastle Cathedral and St. Luke's, Chelsea. Encouraged that Church is opening up to new possibilities.

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Not a church-goer for prayer but frequents churches of historical and artistic merit. Moved by the ritual of the consecration of St. Paul's, Haringey. Found a kindred spirit in the vicar of St. Paul's. The altar and the reredos. Sense of responsibility. Moved by Rothko, Barnett Newman. The contemporary artists and movements he admires. Discusses additional work for the Haringey church, eg candelabra. The bowls he made in Egypt. `Griddle: To St. Lawrence'. `Across'. His use of maquettes and models: `Caryatid: Daphne', `Palanzano', `Atyeo'. His working process. Use of drawing. His piece for Newcastle Cathedral is an idea of the Host in the form of an alabaster disc. Sense of rationality and control in his work.

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His tools: plastering trowels, hammer and chisel, pneumatic tools, diamond disc power tools. Donatello used contemporary means. SC doesn't flinch from idea of using modern materials and machines and ready-made products in his sculptures, eg. stainless steel buckets. Using computer imagery to help realise sculpture; aware of new media available to contemporary art. His titles. Theme of sound and voice in his titles. His public commissions. `Ganapathi and Devi'. Liaison with patron Stuart Lipton. The British Council: `Etruscans'. `Mantra'. `Hymn', commissioned by Stephen Bann for Kent University at Canterbury. `Mantra' continued. The descending torso theme. His relationship with the architect Charles Corea. The influence of Hinduism.

His attitude to the critical writing on his work. His teaching, lecturing and research fellowship at Wimbledon School of Art. His exhibition at Leeds.

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The influence of other cultures. His work is concerned with the universality underpinning contemporary and ancient art. `Echo'. `Flask'. `Taumatras'. His future projects in India and Egypt. His most recent work in India. Exhibition in Delhi.

`Catamarans on a Granite Wave'. The work in his exhibition at Kew Gardens. `Mayan's Cube', `The Kani', `Primal Torso', `Holy Family II', `Tank'.

Works all the time apart from an occasional game of golf, visit to opera, cinema. His regime in India. His attitude to money and politics, friends and family. His friends Christopher Lebrun and Hugh O'Donnell. Relationship with his dealers. His meeting with Henry Moore. The status of British sculpture. `Pittura Ambiente' exhibition in Milan. Competitiveness of British art world. Factionalism and Machiavellianism.

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Protectionism among dealers. The Lisson Gallery. Damien Hirst.

End of Interview