

IMPORTANT

Every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this transcript, however no transcript is an exact translation of the spoken word, and this document is intended to be a guide to the original recording, not replace it.

NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

ARTISTS' LIVES

BARBARA STEVENI

interviewed by Melanie Roberts

F6683 Side A

Commencing the interview with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of June 1998 at her home in London. The interviewer is Melanie Roberts.

Could you tell me exactly when and where you were born?

Right. Well I was born in Meshed, Persia, which I suppose is Iran, and I was born in the British Consulate there. My father was...he was in the Foreign Service, and so I was born virtually in the Consulate. And I can remember quite a lot of even being in those buildings, which is quite strange because I suppose... Those early memories are quite strong, I remember this veranda and this building, so, I can't quite remember what age I would have been then but we did come backwards and forwards to England then go out again, but I seem to remember that this building was actually the building of the Consulate, so we must have stayed there for some time like, you know, three years.

Can you remember your parents at that early age?

Well, my mother was, she was Irish, and the daughter of an army officer, she was Helen Chauncy. And my father was Leo Oscar Steveni, and he was half Russian, of Russian-Swedish origin, so we have a Russian grandmother, who incidentally, I went

and found their home in Petersburg just recently, in 1993, which was very exciting. And, well I just remember my father, and that memory of my father was there for quite a long time because we moved backwards and forwards between either being in India or, well Meshed, which was where I was born, and then we went to India, and my father then was in the Indian Army. And, my visions, my visual of my father was quite a suave man, he had sort of slicked down hair, as was the style of the time, and my mother was dark and pretty with freckles, quite sort of Irish, very bossy, my remembrances of my parents was that my mother always bossed my father, and I was always saying to my sister later on, 'We'll never be like that with our husbands,' or with whoever we...but of course, you know... And, so, my father was this quite glamorous guy, always in army uniform at that time, and I can hardly remember him not in uniform, except he would be wearing shorts and chuplies[ph] which was these Indian sandals. And I sort of remember from a very early age that that was the vision of my father, and that lasted right through to when we were in India. And they were great socialites, my father was a wonderful mimic, and because he...and very amusing, he could take off anybody, and he spoke about seven languages because of the Russian, which was why they used him later on in, you know, this war, the last war, in Chongqing and everything. So, there were always parties, and there always seemed to be parties all the time, because my parents did have a lot of very good friends, and my father was very amusing, and my mother was a great hostess, and that is how I remember them really, though there's much more that I remember about my father, especially when I left home and married John Latham.

But back in this early period, do you remember the sort of domestic environment and the servants and so on then?

Yes, yes absolutely. And this might be slightly confused with my Meshed, you know, being in Persia, but, this big veranda that, we would be a lot on the veranda, because it would always be very hot, and there would be a lot of undergrowth growing up around it. And we had an *ayah*, which is, you know, the Indian nanny, and, I remember an incident about being on that veranda, which was Meshed, and it wasn't being in India, so that was an early memory, which was that, we had some little presents sent out to us from our grandparents in England, and mine was a tiny little cold frame, you know, like a little greenhouse, and a very sort of small rake, and I

remember that however it happened, I smashed the glasses of the *ayah*, and my mother, I don't know how it happened, how I had smashed them, but anyway she ran screaming to my mother, and my mother came and picked up this present and smashed it down on the veranda to show me what I had done to the *ayah's* glasses, you know. So I remember that very distinctly, and it was on the veranda. And I remember, I can't remember much more of the other servants, but we'd have, I remember there was a birthday party, so, I was either three or two or whatever it was, and I had an elder sister, Elizabeth, who was two years older than me, and I remember we had balloons, they were silver balloons. They must have had helium in them because they just floated up and away, and I remember looking, and I didn't know they had helium at that time, or I wouldn't have known it was helium. But anyway my balloon, which was a silver balloon, floated away out of my control, off the veranda, and over above all this undergrowth, so I remember that. And that was Meshed, that was definitely Persia. And then, we would come backwards and forwards to England, to Devon, with my grandparents, and I always remember going on these big ocean liners, the P&O liners, and having these very hot baths of seawater would gush in and be up to here on me. And the life on the boat, we did this several times so it was sort of quite a big memory, but I remember they had boxing to entertain the passengers, and the lift boy was one of the boxers, and I remember seeing him in the ring and smashing each other up, and that was in a way the first time I had sort of seen, which was apparently meant to be an interesting game, people beating each other up, and I remember being horrified with that. And then, we would go backwards and forwards to my life in Devon, which was then very strong for me because I was then left in Devon by the parents, one, because I had had rheumatic fever as a small child, and so they never knew how, you know, strong my heart would be for India or whatever, and, which was also a reason why I didn't go to school for quite a long time, and I... I'm losing myself a bit here between India. But...

And what age were you when you were, when you stayed in Devon?

About five.

Mm, so very small.

So, between that time I was going backwards and forwards between Devon and India, as it was then. In India, which were quite sort of strong memories, and my Devon memory, but that comes in a bit later, because I stayed there with them, but the Indian memories were also very strong in that there would be an earthquake, and again, you know, the veranda, but it was just a bungalow, we were in the Delhi Contonment which were just outside Delhi which is where all the army was based, and I remember that when we had the earthquake, and it was quite a strong earthquake and we all sort of rushed outside and everything, the whole landscape was shifted, you know, we would go to the end of the road, and the landscape was completely different, I remember as a child, how could it have been changed like that. And also all the things like the snakes, there were a lot of snakes in the water holes, cobras, and they would always be in threes, and I remember my mother again very resourceful, I remember they were cutting, scything the grass, and suddenly there was this great scream, and one of the Indian servants, there's much more about the servants and how we were kept from them and everything, but I remember him screaming, and my mother, and he had been bitten by a snake, and my mother rushed out with a penknife and just cut out a piece of his leg, you know, which is...she was very terrific when you think about her like that, you know. And I remember again we would have presents sent out to us from the grandparents, and they sent us some dolls, and I was always dressing up as a little boy, so I was always...so we would play, my sister always wanted to play hospitals, so she would always be the nurse and I would be the doctor, and so, this was always going on. And then when they had the monsoons, the whole place would be flooded, you know, absolutely sort of solidly, and we would be paddling around in all this mud, and then again the landscape would completely change. And we would have balls and sort of odd, and dolls sent to us from England. And I always remember that if there was any game going on, like the ball would roll underneath the entrance to the garden of this bungalow, and they would say, 'Oh Barbie will go and get it,' so I would go down, and of course the cobras would all be curled up in there because it would be a nice sort of place for them to be, just in this sort of wet patch, and I would sort of take the ball from the cobras and they would sort of look at me, but they...very bored. And you know, other sort of memories like that of... And also being punished, because if, punished with my toys from my grandparents, you know, like I told you about the thing being smashed with the *ayah* there, and again, we didn't seem to have an *ayah* in India, we had English people

looking after us, but there was a huge lot of servants at the end of the garden – well huge, I mean like five or six servants, and I was always wandering down there, because they would clean their teeth on sticks of wood, and I wanted to clean my teeth on sticks of wood. And I was very wild, I would always go off with them, they would go off to prayer meetings and I would go, and he was called Wodgidalli[ph], and I would go on the crossbar of his bike. And that was also again, when I saw somebody killed, because, I'd never seen a dead person before, because I had gone off to a prayer meeting with Wodgidalli, without telling the parents, and I was busily sort of bowing down along with all the other people that were bowing down, all the Indian people were bowing down. And I always remember the bells calling them to prayer, you know, in these places, where I don't think I was meant to go at all but I just went along with him, well certainly not by the parents seeing. But on the way back I remember there had been an accident, and there was this dead person, and this quite traumatised me, because I'd never seen a dead person before, but it was interesting for me. And I was always having these interesting adventures, because I would go off either with Wodgidalli[ph], who, I don't think he was much older than me, you know, he was probably about fifteen or twelve or something, you know, he was a young person. And I was called the Toto Missi Barbar[ph] by them, which is the little Missi Barbar[ph] presumably. And later on, I was very fascinated by the Indian culture, everything about it, I mean I just loved it, you know, like cleaning your teeth with some sticks, and not wearing any shoes, I mean I was always being told to be wearing my sandals, but nobody else was wearing their shoes, although we all took our shoes off in the house and everything, but then there were snakes also in the house, in the water holes, and lizards on the ceiling, which would drop off onto the bed, and that would make me scream. When I came back to Devon there were spiders, great crunchy spiders, and I think, oh it's much more fun than the spiders. And, anyway my father, we often used to go to the parades, you know, the army parades, and my father was immensely popular with... He's always been popular with whoever he was with, because of course he would speak the language, and he could pick up languages like that, so he spoke the Indian dialects, and, he was a great guy like that. And his obituary, you know, there's me leaping forward hundreds of years, you know, they did say, and there was a great thing about my father, he was so amusing and interesting that he made other people feel amusing and interesting when they were with him, you know, it sort of sparked off on them. And we used to go to these

parades, and Indians would come up to me and say, 'Mm, you're...' make a remark about me being white, and them being black, but it was a very very friendly thing, you know. And I had a long thing, I wish I was, I wish I was brown, why aren't I brown? You know, I really wanted to be brown for a long time, to fit in I suppose it was. I didn't, I didn't feel at all, although my mother kept up an enormous thing, as did my grandmother when I got back, about viceregal lodge, and us and them, which my mother kept up right till before her death, when she came to Peckham and she says, 'How did all, how did they all get here?' you know, and 'How did they have cars?' you know, and I would freak and think, well I can't go into Peckham, we can't go into the market now because I'd been with my mother, you know. So she was very awful, she was very snooty, my... Well, you know, I mean she...she had this concept, it's not snooty, she just had this concept of 'us and them', and the imperial race, and my father didn't have it, and it was very strong that he didn't have it, because, he was very Russian in that he would burst into tears if there was a sad story and everything. And I always remember in India, I had to rest all the time because I had had this rheumatic fever, so I would be put to rest, and I would be put to rest on the veranda, and we'd sleep on the veranda, and we'd...I'll come back to the veranda in a minute, but, this is about my father, was that, my mother would always instigate the punishments, you know, she would say, 'This is impossible'. Anyway, I was meant to be resting, and I had sort of like nothing to do, so I thought I would cut all the fringes off the Persian carpets, thereby lowering their value by x hundreds of pounds, to tidy up you see, this was me having nothing to do. And of course, they completely freaked. My mother collected carpets out there; in fact there was a big Persian carpet here that was, is the same age as me, and I sold it because I didn't have any money, it was too big, I haven't told my sister yet – leave it off the tape. Because I had absolutely no money, so I sold the carpet. But they made it for, you know, of my birth so to speak but it came from Persia of course. But they had lots of these Indian carpets, this is one of them, has it got the fringes off? I don't know, probably worn off. But anyway, and I remember my mother being absolutely furious, and, as was my father, but my mother instigated that he would have to drum some sort of, you know, discipline into me, and so, he had these slippers that were leather slippers and very hard that he would just slide his feet into, and I remember being beaten with these slippers by my father, and I just remember how hard they were, this leather. But this punishment had been made by my mother, because my father wouldn't think to

do that; however angry he was, he wouldn't think of the punishment, he would just be furious or whatever, but he would be wound up to it a bit. I'm being terribly bad to my mother here, I mean she had a lot of, she had great character and resource, but... The other thing I remember about India was, as well as the snakes and the landscape being shifted, was sleeping on the veranda because of the heat, we would have wire meshing over it, and the hyenas and jackals would come up out of the dried-up riverbed and rub themselves against the wire netting. And you could just see their eyes, you know, their yellow eyes in the dark, and I would scream and scream, and my mother said, 'Don't be so silly, they can't get through the netting,' you know. But in the night you couldn't see the netting from the inside, you know, and you would just see the moon and these hyenas, and when I went to art school I remember painting pictures of this. And, anyway so that was another. Another thing was that I got, I was climbing some trees, I was always climbing or going down holes or disappearing and being lost.

You don't sound like a very good invalid.

No, I mean I was, you know, that's probably why I was left at home in Devon. Anyway, I got scratched by a wild cat, which I didn't realise was a wild cat, I do remember it had very pointed ears, but I remember that I had to go and have a hundred injections on my stomach for lockjaw, and I kept going up to this hospital and they kept looking for places to inject me that hadn't already got the iodine on them. I remember that. And those are some of my Indian memories. Oh, and the other lovely thing was, learning to climb an elephant by, the elephant boy taught me how to climb elephants, because most people got lifted up by the trunk and put on the howdah or whatever it's called, but I noticed that the elephant boy, he would just shin up from the tail, you know, and he taught me how to do this. Because the elephant would put its foot up and you could tread on its foot, and then you would get onto the tail, I remember doing that, and being very proud of being able to stand up when the elephant was running, and...

It does sound as if you had a lot of freedom. Your parents were very involved in a way that quite surprises me for that time.

Well I think that they were just terribly busy or something, and I kept escaping virtually. Well, I mean I remember my own adventures, I mean probably I was much more controlled than that, but I just remember my adventures, and I remember when the monsoon was there, and I also remember that when it was very dried up I turned the tap on and I flooded the entire garden, and then the laundry people had come for the, what was laundry called in Hindustani? Oh, I can't remember the name now. But anyway they came to...and they had all the laundry in sort of piles, and I had seen them cleaning the laundry by sort of pumping it out, like this, so I thought, well I will do this. And of course I just got everything muddied completely after and it was a nightmare for everybody. But I was always really wanting to be with this exciting other life that apparently my parents weren't too much in, you know. Well for a child that was what was fascinating me, which was slightly different from my sister. I mean I went on these adventures on my own, I mean, my sister I think was more conforming, or was more interested in you might say the Western living rather than the Eastern living. I don't know, I mean I remember things, not remembering her very well then. I remember that we both had the same, identical clothes, and very few of them, like three little outfits that, little overalls that just pinned on our shoulders, and those were our three outfits. And so when I came to England and went to school with a uniform I had no idea how to deal with it.

I mean did you have any formal clothes for when your parents were entertaining, or anything like that?

No, I think we just wore these dear little outfits with buttons on the top, and our chuplies[ph]. I did wear shoes on those occasions. I can't quite remember the formal side, I seem to remember the informal side, you know, I remember the adventures and, I just know that there were lots of formal parties and things. And I remember going, you know, going in to Delhi, and I remember we would go to a place where all the ivory tusks were, and there were these huge tusks; I remember this great smell of ivory, and I've remembered it ever since. Of course my parents had therefore got sort of the usual ivory things, you know, ornaments, which of course they brought back from India. I just remember the smell of ivory.

What does it smell like, can you describe it?

Well it was so visual, these enormous tusks propped up against the walls of this place, that the smell and the... I mean I've always been very conscious of smells and I love smells, and... Well it was very heavy, very, going towards being gardenia, but much...yes, very heavy scented but pungent smell, but absolutely stuck with me, you know, the smell of ivory is very strong, you know, and...

It sounds wonderful.

So that was some of my India bits.

I mean, were you conscious of the gulf in terms of poverty, and your own comfortable background?

I think, I think that, in spite of my mother putting across this sort of 'us and them' business, I saw, and maybe it was because there were servants who were at the end of the thing, the end of the garden and therefore had a lot of, were much better off and everything, and when I went into India – oh another great smell of course was the smell of urine in India, I mean it hit you as you got off the boat and got off the train, was the great smell of urine. And so that is equated with poverty presumably. And also, yes, the begging was terrible, now you're reminding me of it. I'm very much in my house surroundings, you know, when I'm talking to you, the first year, but you know, going into, going across India, you know, we would go up to Simla in the hot weather I suppose, and that again has got great memories, of going on the train and going, you know, for such a long time on the train and then winding up the Himalayas and seeing the Himalayas, you know, up there, and also going on long journeys across deserts, you know, we would only go across the edge of a desert, I can't quite think what desert now, but anyway, desert stuff, and the car running out of petrol, and my father going off with this one little jerrycan, you know, a fat lot of good that would be, but... And also, you know, travelling with Wodgidalli[ph] and the other servants with their feet hanging out of the car, this was when we were going up to Simla once, and I know we did bits by train and sometimes by car, I can't quite remember how that worked. And I remember his, he just had the Indian sandal on, I remember his feet were hanging out of the car and one sandal fell off and fell into this ravine as we were

going across, and total trauma. So on the poverty side, I think that, I remember the smells. I thought that the begging was terrible, didn't understand it, you know, I didn't understand why all these small children were needing stuff, I just didn't understand it, at that early age. But, I think I got a real love of the culture which I find now sort of in Peckham and everything, that, it's interesting that you've brought this up, because I have so many different feelings, having been here a bit in the riots and everything, you know, and of course that's Caribbean and Indian and there were a lot riots going on when we first came here between the races and everything. But, sort of, seeing injustices, like, why is it like that, and what's fair in everything, I feel that I was questioning a lot in myself, but I wasn't getting answers. I would get...I felt I got good answers in a way coming up off my father, but I don't think I quite got the answers from my mother about bigger issues of justice and things, because she was very much as that age in, in you might say colonial ethos, or, well it was very much, I mean if you see any of the films that they're making, you know, it reminds me very much of how my parents were then, or would have been then.

And were you conscious of your parents talking politics between themselves?

I think that, not until later, you know, I was very...I was much more aware of that when they had come back from India to Devon, and then they would talk about things, and then I would hear things which seemed to me to be unjust, if you know what I mean. But when I was in India, I mean I was only up until five, I suppose, and then I was left in Devon, it seemed to be, oh it seemed to be social that my parents were involved in; I didn't hear the political side of it consciously; as a child I would feel injustices, and I would just feel them, but I wasn't getting any answers at that time, I think. I think because I enjoyed my adventures so much with...and I'm talking about my home setting and just going off on the prayer meetings and going and doing what I did, so I wouldn't have rubbed up against, you know, too much of the actual poverty of India, because it would have been quite select, would it, until I went into Delhi or places like that. Yes, 'Passage to India' and all those sort of films of course do evoke a lot, and 'Gandhi'.

Yes, do you see them as accurate?

Do I see them as accurate? Well I then do the business of relating them to my memory. Of course I wasn't there at the sort of, the shooting of the Indians when they sort of came on, although I remember watching a first showing of that film with either my mother or my father, because, in fact both died, and I remember them saying how... I mean I don't know whether it was, I don't know whether it was accurate or not, but my father was deeply upset about it, I mean he was such a fair person, and he loved everybody, so, it would be awful for him. But I noticed that, I remember my mother being very outraged about Mountbatten's wife sitting down with Gandhi and everything, how appalling that was, and this.....

End of F6683 Side A

F6683 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Latham on the 4th of June. Tape one, side B.

Going back to your childhood, just tell me about when you had rheumatic fever. Do you remember anything of it?

Now you ask the question, I can't...I think that I had the rheumatic fever when I was about one-and-a-half, because I don't remember much about it except, I remember that my uncle, Uncle Leslie, who was very glamorous, my mother's brother, I remember he, he had rheumatic fever too at the same time and I remember, so I must have been about two, because I remember that we had to exercises together, and he sort of did exercises with me. And, I just remember a lot in my childhood I was in bed for a lot of the time, like, you know, later on I had bronchitis, and typhoid, and, I would have illnesses that would last a season, like, you know, I would be in bed all winter with great big wodes of cotton wool, you know, seeped in, you know, this heavy smelling eucalyptus or whatever it was. I would always be wrapped up in something, or... So I can't remember much about the rheumatic fever except I do remember... I mean I might have been three, I can't remember, but I know that I had it very young, and that my uncle also had rheumatic fever, and I remember there was this business about exercising together, so I might have been three, I don't think I would have remembered it at one or one-and-a-half. I'm not quite accurate about that, but it always seemed that I would have these illnesses that would go on for a whole season, and that I would have...well when I was back in London, in England, we would have this Russian doctor who would come in and speaking Russian to my father and wrapping me up in all this stuff. And I think that that's why I had quite a lot of sort of imagination and I would write stories and I would draw masses of pictures, which must have been the origins of my getting into the art. And then of course the dancing was to get me stronger, because, and that's why I was left in Devon, was to go to dancing school and just get well, and just do careful bits of dancing and not strain, so, I don't know how that worked.

Did your sister have a very different life because she wasn't in the same position physically?

Well I think that that's an interesting point. I think, because that was the contrast between us all the time, and it's quite interesting that my sister was always fascinated with medical people and hospitals, and she went to do physiotherapy, and when I did eventually go to school at twelve-and-a-half, which was obviously far too late, I would always find my sister with the matron, hanging around the matron, and being very good. I mean my sister was very interested in medical things, I think because she didn't have the sort of attention that I was getting, and I always had, I can remember how badly treated I felt, you know, as children do, later on, that when we were in England, when we were left in England, I mean my sister went on going backwards and forwards to India for a bit, but, that she...she was always the one that, in particular my grandfather, would not like, and my grandmother would not like, because, possibly because she wasn't as delicate or sparky or mad or getting away with it as I was. I was...I mean I can now look at it and see that I was getting away with a lot, because I...I would always go and do things, you know, so, I either got away with them or not, and my sister would be very responsible and good. I mean later, when the war was on and we were sent off to school, she went to school before I did, she would always be looking after the clothes and seeing that everything was mended, and helping me pack and everything, so she always took this very responsible role, and was not much liked for it. I mean I remember my... I mean I liked her, although later on, much later I remember sitting on the sofa with her and she said, 'I always hated you,' and I thought... I mean we now love each other, you know, it's all right, we got over that, but I can see how much she might have hated me, because I would have had more attention because of being delicate, and not towing the party line, which in a sort of way I suppose is more nice to know, although it needs more punishment, than my sister who would do the good things and try very hard. And I know that I always felt a great unfairness from my grandparents, and my mother, towards my sister, whereas my father loved my sister, he was...well he loved all of us, I mean, he loved us both because we, my last sister was much later, but, there was an unfairness I think between us possibly because of my illnesses, and my behaviour, for getting away with it.

Do you remember reading, without your education as it were? I haven't quite understood how one performs without education.

Well what happened was that, my grandmother taught me to read. She had come and she would read me stories at night, like Louisa Alcott's 'Little Women', and 'The Last of the Mohicans', and very, you know, stories of that time. And I used to absolutely love this. And so the way, so I thought, I've got to be able to do this myself, so you know, I would get a torch and read under the bedclothes to try and read the rest of the story. But it was very very phonetic, so that when I did finally arrive at school, I mean you know, I had no sort of, it was completely phonetic pronunciation of words, and you know, no...you know, I had to be pulled on to how reading was, and writing was, and grammar and everything like that. And I would read all the rubbish, all the sort of throwaway books on the rubbish heap, because you know, I didn't really sort of get to school until a bit later than that, although I was sent down to the farm at the bottom to do reading with the farmer's wife on specific books, but there was a sort of judder between my actual sort of reading and, you know, it wasn't structured through any grammar or anything, so it was a bit phonetic and... Yes, I mean I then avidly read stuff, but I would read it to myself, so when it came to being read aloud, it was completely wrong, you know, or pretty wrong. So, you know, there wasn't much structure until I was about, till just before I actually was sent away to a school, and it was quite difficult to pull that together, but I would always be very interested in a subject like geography and history and biology, and I would draw very well, you know, pictures of battles, and the biology things, and... But... And I would write stories completely phonetically.

How did you feel about being left by your parents with your grandparents?

Absolutely dreadful. I felt that it was a complete let-down by my mother. And I remember she gave us each a doll and the doll had all these knitted clothes on it, and occasionally children would come round to play with us. I was very bad with any other children I didn't know, because we lived on top of this hill with the grandparents and I had so much you might say imagination, all fairies in the garden, or being with my grandfather, either fishing or, you know, on the boat or in the garden or something, that I couldn't really handle other children, and I noticed that if they came anywhere near this doll that I was meant to be, being generous with my toys with, I would go completely berserk and have to be shut up in my room for not being

able to play with other children. And I was always putting on plays there that people had to come and watch, rather grimly, you know, I was always putting on these plays on the veranda. Seemed to be with verandas all my early life, even when we came back to England and to Devon. But I felt awful about our parents going, and when they came back, you know, on their sort of leaves from India, you know, they would be like these golden people, and, I remember, you know, the war just started or whatever it was, because then we got sent away to the school in Taunton which had been evacuated from Folkestone and all that sort of stuff. But I remember, they would be completely, marvellous people when they came back, but it was absolutely awful being left by my mother, and... But then, I developed a very close relationship with my grandparents, which I don't believe my sister, you know, my sister had a hard time, but...

Can you describe them?

What?

Your grandparents.

Oh yes. Well, my grandmother was quite plump, and dark, you know, this was the side that flowed through to my mother, and she had a great big plait of dark brown hair that came right down to here, and I remember it was a bit grey but she kept her dark hair, you know, and I notice my sister has kept that too. And my grandfather was very glamorous again, and I think I was completely in love with my grandfather, and possibly him with me, but I mean I'm exaggerating it. What I mean is, we got on very well, he would tease me, and he would do all the things like gardening with me, he had a great wodge of white hair, and he was very tall, and he was called the Colonel all round the places, you know, and he, I remember doing all the gardening with him and planting out, you know, with the little dipper, planting out the plants, and the tomatoes. And then we built the greenhouse together, and I remember, I went back, you know, sort of, like ten years ago, and I asked the person living there, who incidentally was a person who had been a prisoner of war in Japan which was interesting, and I said, 'Could I see the greenhouse, because I helped build it?' He said, 'Yes, it always was a bit skew-whiff,' he said. But, yes my grandfather was a

wonderful creature. And my uncle, my mother's brother, also very glamorous, but much thinner, and without the...oh well I don't know, because you don't know as a child quite the thing, but again my grandfather was more thick-set than my uncle. My uncle was an Olympic Games hurdler, he came second in the Olympic Games, so of course we always have to have 'Chariots of Fire' being played at us sort of round the track and the family turns out to look at 'Chariots of Fire', you know. Anyway... Yes. Well, I think my grandfather was lovely, I used to go sailing with him, before we even got the outboard motor, and we would get becalmed out at sea and my grandmother would go bananas, and we would do mackerel fishing, and I would... You see I could do all the sort of things like row my boat past the whirlpool, I was given a little tiny rowing boat, and gut fish, and you know, milk cows, but I hadn't actually been sort of quite educated, nobody had been instructed with my education. But, we would go out to sea and we would be out at sea for hours, you know, like half a day or a day and stuff, just off Teignmouth, and then we would also go round to Brixham to have our, to have the sails re-redded, the red Devon sails, were redded every year with this stuff that protects them from the weather. And I remember being out at sea with my grandfather and there was always this business about, he could just pee over the side of the boat but I couldn't, and all that sort of business. And, this was another thing, I think that, I was aware that I mustn't see my grandfather undressed, you know. I remember that once I went into the bathroom when he was in the bath, and this was, you know, again a great sort of horror, you know, I shouldn't have seen that, whatever the 'that' was, and... Yes, it was, I thought my grandfather was wonderful. Because we did get on well, and he would tease me mercilessly when he would pick me up from school when we eventually got sent to school, he would say, 'And when are you going back?' like tomorrow, and I remember being dreadfully hurt, and of course this was a joke, you know. And my grandmother taught me all the cooking, and the sewing things, and we got on tremendously well, but she didn't get on well with my sister, and this sort of ran through, you know, what happened was that my sister didn't get the love of my mother, and my grandparents, and in fact my grandfather used to always joke and laugh at her and call her the ugly sister, and it was awful when I think about that, because when we were bridesmaids to this glamorous uncle who married very glamorous Auntie Barbara, who my grandmother hated of course, and she looks, you know, the pictures of that period, she was very very pretty and she looked, she had mauve eyes and she looked absolutely...and then

this short hair, she looked absolutely a Charleston, typical beautiful person. They were so glamorous, these two, and we were bridesmaids to them, and I remember we had these little bonnets and everything, there's pictures of us there. And I remember having our wedding, our bridesmaid's dresses made for it by a woman called Miss Webb, and I remember there were these three trays, and I've got one of the trays left, it's a crappy tray, and I've put my little bridesmaid's picture embedded on the hole which has been burnt in it, because it just reminds me, it comes from that period. But, yes we had these yellow silk bridesmaids' dresses, and the pictures were taken. I remember my grandfather calling my sister the ugly sister from the Cinderella, and it was upsetting, because I would know as a child that that was very unfair, and I know when, she would run down the path and she fell over, we would collect the eggs from the chicken houses, I of course would climb underneath amongst all the chickens and get all their feathers in my hair and get covered in this red Devon mud and everything. And I remember when Elizabeth went to collect them she fell down the steps and broke the eggs, and she was given such a hard time. I always remember that.

Has she talked about it since?

Oh yes yes, I mean, she always felt that she was never loved, and, but that my father loved her, and that this ran through the thing and went on to the younger sister who was also much privileged by my mother and by the grandmother, you know, and everything went through them. I never sort of wanted any of the things when people died, it wasn't at all important to me, except my father's ring which was meant to be left to my, it was the Tsar's ring given by the Tsar to my father's father, and that was meant to be passed on to the first daughter who had a boy, and that was me because I had Noah, and so that's the only piece of possession I ever fought for, I didn't get it of course. For Noah I wanted it, and they didn't give it. And I think it was because my mother found out that he was gay, and she therefore didn't feel that it could go on, because on her deathbed – oh I've jumped a whole sort of, generations here, but... Where were we?

I was just about to ask you, how often did your parents have leave?

It was either once a year or twice a year, because there would be these huge gaps and then these golden people would arrive back, and it would be completely unreal for about a month while we would go in the car round places, and people would salute my father in the war later on, you know, they'd sort of, I'd see him getting saluted, you know, even when he was under the car and tying up the, whatever it was that had gone, something, you know, he would climb out and somebody would salute him, and I would be very impressed as a child. But that, I must have been, that was in the war so I would be, whatever I was, twelve would I have been, or was it before that? Well, older.

Did they leave with Partition, or before?

Gosh. When was Partition? Remind me, historian.

'45, 6.

Oh. No, they were still going out. Because my father was always on about how it would work and that there would be trouble with Kashmir, always he was saying that, and that it wouldn't work. But I can't quite remember whether, you know, when they left, and my recollection there. I think it was after Partition, because then in the war he went up and he took the India-Chinese thing. I'm being a bit vague about this.

Did he talk about his work and his public role to you as a child?

Not actually to me; I would hear the discussions going on. If I asked, as I did, older, a direct question about, you know, how all this is happening. Because it was only in seeing the Gandhi film of this great crossing where they crossed, you know, those people on the top and the people below and then how they fought, you know, when they were trying to go in the Partition, that I realised what it must have been like, what were traumas and what were the...what was the criteria that was being applied to this. Because they were... Well my father did talk to me about Mountbatten and stuff, because he was on Mountbatten's staff at a certain time, up in India, and also Chongqing and everything, so... God! I might be getting the history wrong here. Anyway, yes, I mean he...he had great notions of how it should be done, so this was

always being discussed, you know, but how much as a child I was listening to it or not, but it was always being discussed. I mean, when they did come back on leave, and there was, in my grandparents' house there was a great long oak dining table with the chairs and everything, and Uncle Leslie and Auntie Barbara would be there as well, and they would always be discussing the toing and froing of that, because my uncle later went into the, he later became Adviser to the Sultan of Muscat in Oman and stuff, so they led a very sort of imperialist kind of life as well.

Was your grandfather a military man as well?

He had been in the Army, yes, but he was wounded and so he was... I mean I was with my grandfather when he was retired, you know, he was in Devon, they had retired, and I remember the first picture I saw of them when they first went down to Devon, a photograph was of my grandmother and grandfather sawing a log with this double-handed saw, and they ran a market garden and everything, you know, and... But he was a military, you know, he had been in the Army and, it was always the Army background that they came from. But then my father during the war was in MI5 or MI6 and they were cracking codes and they were I think spies, I mean my father was a spy, I was told; if it was MI6 and he was at Bletchley he was a spy. Again I'm not very good about the history and checking that out, but I know that they did the big cracking of codes during the war, and we were being followed backwards and forwards to the school, just that bit of the war, and they were at Bletchley, and my father going to Chongqing and everything.

Your mother's role sounds absolutely traditional. Do you know if she had any sort of desires beyond that?

Well, yes, as I said I've given her a bit of a bad press. She was much more traditional in that she was of her time, seeing the role of the British Empire and all that, so she would be very sort of regretting of things, where, I didn't get that feeling off my father, I just felt him being very interested in how it would work out historically, both in that and also, you know, before that, before I was sort of born, or just when I was born, or whatever it was, he wrote the last dispatches of the white Russians from the Bolsheviks for the, what must have been the 'Manchester Guardian' then and

everything, he was very involved in that, so he was very interested in the historical thing, and he... I'll come back on to my mother who has again being left out of it. But he wrote his life story, which is rather dully put; the extraordinary thing is, it's so dull, because it's absolutely accurate, and you don't have any of his wonderfulnesses in, and if I had lived long enough I was going to put his wonderfulnesses in, back into his book, which is 'From Imperialist Russia to the Welfare State', and it's a very beautiful structure, and I think reads much more interestingly now, although it was...it was boring because he didn't put in his great humanity and observations, you know, which is so strange. But my mother, she was very very strong, and she would...I mean I can see me in her, and as my, as John will say, 'You're just like your mother,' which of course is the worst thing you could possibly say. What I'm trying to do is boss and get the things done, like I'm setting up the meetings and going out there, and why don't you do so-and-so, you know, it's a real pain that you can really be put down for as a woman, and I do that. And my mother did that, and she would go and, I mean I would hear great discussions going on about how Steve, my father, either called Stevo or Leo, either, how he should handle his affairs with, this was the Russian from the timber trade he was with afterwards, and how he should be conducting his business, and that he wasn't having enough play and how he should tell this person and that person, you know, my mother always telling him how to run his business. And then of course my father saying, 'Yes, well of course they just think, you know, that I'm speaking out of your orifice.' You know, I mean not like that, but... So, my mother was very strong. She was very, she was very fair, I mean, during the war she, not only was she at codes[ph] and going backwards and forwards out of India and leaving us, you know, because of everything, but as she said, 'I have to keep an eye on Steve because he'll go off with the secretaries,' you know, which of course he did. But I mean he was utterly devoted to my mother, he called her Pussy and Misha and all these things. I mean he said, 'I always used to remember her heels coming down the corridor, clipping down the corridor,' and although my father had lots of girlfriends, glamorous girlfriends and everything, which my mother would be keeping her beady eye on, but nevertheless, you know, she was much admired for being a great hostess, very caring about things. I mean in the war she was doing, she was in the Walworth Road doing a soldiers, sailors and airmen's, you know, SSAFA, and getting clothes for the people, but always to do with the Army or, you know, things. And I think that she was very caring with the servants and everything, but you

know, her place would be kept very severely there, whereas my father had none of that, you know. I mean I suppose he did in his work that I didn't sort of see, but I mean, I would see him not, that not being a priority with him, whereas it was a strong one with my mother. But, she was a great character, in that she was so strong, and she did things so well, you know, and she taught herself typing to go out and keep an eye on my father and the secretaries. And, you know...

Were these sort of socially allowed transgressions at the time?

What?

The secretaries.

I don't know whether they... No, I think, I think that they weren't. I mean it was frowned on a lot. I mean how much people did, God knows. I mean, my sister now has this terrible time with her husband who is doing it all the time, and maybe it's a throwback from what they were all doing, God knows. No, I got the feeling that my father would flirt a lot and be with these people but that he was very faithful to my mother, and I think that that was the case. Whether, I mean, he could have had all sorts of flings. I know my mother had one or two people who admired her, but I don't think that anybody was...as far as I knew, and I didn't hear them talk about it or fess up to me later, or they didn't want to, or whatever. I don't actually feel that they ever slept around, but that was a feeling I got as a child, how that was maintained, you know, but there was a great sort of thing that Steve was a great flirt with the ladies, you know, as he was. But, my mum was much admired for her strength and her, well her...she would get things done, you know, as showed up in the war, and showed wherever she went with my father, she would get things to happen, and...

Did she have a soft side?

A what?

A soft side.

Oh I haven't portrayed her very well. Her soft side. Yes, I mean she did delight in things, she delighted in the parties, and she delighted in, well she, you know, her high point was the weddings of the daughters you see, and I really fowled up on that, as you'll get on the tape, for which she didn't forgive me for a long time. So it was the parties and so, she would love all of that, and she would be, you would see her real character in that. Indeed of course she had a soft side, but I don't know how to quite portray it. I felt it very much in her last years. She used to love...I knew that we were on a level then, that she could fess up and be soft with me, and me love her for what she was, and forgive some of these things, you know. And actually confront her with them and talk to her about them, I mean that's what was important, that I was able to talk to her about some of this. But by then, you know, she was fantasising as well, you know, too, I think. I don't want to leave it that my mother didn't have a soft side.

End of F6683 Side B

F6684 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of June. Tape two, side A.

Going back to your time in Devon, it would be very interesting to hear about your education and your ballet.

You mean lack of it. Well, yes there were two things there. One of the things to get me stronger was, to do dancing, so, there was a local group that did dancing, a very good woman dancer, and I can't remember her name now, how bad of me, I should have dug it up for this, but maybe I will find it. But, she had a dancing school in Teignmouth, which was at the bottom of the hill from my Shaldon, which was on the river, and the other side of the river was Teignmouth and also the shipyards that were building the torpedo boats for the war, and so they were always being bombed, which was what happened to my grandfather, that he was caught in a bombing raid. I mean he wasn't killed, but he was traumatised from it. And, yes I was sent off to this dancing school, and this dancing school had quite a high sort of reputation in the area, and the Ballet Jooss had come to either live or work at Dartington, because Dartington, from the Elmhursts had got, you know, the American writers, thinkers, Bertrand Russell's children were going there and everything, but I didn't sort of know anything about that at the time. But the Ballet Jooss were at Dartington and they were dancing, putting on productions, and I didn't realise as a small child that I had gone and danced there as, they wanted, you know, young students from the surrounding schools, and I had gone and danced in Dartington, in their very formal surround, where they put on plays and everything at Dartington Hall, and I recognised it a great deal later, I went there, and I said, oh, I've been here before, I've danced here. They have these very formal trees, and this grass area where they put on performances. And I realised that I had been with the Ballet Jooss dancing as a child in that dancing place. I was doing lots of performances, on the pier and in Torquay and around the place, as I did my, I always remember going to my dancing classes in this big hotel on the front, and the air-raid siren going, and us all having to sort of go out, because they would be coming in to bomb, you know, they... They would switch the engines off and fly across the Channel with the engines off and then they would bomb, so that the sirens would come almost the same time the bombs would be dropping. And my

grandfather was in the air raid, was an air-raid warden, needless to say, so he would be dashing off, and there were several bombing experiences. But, I did a lot of dancing at that time, and then the war sort of hotted up. And so he was caught in one of the raids, and he was standing under a, he was pulled into a doorway when the building came down, and it did give him sort of like shell-shock, or whatever it was, and he did get ill and he died a few years after that. But I also remember when they came strafing in from, again trying to get the MTB boats. Which incidentally, John, who I didn't know then, was a young naval officer and he was getting his MTB boats from Morkan Tiles[ph] yard, so that was, you know, that was one of the interesting things. But of course, you know, he was quite a bit older than me and he was in the war, and I was not in the war, except as a child. I remember seeing... Oh I'll just finish this bombing raid thing. Because I had a lot of dreams from this period. Because we lived on top of the hill and my father was in the air raid things, sometimes I would be sent to give messages that we had got on our telephone, you know, that, where my grandfather had gone to or something like that, and I would be told to run down to the village, and I remember running so fast, because I was quite a good runner, running down this hill like I was almost flying, so all my dreams were me flying up the hill. But it was, it was to give messages to the corner shop, who would then transfer the messages on, and, I didn't quite know what it was about but... And I also remember when the bombs were dropped quite near us in our bungalow at the top of the hill, and I remember being dragged under this little oak table, and my grandfather, who obviously hadn't got down to the village in that time, but he was saying, 'Get under the table, woman!' to my grandmother. My grandmother saying, 'No no no, you must come [INAUDIBLE].' He said, 'Oh!' you know, he was suddenly the soldier, you know, and, woman and children first under the table, you know. All very dramatic. And also the air-raid sirens coming on, but the bombs coming at the same time as the air-raid sirens, was this trick of turning the engines off and just coming, you know, floating across the channel and then doing the bombing. There was a lot of bombing around then. And then there were searchlight batteries all along the wall. And I always remember when the parents goldenly came back, you know, as they goldenly did, from...and we would go off along the coast, there's a most beautiful drive along the edge, along by Torquay and Paignton and everything, you can look down, and, I would always think that I was seeing a submarine and that we ought to report it, and I always remember being told, 'Don't be so dramatic,

you're always lying,' this that and the other, and my mother would say, 'Just like...' was it the Prince of Wales who abdicated? 'You're just selfish like him, you know, always thinking of yourself,' you know, so, I was always being put down as a selfish, self-centred person, even when I was trying to save everybody, that was obviously a submarine. So the sort of funny little memories from the war and being in Devon and dancing, and... And also for my birthday I had two treats, because it was the 21st of August, my birthday, and there would be two treats. One would be that we would go in a flotilla of boats round the rocks, because you couldn't actually climb round the rocks because you would have to go round by boat, to a beach that nobody could get at, which was absolutely lovely, and then we would have our picnics, and build fires and everything on that. And so there would be that treat. Or there would be the treat that I could go up to Dartmoor, and we would, up to Hay Tor and we would have a picnic up there. So those were two treats that my grandparents would give me. And, those were my sort of birthday treats. But the war was quite sort of strong there. I mean when we did eventually, when I did eventually go to school, because my sister had already gone to school, the headmistress of this school came to interview us, because she was going to virtually be our guardian when the parents were in India, and she was called Miss Starky and she lived with Lady Hosey[ph] who was a writer on French – on Chinese literature and everything. And she came, and I remember taking her up this, to the top floor of this tiny house down by the beach, this was the house we were just staying in really. And showing her my little rowing boat that was moored in the, that I was given for a birthday present from my grandparents, this tiny little rowing boat. And, then we were sent off to school. But I remember that Exeter had been badly bombed, and so that the railway line was down, so we were going to be ferried across by buses and everything. I remember all these troops, and there were masses of these glamorous troops carrying our suitcases, you know. I don't know, I was eight or something at the time, I thought it was all marvellous. And so that you would go as far the train wasn't bombed, then you would go by buses to get across to this big house which the school from Folkestone had been evacuated to, called Henlade Drive, and we would have troops at the bottom of the driveway, you know, who were there. And I remember... So, yes, so there was that, when the school was... And I also remember that, we had gone to play tennis, and I can't think where this would have been; would it have been...? I don't think it was at that... Well it must have been, because that was when I was at a school, so, I'm trying to think, I

was only at a school for a year and a half, which goes down in my CVs, school, a year and a half. And, I remember, this was the landings, you know, the actual landings on the Continent. Because, for about two days these aircraft carriers were going over towing these planes, you know, to land in...and then we heard that they had landed, you know, and that was the landing on the Continent. So, I just remember, yes, playing tennis and these, they were going over and over and over for sort of hours, these massive parachute battalions going to land in Germany, and I just remember, you know, the hot weather and the drone, the constant drone of all these planes going over. And then the awfulness of, you know, that, how many people had been killed and all that sort of thing. And then also, when I had got, when we were at this school, which was this year and a half, we were all knitting for different, Balaclava helmets and scarves for the different ships, each of us adopted a different ship, and mine was Warspite, and then there was the...there was the Rodney, the Warspite. Oh God! I can't remember the three ships, but I know...and I couldn't knit, I was absolutely hopeless; everybody had to do a bit on my scarf, and I kept thinking of this poor sailor who's going to get this scarf with all these uneven bits. But maybe it doesn't matter, maybe he's cold, you know, and... I was not good at that sort of thing. I was very good at sewing, and I was very good at drawing, you know, and I...in fact I...Lady Hosey[ph] asked me to do some illustrations for her through the Moon Gate I think it was called, and I did the illustrations for her Chinese book, just some of the, things for that. And I also did a lot of drawings and paintings of Henlade House and the school and round there, you know, I got very good at drawing there. And also I was very good at gymnastics, and the dancing. And we had a German gym instructress there, Miss Kosterlitz, and there was also a girl from, a Jewish girl who had...God! I'm not remembering her name, she lives down in Devon, I must go and find her. I almost want to ring my sister up and say, what was she called? She remembers these things. And, where was I? Oh yes. Yes, I was doing these drawings and things. And we would get bombed, you know, Taunton would get bombed, because there were a lot of troop installations there and they were... And then the Americans came over, and they had a big encampment there, because, this was very exciting for us, because the Americans came, and they came with their fridges and their sweets and their...all the things that we hadn't had. Because every time we got presents from the Commonwealth, from Australia and everything, honey for the children in Britain, we had to march in our Brownie sixes with our flag flying, to the end of the drive and

give them to the soldiers in the searchlight battery at the bottom of the drive. And we all knew that they had honey and all these much better things, because they all had the NAAFI, you know, but we had to give it up because we were Brownies and Guides, weren't we. And I always remember my Brownie thing was, 'Here we are, the merry elves, helping others, not ourselves.' And there was others, 'Here we are, the little people, aim as high as any steeple.' And I think both those things have got into me. [LAUGHING] But I remember having to give up our things and march to the bottom of the drive. And I remember when, oh yes this was funny, when the Americans came, an American chaplain came to visit our school. He was terribly glamorous, and of course all the girls were like this, you see. Well we were going to of course do a Nativity play, so we were going to do the Nativity play for the Americans at their camp, weren't we. And, so, we... One thing he did, this American chaplain was, he had brought us a lot of magazines, these absolutely wicked magazines from America, which of course we avidly read. They were discovered and we said... 'Where did these come from? Where did you get a hold of this?' And we said, 'The chaplain brought them, Miss Starky,' you know, what could be better than that? And then there was... And then, so we went off on this Nativity play in bus-loads to the American Air Force base, or whatever it was, and, I remember, and we had these heavy angels' wings, I was one of the angels you see, of course, and I remember afterwards, when we had done our Nativity play to all these troops, we were then sort of let out and allowed to talk to the troops, or they gave us ice-creams and things, you know, all the things that we didn't have, masses and masses of ice-cream. And, 'Go on, help yourselves.' And then the troops started talking to us about whether we had boyfriends or not, and of course we hotted up, talking about boyfriends and everything. I don't know, I mean I could have been, yes, because it was only my year and a half, I must have been twelve or something, or I might have been eleven-and-a-half or, that year-and-a-half I was having at my school. And then there was... Yes, and I remember, when we were bombed also, quite a lot of bombs fell round, and we would have to sleep in the basement, and I remember our Miss Starky coming down the stairs, looking I suppose a bit like Winston Churchill, because she was a very tall person, she was wearing her boiler suit, and I know that Winston Churchill was famous for his boiler suit. She was just without the cigar. And then we would go out and we would look and see where the bombs had fallen, and we would see these great, you know, because of course they had dismantled them and everything, but huge

holes, you know, sort of around. And, yes, I remember that. And then, my...I made one friend at school, called Tricia, I didn't understand the rest and I couldn't remember any of them, although my sister valiantly tries to have an old girls' thing to which they all come, which Tricia and I always refuse to go to. But, and this friend of mine, Tricia, she, her father was in the Air Force, and, she had these two brothers, and she was all... When the father from the Air Force came, she always wanted to invite me out, and I would be terrified of going out because there would be two boys, you know, and this was totally impossible to deal with. So I would always try and get myself ill with a temperature, and you know, try and hot up things, but I would have to go out sometimes, and then she would say, 'Oh Barbara is so', you know, 'Barbie's so good at gym and everything,' and then the brothers would pick me up in the air and throw me round, and I would do cartwheels and everything. Because I was always doing, I would always win the gold medal for gymnastics against this other German person who, she wasn't called Lisa but something a bit like that. God! I can't remember her name. And Miss Kosterlitz would put us through these paces and we would do routines which were back bends, back bends, flips, cartwheels, splits, and everything, and they'd never know whether to give it to me or to this other girl. I can't remember her name, this is so important, she was the only other person I really got on with, which was this other very competitive athlete. And, we would do things, this Miss Kosterlitz who came, you know, very Germanic, and when we put on a display for the parents, I remember we all came into the drum, you know, like this, and the parents were terribly put off that this was sort of like a Nazi sort of troupe movement coming on you see. And we were great timing, you know, from her, absolutely marvellous timing, so all the cartwheels, splits and everything was done like that, over the horses, you know. And I remember her being so angry if people couldn't go over the horse, she'd say, 'Come on! What are you doing?' and she would force them over, you know. But anybody who was sort of good at it and everything of course had a fine time with Miss Kosterlitz, and she would...we would do this great tree climbing thing on beech trees which were sort of supple and everything, and she would give us a rope which we would tie round our waist, and then we would...and it was meant to be the right length and you would jump out and the rope would swing out, and I remember once it wasn't the right length and I jumped from the top of the tree to the bottom, but I'm still here. But, we would do

these amazing sort of acrobats and stuff, so, you know, my dancing was taken in this direction for a bit.

What about the sort of more formal side of education?

Oh yes, that was in there somewhere. Well, when I hit the school you mean. Oh yes, well there were all these things like scripture, which the two headmistresses were very keen on, and I was very interested in the scripture. Oh yes, and then we got confirmed there, and I really did think that was a bit of a number, because the Bishop of Bath & Wells laid his hands on us and I really thought, well he's going to see everything that I've done wicked, but I must be good now, you know, and I became a bit religious for a bit, which my sister used to kick me around for. 'Oh what are you saying your prayers for? He can see everything.' But anyway, and... Yes, so there was scripture. I was quite good at all these things, out of interest in the subject, but I was terribly bad of course at the writing down, and so when it came to the School Certificate, which I then took when we came up to London, because the parents took us away from school because they could get a flat in London on a top floor for absolutely nothing, because they were having the doodle-bugs and so, they decided, they hadn't been killed during the war and neither had us, so we would take this great flat you see. But, I remember that they had to make a dispensation, and I don't know how it was done or anything, but that, the spelling and the writing was just not there, and so, I mean I took literature, English, you know, total, no spelling, biology, something, and I got sort of, you know, honours and whatever. But I remember that there was a dispensation around the fact that there was no spelling in here.

I mean do you think you were genuinely dyslexic, or just that you hadn't had enough education?

Quite a bit dyslexic, I've noticed, because, I mean since being with John and everything, you know, the letters are around the wrong way for me, and I had this thing about, because my mother tried to get me to go to a secretarial school, it was an absolute nightmare, but this business about having, Tricia and I both went and created chaos, but there was, the business about the fatness of the letters and above and below and were they are in front or behind, I still have problems, you know, still have

problems with it. So could well have been dyslexic. But also no grammar, this is the way grammar works, you know, just a few rules like, 'i after e except after c' stuck, but nothing much else. And because the reading was done so haphazardly, and without, 'Now read it correctly,' you know, so, there was this massive, being good and interested in all these subjects and dealing with them and writing it out, but having a very difficult time with the actual writing I suppose.

And do you still have a problem?

I think it's one...I think it's one of... Oh what, dyslexia? I mean, I have no spelling of names, you know, so, that's why I said to you about the names. But, I think I do... I think I'm marvellous actually, what I do, writing and everything now, and I'm quite sad that a lot of my writing then, my flowing writing, you know, my story-telling, because I wrote a lot of stories when I was ill as a child, and they were very, you know, when I did hit school, you know, they were called wonderful stories, you know, because they were I suppose imaginative and they were completely free-flowing. And I do, I sort of resent having to write these letters to civil servants and getting, you know, all the time, and [INAUDIBLE]. It's not that I resent it, but they're very hard to write, because one, you're having to be politically correct, you're having to get all the new stuff that they're not versed in. I mean they're very hard letters to write, and I'm always giving myself hell for finding them so difficult, having to talk to John about it. I mean this is a constant thing, right up to this present, writing all the stuff to the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and Health and everything. I'm fine when I talk to the people and I put it over; get it into a letter, letters are difficult anyway aren't they, especially when you're doing a political thing and bringing in all the stuff, and, I do resent having to have John help me with that. And I find that, because he's there and he understands it all and everything. And I find that if there's a woman with me, I feel fine, but if there's a man correcting me, it's all that history of being corrected and being paternalistic and being the wrong, you know, not feeling good about what I can do, but bad about what I can't do, and that goes right back I think to, I'm very conscious that I didn't have an academic thing. When I was writing my CV incidentally, my son who's a philosopher, and a musician, my eldest son, our eldest son, he's called Noah and he's quite wonderful, of course, and he was looking at my CV and I had sort of written about being at school, so he

said, 'Barbara, people just don't even put...it's further and higher education, if at all, that you even mention on a CV,' you see. I suddenly realised, I had nothing to put in you see. And later on when Paul Riley[ph] said, 'You must become a fellow of the Royal Society of Arts,' you see. So I get this great massive form, you know, academic qualifications on it. So, I sort of said, 'Well Paul, I've got a bit of a hang-up about this, I mean I just don't...you know, what should I put?' Because I've just done two parallel lines with a year-and-a-half at school across it, you know, I thought, well this is not going to be much cop, so I'd better ring him up and tell him. He said, 'Oh it doesn't matter, Barbara, I mean,' this that and the other. It's like, you could get into art school without, you know, your A'levels or your whatever levels. And of course, well I'd done quite well on the School Certificates and stuff, but, you know, it was the portfolio that counted wasn't it, and it was, you know... So, that's always hung about my person, and it still seems to do it.

Have you had a chance to go back to imaginative writing in your adult life?

Well what... Oh dear, now this is going to hurt me. I... Gosh, that's a... Don't bowl me that one. No, I did decide to, I went to the City Lit., but I went to do an autobiographical course and there was a very interesting woman there, again I've forgotten her name, and, I found it enormously difficult to get the stuff done, because I was doing the wretched A.P.G., O. & I.. I'm always doing it. And, I do want to do this book, and I want to do it rather like I'm doing this, but perhaps bringing out different elements, but I haven't taken it as imaginative, you know, not like my fairy stories and my, you know... I think because I... I think what I've experienced in my life, like the dancing, the visual, where I've been, and I believe I'm very, I know myself to be very visually perceptive and responsive to visuals and smells and, you know, I did a lot of sort of things with the camera and everything. And I'm wanting to make this film, out of objects that I've made, because you know, those rubble objects that you see up there and stuff, which was my assemblage and stuff, which I went in to from...there's a better one there, those are just the old Sixties ones. But, I sort of felt that, now you ask me that question, that, my life experience and my journey and the things on it and in it are the work, and it's a film, and it's a story, rather than I would make up stories, so I've gone into that mode. I'd like to talk more about that with you off the tape. But, that was a very interesting one you bowled me,

because, that's why I would also say, like I've got a friend, Carlyle reedy, who's a bit younger than me, and she's, there's a picture of her there, now, she paints pictures, that's one of hers, little collages there, that I like very much. I make things with very much bigger pieces of material. And she paints; I don't think her painting, I mean I don't find her painting so interesting where she's got figures and everything in it, but she, instead of writing her autobiography or anything, she's absolutely mapped everything, she just concentrates on her own work. I mean she's not a public person, she doesn't go out publicly, although she did at one time. She writes poetry, which I call the equivalent of imaginative writing. And they're almost like little marks, they're like little distillations of a paint mark, but the words just being used beautifully, you know. And I think that she's very good, and I mean I would have to have another life I think to let go and be able to do that. So, I think that that might be an answer to your question.

Just briefly, because we're perilously close to the end of the tape, did you ever think of pursuing a ballet career?

Oh I did indeed, but, and I really, I think I would have loved that. The thing was that, both the ballet and the art school, because I wanted to go to art school, and my mother when she came back said, 'Go to secretarial college and you'll always have something underneath you,' and at the same time I was going to the art school, and at the same time I was also doing dancing while I was at the art school, I was...the old Chelsea Town Hall, not the one that's there but just round the corner, and I was doing some dancing there. So I had my ballet shoes and I had my drawing things, you know, and I was...I was sort of pulled between those. But they weren't, they weren't helped or pushed along by my parents. I mean my father didn't really have a say in what I did. I wanted to do both dancing and I wanted to do...and I wanted to do the art, and my mother promised that I could go to the art school if I did the secretarial course, which of course I got kicked out of. Anyway, I sort of got...I got a scholarship to Chelsea. But, and I remember my father went along. I've leapt forward a bit here.

End of F6684 Side A

F6684 Side B

Recommencing the interview with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of June. Tape two, side B.

After your short period at school it would be very interesting to hear what you did in the gap between, you moved, you know, when you moved into a sort of adult life.

OK. Well, my parents were coming back from India and Chongqing or wherever they were, and they decided to take this flat, which was a beautiful flat in Courtfield Gardens I think it was, was it Courtfield Gardens? A big mansion flat on the top floor. And all the flats on the top floor were going very cheaply because the war wasn't quite over and they were having the doodle-bugs, and so nobody really were risking the top floor flats. But my parents said, well, we had all managed to survive this war – I think I've said a bit of this before – so let's plunge into this flat. 'And you, Barbie, will take a secretarial course, which will make it all OK, then you can do what...' this art thing she had heard me muttering about. And she hadn't, they didn't pick up on the dancing thing at all, that wasn't... My father was quite interested in it but my mother didn't think this was anything, you know, so, the idea was, you know, how would I get my School Certificate. I hadn't got School Certificate, because we were taken away just, to go and move into this flat, so they thought they would try me on School Certificate. So, the only place we could go and just take that exam was a finishing school in, well as far as they could look or whatever. When I say they, I think it was my mother doing all this, I don't know. So, my sister and I were sent to Mrs Renie O'Marney school for young ladies in Queen's Gate, and where we were all called the cygnets, and where we were taught, where the idea was that we would obviously marry somebody pretty soon and that any ideas on art, which I was pretty interested in, would be as conversation at dinner. I mean, the girls were taught how to dress, how to walk, and conversation at dinner, so, and also which knife to pick up first, and the girls had a butler who would, you know, who would come to the meals, and show us how to do...that this was a butler pouring out the water, and you didn't grab across a table for the jug of water and pour it out yourself. So, anyway, but, my mother said, 'But I do want the girls to take their School Certificate.' So, there was no real classroom for us, so we would do it on this rather thick carpet in one of the

bedrooms, we would be swatting up these exams for the School Certificate. But there was an art teacher there, who I got on with very well, so that was lovely. And anyway we took the School Certificate, I remember it was a very hot summer's day and we had to go to Ealing or somewhere and sit this exam for the School Certificate, and I remember taking the exam. And then finding that I had passed it and rather well, but with this stipulation on, you know, 'She had been ill and not got...' you know, whatever they said, I managed to get it in some way without the spelling and the grammar or whatever was necessary. And, but I had met this art teacher. And then while we were waiting for that, I said I wanted to go to art school, and my mother said, 'No, you can't go to art school until you've done your secretarial course,' your secretarial course. So, in the same square that our flat was in, there was a secretarial college, and my great friend Tricia from school, whose parents were also going to send her to a secretarial college, so we went there for six months. She was expelled, and I was sort of kicked out later, because, although I did the journalist course sort of terribly well, they just couldn't understand that I couldn't actually spell anything, and especially with shorthand, you must have some sort of knowledge of spelling, because... So it was, you could say, a disaster area. But I suppose I did learn touch-typing, which of course has stood me in good stead, because you know, I can touch-type, whereas John is still ploughing away on his computer with three fingers or whatever it is. But then a lot of men do that anyway don't they. Don't they?

They do.

So, anyway, so I did that. But anyway, I then won my position to the art college, to Chelsea School of Art, and I took along a portfolio of stuff that I was just sort of drawing and painting and doing anyway.

And can you remember what kind of things you were doing at that time?

I think they were mainly landscapes, and...yes, mainly landscapes and trees. They weren't abstract at all, I became abstract much later on, when I had had the children and everything. And, so, they were very well seen hand-to-eye. I mean, my mother and father both hoped that I would do illustration, because I would go into the City and I would draw the Monument, and my father's, you know, that part of the Thames

and everything, they would make them into Christmas cards and be immensely proud of me, you know. And, they were immensely proud of my abilities that would show up to their friends in a way, but once I got into art school the parties and everything they had in the flat, there was one little room that sort of went downstairs and that was my room, and I would be there in my father's shirt, painting these apparently appalling pictures, and all the party would come and look at me, and I would be the sort of, 'You must come and see Buki, she's doing her painting in my shirt,' you know, and sort of... It would be an amusing conversation for the party. Buki was my father's pet name for me, like my mother was called Pussy or Misha, and I was called Buki. And, anyway... And, so I was doing that. So I finally won my way to the art school, which was of course where I met John, and the thing was that all the people that had been in the war were sort of like 30 and 28, and we were all 17 or whatever it was, and they were given by the country, what was it that they wanted to do, and John before he had gone into the Navy was very keen on bird-watching and painting flying ducks and everything, and so, which was one of the reasons when he was asked, you know, when they found they had John Latham the naval rating, the first thing he was meant to do was, 'Oh you've got good eyesight if you're interested in painting and an artist, you'd better go up on the crow's nest and spot the aircraft coming in to bomb us,' or whatever, which is what he did of course. I hope he told you that in his story. Anyway, and, so, I went to Chelsea, and I was absolutely dead scared of these older people; I mean it was bad enough any of these people, because I was still immensely shy for some reason, and also very shy of men. And I would get quite a lot of interest from the men, and I wouldn't know how to handle it at all, and so I would slope off and do my dancing in the town hall sort of thing, you know. And also, Chelsea School of Art at the time, it's opposite the one that is there now, which is now a medical school, I think it's part of King's College, and you could go in one way and underneath the basement and come up at the other end, and I always used to do that to avoid all the men who would stand at the top of the staircase, if you came up the stairs, and would sort of point you out and comment on you as you would come out, so I thought, there must be another way I can get to the art school without having to run the gauntlet of these men. There was a special terrifying lot which was John, who was very gaunt with blue eyes and so on, and there was Gerald Hausen[ph] who is a very interesting art historian – not art historian, he writes books on Spain and everything, and he was there. And a guy called Wally Poole[ph] who has died now,

who was immensely, I don't know how to describe him, except, he wasn't a very good artist I never felt. I mean he was very influenced by Adler and those two painters at the time, I mean he didn't seem to be original, but he had a great persuasive lip to him, you know. He was a bit of a bully and a manipulator, and John was seen, in relation to John, John was seen as having, you know, upper-class parents and therefore... And also coming out of the Navy, Wally hadn't been in the forces, I don't know what he was doing. And then there was the other guy, Vere Holden-White who, as you can hear from the name, was quite aristocratic also. And they would all stand at the top of the stairs, and that would be the terrifying...the ex-service people that one had to definitely get by. And I always remember, once I was coming in from my parents' at Courtfield Gardens, then getting on the 49 bus, and my God! Vere Holden-White was on the bus. Oh God! you know, so I had to talk to him, because he was going to talk to me. And he eventually had a crush on me and came down...well, another story. Anyway... And, it was interesting though, because after I had been there, John used to come and talk to me in a very sort of abstractive sort of way, he would come and... I remember we were all sitting on donkeys at the time drawing a life model, can we believe it, of which I was very good at that sort of hand-to-eye stuff, and I won a scholarship later on, I did a whole lot of drawings, and I went to Spain and things, and I came back with all these drawings, and I won the Christopher Head Scholarship. And, I remember this guy, who then became Principal of Chelsea called Brill, and he was a man from Yorkshire, and he obviously had it in for me for being middle class, one of the middle class girls, you see. So, I remember him saying, 'Oh Miss Steveni, oh. Oh, you're very much better than I thought you could possibly be,' i.e., you know...or something or other, anyway, along those lines. And I also remember my father coming in at the time, I'm not quite sure in which order this was, and he came in with his rolled umbrella and his bowler hat and attacked the – sent by my mother – attacked... Oh I'm giving her such a bad press. So you must remember on this tape that my mother was a very wonderful woman, and I'll say some more about that later. But, she was tough, as you'll find out in a minute. And anyway, I... And he came in. And then afterwards Williamson, who was the Head of Chelsea School of Art at the time, came out with a very amusing little grin on his face and said, 'I've had your father in here today, Barbara.' So I said, 'Oh yes?' jumping nervously, 'What did he say?' He said, 'Well he gave me a lecture on, when you were you going to earn some money and what sort of career was this?' And I

said to him, 'What did you say?' He said, 'Well, I did my best to tell them that you were a very good student and that we hope that you would earn a living,' you see And, so I remember that. I also remember the time, I had a cousin on my father's side I think it is, Eric Kennington, who is that draughtsman, you know, who did 'The Seven Pillars of Wisdom' illustrations and everything, he's got a whole lot of stuff in the Imperial War Museum which was why they were quite interested in sort of joining up my father's stuff and all that. And, I went and stayed with him, because my parents, thinking, oh well, if Barbie is interested in this art thing she'd better go and see Eric,' you see, so I was duly dispatched to Oxfordshire where they lived. And his, Eric Kennington's wife had joined some sort of religious movement, and they kept trying to get Eric to sort of join the religious movement and he would be out in his studio in the woods. And, I went in there, and I talked to him about, how could I do this thing, like, being an artist or whatever it was, and he told me about the two ways you could be an artist. You either go down the commercial art line, or you decide to be 'the fine artist', in inverted commas, or something, and that this would be a choice I would be having to make. And so, I remember him talking to me about that, and it was a great help, and I used to go down there often. And he had of course an assistant. This was my first person I fell in love with, and I didn't know what to do with it. And he was a very glamorous, I think he was Canadian or something, guy, who, when I was down there, he had a sort of hut in the woods, and, romantic, romantic, and, he was like a young Beethoven's head if you know what I mean, and I remember that, he came and used to talk to me, and I would go and look at his work that he had in his shed, and then we would go for walks and everything, and I remember him taking my hand and pulling me up a thing, that was the first sort of feeling of a man sort of, you know, that... I mean there were other instances but I know that, I had sort of rather fallen in love with him but didn't know what to do. But then I didn't go down there again for a long time, when I did go down he wouldn't speak to me because I had just left him and I hadn't bothered with him. And so I guessed I fouled up. But, he was a very lovely person. But it was interesting with Eric. Yes that was where my first sort of thing, I'm going to do the art, came from. And he suggested going to Chelsea, so that was how I sort of got there really. And...

Did you see yourself as a fine artist or a commercial artist, had you chosen?

I think I definitely chose to be an artist. I didn't see how to apply myself in a design way, I wasn't interested in that, you know, I was looking at things quite differently, and... It was interesting at the time, because this Vere Holden-White[ph] I was talking about, it was interesting how, I was doing rather... I think my drawing was very good, hand-to-eye, but it was quite tight, I hadn't sort of loosened up, if you know what I mean. And also my painting, handling oil paint and handling acrylic and, you know, beginning to handle stuff. And there was Ceri Richards there, and Henry Moore was there. But I remember Ceri coming up to me and saying, 'Well are you enjoying yourself then? That's the important thing,' or whatever it was. And I thought, why is this man being so trivial? Doesn't he know it's difficult and I'm having difficulty? I remember thinking that, you know, and being rather annoyed with his comment. But, there was a great influence of Henry Moore in that college, you know, everybody was turning out drawings like that. I had a couple of very good women friends, Daphne Cork and, a very strange girl, Diana, who I did a lot of things with, and, again forgetting her name, I must dig out their names. And, Chris Parbery who married Robert Roberts, who was quite a sort, who was meant to be the artist in that art school at the time that everybody drooled about, quite a sort of academic Welsh artist, and, Welsh was very prominently in at the time, I mean, there was Dylan Thomas and you know, all that sort of period and...and Ceri and everything. So... Where was I?

Can you remember how that Henry Moore influence...?

Oh yes, I wanted to say about the Henry Moore influence, yes, how it sort of filtered through the school, and that's why I was...was that, for instance my friend Chris Parbery would kind of do Henry Moore-type drawings, the life drawings would come out very influenced by Henry Moore, you know. And John at the time was painting a lot, was doing a lot of drawings of flints, and of course the Henry Moore flint motif, you know, so all, the flints and the Henry Moore were very strong at the time. And of course, and Barbara Hepworth just sort of coming up there, and Ben Nicholson coming up. But there was a very strong Henry Moore feel, and I was very conscious of my friend Chris Parbery drawing in his style and getting a lot of admiration for it and everything. And, I know that when I was drawing flints and this sort of thing, and the type of way I drew was very much to feel the form in it, and I would do lots of

these little cross-cut lines that would be showing where, the direction of the form perspectively, you know, how they came, and then getting the form, the curve into it. And I used to love doing that, I just sort of loved doing that. So, a strong influence was felt there, although, one hardly ever saw him, I mean he would come in and you know, like, Henry Moore's in, you know, sort of thing. And of course there was a lot going on about Henry Moore. Oh, was it Henry Moore? Now I mustn't get this wrong. Yes, that was another thing, I can't quite remember whether this was from this time or much later. I remember some interviews that... Oh no no, it was another artist. It was just that, some artists who have been most tremendously good... [MIC NOISE] Did I brush something? Some artists who have been tremendously, you know, influential, in their art work, turned out to be very inarticulate and unuseful in interview, and, I mean I always remember what an absolutely brilliant interview, much later on of course, I think Melvyn Bragg might have done it, with Francis Bacon, I thought that was the most classic interview of a real artist; you could feel his medium being used. Now I seem to remember, and I think it was Henry Moore, that, I might be quite wrong about this, it might be another artist, but I seem to remember there was a couple of artists, it might have been Henry Moore, that I thought, I didn't get a feel of an art intelligence behind it, and I don't know why that was. It might not have been Henry Moore, I might be quite wrong, so scrub it.

It could be, because he was known to be quite reticent, and it's thought that some of his statements that he made were truly assisted by Herbert Read.

Oh right, that could well be it, because I know I was... I mean there was such an influence of his actual art work, that I couldn't believe that the person almost didn't know why it was being done, but I mean, or how. I know that I found an absence between the influence of his work at the time and him as a person, or him talking. So, I remember that.

And what did you feel about Ceri Richards and his work?

Well that was going into the Matisse and that sort of side. I... I quite liked Ceri Richards' work, but I didn't...I think that that remark to me... This is funny, I've only just thought of this now, is that, although I was quite a sort of Sixties person and all

that sort of thing, and wild and everything, I did expect, I had an expectancy, that there would be a real sort of seriousness or something; I didn't want a trivial remark, either in my direction or from somebody who apparently has done this good work. So I might have been then subconsciously finding that I wasn't so interested in his work, or I might not have been so interested in the work, and whether it came before or after the remark I don't know.

So did you feel it was a sort of sexist remark, or to do with your class?

Yes, yes I felt it was to do with, I felt it was a sexist remark, although at the time I wasn't working out that things were sexist, even, you know. But... Yes, I wasn't nearly so conscious of Ceri Richards, although he was there and I saw him much more, as I was on Henry Moore's influence. And also at the time there was sort of, was it John Buhler, you know, the London Group people were...

Robert.

Robert Buhler, yes. And my father happened to bump into him in the pub, as is his wont, because my father would wander down to the pub and there would be Buhler there, and they would talk together, and, 'Oh yes, I've talked to him about my daughter,' and this was beginning to get, that it was OK, I was at art school because there was this nice guy, Robert Buhler in the pub, you know. But I was very influenced... Another big strong influence that was going there was the Coldstream, Buhler, you know, school. And of course I had a great friend in Liz Frink there, because she was in Sydney Street, just, you know, across the road from there, and we used to go round to her, and she would have shot a hare or something and brought it up from the country and we would have this great jugged hare dinner. And, I thought she was great, and, when I had come up to London I had not shot hares but I had shot pigeons, not realising that pigeons are not to be shot in London, and this was...you know, because I was going to make a pigeon pie, so I rather sort of equated with her. Anyway... So, yes, so Liz Frink was there, and these friends, Diana and Chris Parbery and Daphne Cork were my little gang. And, there was all the business, you know, of going to the Queen's Elm, and, the two pubs were the one in the Fulham Road, which was the Queen's Elm, what was the other one? Oh for God's sake, I've forgotten it.

I've been really dead, my memory today. But anyway, they were the two pubs, and that's where we all hung out, and of course there was also the Chelsea Arts Club, but, I couldn't bear that, that was very much...that was very much Brill and...and I suppose all the Louis MacNeices and all those sort of people were there, although I did later on, I liked the Louis MacNeice poetry, and I did do some stone lithographs from the Louis MacNeice work that again helped me with my scholarships and everything. And, so I was doing a bit of dancing up the road, and I was at Chelsea, there. Then I got the scholarship. And then I remember John. When I was drawing, they always had to call my name out, because I was a scholarship person then, because I would have my materials free, and so they were calling out Barbara Steveni, and the model suddenly said from the dais, 'Oh, that's an unusual name, I have a great friend, Leo Steveni'. So, I rushed home and I said, 'Dad, I met a friend of yours today.' So he said, 'Oh yes?' I said, 'Yes, she's the model at Chelsea, very tanned and brown.' And, he said, 'Oh, oh Buki, come into my room and we must have a little talk. Don't talk to Helen about this,' you see. So I sort of rushed in there. And it turned out that Dad was a nudist, you know, and went down to St. Albans nudist camp you see and everything. And so he tried to sort of, not win my silence exactly. So he whipped out all these photographs of these people in St. Albans nudist camp, and he showed me this picture, and I shrieked with laughter, they were so sort of ugly, almost like, almost funnily enough, as I say this, like, I saw later, you know, from Belsen, in the... They weren't thin but they were fat Belsen-ites, if you know what I mean. Because one is always having the nude figure, especially now, put to one, except in life drawings, as this glamorous, perfect figure, and here were all these people from the nudist place absolutely ordinary and falling all over the place. So I was sort of shrieking with laughter. 'Well what happens when you're playing tennis? Surely all your bits are jogging up and down.' And he was saying, 'Oh, well, no no...' you know. So, and so he said, 'Now you won't tell Helen will you?' So I thought, well what can I get out of this, you see, I've got a big secret here. It turned out Helen knew all the time of course, but... It was quite a bond with us, so, that was rather funny. So I was able to put it on him that, you know, it was very important that I was at the art school, and of course I needed to be here whether I had a job or not. So, that was another little thing that happened there.

I mean this is a difficult question, but what did you imagine at that young age, an artist was? Did you see it as a formal role, or intellectual, or both?

I think I saw it as what you were going to do with your life, because when I was talking to Eric, I mean that's what I had decided to be, whatever it was. I hoped I would be good at it, and at the time my only way of being good was, at that time was drawing and stuff, you know. I didn't know what the next form was. And I saw people go through a process of becoming that thing, and I did in this person, Vere Holden-White, because he was a commander in the war and he used to put limpet mines on the bottom of boats, you know, and blow them up you see, for which he had got a medal, and I remember Daphne and I saying, 'Well, so he got a medal for just blowing up...' How absolutely appalling you see, and that he's got a medal for killing people, you know. OK, Germans, you know, but killing them. And, I talked to Vere about this, and Vere would come in, and Vere would try and paint, they would be very faint, faint pictures of still lifes and you know, stuff, and I would question him about blowing up these limpet mines, and why had he got a medal. He said, 'I think I got a medal because I couldn't even swim when I was doing it.' So, Daphne and I discussed the bravery of this, but they were still being killed, but went away. We were 17 and they all 30 or whatever it was. And, so I... But then I noticed, this business about becoming an artist was that, one day I went into the still life room and instead of this faint painting of Vere's on the easel, there was a painting of a pot of flowers absolutely dripping with red paint, an absolutely marvellous painting, and it's like he had come through a catharsis, he was suddenly a painter. And I remember thinking at the time, he's an artist, you know. And then there were other people who you could see were kind of good and everything, but I remember that, I remember feeling very strongly... Oh I felt that John, when I met him, I felt that he was an artist when I saw his things, he was also totally a committed artist, and completely in it and nothing else.

I'm going to stop you there because this tape is almost about to end.

Right.

End of F6684 Side B

F6685 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 6th ...is it the 4th of June?

The 4th of June.

1998. Tape three, side A.

[INAUDIBLE] it's 1998 in spite of our discussion.

It would be very interesting to know how much you knew of the history of art, or contemporary practice, before you became an art student.

I had very little art. Remember that my parents had no interest in it except in, my father had an interest in ballet that had come through his father's interest in the ballet in Russia, who had been a great friend of Pavlova, and we had the books and everything. So, there was a ballet interest, there was a dancing interest, but on the art side, except for Eric Kennington, there was no sort of connecting link. So my own personal stuff was really sort of gained at art school, although I did, you know, I loved Turner, but I hadn't sort of historically put them into positions or looked at art history in any way. In fact that is rather sort of systematic of me, I mean, if that's the right word – no, symbolic of me, not systematic – in that I...I had very little grounding in literature, except what I read, so to speak, what I picked up, so I had got, till I got to school and then I would be picking up things in a more systematic way. But art history hadn't sort of entered me much in a sequential way, and seeing who was doing what. I was interested at that time in Picasso and Matisse and Braque and Pollock, and you know, I had...I would be picking up – and then the American influence – I would be picking up the stuff at the art school, the art history. And nowhere near in the sort of structured way that art students, you know, now do their art history and you know, the foundation goes with this, and then you've got a module on that, and then, you know, you're completely trained through, as I find, the enormous difference between me being a student, art student, in Chelsea, at that time, compared with the Goldsmiths' M.A. students coming in now, they're absolutely like that, they know how to do everything, they know how to use all the latest media, they know how to

use everything. Whereas I had no...it just wasn't like that. There were a lot of, mainly the male students, seemed to have about my person a lot more consciousness of art history at the time. I personally had very little.

And you weren't taught formally at the college?

Oh yes, at the college one... But not the art history so much; one was taught formally life drawing, and therefore you would go through the art history of Piero della Francesca and you know, when perspective was brought in. So I got it then, and then how I related it to the present day would be like Henry Moore and Braque and you know, those people. But I suppose perhaps, because my parents had absolutely no interest in it, this was the sort of, a new line so to speak, with the exception of Eric.

Did you go to exhibitions in London at all?

I did once I was at art school, but I didn't before I went to the art school. I mean, it didn't occur to me it was out there. I mean I think, well where could I have been in my head at that time? No, I didn't until I went to art school, then I did a lot.

Can you remember where, what you saw?

Well I would go and look at the Turners, and then there was the big Picasso and, I'm not quite sure when that happened, but, and I would go to the V&A, I loved the V&A. And the British Museum, but I mean I would go to look at the Egyptians and things like that.

Did you look at Bond Street galleries, or anything like that, the commercial galleries?

Didn't hit the Bond Street galleries until I was at the art school and then of course the staff would be talking about them and I would go to the Bond Street galleries, like Cork Street and this that and the other. And that would be all part of the scene rather than part of, and Ceri Richards was showing there, and Robert Medley and people like that, who was another person teaching there at the time. I didn't know anything about being gay or anything like that at the time, and of course there were a lot of gay, both

tutors and people at the school, so only that was just sort of dawning on me. I mean, talk about backward, but...

Well it was still illegal then wasn't it.

I suppose so, yes.

Yes.

So, yes I guess.. I mean I'm very unread, I'm very illiterate, I'm very... I'm almost sort of, you might say, a neat experience of life rather than a well-read person; I'm not at all well-read. In fact our boys were very un-well-read, and I suppose that's not surprising considering the books in our house were being used to be chopped up and set into concrete, which they do explain, and which dastardly got to our daughter, you know, I mean, well we'll talk about that later. But, no we...I wasn't well-read. I mean I don't think John had read an awful lot, he had only read about three books you see. I sort of feel I've only read three books at that time, you know. I had listened to poetry, I liked Dylan Thomas very much. I didn't like 'The Waste Land', I didn't like T.S. Eliot, but I did like Dylan Thomas, sort of, kind of romantic in a way.

I mean was there a sort of intellectual buzz amongst the students where people...?

Yes, the intellectual buzz was around James Joyce and that sort of feeling. And mainly it was coming, I felt the intellectual buzz amongst, by being on the edge of that 30-year-old lot, you know, the lot that had come out of the war, and they were very much talking about Marxism. Oh there was John Berger there as well, and that was a very strong...John Berger, John might have mentioned on his tape, John Berger was at the college and he of course had a great sort of influence on the students, because of course he was quite charismatic at the time, and of course had a fabulously good-looking lady in tow. And, he was very much pushing the Marxism thing, because they were still trying to get people into the Communist Party and John had, I didn't know about this so much till John told me afterwards, he tried to get John into the Communist Party. So there was a political debate, and the intellectual aesthetic debate was mainly conducted by Gerald Housen[ph] and John, and this Wally

Poole[ph], although less so Wally Poole[ph]. Which was around, again the political thing and the Spanish Civil War had come out from that, and... And the position of James Joyce in literature, Wally introduced John into James Joyce, which was a very important person in John's career history, and then John was very influenced by El Greco, and he was always looking at the nothing, the hole in the object, and that's I suppose the Henry Moore flints and everything, that was also making a sense. So that, intellectual debate was around the politics, and around, the beginning of abstraction I suppose really, going into the cage and the abstraction and you know, that was coming up later, but... So later on, that, when I was married to John, we were right into the Destruction in Art and all those forms, but at Chelsea it was moving from realism into the first sort of bits of abstraction, and you know, the literary side of that, and, which was quite strong, because Gerald was very a literary person, and a historical person, so he and John had a lot together. And I was on the edges of that. Amongst the women, amongst my gang, and in the pubs, you know, I think we much more into the male-female relationship debate, and the type of art work we were doing with ourselves, and we were beginning to work that out a bit I think, rather than in historical, in art historical terms, you know, relating to other things. Although...

Do you mean in terms of there being a difference between male and female production, or do you mean in social terms?

In social terms, but noticing the difference in male and female production. But you see, at the time we had this very strong Lizzie Frink, who was coming out with her political, was it the Political Prisoner?

Oh yes, the competition.

Yes, that competition. And so that there was Robert Buhler and hers, you see. So, we were looking at that quite a bit and seeing, you know, seeing, having our discussions in that relationship I think more than the ones that John and Gerald Houson[ph] were having, you know, it was somewhat separated there. But not with any, too much conscience. I mean American feminism, as it was, had not sort of crossed the channel when I was in the art school, so it was very sort of subconscious what we were

dealing with, I think. And it wasn't until I was married to John that we had, oh God! who's that American feminist? I met her the other day again. God! she's in my filing system. Anyway, an American feminist came over and lived in our basement in Portland Road. I'll remember her name in a minute, or I'll look her up. So, yes, as a means of production, the female shapes and the whole business of the model and all that was just beginning to rise I think amongst the women in a rather subconscious way. I don't think, well for my part it wasn't very focused, but we were feeling it, whereas the men were going along with bringing out their intellectual debate and means of production you might say.

So how did you and John get together during that time?

Well, I had sort of noticed him, and I guess he had sort of noticed me and he was also a friend of this Vere who came on this dreaded bus, the 49 bus with me, so they would be at the top of the stairs. But, John came in to a life drawing thing one day and threw a card into my hand saying, 'Work hard for me' or something, you know. In other words, work away, you're doing well, for me. I don't know whether it meant that quite, and I'm probably getting it quite wrong, but, I remember being terribly sort of flattered at the time that this person, who incidentally was having a show in the Kingsley Gallery, and he had been written up in the paper by Eric Newton at the time, and he and Berger had a show together, and I went along and looked at his show and he talked to me there, and then in the art school he talked to me again. And this was obviously beginning to get quite dangerous, because I went and saw him at his studio. But, at the time John was looking very gaunt and, well, he always looked gaunt all his life really, but, he had a cancer in the throat that had just been operated on, and so he was looking more gaunt than usual. But, he wouldn't talk to many people, and he didn't want to talk to people, but he would talk to, say, Wally and his two or three people. He was very isolationist. And he was working on his El Greco sort of period of things. And anyway when we did get together, and I went up to his studio, he asked me to go up to his studio in Primrose Hill, and, we kind of made love but I didn't dare to make love properly, because, I mean my parents, I mean, my mother, this would be curtains. And, he couldn't understand why I wouldn't. And I remember him saying something about me being very very slim at the time, but not as thin as thought, or something, I remember him saying that and everything. And he

used to anoint me with oils and everything. So, I mean he had quite a sort of...he had quite a spiritual side, because there was all this El Greco thing, I never know how to use the words now, they've been so sort of analysed out of existence, so if you say spiritual it's all the mess of everybody who's being spiritual. But what I mean was, that El Greco and the shape of the El Grecos, and anointing and everything, all seemed to be very much part of John. But I would have these two very schizophrenic lives which would be me at the art school and then me with John and the people from the art school, and then me going home to my parents, and this would be completely schizophrenic, because it would be suddenly middle class and behaving properly and then they would have their parties, and I wouldn't know what I was doing at the art school, because I... I was beginning not even to do drawings now, I was just beginning to go a bit abstract in shapes and forms and everything. And there was another visit from my father to the Principal, who was very worried about this. But by now I had got my scholarship, my Christopher Head Scholarship, and I remember running home from Chelsea to Courtfield Gardens, and I must say my mother was very sweet, she gave me a vase for winning this thing, I remember she gave me a little glass vase. And, I was quite pleased with this, because you had a whole year of – gone back a bit here, but a whole year of free materials and free whatever else was going, and I think there was a teeny bit of money, I can't remember, it's the first thing I ever won anyway. And, yes but when I...but when my life became schizophrenic was that, half of me would do one thing, which was what my mother wanted, and a half of me was doing what I was gradually going towards, and, I remember that... And there was this guy who was in the Commonwealth Relations Office called Terence O'Brien, and he was trying to marry me, so I would go off and be at his place, and he kept saying, 'I'm never going to be happy until we...' And by now there's an engagement you see, in fact I was thinking before you came today, the pictures of me were obviously taken, and the engagement, as they were, by my sister when she was engaged first, by Lenare, the court photographer or whatever it was at the time.

Good Lord!

And I know that my mother destroyed them and my father crying, being very upset, because, when I ran off, as I'm about to tell you, just before the wedding. Anyway, so

I had this schizophrenic life, and so one half of me thought I was going to marry this guy from the Commonwealth Relations Office, because that's what I was being told I was doing, and I would be saying to my sister, 'Well how do you know that somebody really loves you?' And she said, 'Oh well you can tell because they want to undress you.' So, oh well that's useful to know. So I thought, well I've been undressed so it must be John, you know, and I haven't been undressed by this other guy, yet. I had some other boyfriends at the time you see. But anyway, and, so... I don't know how we're doing on this tape. And then, and, so, it ended in that, this engagement was announced, and I was completely schizophrenic, and then my parents, headed by my mother, forbade, no I think even my father was coming on strong now, forbade John to come to the house or me to even go to the art school or anything, because this was obviously dangerous territory. So, I wasn't allowed out of the house, because otherwise they didn't think they would get me to the altar you see. In fact this Terence O'Brien, my father told me, said, 'Look, you just get Barbie to the altar and I'll do the rest,' you know, or whatever it was. And so, my father promised that he would do the rest, or whatever it was. But anyway, this Wally Poole[ph] friend of John's rang up and, because John couldn't ring in, and asked me to go to the pub at the end of the road, the well-known pub whose name I will give you later, and so, they said, well, we're not allowing her out. So I said, 'I've just got to go and post a letter,' you see. So, I then ran away. I went to the pub, and John got a taxi and took me down to the country, and the wedding, which was the next day or two days later, rolled forward and my mother couldn't stop it, and they all turned up at the church, and it was absolutely terrible for her. And, my father came and left all my belongings on the pavement outside John's studio and said, 'Never darken my doorsteps again,' you know, noise, but crying desperately, being Russian, he was always crying. 'How could you do this to...how could you do it, Buki?' you know, this that and the other. And, so that was rather awful for them, this big wedding, because the biggest parties they ever had were the weddings and they were all sort of so marvellous, and, I don't know what it must have been like for her. So, that's what I did. And so, I then went and lived down in the country for a bit, with John's father and everything. And then we decided, or it was decided, I don't think we decided anything, that we would get married, but we would get...and I would go and stay with John's aunt, who was a great little spinster woman who, a professional woman who had worked in the picture library, you know, what was that famous picture library, Post, Picture Post library,

and she was marvellous. Aunt Marge. And we were going to get married on February the 2nd, we were going to get married in the Church of St. Thomas where John had sold a painting to the priest who was going to marry us in exchange, but he was a de-frocked priest we found out afterwards, but it didn't sort of matter; I don't know if that annulled the marriage. But anyway, so on February the 2nd, John having got up in the morning and said, 'Look, I can't go through with this, I really don't think that I should get married, because I'm an artist and you know, it's going to...it won't be any good,' and me bursting into tears and saying, 'Well all right then'. And then Aunt Marge coming in and saying, 'Don't be so silly, come on, just let's get it over with, and done with'. Got down the church and there was just Aunt Marge, John and me, and then my friend Diana, Diana Lowry, that was her name, she turned up, she was a very good draughtswoman, and she turned up, and she was going to be my witness. And then another witness came in off the street, because you're meant to have two, I can't remember who the second witness was. Yes, I think it as somebody just off the street. And then my mother and father suddenly turned up, I suspect Aunt Marge had got on to them, and my mother threw her arms around John and said, 'Thank God you've made,' well not an honest woman of her, but, 'Thank God you've done it,' you know, or whatever it was. And my father looking very flustered and tearful. And so they disappeared. And so we got married, by a Father Patrick in this church. And then we got on a bus afterwards, and still a cold morning, and we went and sat on the top of this front bus and went down to Kew, and I remember the bus conductor coming up the stairs and he was singing, 'Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, I love you'. He was singing and it was rather sweet. And it was a sort of cold day and we wandered around in Kew Gardens for a bit, and then we went, we either went down to the parents, to John's parents' house, Pop as he was called. And I remember after that my father sort of made it up with me, he said, 'Once I saw Pop I knew everything would be all right.' Because of course Pop, John's father, was a sort of colonial civil servant, and actually a sweet sort of, like, religious man, I mean in tweeds, I mean, you know, it was all going to be all right, he was one of their sort; the fact that John had this emaciated face and a beard and all his friends were scoundrels was, you know... And then it turned out of course that they all absolutely loved John, because he was this really quiet, nice man. But my mother took an awfully...it wasn't until our first child, until Noah, that my mother was able to come down and help with the baby being born, that she sort of got over that. Which was quite an awful thing for

her to get over, because she had arranged this huge party. But anyway they burnt all the Lenare photographs, and I've got no photographs of me at that time, which, everybody else has got their wedding photographs. Complete void.

Well I suspect if you were to get hold of the young man in question, he's probably got one.

I don't think so, he was a bit... Oh it was awful about him, because he immediately tried, I heard about it afterwards, that he had tried to, you know, he was very very deeply upset, and I sent all his presents back, you know, all his family jewels, because his mother had died and he gave me all the family jewels, so they were carefully packed off. And also, he...he took up with whoever it was, and she died soon after, so that's awful. And then one day I was doing a job in Hamleys, I'd do sort of...quite a bit later, and he came into Hamleys, into the shop, into the thing, and I remember hiding under the counter until he had gone. I couldn't, absolutely, face it. I would do all these sort of demonstrating jobs, you know, to earn a little bit of cash, you know, and so, come Christmas I'd do that, and then I'd do the Ideal Home. Anything to earn a bit of cash, and jobs in America or something.

But at that moment, when you set off for the post box, you didn't think, I just can't do this?

When I set off for the post box, I...when I set off for the post box I knew that I was going to go and meet John, and what would happen after that of course I had no idea, but I knew that I couldn't go through with the wedding, but I didn't know how I wouldn't go through with the wedding because I didn't know that there was a taxi and I was going to escape you see.

Yes, I can't think of a worse moment in a girl's life.

What, a decision, an escape decision that you... And I know that when I got in the taxi with him and everything, and I said, 'Oh, I've done it,' and it felt wonderful; I'd done whatever it was, but one didn't know what it was.

Mm.

So...

But no regrets?

Oh I think that, no regrets that I did that, because I think I have a wonderfully interesting life, although very hard life, I mean all my sisters don't know how I do it, and they don't want to know how I do it. And also it's been very hard with John, I mean it's...I've had to, you know, like I did leave him at the Hayward Gallery, and that was very hard for both of us, and I've had to sort of, in a way somebody pointed this out to be, that I was using him to define what my boundaries were, you know, what, you know, in a way. And I think he is a very wonderful person in his way, but we never were able to talk about all the things that we needed to talk about, because people didn't talk about that at the time, and I would have instinctively, and I tried instinctively, but it wasn't in John's makeup to, and I understand that. Although I can get out some of it now, but I mean there was great anger and stuff when I left. So when you say no regrets, I'd say, seeing the way the world had changed, and especially the Western world and relationships and everything, I think I am extremely lucky to have met John, to have found that I wanted to do the art, to have found a road that I could put my foot on and go down, not that one knows anything about it when you set out, and that's what my film's about, my journey, I go through the rubble with, with the stones, and the bomb sites as I call it. And, no, no regrets on that. My regrets now are that, I still seem to have quite a lot of anger in me about men using women and abusing women, and how I bought into that unknowingly perhaps a bit, and how I've had to define myself out, and how I don't like having to do that. And, I don't know, I mean it's a painful one.

Do you mean the kind of social structure that means that you've had to separate yourself from his name in order to become a distinct individual?

Partially that, yes, yes, absolutely. And also that I still find myself, from habit or from culture, finding it easier, possibly because of my now acquired skills, to help put the show on the road over there, than put the show on the road over here. But then

it's quite complicated, because the whole business of A.P.G. and O. & I. is like a joint structure, but it's also a historical structure, and so I have...I'm quite a lot pulled about my own role, and that's why it's been very nice just lately having people see it as my work, and when I went to Russia it was my work and you know, it's a continuous performance from doing the performance art, which I'll come on to. It's like a social sculpture.

When you left Chelsea, did you continue your, you know, that style of work?

Ah. When I left Chelsea, because you know, I sort of hadn't left with an exam or anything like that, I went down and lived in the country, and I went to Farnham School of Art, and I started to do the lithography and stuff, and gradually found that painting was very difficult for me, I didn't really like the medium of oil painting and stuff, and I seemed to go into the lithography, and in doing those prints and things I became a bit more abstract. And then, when we moved from where we first were, I began to make... I mean John was doing great big, enormous paintings at the time, and was sort of...where were we first? Oh yes, in the parents' home. Great big, rather sort of brooding paintings that went right across the kitchen, sort of like people in mines but also very sort of, looking again like the flints which were, you know, Farnham has a great sot of flint area, so it was this very engulfing stuff. And I was beginning to do lighter work I think as a result of doing this lithography and stuff. But then, I then had miscarriages, I'd had an abortion before that, and then I had Noah, so I was going into the children thing, so that the work was... I was doing rather light, abstract, more abstract, going abstract, lithographs, and sort of very faint paintings, they were sort of almost dreamlike. I think I was.....

End of F6685 Side A

F6685 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of June. Tape three, side B.

You did raise at the end of the last tape the question of having miscarriages and an abortion, and I would be very interested to hear about why that happened and how it was possible at that time, when I know it must have been a real problem.

Well, the thing was, I can't quite remember whether we were actually married or whether it was just before we had decided to have this wedding date, but I found that I was pregnant, and I was pregnant quite early on, and, of course I couldn't go to my mother because battle lines had been drawn, and I wouldn't have gone to her anyway, but I didn't know who to go to. And John definitely wanted an abortion, and I think I definitely did too, I mean it was emotionally traumatising anyway being...I'm using this word trauma, which was not a word I use, but, and definitely not used at the time, much over-used now. But, I was, you know, coping with the business of being with John was quite difficult enough, so I definitely couldn't take on board the idea of having a child, but also having an abortion, which I think we both wanted, how we went about that was that John had this cousin who was a writer, Penelope Bowers[ph], and she told us...she was...she was going to have a baby, that was right, by somebody, and she told me, she told John where I could go and have an abortion, and I think we were in the hospital at the same time, her having the baby and me having the abortion, and I know it was roughly about the same time. And, this writer cousin of John's was quite sort of eccentric as well, you know, as John, they were the eccentric end of the family; the rest were sort of quite straightforward. So, I did go and have this abortion, and I remember when I came out from it, I felt completely and utterly drained, and we went and met Wally Poole[ph], John's friend, who I never liked and he didn't like him in the end. And I remember feeling absolutely awful and feeling that I looked awful. I felt completely drained and I felt awful after it, for quite a long time. And I know at the time that, John was quite unaccustomed, I mean, yes he was kind but he was quite unaccustomed to dealing with any female emotional problems I think. I mean he had had girlfriends before and stuff, which I was quite upset with when I found out, you know, when we talked more about it, when we were married, you know, I was very jealous of them and everything, especially when they came and

visited us. But this abortion, I know I felt very bad about it, and it also made...and I was quite ill about it. And again I think it was something that... John and I didn't go into discussing, you know, each other's feelings much. I mean, it was always discussing ideas with John, and the ideas would be so fascinating, and one would always be discussing ideas, but I felt very alone I think the first part of that marriage, because I suppose I didn't have my mother and I didn't have a woman. Luckily there was a woman down there who I then made friends with, but I didn't have any sort of female friends. But anyway I had this abortion, and it was then quite difficult for me to have a child, because later on I, you know, I was pregnant again and I had a miscarriage, and I remember the doctor coming in and saying, 'Oh don't you know anything about anything? You've just had a miscarriage and that's why you're bleeding. Now go back to bed now.' You know, and being very sort of gruff with me. And John's mother, who lived...when we were first married we were given one of the flats in John's parents' house to sort of live in, and this was in Fleet, Hampshire, which was a sort of out-riding sort of place from Aldershot which was again very army, and you know, everybody would come out, and they were all old people and they would come out, well, quite old, probably not as old as me now, they would come out and they would practise their golf shots outside, and the woman would always be sweeping the stairs, and it never, I thought, I must start sweeping the stairs, but it would take me about a year before I would get down to this. And they also seem to be cleaning the front doorstep, or they would have a servant in to clean the front doorstep, and I never understood why you had to clean the front doorstep, or sweep the stairs, but anyway. So, then when I had...having had this abortion I suppose it didn't set me very good for having a child, so I then had this miscarriage, and I was told that if I wanted a child I would have to stay in bed for the good three months. And so when I then became pregnant again... And we did market gardening then, and John was painting these great big glowering sort of pictures. And, we didn't want to really sort of live in this flat of this house of this sort of territory, because it was very un-us, and we had a big party down there which lasted a whole weekend, and all the people came down from London and they were hanging around in the hayricks, and there were wine glasses in the lily pond, and everybody completely freaked out, and the farmer chased Ed Smith, this American artist, off the hayrick, and this American artist would sort of scream out, you know, completely... The whole thing was, you know, the whole of Fleet, Hampshire didn't recover from that party

from London, the weekend they all came down in droves, you know. And, so we weren't really quite right for there. And so, anyway I had my... Very nice drawings from that party, which, actually Wally Poole[ph] did the drawing, and so I hope we can find an invitation at some time, it might be in John's archives, because it was much remembered by the Chelsea set, all the people from the Fulham Road pubs who came, and the writers and the people of that time all came down. And, anyway, yes, so, when I then was pregnant with what was going to be Noah, I had to stay in bed for that three months, and I got up from time to time. And John's mother, who was, we didn't know at the time but she was beginning to go senile, but not too badly at that time, she was very into her garden, and John's father was very religious and he was doing, she was doing theosophy or he was doing theosophy at Moore[??] Park College, you know, a sort of Christian education place. And, he was very sweet, but this whole business about God and the virgin birth, what were we going to do when we did have our child, any children, how would we tell them about the virgin birth, hadn't occurred to us as being a very, something we ought to be getting to grips with. But anyway, I had Noah in a, what had been an old mental institution in a nearby town, in Hook, which is a sort of village there, and I remember in having the baby, you know, packing up all my things for it, and then when finally I was in labour I remember John saying, 'Oh, well what shall I bring?' And I said, 'You don't have to bring anything, I'm having the baby.' And he said, 'No no, but I...what shall I bring?' Because I'd brought my suitcase. So I said, 'You could bring your comb.' I couldn't think of anything for him to bring so I gave him the comb to bring. And anyway I went in, and I took rather a long time having Noah, but what I didn't understand was, why all these women were screaming in their labour, and I thought to myself, well I'm not going to, you know, I mean, how bad should this pain get? Because I'd had a lot of pain as a child. So, I didn't know when I should start screaming basically, because I thought, oh yes, so that's that pain. And I thought I could deal with all of this. And, so it wasn't until the very last moment that, you know, I just said to John, 'I think I'm having the baby now,' as I said on the telephone, and I sort of went in to have the baby. But I hardly, you know, it was there by the time I'd sort of realised that this was it, because I didn't know how much pain to have because I had a very high pain, you know, level.

Threshold.

Yes. So I was...that seemed to me, although it took a long time... An interesting thing about having babies is, you completely forget the pain afterwards. It is so extraordinary how this amazing pain is not with you in any sort of memory afterwards, I sort of find it so strange. Anyway Noah had an awful lot of sort of gunge on his face, and he was quite lopsided, his little head was quite lopsided, so he wasn't a very beautiful baby. And...and he wasn't a very beautiful baby, and people used to come and say, 'Oh he looks like a big' or something, peering into the... And I didn't think that was very nice. Or, 'Why is he so squashed?' And I was very worried that his head wouldn't sort of straighten out, but of course it did into the most perfect head. And, I remember of course, one thing was, being immensely tired after this baby, because one of the things was, and I had it in hospital, all my children were...well the second one was the easiest, but having Noah, I still didn't know how to...how to divide myself between John and sex, and a baby and what it needed, and then me, Barbara, you know, where was that, you know, with my bosoms and everything. So, you know, what is being fed, or what is being... You know, I got very confused by this. And, I wasn't very good at feeding Noah, and I was very tense and tight, and my...was I there or was that the next baby? I can't remember, I might be getting this wrong. But I know that my milk went poisonous, you know, went bad, so it would have to be sort of expressed and everything. And so it was all sort of painful and difficult, and I remember the nurse saying she shouldn't be made to feed her baby, because you know, she is... No, the doctor said that, it was a very intelligent doctor. Was I in London then? I can't remember, I might be in the wrong baby, but... God! But I know that there was difficulties over Noah, and I was very tight about it. And so I was an odd mixture at that time between, and definitely there was no art about me, I was hardly drawing, you know, anything. I was immensely tired. Nappies were being washed as, those terry-towelling nappies; the bath was always full of these yellow nappies, and it was up to here, and I remember, my legs were aching. And I was still trying to wash John's thick woollen socks, because apparently...and he had thousands of them and I remember, I thought, why do we need all these? And then apparently you had to iron things as well. So I was very very tired at the time, and it seemed immensely difficult, and there wasn't any help, you know, basically.

And did John help at all on the domestic side?

Well John, I didn't feel he helped in the washing, with those sort of things. He would help by keeping... I mean he would cook, I mean John's a lovely cook, and...yes, I mean, he would go out and do that. I think he was doing the market gardening at the time. I just, I felt very lonely and isolated in the washing and the child and everything, and I didn't do the child well. Noah had a lot of difficulties with his character and his thing, which came out later, and I think it was a complete lack of support of the project that this is the child here, you know, and there wasn't a sort of support structure. John used to go up to London quite a lot. And, yes it was a difficult time, and a very tiring time, and, yes I still felt that I was in an interesting art world, if you know what I mean, we had these long discussions on art and people would come down and everything, but it was very, it was quite schizophrenic, living in this house of these rather, you know, in a flat in this house in this rather bohemian way with all these sort of retired people around us. I mean, it made no sense. So we were going to get our, we were going to get a house if we had enough money to get a house. So we found a little house in Borden army camp, sort of First World War sort of Nissen huts so to speak, with no bathrooms. And we bought this little wooden house on concrete stilts, with a bit of land at the back down by a river in Borden, which was near Petersfield, and we moved there. And then I had J.P. about twenty-two months later, and that's our second boy. And that was very difficult because Noah absolutely couldn't, the whole business of having a second child, who was late, and we didn't talk to Noah about what that meant, and we did the classic thing of not telling the child that another one was coming, and he was sent away to sister and he didn't eat and he came back with a little bent leg. And John's mother, who was meant to be looking after Noah, because she absolutely adored him, suddenly, I suppose if we'd known about the senile thing, said, 'Oh I can't look after this child, I mean, for goodness sake, you know.' And she had been all the time, so we had to send him to my sister when I had the second child. And then he was late. And Noah just couldn't bear the business of this baby for a long time, and I did a lot of wrong things with him. So that was a wrong thing for which I feel awful. Well Noah won't want to hear all this, I mean, because we've talked it through lots of times. And, he was a very upset child, he used to bounce in the cot and he had this little bent leg, and, all which was just wrong, you know, lack of understanding and lack of sort of female support I

think at the time. My mother did come down and she gave, she brought, she gave me somebody to help with the baby, for two, she paid for two weeks, which was a great sort of help, but I remember this person saying – this was when I had J.P. – I remember her saying, this child is terribly deprived of love, about Noah. And yet he was very, he was very loved and he felt this instinctively, I'd take him around the place and we would go for walks, and he would have his imaginary people, and, I could play with him very well, but I wasn't good at the feeding, and I was erratic, you know. And John was very erratic too, and angry.

You didn't meet any other young mothers in the early...?

Well I did, I did, down there I did meet this other woman who had four little boys, called the Leahys, and she was very strange, but we did make a bond, and that was very nice. That was the only person I had down there at that time. And then we moved to this little house, and we had J.P., and I remember on J.P.'s second birthday... We had put a bathroom in which, the people who lived there which were sort of, who were Gypsies and they were living, they were the first people out of the caravans into these little Nissen huts, and they said, what did we want a bathroom for? Because we had, you know, the copper tub that we could have boiled up our washing in and wash in. So we said, no no, we're going to have a bathroom. So we dug the, you know, we dug the drains to the thing, and laid the pipes, and, we're always doing this. And we got to there. And then they were very impressed, the girl from next door, she came and used to have baths in our place, she thought this was wonderful. And then, they heard us playing records and everything, and I always remember, because people used to go, were just beginning to go to pop concerts then, you know, just beginning to sort of, stuff, and they heard Tchaikovsky, and, things. They said, 'Oh, you know, this music is great.' Now who's this guy Tchai...I mean, when's he going to have a concert? Can we go up to this concert?' So I said, 'No, she's dead,' you know, this sort of thing. But anyway we formed a great relationship. And then I began to have some friends, and a friend at the end of the road and everything. But, on the second birthday J.P. rushed round the corner and cut his head right open on this copper thing that we had taken out to make a bath, and I remember going in the car to, you know, the ambulance to the place, and Noah came too, and he was crying and crying, and saying, 'Why aren't you taking attention to me? I mean I've got a terrible

pain.' Poor Noah was always, couldn't bear any attention that went elsewhere, because he couldn't understand why he wasn't, you know, all right and so on. So that took a long time to clear, and we've been back and looked at Borden and everything since he's been a philosopher in America and everything, and that's all been cleared up and this wonderful, after the age of eleven J.P. and Noah, that, you know, but it took that amount of time, because we just didn't do the children bit with the care. When I see J.P. with his children now, you know, the care and attention they put in, and the care and attention we didn't put in, it was all instinctive by me and erratic, and interested by John who was really interested that these children became very interesting and watching them. You know, I mean Noah was a very interesting child, as was J.P., but Noah being our first, you notice the growth things, and Noah would just look up at the sky and say, you know, 'Is the moon...my face is wet; did the moon do that?' And also he had great, he's a musician as well as a philosopher, and he, before he could talk, he would imitate all the animals and the chickens and things, so that, you know, he was very conscious of sound and music and everything, it's the first sort of music thing that came into our lives, he brought in a lot of music, really he became a concert pianist. Wandered off onto the children here.

Mm. Oh well I think that's important. So, he became a professional pianist, as well as a philosopher?

Yes he did, yes. And a philosopher, and he went to Cambridge. They both went to Latimer, the two children, the two boys, and he became a professional...well he went to study at the Conservatoire in Düsseldorf, and then he...he was doing maths at Cambridge and then he said, 'I don't want to be a mathematician,' and he said...somebody said, well why are you here? And the guy in the queue, he was asking the guy in the queue why he was doing maths, and he said, 'Because it's my best subject,' and Noah thought, I don't think that's a good enough reason for me to be taking a maths... You know, he took his maths degree but as he said, it was a measly third, and he decided to hot up his German and go to Germany and be a musician. Because when he was, when John was away in America we had a whole lot of pianos in the house that we went and lived in in Portland Road, because it had been a dump that had been closed for drug trafficking and there were all these pianos, and most of them were absolutely past it, you know, and sort of, well they were all past it.

But Noah started to sort of pick out sort of things, and then I got him some piano lessons while John was away, and he really got into it, and he had a wonderful teacher. And so, we got him a piano, and so he roared into being a musician, and then he became a philosopher and music came second.

Extraordinary. I'm going to stop you there.

I've rather gone into the family.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Recommencing the interview with Barbara Steveni on 22nd of June 1998. Continuing on tape three, side B.

Now, when we were last speaking you were talking about your son J.P., and sort of chronologically we're situated in the late Fifties. So if we could sort of pick up from there.

Right. Well I was rather weaving backwards and forwards between still being in the country and then being in our house in London. Oh, we first moved up, and we lived above a toy shop when the children were small, and that was where John made the first objects, and I also was making abstract work. And I remember, I think that I... sorry about this, but I think that I...I talked about them not having had any toys in the country, and then when we came up to London we lived over this toy shop and there were all these toys. Did I talk about that before? Oh. Well anyway, when we came up to London from the country, we were hit by town things so to speak, and the first thing was that the children, you know, had all these toys. And I started to...well I still had the two children very small, so... You'll have to scrub this because it's not good.

Tell me what triggered the move to London.

Yes, what triggered the move to London was that, well we couldn't...we couldn't really sort of live down there any more because, one of the things was that John was wanting to be, come back into the art world so to speak; whether it was the art world,

he had work that he wanted to do very much more in London, whereas before he was just working through his ideas and going up and just doing one great big painting or whatever it was. And I was working on, I had started my abstract work, from abstract painting and then going into, just beginning to make assemblage, not knowing it too much then but definitely putting pieces together of material, and not using paint any more. And there was a general feeling that, if we could find somewhere to live that we could afford, we would move to London. And so, John found this flat above a toy shop in a sort of rather run-down area between Shepherd's Bush and Notting Hill Gate, and we moved to this flat, and John stored all his work in a sort of shed at the back. And, it was really that, being private and perhaps having the children had now become...being again involved in what was going on, and...

Did you feel the same need to be involved in that world, or were you still...?

Yes, I was very interested to do more of my work, and I felt that if the children, you know, were now both, J.P. would then be of school age, you know, nursery school age, it was going to be, it was my first time to have time since I'd had the children, to be making my own work, so it felt right for me too, you know, I wanted to get back. Because, well I say back to London, it was obviously a much more exciting life, and much more going on, and I was going to pick up again with some of my art school people. And... I'm no good today. Yes.

We're just going to stop for a moment.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Restarting the tape. I would be very interested to know more about your assemblage work at the time, and you know, what that meant to you and where it came from in terms of interests and influence.

Well, I can never quite sort of remember out of us which did what first., but I know that after I had left the country and I had been at Farnham, and doing lithographs, which I did, I did enjoy the process of making the lithographs, and I knew that in the life classes in Farnham, in the country, that I had didn't want to push that paint around

any more, it was messy, it was sort of heavy, it wasn't doing it, and I was going very much more into, almost, almost using my subconscious and dreams, that seemed to work better, and it came into a much more translucent paint and I began to use very very diluted acrylic, and then draw into it, which was rather the sort of process that I used in lithography, but I was using acrylic. And then I did find that I was picking up bits and pieces, and I think in the move to London John, who had been painting just, say, one great big painting, I think it was almost of a, it looked like a mining painting; it was very dark, and he had sort of finished with that. And then, I was going into much more sort of use of translucent paint and dream images, I was very close to dream images then. And by using the subconscious so to speak, and wondering where that came from and just getting these completely abstract forms from having tried to do life painting and realism and whatever, I then began to pick up pieces of stuff, and they would be sticks and stones and rubble of broken buildings. And I then found a great release in doing that. To begin with I thought this was, you might almost say bad art, you know, it wasn't art, you know, but I was just feeling around with materials. And I then began to soak canvas, I still liked the use of canvas, in a sort of mixture of PVA, and then I would rub sepia into it, or I would rub earth into it, just, you know, from the ground, and mud, and wasn't thinking of any things like preservation or anything like that, completely, any more than John did with his materials. But it was very sort of different from John's stuff. John, it's quite difficult for me to differentiate when I made work and what my work was like, to what John was doing at the time, but I remember that when we moved up to London, and there was this shed with all John's sort of paintings and stuff at the back, and we were above this toy shop with the children, I began to have some more time, because J.P. had gone to a nursery school round the corner, and we were very close to the crescent, to Norland Crescent, and Bridget Riley lived in the crescent, and she was very...Bridget Riley was living with I think, or living on and off with, Peter Sedgley at the time, and they were beginning to be rather sort of political artists with Air, space for artists to work, and Peter Sedgley was always very political. I'm not quite sure of the dates and timing of this, this might have come later, but we were gradually picking up.....

End of F6685 Side B

F6686 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 22nd of June 1998. Tape four, side A.

Right. Well, here we were in Norland Square and were beginning to take up activities with other people around, and for me personally it was the amount of time that I would have between the children being at school and... But then, there was association with...there was association with what happened in the evenings, like, there was the Fulham Road pubs, which of course when I'd been at Chelsea there was the Finches pub and there was the Queen's Elm, and then one gradually began to pick up with people now that, and different sets of people, to see what, you know, we, what we were doing. And then, John went to New York, and I was left at home with the kids, and I began to... No, that was in '68, that was long... And, yes I was... Then the children began to make friends at the school, at the primary school up the road, and there seemed to be sort of more time, so I was beginning to make more of my works, which were a bit related to these ones that you see here now, which are some of these Sixties works. And, then, in this place, John, who had been in America and had made some works in America, he was staying at the Chelsea Hotel, and then, he had his things in Venti Quadri and people began to know of his work. And so collectors then came to our flat above the toy shops and bought John's big works. John was making, he made his two pieces, one which is in the Museum of Modern Art, and, 'The Shem and the Shaun', which are now travelling round this Out of Actions exhibition. And they were absolutely enormous and there was nowhere to put them except propped up against the wall, and the kids were sort of there. And anyway things began to sell, one sold to the Museum of Modern Art, and as a result of that we were able to move to a big, very derelict house up the road which was about £3,000, and it's in this very smart area now which is Portland Road, which is the sort of height of expensive houses. And it was £3,000 and John had £2,000 from a sale of this work to the Museum of Modern Art or whatever it was, and my mother gave us £500 or whatever it was, so we made up this £3,000 and were able to get this very run-down but, one, two, three, four-storey house in Portland Road, which was crammed full of these decayed pianos and mattresses against the door and smelt, and it had all these syringes in the garden, because it had been closed for drug trafficking. And my

parents, who had given us this £500, drove up to see this wonderful acquisition that we had acquired, and of course fell back with horror because, I mean the smell and the stench, and we were trying to sort of clear everything out, and do it all ourselves as usual, like, we laid, we dug up the floorboards again and we...we got a couple of people who came in in exchange for whatever [INAUDIBLE] we had, and they helped us lay the hardcore so we could lay some floorboards, and we gradually put this house back together, or pulled it down or whatever it was. And it was there that we, in Portland Road, that we began to, we were visited by Alex Trocchi, who thought that we had this, a house, how wonderful, we would...he would move his project that he was working on at the time to our house, and John said, no way, and Trocchi said, 'Oh no no, we've all got a house now, we must share and everything,' and he was shooting up in the bathroom and... And then there was Malcolm, not Malcolm X but the guy who ran, in Notting Hill Gate, who was a sort of, a Rachmanite, person. Was it Malcolm X? Anyway, we'll have to get that clear. And, so there was a lot of exchange, and there was Alex Trocchi, and down the road in Princedale Road there was... I thought I'd done this with you before. No. Oh well, down Princedale, at the bottom of Princedale Road there was this very pretty house, in Pottery Lane, and it had some of Augustus John's children in that, and all the Augustus John period was in there, and...but we were very, not of the painting area of the arts, so although we met them and everything it wasn't our line that we seemed to be following, which was very much more abstract, conceptual and assemblage and whatever. But we did meet Brian Wall down there, he lived in Pottery Lane, and the Prince of Wales was the pub that we all hung out in, which was just across the road, and we also had the Mosleyites down at the end of, another parallel road which was Princedale Road. And there was also Release. So we had... And then R.D Laing had a section of his, oh God! I cannot remember the name of his organisation that he was working on, but perhaps I can think it up later, but... So we were in touch with R.D. Laing, and Trocchi, and not the Mosley group, although the Mosley group, it might have been a bit before when we were still in Norland Square, they came out in the great big car and there was...they were kicking people. They got out of this great big car and then a sort of riot started, and it was very distinctly Mosley's great big black car with the open sort of top, and all his Black Shirts. And I remember the...I remember taxi drivers stopping and seeing people being kicked in the gutter, you know, and against the sort of high ridge of the pavement, they were getting their

heads against it, and kicking these people, and I said, you know, 'Well why are you just stopping your taxi and watching?' you know, why don't you do something? And you realise that this was a feature, that people were just watching, and allowing it to happen. And...

So these were racial attacks?

These were racial attacks you see. So, and it was my first experience of racial attacks, and then later on when we were... You know, there was such a sort of contrast of movements there that, we had Release which was very very experimental at the time, with Caroline Coon, and, God! I can't remember his name, this is so bad. It's what I wanted to do, was to get some of the names clear in these periods. There was a lovely guy that worked with Caroline. Rufus, that's it. And he and Caroline started Release. Now, Rufus just looked so sort of vague, he had this red beard and everything, and yet they were legally dealing with all these youngsters who were smoking cannabis and this that and the other, which was being considered so dreadful, but they, I mean they did such a fantastic job. But that sort of Pottery Lane, Princesdale Road, Portland Road that we were all in, seemed to have this mixture of, just coming up highly middle class people, or the art fraternity, of its various things, you know. There was even Augustus John's people but there was Brian Wall who was a metal sculptor, and then there was us going very much into the conceptual, and performances in the streets. And it was when we were in that house that Gustav Metzger came round, and John was burning a tower of books, his first Skoob Tower thing, in the garden at the back, scarcely a garden, and I remember Gustav coming round and saying, well, why weren't there fireworks in the top? And John said, 'No, that would completely ruin the intention of what I'm doing.' And he was actually burning, I can't remember whether that was where he burnt the tower with Trocchi's books, you know, a tower of Trocchi's books, but later on he did that. But, Gustav Metzger came round and he looked at it, and Gustav I suppose at the time, now I know, was doing his acrylic destruction works. And after Gustav had seen that, he then came back about six months later and said he was going to put together this destruction in an art symposium thing, and I remember Ronnie Laing being in the house when we were burning that tower of books and he brought with him a couple of people, a guy, who were his students that he was treating for schizophrenia and whatever it was, very

talented students. Well, whether they were students, I sort of, I automatically called them students as though they were art students, but of course they were being treated by Ronnie Laing for schizophrenia and drugs and whatever. And, he...and two of the students, one was this guy called Phil Cohen, and he was very bright and he headed up quite a lot of radical political movements later. And then there was this Elsa Stansfield, who is quite a well known film-maker, she was an early film-maker, and she lives in Holland and she's going to be in this thing at the I.C.A. next week.

We're just going to break.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Recommencing the tape.

Yes, you were just talking about Elsa Stansfield and Phil Cohen, who were people that R.D. Laing had treated, but continued to be associated with.

That's right. Yes, he had suggested, Ronnie, who had been connected with us, because he had come into the house, and he had suggested that, could we put up Elsa Stansfield, because he thought that it would be useful because she was interested in art, being you know, in a house which was an artist house. And it was where she had this...she was a big plump girl, we thought, wearing a duffle-coat, and one day... She came from Glasgow, Ronnie came Glasgow, and she suddenly said, 'Well, big production scene today.' And I said, 'Well like what?' And she said, 'I'm going to have a baby.' Well I had thought she was gay, we all thought she was gay, because she looked very, you know, she was sort of quite butch and everything, and we had never sort of discussed that sort of, that with her. And so, I said, well OK then, where's the nearest hospital? And so we rang up the nearest hospital and said we'll be coming in, and I went with her to the hospital, I drove her in there. And the nurse began to ask me questions about her, like, you know, what was she called? And I said, 'Well, like Elsa Stansfield,' and then suddenly this voice from behind the curtain where she was in labour, pretty well having this baby, came out with a three-barrelled name that she was, which presumably must have been the name of the husband, or the father of the child. So anyway out came this little baby, which she called Heidi, and, I

think she called it Heidi, and it had lots of little blisters on its feet. Anyway, she had this baby, which she immediately had adopted, and, that was very strange for me at the time, you know; I hadn't thought that one could just go...you know, I hadn't put my head on the idea of just making a baby and then getting it adopted and then, you know, don't have a man around the place. I mean the whole idea was quite interesting to me. And, we got on very well, Elsa and I, as she did with John. The other person, Phil Cohen, who became this radical person much later, I think he was called Doctor John later, heading up some political movement. When John was on the Continent, John was just sort of making different types of assemblage and stuff, and he was using suitcases, and he had these three moving suitcases that he had put an engine in, and they were in an exhibition in Folkestone, but we went to bid for these suitcases at an auction in Paddington, in Paddington lost property office, and put up our hands at the wrong time and got landed with, you know, hundreds of suitcases of all sizes, so we would have, you know, there was nowhere to put them, put all the little suitcases inside. Anyway, John was on the Continent, and I thought, oh well, he was coming back, I suddenly dreamed up this event which was that we would take all these suitcases in our van down to the station, arrange with the guy on the station platform that these were a whole lot of...we wanted to get rid of the suitcases. So that we bribed this guy with his trolley, which went down the side of the train, to put all the passengers coming off the train, their suitcases on. So we put all our remainder suitcases, you know, I took some saws and nails and hammers, and Phil took some candles and matches and everything, and we then got this station guy, guard, to push our trolley with all our suitcases down until John got off the train. And then we'd tell John we'll be getting rid of the suitcases, this is our event or whatever we called it at the time. And so John started sawing up these suitcases, and we sawed up the suitcases and bashed things. And other people who had got off the train who had put their suitcases on this trolley as well were absolutely appalled as we started to chop these up and set fire to them. And then finally... and we had also typed out some little things saying, 'Disposal Unit', you know, 'Paddington Station' or whatever it was, to make it official, so we were handing these out to any officials that came to begin with, which stopped them dealing with us, because if this was official then this apparently, you know, it stopped them for a few minutes. And then, we managed to make a huge construction of the suitcases we had chopped up and wire between them and everything, and then I hung them over the end of this train as it backed out of the

station, and we got rid of a lot of suitcases and nobody sort of...and then we drove away. And the only person who recorded it was of course a Japanese tourist who came out with her camera and was taking photographs, but we disappeared. But that, what I mean was, lots of things were done as events and stuff with no thought of, this is an art work, or this is an event; we would just do events, like at that time, I was rather pleased with that event, because I had just dreamed it up and it just came out terribly naturally. And it was my event, but of course it was never recorded. But anyway. And then at the time we were...we were doing things like, soon after that, I can't remember, but I did have a child in here in '63, and that would be shortly afterwards, after we had done some of these events. We were doing things round London called 'Nodnol Lives', which was sort of like London backwards, and we were meeting up with artists like Peter Cutner at the time and John Starkey[ph], who was a poet, more of a poet and sound poet. And Peter Cutner did some coloured food, he was doing coloured food things. And then... So there were series of events that were going on at the time, and John had been in America, and we had moved to this house, and this house became a sort of, quite a centre for artist discourse and great big suppers that we would always be having, and John was getting known in Germany quite a lot, he was doing some work in Düsseldorf and we would go of and do things like the Aachen show, which was where he met Joseph Beuys, and in Düsseldorf. And, I can't quite remember the chronological order of these sort of early Sixties pieces, and our activities then. But, I know that I had Xenia, which was our daughter, in 1963, and John was with the Kasmin Gallery then, and I remember Kasmin coming into the house with a huge bottle of champagne, and the room upstairs, our bedroom, you know, where the bed was, was on one side of the room where we had knocked all the filling out of the wall and just kept the laths in between which we had hung works on. So, me having a baby was going on at the same time as Kasmin was getting heavily drunk with the nurse who was meant to be looking after me, and then I had Noah who I had made a great point, having not done him very well when I had J.P., and I said, 'This baby is for you,' you know, and I told him earlier the secret that I was having a baby, because I was quite shocked that I was having one because it was after eight years, and it certainly wasn't planned. And he was very sweet about it, because he hadn't liked children, you know, he hadn't liked the incident of his brother being born, because we had done it sort of all wrong. And we were going off on that day that I was having, that I told him about it, and we were going swimming at the

Oasis. And he said, 'Are you sure you're going to be all right?' And I said, 'Yes, no absolutely fine, swimming's good for you,' you know. And so I went off with these three dirty little boys. And we were actually turned out of the Oasis that day for, I think we had dirty feet, because, well you know, whatever it was, we were all turned out, and I remember it was the day I told Noah that I was going to have this baby. And, anyway, here I was actually having this baby, and John was with the Kasmin Gallery then, and that was when Kasmin had decided, you know, that he would leave the Marlborough Gallery that he had been before and he would set up his own Kasmin Gallery, backed by the Guinnesses, Linda Guinness and Dufferin and Ava was the guy that was sort of behind it, and then of course there were all the other Guinnesses, like the Henriettas. So, I always remember Kasmin saying, 'Oh God! how can I keep them interested?' I mean, you know, 'How can I keep them interested? What can we do now that will keep my backing interested?' you know. And, we used to go and play poker with Kasmin, who was a great sort of...there was a poker school, John was very cool about the poker – I diverge from having my baby here, and going into a Kasmin thing. And, it was... So we would play these poker games, and John would stash up the money, and then they would say, oh no, we must go on playing because we've all lost the money, and John said, 'Not on your life,' you know, 'I'm going off with this money'. And that was considered very sort of, not done, and we went off to Scotland and did all sorts of things on the money John got out of this poker ring. Anyway, we were sort of great friends with Kasmin and stuff until a bit later, but this was when we were, John was very in with Kasmin, and Kasmin was just getting on to promoting Stella and some of the new American Abstract Expressionism, and that was when the break actually came between John and the Kasmin Gallery, because David Sylvester was ringing Kasmin up in the middle of the night, Kas rang up and said, 'What on earth have you done to make, you know, Sylvester so absolutely furious?' Because Sylvester was ringing him up saying, 'Look, you've got to drop Latham, his Victorian tombstones,' because John was doing those great big black things like his 'Burial of Count Orgaz', you know, from the El Greco, in a billiard table. And Kasmin, who had been very keen on John, actually dropped him shortly after that, because, because of Sylvester's influence and because he went forward with the Americans. Although John got on very well in America with Newman, Barnett Newman, Frank Stella and all these people who he met in the Chelsea Hotel. But, anyway back to me having the baby and Kasmin. And so they all got drunk just on

the other side of this, you know, this room that had been divided in half, and finally, Noah left my side and went off and said, because I was now in labour and he thought he couldn't stay and hold my hand any more, and so he went off to a friend round the corner, and when they came back I had had this baby through the drunkenness of next door, and the nurse sort of absent-mindedly putting this baby on to the 'News Chronicle' as it was then. And then Noah came back and said, 'You are a genius,' when he saw the baby. You know, how could this be a real live person? Which was a considerable thing for me, because I had done it so wrong for Noah when he had, when I had J.P., you know, I hadn't understood at all the business of telling the child the next one was coming and all that thing of being...it had all been totally down to John and the interest in the father and stuff, you know, so, it was very like that. So, then... Anyway, having Xenia, it was very marvellous really, and, although it meant that I wasn't doing, you know, so much work and everything, once... I mean, it wasn't until '68, '67/'68 that I began to teach in art schools again, and I taught in Hornsey at the time of the uprising so to speak, I was teaching at Hornsey. But before that I began to do sort of odd jobs, like demonstrating in toy shops, and Hamleys and the Ideal Home Exhibition to earn some money. And it was then that we got this...John was in America again, his second period of being in America, and it was then that Noah had his piano lessons and, you know, we got the piano, and he went ahead on becoming a musician I suppose, beginning of becoming a musician. But we had...I'm going backwards and forwards a bit on my Sixties bit I realise again. But, I then began to pick up and do some teaching, like in Hornsey. Now I haven't related teaching in St. Martin's, have I? And, what had happened was that while John was in America, some members of the Fluxus Group, Daniel Spoerri and, George Brecht just came for one day but he didn't stay with us, but Daniel Spoerri and Robert Filliou, were going to put on a show in Gallery One, a sort of Fluxus show, and they came over, and I was...oh this was actually just before having Xenia, because I was heavily pregnant with Xenia, and, sorry, I'm flipping back again. But, they came over, and they stayed with me while John was in America, and, they wanted, this was where my idea for A.P.G., which was the Artist Placement Group, as it was to become, became born, because, they wanted a whole lot of material for scrap, and I took them to an industrial site just sort of outside London and collected some scrap for them to make their show, you know, sort of stuff for their show, and a bit later than that, which must have been '65, '66, yes it would be about that time, and, I got lost on the Outer

Circular Road, this was when I was on my own without the Fluxus Group people coming with me, and I got lost on this industrial estate, and it was at night time, or at least it was dark, it was about sort of 10 o'clock, and there was this huge, enormous industrial complex, humming away, and there was a Mars factory and a clock factory, a Timex factory. And I thought to myself, well, instead of just picking up buckets of plastic and material, why aren't we actually associated with this world that we don't seem to be touching? And, I came back with this idea in my head that we needed to be, you know, artists needed to be in this whole other area, and that was the beginning of my idea that, which grew into the Artist Placement Group. And when John came back, I told him about it, and he thought that that was a very interesting idea and he liked the idea. And he had just been given one or two teaching days at St. Martin's School of Art, and he told Frank Martin, who was Head of the Sculpture School at the time, and the Sculpture School had all sorts of people, like Gilbert and George and Tim Scott.

End of F6686 Side A

F6686 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 22nd of June 1998. Tape four, side B.

Now you were just at St. Martin's.

Yes, well, I got to St. Martin's because John was doing a day's teaching, or two days' teaching, and he had been asked to come in and be between painting and sculpture, like nowhere, because he was making these assemblages, and because his ideas were fitting in. And John there met some very interesting people, one was Jeffrey Shaw who was one of the founding members of our A.P.G., a very bright guy, who was very into...he was a, you know, he had been trained as an architect, but he was a very interesting thinker. In fact I think he won a prize for being, in Australia, he was Australian, for being one of the brightest thinkers, you know, in an Adelaide college or whatever. And, he met John there, and John met Barry Flanagan there. And I...and we also knew Mark Boyle and Joan Hills. And I got this idea that, on this Outer Circular Road, that, to do, to get the artists into a different position, because it was a whole lot of our area that was being left out. And it came a lot from doing events and happenings in the street where we were also moving out of galleries and doing the sort of events that I've described, you know, that I did on the station platform, and Peter Cutner and John Starkey[ph] and all of us were doing, and Stuart Brisley, were doing, although I didn't meet Stuart until later closely, until I was actually teaching at Hornsey, which was '68. Because it was '65/66 that I did a, I was invited to go to St. Martin's and do a day a week, asking... Because I had this, I wrote a paper about, what was it that the artists thought they were doing by deciding to be artists, and where did they think they were going, and when they came out of art school, you know, what was it all about. Because there was only Coldstream's teaching in art schools as anything that artists could do before they, you know, to support themselves I suppose, not that I ever like using the word support, subsidy, or help; I never feel that any of those things are anything to do with the motivation and the path you're on as an artist, and so the whole idea of subsidy and stuff is very difficult for me to handle now. Anyway, Frank Martin, who was Head of Sculpture, saw my paper, I had just written a paper, with Joan Hills, about this idea. And he said, 'Well why

don't you come in one day a week and ask, you know, and do your questionnaire with them as part of this project?' And so I got a day a week at St. Martin's, and John was doing his day and meeting with Barry Flanagan. And so the people that I was asking these questions of were, like, sort of Tim Scott and Philip King and all the people that Bryan Robertson was making famous as, you know, the Bryan Robertson, British sculpture of that period. And, I went into Frank Martin's office one day, and he said, 'Oh Barbara, why don't you get in touch with...?' Because I had said industries and everything, you know. He said, 'Why don't you get in touch with this guy?' And he was reading the pink 'Financial Times', and he was called Sir Robert Adeane, who was I think connected with the Queen, because there was a Michael Adeane who was, you know, to do with some, the monarchy I suppose. And he said... Because he's chairman of all these companies, like Shell, this that and the other, you know, he had got about sort of ten chairmanships, as they all do. So I sent my paper to Sir Robert Adeane, and he said...he said... I rang him up and said, 'What did you think?' He said, 'Well, come round and have a drink my dear,' you see. So, I went round, and he was standing aside his Cheyne Walk house, he was standing in front of the fireplace, needless to say, astride of a tiger rug with its great big head, you know, and I'm terrified of people who shoot tigers and I never accepted this present from my uncle when he gave it to me when I was 21. And, he said, 'Well very good idea my dear. I'll be on your committee.' So, I thought, oh my God! I'd better have a committee to put this man on, this is obviously very good. So, I rushed round and got a committee of the sort of people you would have on a committee, which would be Coldstream, you know, Frank Martin, Julie Lawson joined it. She was then, she was secretary to Roland Penrose, and we got Michael Compton, who was at the Tate, and we formed a trust called Artist Placement Group. And I began to approach the industries later, not quite then. But anyway that was when it was formed. And we had a wonderful Swiss guy who had a lot of John's work in his house, called Bernard Berchinger[ph], and he became the first chairman of A.P.G. as it was then. And so, we had what was called the Noit Panel, which was Barry Flanagan, Jeffrey Shaw, Maurice Agis, who I see is doing a lot of things again now, and Ian Munro who I met later on at Hornsey when I was teaching at Hornsey, which was '68, because I taught at Chelsea first, doing this thing, and that was when A.P.G. was invented. The same time as all this, we were doing events around London with, and we...but perhaps they were sort of coming later, but intermittent events like, in Covent Garden, a tiban[ph] tree with Stuart

Brisley. But, I don't know, perhaps they came later, because, around the '68 mark, but it was after... So, '65 I'm at St. Martin's with these artists, and it was just about then that the Destruction in Art symposium happened, and that meant a whole lot of international artists came over, and we had Yoko Ono living in our house.

Before we move on to that, can I just ask you to explain Noit for those that may not know.

Oh yes, oh I'm sorry, yes. The Noit Panel was, the No It Panel, and it's the last bit of attention, I-O-N-, T-I-O-N, and it's...John was always playing with words, and putting the language round the other way, so that Nodnol would be London backwards, and his burning of his Skoob towers would be 'books' backward, and so, Noit would be the end of 'attention', and it was also 'no it'; it was to go from nothing to one, or from nothing to finding out, which is the way that one might be working as an artist, but that's the explanation. And we decided to call it the Noit Panel, the no it, no object. Artists who were interested in the 'non it', you know, the finding out and what would come out of that, and that's run... A lot of these influences of John's refusal to use language with the baggage that it comes with, but reinventing the language, has sort of gone right through a lot of the A.P.G. and what is now the O. & I., and has caused a lot of difficulties for people, because it always meant that it was a very exclusive language, if too much of it came in, and that was very noticeable with, when we started to talk to industries and everything. I mean I do the explanation and what it was that we were doing, but if too many of these words were used, or John would talk in his, getting across, as he would call it, non-received language, you know, if he was getting that across, that would become very difficult if it was too much woven in to the output of material that we were approaching people with, and that, you know, has always been a problem. But in a way it's also been very essential to make the difference between falling into bureaucratic terms, but it's also made the difficulty, and that's where I suppose the juxtaposition between what I do in socialising the concept and what John does in specifying almost the geometry of what is going on by having art integrated or, inclusively with other disciplines, professions and trades or whatever in this way. So it's, the difficulty and the specificity have always been between John and me and how it reaches the public I suppose, so I suppose we very much, on opposite sides of the coin, causes the great scream-ups that it causes.

Between you two?

And between others if they hit it, you know. I mean all the time, right up now and everything, it is, there's what, John is inputting, and you know, how the body of A.P.G or O. & I. as it's become now, manifests itself to the public, and how the artists working with it, who choose to be associated, there's a particular method and brief that we distilled and developed as a result of going into those contexts which had not been gone in before, you know, in this way, like in industry, like into commerce, and into government, into the bureaucracies, that it...it has always kept us distinctly separate, which has enabled the role to develop in a very distinctive way, which has resulted in very good practice over the time, because it's the way artists work, if you're going from nothing to finding out, and therefore you don't predetermine any of the things. And to try and get society, you know, commerce, which must have its results, to take the risk of doing something that you don't know, and pay for it, has been an enormous leap that we managed to sort of achieve. Perhaps I've gone too much into that bit at this particular time.

Well I think it's important to kind of clarify it. I would be interested to know the theoretical ideas of John's around Delta and so on, to do with A.P.G. How much, as a kind of...how much input did you put into that, in terms of developing that side of it?

Well I think that...I don't think that I put... I was very instinctive, I mean, right at the beginning John would say, well if it hadn't been for him, having met with these astronomers and the biologist down in the country, and him working with his spray gun, which would be the first mark on a canvas, and seeing how that brought what he was doing with his art, the framework of art into a sort of envelope structure with where it was the physical disciplines were getting to, and seeing this inclusive framework, that I wouldn't have even thought of the A.P.G. idea. But you see I came on the A.P.G. idea completely like, why aren't we in here? And then finding out ways of getting in and developing a skill like that. So I wouldn't say that, I couldn't say that I... I would listen to what John had to say about Delta and the theoretical side, but I wouldn't say that...I would understand it historically but I wouldn't say I worked from it at all. Numbers of artists who, you know, the beginning, the founding

artists, like David Hall, was very much concerned with the surface, the observer, you know, I mean I'm also very aware of, there's the surface of the canvas, there's the observer, there's the participator, you know, who...and the different component parts of what goes on to get a work there. But I would in a sort of way be doing it completely differently, not using nearly so much of the theoretical side that John was drawing out of his association from the astronomer and the mark on the canvas that was there and wasn't there, and Pollock and the art history; I came at it very much through my own making, my own process of going perhaps, you know, from drawing hand-to-eye, representation, painting, and then into abstraction, and then into a performance. Just understanding how that came about and trying to get that into those organisations that didn't work in that way, weren't using that particular, weren't using the audio and the visual and those sort of perceptions that were being distilled by artists, and getting that medium of communication in. But I wouldn't say that I would take... I would listen to John's stuff but I wouldn't work in that way. I can't say that I contributed towards his Delta, although when it came...I mean when it came to doing, say, a logo, he would tip the triangle on its side, you know, and he would do lovely things like that. Now I wouldn't say that I contributed to that, but I might say, well why don't we have it on its side or something, but I wouldn't be taking the theoretical thing through there you see.

I mean in terms of what he seemed to imagine that the potential of Delta was that, you know, through art there could be a completely changed idea of society...

That's right, yes.

And do you subscribe to that, or did you see it as a more sort of practical catalyst?

You see I wouldn't subscribe... I mean I do subscribe to, I do subscribe to, because I'm there and have seen it work, I do subscribe to what goes on when the perceptions of artists who use this different form of communication do when they are with other people, you know, how that fuses and changes things. And that's what I'm totally, have seen work, instinctively got to work, but I didn't use his forms, you know, I didn't use John's Delta when I was putting it across, but his idea of Least Event as a Habit, which is, you know, you put a thing in three times, it's like a sort of cinematic

thing that then comes into your head and everything, that, I mean all these ideas of how change comes about, you know, seem to synthesise between John and me into the practical manifestation of getting what I got to happen, which I feel, I mean although Jeffrey Shaw said, 'I hope this is not an art work that you are doing,' and I said, 'No no no, it's a strategy for getting...' But it is actually, I mean I do see now, possibly because there's never been any pay for it, except on and off, but not that I want to use that as a thing, but I do see it as a development of making a work that is very much in the form of social sculpture, to coin, to, you know, it's in that mode.

This whole aspect of the sort of group working within A.P.G....

Mm.

How did you feel that worked at the time, as the idea was developing?

I felt it worked very well, because we did have some very interesting artists who were working, to use the horrible phrase used now, at the leading edge of experimentation, like Jeffrey Shaw was using air art, I mean he was using inflatables and stuff at the time, so he moved from hard sculpture to soft sculpture you might say. Barry Flanagan was also working that way, although he went back to using, went back to representational sculpture and bronzes, which we felt was a great let-down, because he had been very experimental and interesting and we felt that money, perhaps I shouldn't say this, money is so sexy, as Kasmin always used to say. But I mean he did love making those objects, you know, he loved making his hares and his stuff, and so that's what he did, but that wasn't so interesting, although he was a very interesting person at the time. So, I felt it worked very well in that...well we have a lot of things going on, I mean we... You know, we began to get invited to foreign countries, and we were putting on things, like we did the Industrial Negative symposium, which was at, which was in '68 – I'm still darting around in my Sixties here, but never mind – and that was where...where we got together the industrialists, and we had, we put this thing on in the Mermaid Theatre, and I remember getting the whole, getting the Mermaid Theatre project on as usual from the basement of one's house, and I remember some Americans coming in and saying, 'My God! how do you guys do all this?' you know, 'from nothing, with nothing.' And we put on this Industrial

Negative symposium, and I remember getting the guy who was running the Mermaid Theatre at the time, I can't remember his name, everything's going, and the Lord Mayor, because we wanted him to open it, and I remember I went to see him in the Mansion House, and I was all dressed up nicely and he had his chains round him, and I said, 'Well, would you open our Industrial Negative symposium that we're going to have?' And having got over the fright of it being called Industrial Negative, which, because it was the positive and the negative like that, but the word negative was not considered a positive thing to put in a title, but... And we had the Mermaid Theatre, and I remember that we had to have, because it was in the City and we had the Lord Mayor we had to have the proper ritual arrangements, that the Lord Mayor would have his equerry-at-arms, because from the plague there always had to be this person sitting next to the Lord Mayor with a handkerchief for him to sneeze into so, you know, because of distributing the plague in a common place with other people, you see. And, we had.... So I remember thinking, oh my God! I've got to get all this stuff back, and you know, it's tomorrow, you know, so, I remember rushing round in my sandals and my dirty feet I suppose, and banging on the door of the Mansion House, which was closed, it was after hours, it was 6 or whatever it was, and this man came to the door with his spectacles, and I didn't know whether it was a servant or, you know, who it was. And so I said, 'Oh could you please give this to, Sir something-something, it's for the Lord Mayor's equerry, something.' And this guy looked down at me over his glasses and said, 'Well my dear, we have met earlier today, and I must say you deserve to succeed.' It was the Lord Mayor without his chains, and me in my dirty sandals. And I always seem to remember that throughout everything, and I'm still doing it now, I will carry any letter myself and put it through the door so that I know it's happened, or on somebody's desk, and I seem to be doing this all the time, and I'm still doing it now, you know. I mean, I think, oh God! you know, this... Even e-mail, I prefer to put the things on their desks and know it has arrived, and this is a terribly stupid non-technological habit of mine but, I think it's because I do it all myself, and I've never had, except from time to time I've had people working for me on this. So, it's all become part of the work and the process. Anyway we did this Industrial Negative symposium, and we had Paolozzi and we had Paul Riley[ph] and we had a lot of... And we had Billy Cluver[ph] from Art and Technology in America, who was a very bad speaker incidentally, and we had a lot of industrialists, like British Oxygen and I.C.I., and people who came, and artists who talked, and we put

on an inflatable show outside, which Jeffrey Shaw put on. And, I remember when we got them all inside, and Deborah Brisley, Stuart Brisley's wife, and we got them all in, and then it started rolling forward with this recording. And I said, 'Oh my God! we've done it!' And there was the Mayor getting up and saying, 'I see that something...and saying all these things,' and Ray Gunter[ph] got up and talked about how, you know, that people who had...he talked about the Industrial Revolution and how we had now moved into a state of robots and everything and how terrible it had been that people who were really sort of angels were just sort of robots on a continuous conveyor belt, and you know, he talked about the importance of the artist being in...being incorporated into the life of industry and everything. But it was quite associated at that time with, we were pulling it away from being applied art, and making objects, which was quite interesting because the Art and Technology people had put together artists and engineers to fabricate their work and make, you know, make an interplay also with an exchange of ideas in the workforce, but very much towards getting the objects, the art objects made; whereas we were very much more towards making a different fusion between different types of perception, and the work that would then come out in the process of that. And that was a very sort of seminal, one of our first seminal events, and from that we had people from Esso petroleum and British Steel and people, they joined with us and formed part of the A.P.G. advisory group you might say at the time, and so when we were then invited to go to Germany and put on something to German industry, the people from, they came with us to represent British industry, which was the great thing that, you know, it was great that they could speak for the artists in this way. And I remember Tom Batho who was head of employee relations at Esso, who was very interested in the idea, and we did a very good placement with Esso, I haven't gone into the placements here, because I'm running backwards and forwards across my Sixties again. And, I remember him saying in this, at this symposium he said, 'This symposium will be a record of, the artist is not asking for support, but is offering...but, is not asking for support but to make a contribution.' And that was a very nice distinction that was made, that we were there on a different tack. And there was a lot of press in the industries, and the funny thing after that was, it was the advertising agencies who all jumped around and wanted us, and we kept getting these sort of artistic directors inviting us to, you know, board meetings, and there would be filter coffee and all the sort of things you see on the ads. But they were just wanting us as sort of improvement and logo, and although

Stanhope Shelton[ph] was one of our people who was a member at the time, and he wrote quite well about it, we could feel that it was going in the wrong direction, that the advertising was wanting it for the wrong reasons. And I suppose we were very purist in that we...the condition that, you know, through working with industries, the conditions that we made was that, here's the proposal, this is how it would...we as artists would say, if the creativity is to emerge between you and us, it has to be free and not be pre-empted, and it, you know, it's not predetermined, and of course you have to come down on to saying, were they interested, were we interested, and that's all part of our process of negotiation. But we were quite tough about that, and that is why in the present say where businesses are jumping up and down to see where they can tap the creativity of artists and use it in different ways, and the old Arts Council schemes, the fact that we actually got them then, and later with Government departments, to accept that they would take it the way the art was made, you know, was, for commerce was quite a thing. And after we had done the Industrial Negative, we then did the Industrial Placements with I.C.I. and with Esso Petroleum, and with British Steel, and I think that out of that came completely, you know, how you could attribute success and failure, and what was success by our standards, what was success by the artist's standards, what was success by their standards, and a lot came out of those, which we were then able to take to the Government departments when we did that later. But we then did these shows in...I'm sort of fading slightly here.

I'm going to stop you because the tapes about to run out.

Oh great, well that's fine, because I'd like to.....

End of F6686 Side B

F6687 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 22nd of June 1998. Tape five, side A.

I would be very interested to know quite how this process by which you lost the object in effect and moved into events and so on, how that actually happened. Was there a moment when you literally said, you know, we no longer want to paint, or produce?

I think it was being felt around the place that the issues were wider, like... I think the strong thing that was happening then was that context was half the work, was a phrase that was coined later on by John and all of us really, and the others, and this is what are known for, David Harding talks about it in Glasgow, that context is half the work, and that has informed his work and his courses that he has done. But I think it was that, at the time, for instance, the idea that the whole city was our context, and whatever came in to that context, whether it was people passing by or it was us, or something, we were very aware of the fact that it was out of the studio and gallery and into the streets, and that affected the materials that we used, and we would be using ourselves, and what would pass us in these contexts, we would never know what was going to happen in these context, because people would be passing and that would throw up different, it would throw up the differences. So, and Jeffrey Shaw for instance was using inflatables; he had moved from hard object to soft sculpture, to air art so to speak. So the technology was also showing us different uses of the technology, but instead of making objects like Art and Technology, and the artist was going to join with engineers to have their work fabricated and perhaps made better, that was not our direction. We were going to make, we seemed to, all of us in our different ways and different uses, wanting to make a wider object you might say which was a process, and it would come out of the context in which we were working, in the same way as one might have been doing a painting before in a studio, you would have those materials, but we were going to have a whole lot of different materials and they could be the new technologies, it could be film, they could be photography, or they could be people passing in the street or whatever it was that the factory threw up. But supposing it was a factory, it wouldn't just be the materials that we would be working with; we would be working with the people in that factory and what they brought to bear with it, and the component parts of the issues of what that

industry was going towards. So that's how it then developed, and that was the way we found ourselves working. But it came from these events that we did that, anything could happen, but in a way we were directors of the play, so we were again the directors. I mean I'm using this word now, having just thought of it, but... So we were making this wider work, which later was coined I suppose by Beuys as social sculpture, but at the time we hadn't met him and he hadn't coined it, you know, and he certainly wasn't going to put it, although he talked about it, he certainly didn't put it into action in commerce and these other contexts to make a new work out of it. So, with Jeffrey doing his air art, and Barry Flanagan, who was doing representational heads, very beautiful heads of his daughter, and he did one of our daughter...

You haven't got your.....

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Continuing the interview after a short break.

Right, we were looking at how we actually moved from object to event, and we were looking at how it was, the component parts that would make up a context, and the new technologies that were also providing a change in what.....

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Restarting the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of August 1998 at her home in London.

The last interview concluded when the machine broke down, so we're going to pick up by returning to an earlier period on the tape with the Destruction in Art Symposium, which I know you want to develop on.

Right. Well, what was happening was that, we had had a book burning tower ceremony in Portland Road, to which Gustav Metzger and Ronnie Laing, I mean in other words R.D. Laing, had been present at, and various artists, and our friends, and from that idea Gustav Metzger, who was interested from, I suppose from his idea of

art and capital, he said, 'Well we're going to have a Destruction in Art symposium, and we want you to be involved in it.' But he got the idea from watching John burning this tower of books, and of course John was not burning the tower of books as an anarchist gesture, although any gestures at that time appeared to be anarchical, but of course they were actually drawing attention to, in John's case all the time, what are we investing in language, that we say, it is so; it was almost a philosophical debate, but John Latham takes it much further. And, with a result of Gustav being in our house, he went away and he got this idea for a Destruction in Art symposium, in which he invited all the people who, from America and from Europe, who were involved in making the gestures away from the art as object and as value and as being processed through the gallery as exchange, into, what is it that the artist is actually on about, what are they doing? It comes off Duchamp and from various art history points. You could even say from Pollock and from Action, like this big exhibition that is currently running now, Out of Actions in L.A., draws together all those people in America and in Europe, and actually from Britain, because this period was not at all covered at this time at all and has been suppressed in this country, as being anarchical. And, anyway, so as a result of this we had, people were staying in our house, one of which was Yoko Ono, and at that time she was with Tony Cox, was her husband at the time, and she had a small child who was Kyoko who was the same age as our daughter, Xenia, and they went to the nursery school over the back wall together. [Sentence deleted at request of interviewee.] Anyway, and, as a result of that, we did, we followed through what we were already doing before this Destruction in Art symposium, which was a whole period of works around London which we said, which we called Nodnol Lives, which might be, you know, on a previous tape, but, which was London backwards; we were always reversing, because having John very prominently in anything we were doing, we kept reversing words, and you know, drawing attention to the language all the time. So it was called Nodnol Lives, and we went and did all these projects, in the zoo and at Tiban Tree[ph] with Stuart Brisley, and Peter Cutner and various artists. And, but anyway, it brought us... So we were working like that anyway, so when the Destruction in Art symposium came, we were obviously the people that would be involved in it in this country. And we had Yoko staying with us with Tony Cox and the child, and everybody was flowing in and out of the house from the Fluxus Group, some of the Fluxus Group, and then, we did these events in the various places around, like in the Mermaid Theatre, and in the

Mercury Theatre, and in this place, you know, various derelict sites, like the playground where we blew up explosives with a French pyrotechnic artist, whose name I've forgotten, and we blew these dictionaries up over London, quite a lot of...this might again be on another tape, but anyway... And, so these were some of the events that were going on which were carrying on from what we were doing, but this was a whole period of about, I think it was three or four weeks that we did these projects around London, and we had a lot of the Viennese artists, Otto Muehl, and, God! what was his name? Oh God! I can't remember his name, but he was in the Out of Actions show that we were doing in L.A., you know, all those people turned up again. And they were doing of course a sort of, things like cutting off chickens' heads and disembowelling animals, which of course created an uproar in the press, where some of the things we did in the Mercury Theatre in Notting Hill Gate, that caused an uproar, because we had nudes moving on the stage, which was me and another girl, we took it in turns to do this performance with hardback books and softback books, and Jeff Nuttall participated in that. And I can't quite remember when the poets' conference came in, I think I covered this before, did I? About the poets' conference at the Albert Hall, with Faylan Getty[ph] and...have we not done that? Oh dear. Well, roughly about that time we also did, there was a drawing together of the Beat poets in the Albert Hall. So these were the kind of things that were going on that then, we were drawn together through the Destruction in Art symposium. And I was instrumental in... Yoko and I got on very well together, and she was about the first woman artist besides Carlyle Reedy who I met a bit later, an American poet, and artist, performance artist. And so we got on very well together, and we, she told me about her piece, *Cut Piece* which she had done before I believe in America, which consisted of her sitting on a stage and inviting the audience to come up and cut off her clothes, and I arranged to go and get, you know, for publicity purposes, from Biba's, some clothes that would get cut off, so we had all these different costumes for her to have cut off from Biba's. And, this was done in, off Covent Garden, what gallery was that? I'm not quite sure what particular gallery that was. Oh, in the African Centre, which still exists in Covent Garden. And, she sat on this platform, and had her clothes cut off, her Biba garments cut off, one by one, and again that was interesting in the late...in Yoko Ono's show at the beginning of this year, how very different it was, the way the people cut the clothes off now and what they cut off Yoko at the time. And it was also interesting that, it was the men that came up to cut all the

clothes off, whereas in the present day a lot of the women came to cut the clothes off, and so that was another interesting factor. And, but I remember when, when they had all been cut off, Yoko then had her long hair down to, came right down to her shoulders and she just sat cross-legged on the platform, and she looked very ancient, because she wasn't very ancient then, she looked like a Buddha, because she had this slightly, you know, olive skin and her hair like that. And, well to me she looked like a Buddha, and it was a nice thing that I've always remembered about her. And...

How far did they cut the clothes off?

What?

Did she end up with no clothes on at all?

Absolutely no clothes at all, and her hair, and just her long hair, and just sitting naked on the platform. And I remember how ageless she appeared, you know, it wasn't a young woman that had everything cut off or something, you know, the whole gesture, and the point of it came, that this was not an overtly sexual thing which, you know, is completely changed now, but that, you know, the gesture made it what it was. And I remember thinking that at the time. We did these, also these events in a derelict playground where we blew up the dictionaries over London with this pyrotechnician, and we also did a number of Yoko Ono pieces which she and I worked on together, one was 'Shadow Piece', which is in the John Walker book, where she just laid a cloth down and I lay on top of that and she just drew around it, and then she pulled it away and that was my shadow, I can't remember quite how it went on, but anyway we did 'Shadow Piece' together. And then, she also worked a piece with our son, Noah, which was a steam piece, which was, when the kettle boiled, that fault would belong to Noah or something in a different place. And there were a whole lot of things that we did together with Yoko. And I remember, although she was very into publicity, and you know, she was being promoted all the time, there seemed to be no time for anyone else, and it was all publicity, and she is always known for that, for promoting herself, and even when she, now, doesn't want to promote herself, as the women say, she is always the one that, you know, gets the attention and is promoted. But, we did form quite a relationship that we sort of kept going. And...

Did you work out ideas between you, or was she the originator?

No, she was the originator of the ideas, and I just found, which was rather of course again what happened with me and John, was, I mean she was the strong woman at the time, she arrived as a Japanese artist. And of course, I mean, as I found out later, but didn't think at the time, I mean I was quite...I just went with things, but I also initiated and organised how they might happen, and got things to happen and took part in them and participated. But I have to say that I...I can't remember myself initiating any of Yoko's things. She arrived with her stash of works that she was going to do. And listening to her in the present day of course, listening to her interview on the B.B.C., her 'Face to Face', she remarked that, you know, the fact that she was a well-off lady

meant that she arrived, she could buy great big lofts in America, in New York or whatever it was, where they would all do their events and stuff; she had the money to do that, so she would be the artist who would do that, and, sorry, I'm being a bit subjective here about...

So where did that money come from?

It came from her, you know, her parents were bankers.

Oh I see.

And, you know, so she arrived with that money. But she was a strong artist, she knew what she wanted to do, she had also trained as an opera singer I think, but you can get all the facts about Yoko much better from her 'Face to Face' thing. But, it did make a difference, I think, at that time. I think I'm looking at, who were the women artists at the time? And I didn't see myself as a woman artist at the time; although I had been at art school and I had done these things, I didn't actually see myself as a woman artist, that came much later, because I was in a culture, and living with a quite a bit older male artist, and all men, and all artists were men at the time. So I was very much participating in, as was Stuart Bisley's wife, you know, I think I remarked, possibly on the tape, that you know, in 'Studio International' at the time there was Deborah Brisley with her guts being pulled out, you know, meant to be being pulled out by Stuart Bisley and being cut up and everything, on one page of 'Studio International', and on the other side there was me being, you know, burnt in a gallery in Aachen, you know, all wrapped up in books, and just my eyes showing. So we were very much participating in our men's events without thinking that we...without thinking, period, you know, how much we were giving or doing or initiating or anything. So it took me quite a long time to pull out of that and claim what I was doing and notice myself, because I was in that culture at the time where the man was it. I mean except when I was at Chelsea, as I think I remember, I remarked before. As a student I felt quite strong about myself in relation to Lizzie Frink, Elizabeth Frink, and as a student, you know, where I was finding my way and drawing and painting and then going into abstract. But, when I got married to John, I then of course, you know, not only were there the children and everything, you know, he

automatically I suppose in the culture, took over, and he was a very strong man and that was it. So...where were we?

Destruction in Art.

Oh Destruction in Art, yes, and Yoko and everything. So, that was really in answer to your question that I didn't actually, you know, I took on what it was, Yoko's stash, she arrived with her stash and what she was going to do, and although we had been doing events and happenings, and I'd done my own events and happenings and stuff, I didn't, you know, those were Yoko's ideas; I can't quite remember the chronological order in which I did my events with Phil Cohen and stuff. So...

I mean can you describe the feedback from the public to the Destruction in Art Symposium, particularly these external events?

Well, I as a participant, we were getting very much the artists... I think it generated a lot of attention with artists, it got quite a lot of press, which Gustav collected avidly, was all these little bits of newspaper cuttings and whether it was being stopped and everything. And Gustav is a great collector of bits and pieces of information which in a way claim Gustav's path through, another male attitude was, I must take care of my career, and I notice now he's claiming, 'This was '61, this is '63, I did so-and-so,' and I think, gracious me, here we go again, even now, having to use the first person singular all the time, you know, the great I thing was flowing through strongly there, whereas I think that coming from my end, my personal end, I was just as involved in doing it with Yoko and with the rest of us. So, and the press... So, I was only getting the press responses, you know, of, which again was not much noticed in the classical, you know, not noticed in the...

Traditional press?

Yes, in the traditional press and stuff, it wasn't hardly covered at all, because it was seen as sort of, these gestures; in fact nothing hardly was covered except by the art fraternity that covered it themselves you might say, you know, so we're still looking for the John Prosser[ph] who took all the photographs, and nobody can find him, and

Yoko whenever she comes says, 'Did you ever find John Prosser who took all the photographs?' Because of course she wants it for her archives you see. So, in a way we've all had to cling on to our bits and pieces, because, and of course Yoko has a great deal more in her Yoko Ono, John Lennon and Yoko archives, which are in New York, and the guy who's collecting those was very interested in any of the bits and pieces we had got that he could put into the Yoko Ono archives. But, it was only the art fraternity that was really covering it, hardly any real press, you know, I mean now you would have the press on it absolutely like that, you know, sort of outrageous Damien Hirst, 'Cool Britannia', all that rubble, would be there. But, it was certainly not there at the time, and much disapproved of and not covered, so...

And you weren't conscious of any desire to record it yourselves?

We...one, we were...I mean me; one, we were actually participating in it, so we were organising the things and getting the show on the road, and getting the performance done or seeing that that was done, but we, some of us would have our photographers, or some of the photographers would be going round recording it, but nothing much got into the papers, except the sort of scandals, like John and my thing at the Mermaid Theatre, and Anna Lockwood who was another person who was doing the nude, female figure, to John's or, you know, male figure, which was at the Mercury Theatre. And that had to be stopped because at the time, you know, you weren't allowed to move in the nude, you know, because that was, they had the big John Calder thing where a nude was wheeled across the stage, came later, but... So that was suppressed and stopped. The burning of the towers in the Law Courts, that was stopped, we burnt a tower of books in the Law Courts, and we've got pictures of, well Xenia running across them, and Paul Overy who was a critic at the time. We did have to...Paul Overy[ph] did cover a lot of the things, and he got some of the things in, but not... I mean he could hardly get them into 'The Times', he was writing for 'The Times' at the time. And Guy Brett I think was sort of following it in an interested way, but neither of them could actually get it into the press. You might get some, I think some of the stuff got into, say, 'Art Monthly' and 'Studio International', but it would not get into the nationals and the tabloids, except, you know, possibly Otto Muehl's cutting off of the chickens' heads, you know, they tried to get some of those things stopped, but that was the thing. And we were, as I say there were a number of

photographers and people that covered it as part of the art fraternity, but not nationally, and those are the things that then went to America, they're in the current things now, because nobody else was covering it except ourselves.

What was the thinking behind the nude books event?

I think John Latham wanted this... He had this performance of softback books and hardback books, and that, again it was looking at books and language, and he had some contact mics so that, and each of them were attacking each other, and the idea was just a performance that, all these books, the softback books, and the pages were strapped on, on the female figure, and it had a great big head, which was constructed out of, you know, the books and the paper, and ditto the male figure with the hardback books. And he was just using books again in a performance to draw attention to what continued to be his interests, the dot, the mark and language, and information, and condensed information. But he made a performance of it with the soft and hardback books, and the male and female figure. And we had the contact mics chopping up the books and roaring through the stuff. This great growling of the scissors cutting through the paper and everything. It was a great sound, and very very low tech, and then, I think I mentioned before that, you know, and then Stellark[ph], the Australian artist, currently now going round, has, well he does all sorts of things with his body hanging up and everything, but he also sort of had, you know, the contact mics and the things, and I think, well, how much more advanced were the huge technological things that we can use in great big screens was that from these ideas that happened then? So I am inclined to compare them, or say, well, that was that, and then now we have the technology doing possibly the same thing again but slightly differently. So his thoughts behind that was to make a performance about male and female I suppose. And so they were to be stripped down to the nude, you know, and we didn't know, we weren't thinking at the time that nudes weren't meant to move on the stage, so that was stopped. So, and that was, that was that performance. But it worked very very beautifully, and there was...and when there was, when they were completely naked and the...except they had their great big heads on, and the place was covered with paper, and the light went out, it was a very good performance. I'm trying to remember whether John had an animated film over that that was sort of rather like a strobe lighting, I think he might have used part of one of his very early films, which

was...I think he did, yes, which was buzzing on the stage, but, buzzing on the figures, so that that would be going on at another rhythm. I'll have to get my facts on that.

Tell me about Gustav Metzger at that time.

Well, Gustav Metzger at the time, very much like he is now, would be creeping round. He looks exactly the same age now as he looked then, which is like an old man, a little old wizened man, very much of his background. And I must say, I personally had problems with liking him. He was very into women, you know, at the time, and I didn't like that, coming from him to me, so I didn't like him on that level. And also, there was a certain rivalry I think between John and Gustav, which is perhaps not so much a rivalry, or I might have been being subjective about John, because I did feel, and I feel it now, that Gustav...well it's that male thing again, you know, I don't want to go into it. But Gustav was always going round with his little plastic bags full of little bits of information and reference, and he's always done that, collecting his reference and pointing out where capitalism is doing this to art, and are the artists aware of this, and you know, this has been his message all the way through, for which of course he's much heralded now, you know, as being, I was a bit annoyed about this subjectively, as being the conscience of art, and I thought, it's bloody not the conscience of art, but I mean I'm being very subjective about Gustav, I didn't actually like him or value him perhaps as much as I can now see, except I don't like his male orientation to keep claiming the 'I' all the time, and I I I, because I find that aggressive. But I think I...I can see that, although he didn't produce hardly any art, he was...and you know, with great difficulty he's going to make this show at the MOMA you know, down in Oxford, and that's come off him coming out of the back woods now as, on the back cover of John's book launch, there's Gustav standing there with John burning one of these books on the South Bank of, at that time. And so I've always felt a bit subjective. You've touched on rather a raw nerve, I've just been, you know, at a conference where I had to, I was.....

End of F6687 Side A

F6687 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni. Tape five, side B.

We might just go forward in time again now to 1968 and the time that you were teaching at Hornsey, particularly during the student unrest.

Right. Well, several things happened in 1968. One was the Hornsey student uprising, which was being paralleled with what was going on in France, or what then went on in France; I think the Hornsey and the English colleges were initiated, well, they had the first sort of uprising bit, and then they were echoed with what went on then in 1968 in France with the students. And, I mean when I say several things went on in 1968, I'm meaning for me and for A.P.G., because we also did the Mermaid Theatre Industrial Negative symposium where we got the industrialists together, which I have covered on a previous bit of tape. But just to go back on to the Hornsey thing. I was teaching at two art schools sort of concurrently or quite closely at the time, one was St. Martin's where we got together the Artist Placement Group, and one at Hornsey. And at Hornsey I met Stuart Brisley around about this time, but it was...there was quite an exciting time, I suppose I was there '67, '68, before the uprising. Then all this student problems arose, and so of course no courses were being run, you know, you couldn't conduct a course, although the students were desperately trying to pass their exams, but the politicos, like the staff, and some of the students of course, more politically affiliated students, completely closed the art school's normal running, and we did sit-ins in the staff quarters, and we just slept there and stayed there all the time. I didn't as the staff, but the students who were running it did, and then the staff came in and out, and at the time they pulled in, like prominent people, like for instance R.D. Laing, Ronnie went along, and I think Trocchi went along; I'm not quite sure whether Trocchi did. But you know, various people in the public eye at the time backed the students. And as I said that's where I met Stuart Brisley, and he was quite active in the student protest, as were we, and I then invited John, who wasn't actually teaching there but he was teaching at St. Martin's, and he came, and, well various, various people converged on it. I remember meeting Sarah Kent there at that time, she was a student there. And, well because I was already orientated towards seeing a different context for the artist, not in a left-right political way necessarily, but definitely that art

had an important part to play, much more centrally than in art schools and, you know, where was it going, why were they in art schools? All those questions I had been tackling in my questionnaire at St. Martin's, so I was also using that as a basis for what I was, for the type of questions I was asking the students in Hornsey, you know, questioning what they thought that they were there to be artists about, why were they doing art, so this was very much my line that I was at both art schools about. But, at Hornsey they very much saw me, there was an artist there called, an Italian artist called Dante Leonelli, and Hubert Dalwood, and they saw me as somebody who could get them I.C.I. plastics, and buckets of plastics, just for concept, that we were not about, and when I say we, I was not on about; the notion of A.P.G. that was coming up then was the role of the artist in a much more central way being repositioned, and it wasn't there to go and get buckets of plastics from the industries. Well, I was rather pushed into, would I get buckets of plastics for the students, you know, and would I get Perspex and this that and the other, and Hubert Dalwood very much wanted me to do that. But I...I tried not to do that, you know, just... But anyway at this, as the '67/68 came up and the art school was closed and all this questioning came up, I found myself being very much able to begin to ask those questions in a wider context, so what are we all at art schools about? And I remember at a time when the college was closed, well it was closed a lot of the time but we would keep having different venues where we would go and have discussions and debates and meetings to which people from the outside would come in, and of course all this was very much in the press, because you know, what exactly were these anarchical students doing? And we did, I remember one particular occasion where the college was going to be closed down, and we had the police outside, and they had their dogs, and we were feeding baked beans to the police dogs, and I was speaking on the telephone to Shirley Williams, who was, I think she was Education at the time, I can't quite remember, and she was saying, 'Well look Barbara, the thing is that, if you want an independent inquiry into...' I was saying, look, the whole business of the importance of the function of art to the development of education in society, and why we've got our art schools, because they were all, I mean the initial row about Hornsey and everything was the cutting of the student grants, and you know, so it was cutting it down, and I was saying, we must talk about... And the whole discourse going on during the uprising was the value of art activity, you know, the value of art to the society, but you know, any other aspect of education as well, you know, where did that fit into the

society and into the commercial premise and all that. And, so I had this conversation I remember with Shirley Williams, and she was saying, 'Well look Barbara, if you want to have this debate, the way we could have the debate would be that the art schools, you know, that it was really closed,' because we were preventing sections of Hornsey being closed because they were trying to cut it down, so there was a whole huge section that was going to be closed, people lose their jobs, no place for students, and they were trying to rationalise it, as they do with the hospitals or whatever now. And the big issue was, well, you know, what is the value of the art? And she said, 'Well one way we could do this is, to have this debate, would be, if it was actually closed down then we could have an independent court of inquiry looking into this thing,' which of course I thought would be a wonderful way of getting it up into the, you know, public consciousness, and a much higher level than students, just, well students, just, then the business of closing the colleges and things like that. But when he came to it, and I put it to the students, they said, but we're half, you know, we've practically completed our degrees, or our course, or something like that, and if it's closed down we won't get that, and then we won't have our step on our curriculum vitae to get the next thing. So I said, well there's absolutely nothing to do with me, to persuade you or, I'm just putting this point to you, you know, that that would be a way where the whole discourse that we seem to be talking about could actually be discussed, you know, but in a public, you know, in a much more sort of governmental arena. But they didn't go for it, and I didn't blame them, but I remember having that conversation and it was at a time we were feeding baked beans to them, and the police dogs. [INAUDIBLE], I just, little memories from that. But Stuart and I were very active in going round and talking, and we brought in these other people, and other people were being brought in. But what we noticed was that the discourse which initially was very structured and careful by the students, because it sort of hit the press and public figures came in, the serious debate began to disperse and it became a media event you might say, and it became not so good. And the interesting thing was though that both the staff and the students who made it their thing, made complete careers out of that afterwards, out of the Hornsey thing, they roared away to be, you know... So, but that's the way things go, you know. So, that was my particular experience of that, of the Hornsey bit.

Did you think anything productive did come out of it?

I really felt the weight of obsolete bureaucracy and administrations really bugging anything coming out of anything then, you know; just almost the location of very run-down buildings which were an art school in, you might say, one part of Hornsey and then another part, because geographically the art schools were scattered round in rather run-down buildings, and I just felt that the bureaucracy and, art bureaucracy, was appalling and damping to anything at that time, and, I'm sure that, you know, if you looked into the history of the Hornsey debate and you know, the people that were involved in it, I can't quite remember all the names of the students and the staff involved in it, it will be seen, it will be seen as part of the '68 uprising with the student uprising of, in Paris, so all that was connected together and made its statement. I don't think it, I personally don't think it made a difference for art, I don't think that art was the issue it became, you know, the position of art, which is my interest, was not, didn't seem to be an issue that came out of that, not about art. It was a political, you know, cutting down and art bureaucracy, but I don't think that the art debate was advanced in society by that, although perhaps educational debate was; it wasn't quite close enough to it, because of course I take it from my point of view. And also I wasn't particularly...there might have been where my politics, art politics, clarified themselves on the direction that I felt that the A.P.G. or whatever we were going to concoct together would go, that if art was important it needed to be repositioned and it needed to be part of the structure of government, and all that sort of stuff came for me and for us out of a bit of that, but I don't believe that, I don't feel, now you ask the question – sorry about this – I don't feel now that you ask the question that that, that the art was advanced by it.

Going back to A.P.G. and your wish to reposition the artist, I mean how would you, in an ideal world, have seen artists being prepared to go into that world, that you had in your mind?

Well again, and Gustav was very against it, you know, 1968 when we did...and I think a lot of artists still are now, although in trailing the history of the art, I don't think that... Well I must stick to that time. It was very disgusting to have anything to do with commerce as an artist, and you know, except in an applied way, and it was very disgusting to have anything to do with the Government. It hadn't even been thought

of as there being a role that could be, you might say ideologically sound; it couldn't be ideologically sound, because they are, there's an apartheid there, but if one looked at, you know, late on, if you look at it as part of the context of the whole, as I said I think in one of the tapes, that I got this idea when collecting this material for the Fluxus Group, when I got lost in the factories, that there was a whole part of society that was humming away about which we had nothing to do with, and it consisted of people, actions, it consisted of the manufacture base of the country upon which apparently we ran, you know. So, we apparently had nothing to do with it, and I think that, well as we found at the Industrial Negative that we did at the Mermaid Theatre, art, you know, particularly as Gustav said, 'I hate all you industries and I want to burn down your factories,' and you know, like British Oxygen walked out, needless to say. But Gustav wasn't thinking of it as, until much later when he was one of the people that put himself forward to have a placement when he had begun to think of it in a different way, even if he had, you know, whatever. And I still think it is the case, it's very difficult for artists even now to think of Government as part of a whole, of which art must be a part if it exists as another component part. So...

But just going back to the art school, would you like, would you have liked students to have been sort of politically educated, as well as artistically educated?

Yes, I mean, when we say political, that's a tiny weeny p and it's not left-right political, but it's very much going towards a whole structure where art is part of a whole structure and not a bit that is on the outside and that we are allowed to, you know, this is where you make your contribution to society. I would have liked that, but it was early days, except for the type of artists that we worked with who were, you might say the Destruction in Art people, the people who were outside galleries and were working outside galleries, who had even begun to think in a way, where is it that we want the art to, where is it that we want to make our art connect with?

Going back to the sort of practical development of A.P.G., can you tell us about some of the early placements and how they were organised, and...?

Right. Well, our very first placement, industrial placement, was with the British Steel Corporation. I'll just say all of them. British Steel Corporation was first, and then

British Airways, British Rail, and I.C.I. Fibres, and Hille International, which was a furniture firm. And the first one... I thought I'd done some of this, but maybe I haven't. The first one was with the British Steel, with British Steel, and what happened was, I was at St. Martin's, teaching at St. Martin's, and I found out that the British, you know, I started to do research on each, me, started to do the research on each of, well the large companies, you know, the public sector companies, which was I.C.I., British Steel, you know, all those ones, and I found that British Steel had an Iron and Steel Federation fellowship, which was actually for meteorologists and for sociologists in British Steel, and I thought, well maybe there's a way of extending this to include an artist. So I then made an approach to, probably head of corporate affairs or something like that, and talked to them about it, and... No, I think I actually went to the people who were running the fellowship, and I sort of slightly moved the fellowship notion into having a sculptor in association with, so that the fellowship would be run with the school of art which was St. Martin's School of Art, which of course had its currently famous sculptors at the time, Bryan Robertson was talking about the English school of sculptors at the time, which were sort of Philip King and Caro and you know, those sort of people. So those, that school was before the public eye as sculptural schools. And I talked to this person in the Iron and Steel Federation and he said, 'Well I think there could be a case for taking this further,' although I was pushing all the time not for a person to come and do sculpture, which they could understand, you know, we could have a great big steel sculpture, but that there was this wider role. And it was an interesting placement, because the guy that we eventually put forward was a guy who is very into psychology and everything like that, a rather quiet little guy called Garth Evans, Welsh I suppose, and, but he was very very articulate, and wrote very well. And he was actually making plastic sculptures at the time, as many of the artists were at St. Martin's, they were using the plastic and the fibreglass. And so I negotiated that there would be a fellowship for a year with the British Steel Corporation in conjunction with St. Martin's School of Art, but that it would be wider than just making sculpture, you know. They said, 'Well as long as we get a sculpture out of it,' most of them always used to say that. But once he was inside, Garth was very good, because he wrote a paper when he was there; he went and looked at Port Talbot and the steel-making process, and he saw what the apprentices were doing, the steel apprentices, and he took lots of photographs of fabrications that the steel workers, apprentices did to teach, you know, to be taught

welding. And he took these great big photographs of them, and he brought them back to St. Martin's, and everybody thought it was a fantastic new sculptor, and actually it was just the guys' exercises in welding. So we kept that going for a little bit and when we did our Hayward Gallery thing we put these big pictures of the apprentices training photographs in. But anyway it went down very well at St. Martin's, that we pretended we had found this fantastic new sculptor in with these apprentices, which was very much part of the way we were working. But Garth did spend a year studying the steel-making process and the eight-hour stuff, and went down to Port Talbot and talked to people, and, he was very much inside. And he was not drawing the steel workers and stuff, as much later the Artist Agency did, and artists with British Steel and, you know, so, and he wore a hard hat helmet, and he drew and painted all the steel workers, which of course they would love, but this was a completely different, you know, approach. And one of the things that he did, Garth, after he had done his year, and he did start to make steel sculptures whereas he had been making plastic ones before.

[BREAK IN RECORDING – TELEPHONE]

Restarting the tape.

Right. Garth Evans I thought was a very successful association with British Steel. When he was there, as I said he went down to Port Talbot and he was going round, and he was writing a lot and he kept sending me his documents, you know, so we had a nice back-up of documents. But, he then wrote a paper for the head of social policy in the British Steel, who was, I think he was a guy called Kenneth Robinson, who was later in the Government, I'm not quite sure of that. But I know he was something to do with social policy in, yes I think he was in the Government, but he was head of social policy in British Steel. And he wrote a letter to say that, well, 'We were very pleased with this paper that was put forward,' because the steel fellows all had to submit a paper at the end of their year or whatever it was, and they said, 'We were very impressed with Garth's paper,' which was much wider and broader than most of the other papers that they had had, which were, you know, on specific subject matters, but they said, 'And of course we were staggered that an artist,' who they had only thought in terms of producing the object, 'would have such a wide range and in-depth

outlook on the process and the people and what was going on.’ And so that was very good. And so he got a second year at British Steel, and when we came to doing the Hayward Gallery, which was in ‘71/72, which was the results of the process of all the industrial placements – I’ll just finish with Garth’s one – he filled the whole gallery of the Hayward with small pieces of, and big pieces of steel which he rearranged all the time, and an eight-hour steel-making process piped live from Port Talbot. Well we got it to the other side of the Thames and then, it was going to be very expensive to, you know, get it under the Thames or whatever it was, so we recorded, it was recorded in the end, but you know, it was a great negotiation went on at, you know, in putting on the Hayward Gallery exhibition; each of the industries all, you know, covered their exhibit in whatever way it was, whether it was processed film or the gallery exhibit. And the whole negotiation of getting the line to the Hayward Gallery was another interesting one. But, Garth, I think his whole thing was very successful, and then also when we were in the Hayward Gallery we invited the British Steel people to come along and talk about it, and the guy from Education in British Steel felt that Garth had put much too much interest on the apprentices and their needs and stuff, and he brought a tape recorder to the thing and he said, ‘This is political, and I’m going to...’ you know, he tried to close it down, you know, and everything. So, but that was just the guy from Education, who felt that Garth was probably treading on his territory. But, it was considered a very successful placement, both from them, from the British Steel point of view, and they did get some very good sculptures from it. And that was the sort of thing that went into the newspapers, when we did the Hayward Gallery, was these sculptures, but they didn’t discuss that the process and the exchange and the, you know, how good or bad that was, so that’s up to us to do, and has always been up to us to do. And afterwards, when we had sort of debates about this in the I.C.A. and places, and in fact Gustav and the other, John Dugger and one other person who were all being Trotskyites and Maoists at the time, all wearing their peaked hats, and then they gave that away to wearing curved, curly, you know, hats, or whatever it was, was the next ‘in’ political, I always used to say a small p political, movement. Somebody asked Garth, would he ever do such a thing again, and he said, ‘Yes, and I hope with a great deal more understanding.’ And I thought that that was a very successful placement from both sides; it was what was intended and what was meant and what could be taken further. So that was Garth’s one. The next one was the British Rail, and that was done with two artists, David Parsons and

Ian Breakwell. David Parsons was into film and media at the time, and Ian Breakwell was as well, but he was also very much a diarist, and a recording of human behaviour and, a recordist of human behaviour. He was writing a diary which he said was heavier than a baby, he felt, that had just been born, because his diary had gone and on and on. But he's written lots of books, has Ian, and he has been much associated with us, and I drag him out now to go and meet people and explain why it was different to what else, and, he's rather wonderful. A great, also a male egotist, because of the use of the word 'I', that's still used, that was going on. And, the British Rail one was a very interesting person, I was able to negotiate it with, was a guy called Edgar Anstey, and he had been instrumental in getting some of the rather wonderful early advertising films for British Rail which are rather lovely, I think they use them now in ads, you know, some of that. But he was a wonderful man, Edgar Anstey, and we got on like a house on fire, and he said, 'Yes, I can what you're trying to do, and, well we'll have two of these, or, two artists on a feasibility, and they can...but they can be associated with our film and media unit.' Because, a lot of people when I first began to talk about this, they would think, oh artists, oh yes, visual, all painting, all objects, or whatever. So you would, I would always be pulling it away into the process, and away from the object. But with Edgar Anstey, and it was filmed, this was something that both elements could work on, and in writing the contract, or the contracts at the time, we began to get towards what we then negotiated with the Civil Service and the Government later on was the maximum way to get a creative exchange for both parties later, and so gradually the contracts would build more and more that into them. I mean out of all the industrial placements did we learn what it was that would maximise such an exchange, and move from the object to the process. They would always be objects, whether it was film or whatever, but it would move to the process. So, the British Rail one was... How are we doing?

We're quite close to the end.

Well I'll just say that, on the British Rail one, both of them did a feasibility, which was about two or three months with British Rail, and each of them, on these appointments each artist was paid a fee and we, A.P.G. was paid a percentage on that fee, and they would get material and equipment costs, and say, travel expenses, like any other employee of the company or whatever. So that was the way it was

arranged. So in a way it was seen by the art world as another way whereby artists could earn their living, jobs for artists it was seen as, and complementing Coldstream's teaching jobs for artists, so there was teaching and now it was seen that there was going to be jobs for artists in another way, which of course the Arts Council has taken roaring forward as Artists in Prisons, Hospitals and Schools, and activating the residencies. I can't remember if I've talked to you about, that there was only the Gregory Fellows in universities at the time.

End of F6687 Side B

F6688 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 4th of August. Tape six, side A.

And we were just talking about A.P.G. and the second of the placements, with British Rail.

Industrial placements, yes. Yes, well we, the first one as I said was British Steel, and then there was British Rail, which was negotiated with David Parsons and Ian Breakwell, as I told you about, and they were affiliated to their film and communications, or television unit or whatever it was that, their media unit, because they saw art very much in the terms of the visual and that was art, and that fitted very well. But the good thing about it was that the person in British Rail I was talking to, Edgar Anstey, was a, you might say an elder statesman in that he could understand and encompass things and not stick to, that is an artist and this is industry. So we had a very good connecting link there. And they did their studies. And, Ian Breakwell was the one that sort of took it through more; I wasn't quite so involved in what it was that David Parsons did, but they did it together to begin with, they put up a feasibility proposal, but it was Ian Breakwell who took it through and he made a number of films on trains, and they were very beautiful and put together, although, they were quite controversial because, I think the soundtrack he had of one of them, I have got sort of just little, I've got slides from each of, you know, the film things, and they were quite controversial because I think that the soundtrack of one was him looking at a girl across the, you know, across the carriage, and looking out of the window, so you had this passing time element. And, the soundtrack was really the girl having an orgasm, because he was, that was his fantasy. This did not go down terribly well with British Rail I believe, but, so there was a bit of that about it. But anyway, on the whole that was good, and when I came to want to be picking up with British Rail again there was a reference point there, not to the soundtrack of course but to the association with Edgar Anstey, and I tried to pick it up again later in the Eighties, but I didn't have the sort of backing at the time and, you know, the Government was changing, whatever. So there was that one. Then there were some... Stuart Brisley's association with Hille International Limited, which was a furniture firm, and Leslie Julius, who was, and his wife, were interested in the notion of it very much, and they were at a point

where their company was just expanding, and whereas before it had been a small company they, like, knew everybody, they knew that if they were going to go on to the bigger expansion of the company that they would...it wouldn't be this family firm so to speak. But they liked the idea of an artist coming in and, in the way, they seemed to understand the way that we were talking about, but there was the managing director understanding what it was we were meaning, but when the artist came to engage in the factory, he realised that he was going to have to make a sculpture or something that the workers and the staff and everything could actually relate to, because, why wasn't he making something, why wasn't he building something? So he then made a giant wheel out of chair parts, the legs of the chairs or whatever it was, and as he was making this and people were asking him, you know, what he was doing, he was able to link design and building of furniture and design and where that fitted into the social history with the fact that he was actually making this thing, and raising whole questions with the workers at all levels on what the activity of that factory and that company was about, like making chairs or whatever it was. So he raised a lot of issues and they would have been very social issues, being Stuart. And later on he moved, he noticed that there was no sort of, there was communication panels, and as this was an issue with Leslie Julius, how do we get the communication as the company is expanding and getting much bigger, how do we get the communication across, he noticed that in the working, you know, in the working canteen and factories or whatever it was, part of the factory, there were no notice-boards that were giving sort of messages, but in the sort of staff part there were messages. So he began to make notice-boards which connected both sides of the structure, or all sides of the structure up. And also he did what is a very sort of obvious thing, began to paint some of the machinery. Now, in a way one...again the idea was that we weren't there to do that sort of thing, but when you're in there, what do you do? And that is what...and it's always up to the artist who, we know a good strong artist, they would have to be, because they have to be able to work from the context. So one, they must already have been able to have a track record of being an artist, but also have that interest in working in a context where you don't know what you're going to do, and it will come out of a context. And Stuart took that forward very much in the Stuart sort of way, as he did in his next one which he also did in a semi-Government placement later on. And so, although Stuart kicked against it a lot, because he, again that business about A.P.G. being political or endorsing the capitalist

structure, we have been accused, especially lately, you know, of being administrative, and endorsing capitalism that came back into the art from which Gustav Metzger was saying with his *Destruction in Art*, he was coming away from the art world. But by us going into the commercial premise and later into Government, it was seen as contaminating the artist role and, et cetera et cetera, and how, you know, there's a big debate on how you, how a society encapsulates its artists, uses its artists, or suppresses its artists, you know, Jack Laings[ph] and, a particular thing in France, you know, in the way they talk about the artist, although given a lot of leeway and wonderful projects and everything, was actually contained by the Government by treating it that way. So there's always that argument which has gone on right through it. So, and Stuart did do well, but again he made the irritant of the political thing, because, as A.P.G.'s chief co-ordinator, whenever there was a hustle between the organisation that we were working with and the artist, we were called in, or I was called in, to pull it together, or say, well we can't do it, you know, whatever it is. And Leslie Julius was irate that Stuart in a way was making a political thing between the different parts of the structure of the organisation, which in a way I'm sure Stuart probably was, and he would like to do that because he always liked to be an irritant, and then he would like to be an irritant to us as well to say, look, you, A.P.G., haven't worked out your premise yet of what is going on between the proletariat and, you know, I mean, rather old-fashioned politics actually, as I always say, with a small p. Anyway, it was an interesting one, and when it came to the Hayward Gallery, that great big wheel was there, and the wheel was put in front of the factory, and that was the sort of logo, and so it sort of in a way satisfied an old idea of the artist and the symbol and the stuff, you know, there were lots of big sculptures and things there. But we learnt a lot from these placements, we learnt whether it was possible to reposition the artist in a process, event-type way as opposed to art object and use in that way. So it's the whole of the artist being used. So all these were very much learning processes, and we made very good connections with the industries and people. One of the industrial placements we then did was with I.C.I. Fibres, and that was with Peter Barum[ph], who was Marketing Director of I.C.I. Fibres, and Leonard Hessing as the artist. And he was a very intellectual artist and he was...but he went in in rather an idea of, I'm going in to make my work, and although he talked intellectually in a philosophical way to the management and to the people there in the factory, he went ahead with making his object, and the marketing director, Peter

Barum[ph], was much further on in an understanding of what it was that we were doing, and was saying things like, it's important that the artist in this role is near the management structure, and the young managers, so that they can get a wider view of what possibly the creativity in the workforce could possibly be with this extension to it. So in away he was much further on than Leonard Hensing, who was still being the artist in the old way. I mean I say that; Leonard was very good with it, but I think that Peter Barum[ph] was quite disappointed in it. And we did do a study for P.E.P., which is Political and Economic Planning I think, well we did, a study was done at the end of all the industrial placements, that we then put forward, you know, as background to the Government thing, so there was a study done on these industrial placements, and Peter Barum[ph] was the person who did all the research on these different placements and drew out these elements, so there's a study on that. And we've been connected with him ever since, and he came to Germany with us, as did the guy from British Steel and stuff, to represent this artist movement in industry to the German industry. Anyway, so that was I.C.I. And...so we've done British Rail, I.C.I. And then we did one with Esso Petroleum Limited, which was a very interested and...a guy who became one of our directors, our industrial directors, after the Industrial Negative symposium, we had a guy from British Steel which was Chris Patey[ph], and the guy from Esso Petroleum, which was Tom Batho, and he made a speech at our Industrial Negative symposium in which he said, 'I'm glad to say that A.P.G. is here not to ask for support, but to make a contribution, and this conference will be, this symposium will be a record of how that came about,' and we sort of often quote that. But anyway, the Esso Petroleum placement was good. We were going to send Ian again, but Ian was having a sort of personal furore, and we sent one of Barry Flanagan's students at St. Martin's, a guy called Andrew Dipper, who was very bright, but much younger, so this in a way was a younger artist. But we put, when we made the negotiation with a department or with an organisation, we put up two or three artists and then it fines down on to the one that in a way they select, and although they had selected to have Ian, Tom Batho wanted Ian, Ian couldn't do it, so they took Andrew Dipper. And Andrew Dipper was very interesting on it. He went on board and he took a Super 8 camera, and he took also a lot of ordinary stills camera film processing stuff, and he was also a jeweller and he also made instruments, you know, he did a lot of musical instruments, he did a lot of different things. And he just went down to his room, or his, you know, cabin, and he didn't tell

anybody he was there; he wanted them to find out that he was there, like he would be around on deck doing things, on this big tanker, and he had his own, they each had bicycles to ride down the tank on because it was so big, and he sent pictures back of them. And he started taking photographs of ropes, and ordinary things on the, you know, at sea. And he also, one of the things that was worrying the Esso Petroleum people was, the danger of these big tankers, the human error of, you know, turning round a big tanker if it came up against something, that was one of the things.

Terribly obvious thing it turned out was that, the bar was sort of over the engine room or something like that; he pointed out some very obvious things to them that they had been worrying about, so there was sort of practical and social things that he pointed out. But he brought the ship-to-shore element very much closer by, you know, half way, when they got to Cape Town or whatever it was, all, you know, a lot of the crew was sent off for the film stock and everything, and started to film what it was like at sea. And this actual, this actual...his little movie film, the Super 8 film, we showed in the Hayward Gallery later, and of course it was shaking from the tanker shaking, and the PR people from, advertising people from Esso Petroleum said, 'Oh this is no good, look, I mean it's shaking'. But the crew, who came with their girlfriends to the Hayward Gallery to look at the things, they said, 'That's what it's like at sea.' And also, it was done in real time, like the sun coming up over the horizon, and the sea and everything, so it was real time, this shaking film. And, Andrew rang me from America the other day – well, last year, and he said, 'I've just looked at the film again, it's terribly good [INAUDIBLE] did,' you know, and it's interesting that side of it. And other sort of things he did, like, at sea they were hardly, well then, they're probably quite different now, there were hardly any messages out. There's all the grey paint of the stuff. So if you put up any message at all it tells hugely. So he put up these surprising messages that were a bit whimsical or whatever it was, which would draw attention. And so a lot of communication in different form went over. And so that was another interesting element. But it was the ship-to-shore aspect that Esso Petroleum were particularly interested in, that they thought was very good, and when we went... I think that was a successful one, although we did have a little human thing about this, which was that, Andrew put on an enormous amount of weight, and the thing was that he just ate all the meals that the sailors were eating, but you know, I mean he wasn't sort of burning it off. And the thing was, he had had an appendix operation just before so he was terribly thin, but when they weighed him to

go he was very fat, and the chief steward was very very annoyed about Andrew eating or something. So there was a bit of a frisson over that, and when I was called in to discuss it with Tom Batho and everything, and I said, 'But he's just had an appendix operation, so I mean, he's bound to put on weight.' So I was told to not leap to the defence of my artists so adroitly, so, I had to shut up after that. But on the whole, he did a whole lot of different elements that he brought on. I mean, he was even making silver jewellery in his cabin, which was another sort of interest for them, and musical instruments. Andrew actually made violins and all this sort of thing, so he was so multi-faceted that it was fascinating that an idea of an artist was doing all the things except painting, you know, I mean if you have the word artist, it was doing all these different things. And it made a very good exhibit in the Hayward Gallery. And Tom Batho was one of the people, one of the industrialists, as was British, was it British Steel or British Airways, but, was one of the industrialists that went with us to the Civil Service Department, because they had to suss us out when we did the Government placements, you know, for our ID or whether we were any good, and three of the industrialists who had that their experience spoke for us, and Tom Batho was one of the ones that they liked very much and quoted, you know, the example from. So I thought that was a successful placement. In fact I always found for me, but then I'm being subjective here, that in a way, you know, that the Leonard Hensing one which made a nice object, was the least interesting for what one was going towards. So that's Esso, Hille, British Rail. Oh, we had a British Airways one, which was David Hall, and he...he had also, rather like the British Rail one, joined the film unit, because that was the immediate thing that they could sort of see the connection to the artists, it wasn't quite such an inquiring type of person that the negotiations was done with, you know, that went into that. But anyway. And, David, who was the first artist to explore video as a medium at the time, but he was also into film, you know, you heard him talk at the I.C.A., he said that he wanted to look at cloud formations around Gibraltar, because the clouds form in a special way around the rock and he wanted to film that. So he flew with, you know, some of the crew of British Airways flight things to film some of this stuff, and then you see him on top of Gibraltar filming. And he made this film, which again was going to be in a real time of cloud formations that he was suggesting should be put in airports, and, but they didn't quite like that idea, they felt that that was, you know, much more interested in having commercial atmosphere in an airport, you know, like a big hotel, rather than reinforce

flight experience, which, he was also good at some bird sounds I think as well, but I mean... No, that was another artist, I'm wrong there. It was David Toop who went on a, he went to the London Zoo and did a placement in the zoo, and then we went up the Orinoco, to the forests. I can't remember whether... That was an in-between placement, that was, before we did the next lot. And, David's was quite good. One of the things was, each of these industrial placements we then had in the Hayward Gallery as an Exhibition in Time from the period of the first negotiation and the process of the time they were there, and the results that came through in both works, you know, whether they were films or objects or, and the process of what went on, and the involvement with the different people. So that in the Hayward Gallery we had one big gallery upstairs from that slope in the Hayward, and we called it the Sculpture, which is what this student from, the M.A. student from Goldsmiths' is wanting to recreate as a sculpture, to have the debate about the role. [BANGING NOISE] Somebody's trying to force their way in. Shall I...

We'll just stop for a minute.

Can you just.....

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Restarting the tape. I would be quite interested to know, you know, how your, this work and your own role as an artist, related to A.P.G. Did you continue making any sort of work at that time?

I think, you ask this question and I can't quite remember, because, I think that there was a lot of work that was done in debate and discourse and discussion amongst myself and the artists, and I was beginning to feel my role, and also having done, and being involved in the Sixties, you know, and the early Seventies you might say, in performances, you know, in the street or, you know, that performance I told you about that, you know, we did, you know, spontaneous performances, it became very much a performance in context, and when there was an exhibition or a podium discussion or something like that, that was, it became the performance in a different context. And so, instead of being in the street it would be in industry or Government, or, as Ian

Breakwell used to refer to it, as 'meeting art'. We would have these meetings, and whereas, you know, everybody would say, meetings, and that would be fine if you were in administration, but for artists to be having these meetings, and in such a form, we just called it 'meeting art'. And so we would have these meetings, we would set them up, and so here would the event be, would be in this meeting, or this discourse, but it was actually a strategy of change, it was all of those things. We had moved out of the galleries into the street, out of the street into commercial and governmental organisations. And it was all part of the performance, the performances that we might have done, or that we were doing, say in the Destruction in Art symposium where we were making a point about context, you know, like, in the Law Courts or whatever it was, that was a John Latham performance, but, I think my personal performance was as a continuous performance of a different context, which I later came to see as part of my assemblage, that I was putting together these other parts of my assemblage was now taking place in the context of the organisations of society, and I was being instrumental in bringing them about. And as they were ones that had never been brought about before, and there are still a lot of them are not brought about and I still bring this process of the artist being repositioned again, it was like sort of, it's like nuggets of an assemblage, of a wider assemblage. So, that's the way I came to think about it. But as we were doing it, they were sort of events and performances, and I say we, but, I had sort of organised that we would have these meetings and stuff, and we would have enormous jokes about how we would do it and what parts we were playing, and Stuart Brisley would say, 'Well once we get them to talk about that, it's like, once they're on to getting out what happened to their fathers in the trenches, once they're in the rat,' I think I might have said this to you before, 'once they get out their rat stories, we're almost there in our communication'. It was almost like doing performances that made, in our 'meeting art', that made a special sort of communications flow, and it's this, I don't like to use the word 'holistic' because it carries all its sort of baggage with it, but it was getting these segmented structures of society and the different disciplines and the different professions to have the artist in there as a component and necessary and possibly central part that made it into the work. And I remember when we did, later on in Bonn, that was in the Seventies, going across, and I would take all my notes and everything, and there I would suddenly find that I had left the notes in the railway station. And then, because you had all the people like the interpreters and everybody like that, and the artists and the

Ministers and us, and me sort of doing the interpretation, it was like a play, you know, so we were in a way going much more towards, you might say directing a play. So, it's always felt like that. And contained works, like my assemblage pieces that I was doing in the Sixties and stuff like that, I suppose, I gradually wasn't doing those, but I was...I can't quite remember this accurately, what... Oh yes, I was doing numbers of work, you know, at the time, but my main work was being taken in this direction, so I wasn't doing individual works as such, although I would still make assemblage pieces in the studio and things like that.

Did you see all the different artists that were involved, like yourself, in this kind of facilitating role and John in his theorising role, and the artist on site, were they all taking equal credit?

Well, very much, that's what I liked very much about that period of doing it, was that we were so making it together. Whether that's going to be possible to do again, which although, which is why in the O. & I. now, this younger generation of artists who are now interested in getting into these structures, with the principles that we had set up at that time, I'm using this just as...whether it will be like that again, it will be up to the younger artists to do it in the time of the Nineties, and you know, the end of the century. But it was very much like, before that time... Oh yes, and about in that time we would still do, when I say we, and I, in that we, we would still be doing things, say, at the I.C.A. with inflatables and you know, various projects with sound and, you know, there would be various events that one would be involved in that you might say were very much more art events, but the art event that I was interested in was this new context to make the art in, and which we all worked on and enjoyed, and cut our teeth on so to speak enormously well, so that when we came to do... We would have various podium discussions along the way where it would be like an exhibition with a discourse and stuff, and I would, again I would be very much the facilitator and the drawing together role, and leading the debate, or leading the two sides, and then each of the artists would, you know, take their role. But, I wouldn't...although we kept having these events, and the podium discussions and the exhibitions at various times, that's what we would put together. It's almost like curating now. But then, you know, I think, when we first started to do it, and when I

was starting to do it, and the more I got on with it, it has seemed like a continuation of the assemblage work which I was doing on and off at the time.

Did you have any support for those kind of events and exhibitions?

Each event and exhibition had to be, you know, negotiated separately, and those negotiations were very interesting too, for the Hayward Gallery for instance, when we finally got the Hayward Gallery, and I can't remember again if I've told you how we got the Hayward Gallery, was that, we had very good relations with the chairman of the Arts Council at the time, which was Lord Goodman, and the secretary-general, which was Sir Hugh Willatt, and they were a fantastic team together, and they were in Piccadilly at the time, they had these oak-walled rooms and you would go in to Hugh Willatt's room, and, I think he had a bit of a shine for me, we knew that, well he was like that for all the women, but, he was a lovely guy. He and his wife had started the Nottingham Playhouse and the Nottingham exhibition up there. He was a lawyer from Nottingham, and his wife, Evelyn was a very lovely draughtswoman. And anyway, I would go in there and I would explain all these things to him, and, you would just see a pile and a mass of papers, and he had this sort of white curly hair and his glasses, and you would just see smoke rising from above these papers, and that was the vision of Hugh Willatt at the time. And I would say, well now, we want to, we are suggesting that from these negotiations we.....

End of F6688 Side A

F6688 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni. Tape six, side B.

I was just talking about negotiating the Hayward Gallery for, to put up as we called it the process work of the artist being in industry, but from the point of view that we were meaning like the full role of the artist as a full participant and not as a maker of objects. And so, I said to Hugh Willatt, well what we want to do is to put these, the demonstration of this work, which was still going on, in the Hayward Gallery, what are the chances of us doing this? So he and Goodman, we then went on to Goodman, who was next door in a slightly bigger office, and Goodman was sitting in this great big chair, and, as you know he was a great big man, and so I put over this proposal and I said, we've got these various industries, and they will, we've negotiated that, we've only just talked to them about it because we haven't yet got the Hayward Gallery, so I couldn't really talk to the industries about it. And I said, this is what we want to do, and we want to run this thing for a month and a half or whatever the length of the time is, and I suppose they had a gap there, or whatever it was. And anyway he went for it, and he said, 'Well I'll put the whole weight of my, something, behind me,' and I just looked at him in this chair and I thought, yes, well that's quite a lot of weight, I think we'll go for that. And you see, he and Hugh were grinning away together. And so, we got the Hayward Gallery in the following year, and I remember after this negotiation we crossed over the bridge and there was the Hayward Gallery and I thought, oh my God! we're going to have to fill this Hayward Gallery, you know. And I was filled with the dread of the impossibility of this task, which was going to take two years to sort of get it, you know, all up, and although we had done the negotiations with industry, to actually get the show on and everything, you know, I suddenly realised the enormous task that one had set up. But, so we got it, and, I was slightly nervous about this, and I remember Goodman's other remark to me at the time, 'Oh you'll do it with a wheelbarrow overnight.' And, I thought to myself, that's hung round me like a bit of a death knell, because I've always thought that the art world always thought it was, as Peter Bird, who was another member of the Arts Council at the time, said, 'Oh, well what is it anyway? I mean it doesn't take long to do these things, what is this, a round of drinks isn't it,' you know. And I said, no, it's not like that at all, you know, it's all these negotiations and all this, and it's a time-

related thing. So we did this exhibition at the Hayward Gallery, was arranged. So the Arts Council were going to give us the gallery, and the people that worked in the gallery, you know, to be our assistants when we were there, and that the industries would each be responsible for their exhibit in whatever form it was going to be. So, you know, the British Steel did what I've described to you, about the British Steel brought all those crates of stuff; Hille brought their great big ring, and we made this sculpture, which was, this main gallery where we were going to video a discourse between, you know, the chairman and the different levels of the workforce of each of these industries, and the artists, and any press or politicians, so we could debate what the role was, and this was, you know, we were making this new role, this new profession. So that was the sculpture, and we set it up to look like an office, and we also did this in Germany and Düsseldorf, I must look at my CV to see in which order it came. And, it was described as the most successful, or the worst exhibition. The most...no, not successful, the most important, or the worst exhibition, that they had had at the Hayward Gallery; you know, the critics were divided about it. Bill Fever didn't...oh yes he did write quite a good piece. There was a lot of political toing and froing about it. Stuart became very overtly political and coming out with that he had disagreed with A.P.G.'s premise of tangling with the commercial premise, and that we weren't looking after the artist's contract, and stuff, in his terms; I mean, you've probably interviewed Stuart yourself and you will hear what Stuart had to say very articulately, and I've had this out with him in L.A. recently, how he would be home on the farm and have still more interviews to do. He was making a particular point of view, which he has always made, which is to take a Stalinist viewpoint. When I said that he had said he was a Stalinist, he said, 'Oh I was joking.' I said, 'I don't think you were, Stuart. At the time you were being a Stalinist.' But we had a lot of debate about that.

Well there was some quite severe criticism directed through 'Studio' at John as a kind of egotistical leader of the group.

Yes. Absolutely.

That in a sense he hadn't got this kind of communal thing. Do you think that's true, or a misunderstanding of his role?

Well I think that John does come across as... John can come across as elitist, if you want to use that word, I never find elitist is a very interesting word, it has its known baggages. I think John had a much broader notion, and does have a much broader notion, of what government with a small g, and what politics, he doesn't look at Left and Right politics, and I don't believe I do either, and maybe it's just terribly naïve to have done any of this. I mean I was attacked much at the time for, 'My God! she hasn't read Marx,' you know, was Peter's Fuller's comment about me, you know. But as Peter Barum[ph] said, and I'll come back on to John in a minute, as Peter Barum[ph], who was the I.C.I. guy, said, 'Well, when you first came to me and discussed this thing about I.C.I., I thought, well this is just a no-good thing, it will never work, or it will never even be a runner, but because you went ahead and did it, it happened.' It happened that there was beginning to be a possibility of maybe a new role or whatever it was. But the criticism at the time, particularly from Peter Fuller, and Caroline Tisdall came out very strongly that John was being very egotistical and that everybody was following behind, and Stuart would say, I'm sure, that...yes, there was the thing about, were the artists all part of John Latham's scheme of things. And I think that there could be an occasion where, I would say that John has always had a very broad, non-left-right political idea of the whole. Looking at things like language, I mean he's very, he's very much ahead, looking at the history of art and the disciplines and what the Marxists were doing and Pollock was doing, and Rauschenberg was doing, and what happened from the nothing, you know, from the blank canvas point, and the first mark, and then what did artists do and how did event come in as opposed to object. So, John didn't have a left-right political, socialist attitude which came up from a lot of these criticisms, but it would have grated, and it did grate, and it can still continue to grate, on gender issues and, you might say communal issues, because John won't take those, those viewpoints as the motivating forces of, why do art? So, he won't take those viewpoints. And I think that, one of the differences between John and me, and it might just again be another gender point, is that, I was very interested at how everybody related and how the communication flowed, that is my turn-on, is, when a piece of communication flows and something happens, and I guess I've always been like that. And again, I don't know whether it's gender, but John is very much, from what I've said, and therefore I think the criticisms about him could well look like that, and he was attacked by Peter Fuller,

Caroline Tisdall and all these people. But when we talk again, well not to Peter Fuller of course because he's died, but when we talk again with Caroline Tisdall on this that and the other, they listen quite differently now in the course of time; whether Stuart will or not, because Stuart has got his very thing about capital and stuff. I could say a lot of things about Stuart but we won't. But I think that, it does sound like it, I am constantly to this day saying, well I hear what you are saying, but it makes me feel like this, and people could feel like that about what he says that, unless they were people who are looking now very much more at consciousness I say, in inverted commas, you know, whole structures and disciplines coming together, which, you know, John is coming from that viewpoint. But it can certainly sound like that to people, and at the time it was fashionable to be seen to be an art, a socialist artist, like Kevin Atherton and Stuart and John Dugger, and then when you go out to America you find John Dugger was the biggest capitalist thing with his banners, and solid money baby. A very nice guy, but, great big hugs, grown quite fat on his capitalism thing, but I mean, what I mean is that at the time, you know, the left-right political was very, still in use so to speak.

So how many of those artists have held on to that ideal, and taken it into their art work?

David Hall, Jeff Shaw. I think Stuart had quite a bit of that ideal. Ian Breakwell definitely. And Anna Ridley, who was one of, one of the few women artists who was working; she was a film-maker more, and she was also a bit more like me, like a facilitator but film-maker. And she started a thing called Analogue, which, she using the O. & I., A.P.G., O. & I. principle, approached the B.B.C. to have artists associated with the B.B.C. on a...no, it was Channel 4, on an open brief, and they went in and... But it was inclined to be using the facility, and the big facility at the time was the Quantel paint-box which had just come in to operation, so in a way it was, let's have artists in to use the facilities, and it was very interesting the different way the artists used it. But she initiated that as a result of what we were doing, and she still continues to hold those principles. Oh and Andrew Dipper, and you know, I think all the ones that did it, Hill did, but Stuart has always held his particular political principles, which were not our principles, but he has spoken strongly for the A.P.G. and stuff, you know, on podium discussions and everything, but has always

maintained his independence. That was another thing, is, each artist is totally responsible for themselves as artists, and doing their own projects all the time; it just happened that they were the body behind the repositioning of such a new role, and even doing the negotiations now with the Department of Health, and with Ian, Ian... Many artist placements, Arts Council, Artist Placements, have been set up on our model, and continue to be so, but none of them carry the premise through with the track record and the results as we do, and you know, as it still is there, to be followed through as good practice, which keeps cropping up on.

I'm going to stop you now.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni.

Yes, we were talking about the exhibition at the Tate Gallery, which was an Exhibition in Time.

The Hayward Gallery.

What did I say?

The Tate.

Oh the Hayward Gallery, yes, sorry. 1971/72, the Christmas of that year. And, yes the whole, it was to be a culmination of the placements that we were doing with the industries, and I described a bit about it. Well, all the time it was, you know, the exhibition had not only contributions from each of those industries and the placements as the artist devised each of their galleries or the whole area of the space; it was designed, the whole design of what should be in each gallery and how we would do it was designed mainly by Jeffrey Shaw, who is now Artistic Director at Z.K.M. in Karlsruhe, head of multimedia there, and we're still in association with him, and he did the design for it, and he and John I suppose worked mainly on the design of it, but Jeffrey was the person who drew up the design. So all the catalogue ideas, the

catalogue was put together from inserts which we put into 'Studio International' over the two years that we were doing the placements, which were drawing attention to different aspects of, a coming together of, say, commerce, or the new context, or, taking pieces out of the newspaper, out of the business news of 'The Times' newspaper, and reversing that in some way. In fact the catalogue for the Hayward Gallery show, INNO 70 as we called it, and 'Art in Economics' as being an exhibition in time, the catalogue was comprised from these extracts which were put in the back of 'Studio International' over the time we were doing the placements, and each artist was responsible, perhaps with John mainly responsible, for pulling together this catalogue, but each artist did their own bit, like Jeffrey Shaw did a collage of potatoes on one of the Hayward Gallery, outside galleries and things like that, you know, giant potatoes and things, and some of our European artist context, like George Brecht and Robert Filliou, made contributions to the catalogue as people that were working in that way at the time. And a big contextual work, all the time bringing attention to art and economics, and the different value systems of art in the way that we were taking it, which was, away from the product and the gallery and, being captured by the capitalist structure, which again is something that Gustav might have talked a lot about but he didn't actually put into action, which was another thing that we found also with Joseph Beuys, which was remarked on by our German colleagues was, that Joseph talks about the role of the artist but he doesn't, he hasn't actually done it, you've had actually artists in government in this way, pushing the premise of the artist to commerce. So that was a thing. Anyway, so, as well as the catalogue that was put together out of the extracts from 'Studio International', there was, which then had the red printing on the front, 'Art and Economics, an Exhibition in Time' from the first placement that took place, 'to the Hayward Gallery', actual exhibition, which was about a two-year period. There was also a big piece, John put together a nice document, which he will probably talk about, which was in the format of a company annual report of Jim Slater, who was a business entrepreneur at that time, and so John put the whole of the A.P.G. concept into the format of a company report, annual company report, and he also did a negative report of the value of, gracious, I ought to look at this document. Well the value of a country that didn't use art... No, I'm not doing this well. It was in the format of a company annual report, and comparing all the things you would have in an annual report with, taking the A.P.G. principle of the artist in relation to an organisation and valuing up those, and I think that, I'd have to

have the document in front of you to read it out. But that was something that has been, was commented on a lot, you know, was that. And we also had this poster, and when I say we, I guess Jeffrey Shaw, I think all the artists in-putted into this in all sorts of ways, like when we did the Industrial Negative, Stuart Brisley wrote a page with John, and you know, all that. So, each of the artists were putting into it. I was flying round madly doing the negotiations and getting the stuff done, as was Deborah Brisley, Stuart's wife at the time. And I sort of pulled all the stuff together. But I actually participated in leading the debates and things that we had in the sculpture. And, our poster for it was a big picture of the Hayward Gallery, and then we had across it, 'INNO 70, Art in Economics, a Concept for Sale', and then we put a 'for sale' notice, you know, the red 'for sale' thing from an estate agent underneath it, and blew this poster up, and it was all stuck up as our poster on the concrete pillars at the Hayward Gallery. And one of the things later when we had this absolutely, reaction from the Arts Council who really couldn't handle it any more, after the exhibition, was that a Texan apparently had seen this, as he thought was a 'for sale' notice and had gone and asked, you know, whether he could make a bid for the Hayward Gallery, thinking it was for sale. So this was not considered funny, this was fed to us later, and we of course thought it was hysterical. But anyway that was one of the sort of things that was held against us later. And this exhibition went on for, you know, the month and a half of any exhibition that would be on. It wasn't heavily attended. It got a lot of for and against press, it was over the Christmas period – this is me making excuses, but it was seen, as I said, as one of the most important exhibitions about art for a long time, or one of the worst, and there was much criticism and political criticism, criticism about John. And these debates that we had in the sculpture, which were recorded, there was, I mean it was very interesting, we invited a series of interviews in the sculpture, with the chairman of British Airways, and different levels of the structures came and talked, and had our discourse about where the artist was in the society and all this sort of thing, and I think the famous remark was when the chairman of British Airways rang up and said, 'Oh do you want me to make a speech?' And I said... I was in the bath at the time so I had to quickly get out of the bath when he rang me up at the crack of dawn, about whether he was to make a speech at the Hayward Gallery. And so I said, 'No, we want you to participate in the debate with the rest of your people, different levels of the organisation, the people that had taken part,' with David Hall, and stuff. So they all came along, and then we had

this debate about, the point at which art was made, and we were saying that, you know, I led this sort of debate, it was that, we were making the point, we were saying, that it was that the context was half the work, and therefore the point when art would be made in the trajectory of the art historical tradition would be, when there's a new move from the last movement to the next movement. So I described that when Jackson Pollock actually threw his paint down onto the canvas, as opposed to brush-marks and everything – this was to sort of help the chairman of British Rail understand this – and when he actually threw it on to the canvas, that was the moment at which art was made, I was saying brightly. At which he said, 'Oh my God! this is too much for me,' and he was about to get up and sweep out. But actually, you know, they were very interesting debates. And then, another one with Lord Esher, who was then Chairman of the Art, you know, Visual Arts Committee at the time, we were having a debate at which he had come as an interview. We arranged interviews all the way through the day, so, it was completely exhausting, because you had to be in the Hayward Gallery all the time, taking through these interviews, and then we also were being attacked by the press and Caroline Tisdall, and the feminists because, why were the women, you know, at typewriters? And we had the typewriters there because we were running the whole thing. So all the administration of it and the running of it and the, everything was all part of the work in the sculpture you see, and then the actual exhibitions in each of the galleries also going on. But the sculpture had these timed interviews which were throughout that month and a half, we had about four or five interviews a day, and I know I never got out of that exhibition. And they had no food on the South Bank then except sort of vending machines, so I just had this diet of neat whisky and Mars bars, and of course I lost a stone and a half in weight, it was wonderful. But I also had a nervous breakdown later, sort of thing. Anyway, as well as these debates with the industrialists, and, oh and I was just saying about Lord Esher, we were videoing these, all the things that went on in the sculpture, because it was early days of video and we wanted to see that, even if press came and other people were filming us or whatever, we would also, we always took the part that we would, the principle that we would video the media videoing us, so that we would have, keep control of it, and David Hall was always the person doing that, so we had all those things, David and Anna were running that, so... And I remember in our debate with Lord Esher, he was saying, 'Well I mean of course, painting's dead,' he said, the chairman, you know, of the Arts Council said, 'Don't quote me,' but of

course it's all on the video you see. So, you know, they were very sort of crucial, interesting debates for that time. But the result of the press, and the for and against, and there wasn't a great turnout, because I mean the sort of press about it was very discursive, it wasn't general public come in and look at things, because it was very opaque perhaps what we were getting at. I mean we had lots of texts up there, which, it was very new to have texts, then there was this huge room with this deafening steel-making process which was Garth Evans, that nobody could bear to go into practically because they couldn't hear themselves think. They said, 'Oh my God! you know, what is this terrible noise? We can't...' And we would say things like, well that's the sound of, that's what people get when they're making steel, they're in the factories all day, you know, but I mean, it wasn't very general public-ish, but it was interesting to, you know, the art world, and, well some of the art world, not the conventional art world, but...

And did it worry you that it wasn't easily accessible to the general public?

Well, I was so involved in doing the interviews and everything. I mean it worried me that, I mean I was under attack a lot of the time by, you know, the Caroline Tisdalls and the feminism and, so I mean I was running the interviews and so, I...it looked very interesting, perhaps from our point of view, and from certain points of view. When you ask me a direct question, did it worry you that it wasn't accessible to the general art world, I suppose, again, I could be accused of naivety and elitism or whatever it was, I felt probably, in answer to that question now, answering you now, is that, because the industries themselves were so involved and pleased to be doing it, that in a way it was being accessible to the public, because I felt of them as the public by now, you know. And the people that came in, I mean Simon Jenkins for instance was one of the people who came in and was at that debate and in our discourse, we seemed to be having such an interesting time with it all that, I don't think I stopped to think of a thing like, numbers of people coming through the door, like if you had an Anish Kapoor, which of course was the Arts Council's concern, and I totally understand that, but there seemed to be so much discourse and discussion, which is very much more something that would happen now, like this young guy from Goldsmiths' is doing this sort of discourse; he wants to recreate the discourse, because, have we got this discourse now, you know, when we had this thing with

Anish Kapoor at the I.C.A. just recently, you know, about a month ago, and everybody who had come over from America who were looking at what we were doing then, now, art and technology from cybernetic serendipity and then comparing what the artists did with, when the new technologies expanded then to what the new, you know, the I.T., information technology is expanding now and what that's doing the public, they were saying, oh well we never had this discourse, now, the sort of discourse that was going on between John and Anish Kapoor, now, because everything's constructed in a, we're doing a conference of this, that, so you never get the issues of why we are even making this art, or where the role is. And this is what is interesting, the people now, that were interested, that seemed to be interesting then and a lot of artists... And people from the Continent were interested. I haven't quite answered your question, as usual.

One last thing, do these tapes still exist, the video tapes of the discourse?

Some of them, yes, I think Anna Ridley has them. Of course they are in a completely different format, and this is one of the things that will hopefully go into our Tate archives, this, you know, the Tate archives will have not only the documents but the films and everything. I think they're still there, they're in that early format.

I mean they can be translated quite easily onto video.

Yes, I dare say, yes.

It would be interesting to do that.

Yes, it would be. Money. But you know, there always seems to be money for backward things in research, there's never money for forward things that haven't happened yet, if you know what I mean.

Yes. Well perhaps your young Goldsmiths' man can get it done.

Yes.

But he's got a comparative, you know...

Yes, yes he has, yes.

I'm going to stop there because the tape's almost at an end.

End of F6688 Side B

F6689 Side A

Restarting the interview with Barbara Steveni on the 13th of August 1998, at her home in London.

Right. The last tape we were into the Hayward Gallery, which was quite a turning point for A.P.G., and seems to be very crucial now to the interest that there is, coming through in the principles of A.P.G. and why as artists there was any reason, or justification as you might say, according to the criticisms that came out of this exhibition, of why we felt that we could be there. And it's a matter of the different value systems. I would just also like to say something about, I notice in listening to the tape, that I had mentioned that Joseph Beuys had talked about the role of the artist more centrally and politically, and when I said he hadn't actually done it, that was what was fed back to us by our German colleagues, but I would like to reiterate that, I mean of course the effect of Joseph's articulation of where he saw the artist, especially in relation to big issues like environmental issues, in talking about it and having all that media attention on him at the time, as an artist and as backed by quite a prolific German art scene at the time, with all that attention, of course he did affect, it went through. What I was wanting to clarify there was, actually going into a government department and looking at the same concerns of that government department from within and sitting down with them and addressing it from within, was not something he'd done, but I just wanted to say, of course his effect as an artist and supported by the German system of art, which was much more strong and prolific than the British at the time, of course he had his big effect that he did have. So I just wanted to reiterate that. About the different value systems, the criticisms that came on the Hayward Gallery was, on what basis did we think that we were in there, who did we think the benefits would be for. I mean Guy Brett was writing, what was the benefit to be that would come from the artist being with very, at the time, considered by artists, the dirty commercial world, let alone government, which we hadn't approached at the time of the Hayward Gallery, and could anything be affected from within? And this of course is the constant debate going on now as we are making new negotiations with the Government and where people look at what it is that we are doing, and we are seen as good practice, and of course there's a lot of talk about the role of the artist, the role of the artist in world affairs, and there are all sorts of United

Nations arts policy, and of course from 1982 there was the statement made at the Stockholm conference on the environment, which said, well in French, don't collect your artists, use them. And in a way we pre-figured that notion, you know, even from the, as we were working it out in industries, and that was very much the way we were seen, not Left and Right politics, which was the concern of a lot of the criticism at the time. And even now we are being accused or criticised by some of the, I call them traditional left-right politic, political thinking, that in a way A.P.G. set in train all the idea of, the Saatchi, Thatcherite, entrepreneurial behaviour of artists, which I think is quite a ridiculous statement to make and I'm taking it up with the particular person who...

Well there is a kind of very odd thing underlying that attitude to artists, which goes back a long time, which is that artists somehow, people prefer them to be helpless, which is very odd.

Absolutely. And the idea that they should be helpless, and therefore on the outside, and peripheral, and therefore they need things like support and patronage, and prop up, all words which we were very much re-defining and say, you know, another criticism was the language which was being used, which of course was heavily put round John's neck, who was always trying to re-invent, and bring to the surface the words in a different way, to say, look what was a lot of baggage comes with that word. So constantly it was, you know, where was the artist, and if you're talking about value, what's value? And then what is community? I mean, at the moment, just before you came I was talking to the, where our B.T. proposal has gone, which is to the head of community programmes, and so, my first thing will be, could you please define for me how B.T.'s thinking community is, and all these words were needing to be looked at and reassessed. Because at the time of the Hayward Gallery, the left-right political structure was virulent, and so, and it had certainly not been thought of that you could possibly be within, and that systems are never changed from within, and this is constantly a thing that is often said, you never change the structure from within, and then John and others would say, you don't change the system by smashing it. Well, of course a revolutionary would say, but you do, but then we can look at history and say, well does it or doesn't it, where does the change come? So this is constantly going on. I just wanted to say those little bits. Shall I just also say a

little bit about the 'Report and Offer', which was the offer for sale of the Slater Walker proposal, because that does, it was quite an important document which was put into a negative form, again by the John Latham, but it was in the catalogue, and he has, as would an ordinary company thing have, 'United Kingdom Corporation Consolidated Statement of Condition', and then he says, 'A B and C losses, A industrial. To the cost of misunderstanding as between management and workforces in companies,' and then he puts millions, but he puts just 'nought nought nought'. 'To cost of boredom and inertia, workforce, e.g. absenteeism, strike, withdrawal, and then the noughts. To cost of non-appreciation by management of current attitudes, home and overseas. To cost of non-availability of information on product conceptions in U.K. as compared to big competitors overseas. To cost of absence of long-term ideological base of value assessment sophistication.' And then, 'Total economy. To cost of maintaining redundant premises in education, estimation, ninety per cent of expenditure. To deterioration of national assets through lack of care and attention in time, pollution, et cetera.' So, all this was in the Seventies. 'To areas of judgement by authorities.' And then said, 'C, the autonomous individual. To cost of maintaining between 50 and 100 individuals capable of carrying autonomous responsibility, but accorded professional status.' And then he puts his two million at the bottom. But it was just a nice way of addressing it, and I think it's...it was interesting, because it was all done actually in the format of a Slater Walker product, and those things still apply in a way, they are the issues we address when we approach an organisation.

I mean did the company sort of, inner sanctum people, respond to that?

Slater Walker was the organisation. There was a long correspondence with Slater Walker and John Latham at the time, and I believe he came and saw it at the Hayward Gallery. I don't...it wasn't followed up for the reasons I will now repeat, you know, after the Hayward Gallery, what happened. A lot of the things that are opened, can not be followed up unless there are numbers of us and money and these sort of things happening, so one goes for the ones where the most effect is. But Slater Walker and the premise was discussed, I mean he was quite, at the time, quite an open and interested head of a corporation, you know, at the time. Yes, I was going to say a bit about Hugh Willatt and, after the Hayward Gallery, and these criticisms which were

Left and, you know, very politically Left and Right, but... And I don't know whether I said anything about the actual effect, personal effect on myself and others of the Hayward Gallery, I don't know whether I've done that. I'll just put in a bit on the personal effect. It was an enormous strain, because, although we had the support of the Arts Council, and the employees of the Hayward Gallery helping us with it, you know, the actual sort of practicalities and everything, the business of running daily interviews with industrialists and politicians and different people in the Hayward Gallery, about what was it, where was the role of art, and what was it about, and could there be another role for the artist involved in the organisational structures of a country, and also how do, and this is a continuing debate now of course, how do countries either use, absorb or support their artists, where do they pull them in so to speak, was a big debate and discussion going on. We heard some very interesting people, like Simon Jenkins and Peter Hennessy, and interesting, very young people at the time, you know, all these young people now. And of course with the chairman of British Rail and everything, and the different people that we had actually had these placements with. But keeping up these constant interviews, which were all mapped in during the day, and then getting the press the next days, the for and against, and the particular personal attacks I think on John, who was seen as the father figure, I don't think I was particularly seen as anything, except I was doing it all all of the time, and I got it to happen and everything. But there were extraordinary things. I don't know if I mentioned it before, but like, between the artists, like Barry Flanagan wanted his cheque from, I can't remember the organisation he was with, Alan Seckers[ph] at the time, and it was in the middle of when I was going to do an interview, and I said, 'Oh I can't possibly give you your cheque now, Barry'. At which he slapped my face he was so annoyed. Perhaps I shouldn't say some of these things. At which the I.C.I. man who was there from the Leonard Hessing placement or whatever, he stepped forward and said, 'Oh my dear young lady,' and he was called Mr Gallant, Peter Gallant, which I thought was terribly funny at the time. But little things, you know, of high tension were sort of going on. And also the fact that, I could never get out of the Hayward Gallery, because there was no food then on the South Bank in the restaurant and everything, so there was only the vendor machine with Mars bars and chips and, crisps in it or whatever, and then alcohol, so, not in the vendor machine. So I just had this whisky and Mars bar thing, diet, and then getting up very early every morning to get down there, and having read the press and knowing that it was going to be uphill

all the way, you know, it was really very difficult, and I lost a stone and a half n weight, it was really amazing. And also there was, because one of the debates we were going to have was internal between ourselves, and there had been in particular this criticism from Caroline Tisdall, although the nationals, like Bill Feaver and, Guy Brett in 'The Times' and Bill Feaver in 'The Observer', had given considered criticisms, and as Basil Bernstein said, 'You've had such a wonderful press,' and what he meant was a large coverage and big debate, but of course I just saw it as agony. And also at the time, because of the clash going on with us, there was a big fall-out between relationships of quite a lot of people, David Hall and his partner at the time, and...oh no, I don't know whether it was at that time, but anyway, the big clash was between me and John, because I felt that, I felt he was under attack I suppose anyway, and I felt that a lot of it was small, a small concept that he was being attacked on, but... And he was also being attacked on his obscurantist language. And so I sort of felt a lot of that. But, because I was getting the whole thing to happen, and you know, being central to the interviews, I was much sort of centred on, and quite a lot of people, men, sort of fell for me at the time, and one of the people... Well the result of it was that after the Hayward Gallery I had quite a breakdown and I left John and went off with one of these people. It was a disaster area, and I nearly, I had a nervous breakdown, and it was all awful, and... But it was because one was trying to find, well, what was going on here, was there just a great bit dominant figure who was putting everything across us, and you know, there was no time to sort of, for me personally to find my role and think in it. And then there was other men who incidentally, one of them was instrumental in me being able to get to the Civil Service department after, but he also fell for me, and that, and was appalling, and it was... I think I was probably, I was told that I was very beautiful at the time, and dynamic and everything, and I remember people saying all that for me, and I was obviously using it or whatever one does, but, how controlled and... I think it's because if there's a lot of attention centred on you, you respond and reflect back in some way from that point of view. But, I hadn't spent enough time sorting myself out from the cultural existence and predominance of the man artist at the time, so I was very open to attack, both, you know, vulnerable to men's attention, because I was there doing it all, and also, I was vulnerable to not have a precise academic considered response to political attack, you know, left-right, 'Oh she's never read Marx even,' was one of the things that was... But, you know, I can look at it now and say, well I got a lot done, and I went on a

very instinctive learning process, and I would stand by what I've done, and also how I did it. I would like to have had more educational underpinning to it, but I didn't, so that, what I had was what I learnt from art, from being at art school and what I'd learnt in my life and everything, but I was obviously enormously vulnerable at that time, and it did collapse me and I did all these things, like go. And I even think that, I mean I know that, hard though it was for John, who almost collapsed under that, as I collapsed under it, that it was the right thing for me to do in the whole of my life, which was, in whatever form and for whatever reason, and in the right or wrong way, and it was completely the wrong person, I needed to make that gesture to get myself away from John in some way to be able to look at myself, and as he said, 'Well when you started to listen to other people, you know, I sort of lost you,' and I said, 'No, I had to listen to myself,' although I had to go off with the wrong person. But it was a very important point for me. But I mean I can...perhaps you have a comment to make on that, because I would like to then come back to Hugh Willatt and Goodman and what happened after.

Well I would be very interested to know if the person involved was an artist or not an artist.

He was not an artist. It was this other world, and as it was pointed out to me by one of the people who was a director of A.P.G. at the time, he was... Oh well I wonder if he minds going on to the tape. I won't mention his name, but he was in Esso Petroleum, and he had been involved in our, what then became one of our, well, the Esso Petroleum placement. And he had been a director for some time and he had been a great sort of help and support, and right from the Industrial Negative time in '68. And, he saw all this going on, and I think he to a certain extent had also fallen for me, but he had a very good family life and he kept it absolutely there, and he said, 'Well look, you know, you are wanting a more structured life,' you know, so I, well that might have been rather obvious. And this guy was, you know, left his family and everything, at which my friend from the inside, out of the art world, said, 'Have you met his wife? You must never underestimate the opposition.' I hadn't. But...

And did she put up an opposition?

Yes she did. And he went back to her. And that was when I had my nervous breakdown.

Did you take your children with you?

Both the boys were off at, you know, one was already at university and one was at school. Xenia stayed with John but would come and visit me and I think that's where a lot of her upset occurred, which I obviously feel very guilty. But we could... What were you going to say? You were going to say something. Well we could come back to... So, what I'm saying is that the strain and the value systems and reassessing of everything at that time caused quite a lot of personal falling apart, but, you know, the O. & I., the A.P.G. was still very much there as an idea, and to be taken forward, and which I did, which after the Hayward Gallery I went and talked to Hugh Willatt, who was Secretary-General of the Arts Council, and Goodman, who had come and opened the exhibition, and I said... The Arts Council withdrew their funding from us, because they absolutely couldn't bear everything that had gone on, and it was referred to as social engineering rather than art, so our grant was withdrawn. And as it so happened, the grant was withdrawn at a time that... Oh no no, I'm in the wrong order here. I went back to Hugh Willatt and Goodman, and I was advised to lie low by Sir Hugh Willatt while this furore went on, and I said, well, OK, but I wonder, I said, 'I have got...I would like to take this into Government areas, and I have a contact to the Government, to the Chief Statistics Office, and to the Civil Service, and would you write a letter as coming from the Arts Council, saying what good work had been done and how we had done these things with industry and stuff, so that I have at least got a good letter that I could perhaps send on while all this furore thing is going on, to make contacts with the Government.' And so, it was a very interesting... I think I had a couple of meetings with Goodman and Sir Hugh Willatt, and first of all I was very upset and I remember Goodman saying, you know, I said the Left and the Right had gone to bed together, I think I might have said this on another tape, but, I can't remember, but anyway, I said, 'Look at all this press and everything'. And so, I remember Goodman saying, 'Well Hugh, Mrs Latham seems to be extremely perturbed about the Left and the Right; I mean I must say they're far too clever for us. But we will write a letter.' And so Hugh sort of devised this letter, which was sort of semi-dictated between the three of us, and off went this letter to this contact in the

Civil Service Department, which I had been told about from one of these, one of my contacts and people who had come to the Hayward Gallery, taking part in the thing. And, well I think that that might be for my Anaïs Nin tape which will be separate from this. But anyway, as a result of writing this letter, it was sent to the Civil Service Department, and after about a sort of month, when I had sort of forgotten it and everything, back came a letter saying they were quite interested in such an idea; how should they go about it? So, I went and talked with them, and they said, 'Well we'll have to do what we do with any other civil servants, which is to check you out. So, we would like to have a meeting with numbers of the people in industry who have done, you know, this placement concept, and, numbers of you, and we will be present at that with our sociologists and our whatever.' And so, they sent up a meeting, which was held in the Citadel, which is that big building opposite the I.C.A. covered in creeper, in, you know, in the Horseguards Parade, which I recently, when we had a thing last year at the I.C.A. I pointed across, we had it videoed, I pointed across at the Citadel and said, 'That is where we did our treaty with Government,' and it was a treaty. Anyway, in the Citadel we had... First of all, they checked it out with the person from Esso Petroleum, and also with British Steel and British Airways, the three companies or firms that we had done our placements with, and they each wrote back saying, well we got this out of it, we got this out of it, this is what we got out of it. And then the Civil Service said, the one that we feel is of most interest to us and that we like the best is what came out of the Esso Petroleum arrangement, where they got a lot of ideas for ship-to-shore coherence, and also the fact that oil tankers are enormously big and if you want to stop and not run into something, you need plenty of time with us to turn them round, or stop them. And this guy, Andrew Dipper, had pointed out several things about the placement of the officers' mess or whatever it was in relation to the bar and how people were therefore getting drunk and [INAUDIBLE]. You know, various, what would appear to be very obvious things, had listed up and stacked up together as well, I can't remember if I've mentioned all the different things, I think I did, that the artist had done in his assignment with Esso, but that was what attracted the Civil Service, was the overall effect on long-term and short-term and ship-to-shore policy, and the Civil Service said this is the example that we like the most. And then they sent it, they sent off what was, what we call a treaty, it was a document that was sent round to various Government departments saying, we have talked with them and we are suggesting that it might be interesting that you

should have an assignment like this. And then, again nothing worked for ages, and then I got in touch again and I said, well what, you know, has happened? So they said, 'Well, none of them have replied.' So I said, 'Well who did you send it to?' And of course this word 'artist' dropped like a thing to the bottom of the wastepaper basket, and none of them replied. So they said... 'Well who did you send it to?' says me. And so I was told the different people, Mr Ford in, the head of personnel in the Scottish Office, and these different people in Environment and stuff. So I said, 'Well, if I can have their names and everything I will follow this up and go round and explain how this happens and see whether they are interested.' And I went round, and I did meet some very good people, like, in the Department of the Environment I met the chief planners, and they were all upper echelons, sort of like under-secretaries. And so, as I went in to the Department of the Environment, the department, the chief planner was looking at... First of all I went, not to the chief planner, and I was then sent to the chief planner, and I can't remember the first person I went to, you know, I was sent to in the Department of the Environment, but where our stuff had gone to. And then he said, 'Oh I see, this is not what we thought it was. Well we are doing a number of inner area studies.' Because they thought we were there to paint the walls and change the environment of the building, you know, that terrible building in, which is the Department of the Environment in Marsham Street, their HQ. So, I was then sent to the chief planner, a guy called Wilf Burns, who I think is still, has since retired or died, but anyway he was a fabulous guy, and he was head of the three planning teams that were looking at the inner area studies of Birmingham, Liverpool and Lambeth, and he sent me off to talk to them. And so, we got attached to, I had to go and speak for this proposal in Birmingham City Council, get it through at a huge Council meeting. I mean Birmingham City Council with their huge things, it's like being in Westminster, you know, and I remember sitting and waiting for the end when all these people had spoken, because me, the artist, you see. Finally got, and they turned round rather sweetly and just said, 'Miss Latham,' or Steveni, or whatever, no, I was still Latham then, 'has got something to tell us about the proposal that we have one of their people in this new way attached to the Inner Areas Study Team in Birmingham.' And I did my bit, and then it came back that they agreed that there should be a placement attached to the Inner Area Study Team in Birmingham which would be in Small Heath, which was just underneath Spaghetti Junction. And, it was...it was a very good placement, because it was a film-maker with acting potential;

instead of taking all his fee that he would have got for it, he split it up and took a team of actors with him, and it was quite early on in the video.....

End of F6689 Side A

F6689 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 13th of August. Tape seven, side B.

Yes, I was just talking about the Department of the Environment placement and how we had got an artist and film-maker attached to the Inner Area Study Team, who were looking at current Government policy and what future Government policy might be on the inner cities in particular and you know, Birmingham, Liverpool and Lambeth were the three, Lambeth in London, were the three areas that the DoE were going to look at. And of course Spaghetti Junction was an ideal place, underneath it, to have situated an inner area study, looking at it, because of course what the planning and our vast road schemes had done, to breaking up communities and crashing across parts of close-knit communities was the result of planning, and then what and how could communities living under it or near it be re-made or could they be at all. So it was an ideal place for us to be in, in a way, or for the Inner Area Study Team to be. So, he went in, as I said he decided to not just do it himself, but to go in with a team, which I think was very wise. Because we always wanted a team but sometimes...and we always put forward two or three people and then they would choose, but we always try and push for more, because one supports the other and they build up their own team, you know, so it's very useful to have more than one artist on placement, in these big projects, you know. We're doing it again now. And, there was quite a sort of art world criticism which came back when Richard Cork put in, wrote a big article in 'Studio International' later on about these placements, and each of the artists on placements or coming up for placement answered certain questions in 'Studio International', like what did it do to them, you know, how did they think about it, how did they find it: you know, all the questions that would be asked by such a thing. And some people, I mean like, well John and some of the people inside of A.P.G. as it was then, had certain reservations, perhaps, about Roger Coward's[ph] position as an artist in the strata of what was considered the high echelons or the low echelons or the echelons of art at the time. He was a film-maker, and he was very much in a way coming in from the outside of the art world into the art and coming in through this way, but he was very very energetic, and he got a lot done I think, but maybe there was some criticism on the quality of his actual work that he did. Well perhaps I shouldn't be...

Do you mean sort of conceptual quality, or visual quality?

I think it was the visual quality. But I mean, I don't think that I have any right to be judgmental here, or even reflect, and I perhaps take all that back and I reflect, for a tape. And in reflecting on it now, I felt that a lot happened from that placement because of his energy, his commitment to it. He did numbers of projects. He started to use video before, early on in the use of video, so that, one of the things was to be able to echo back the residents of Small Heath response to the decision-makers, through video, media, you know, so that we could actually talk back with video films to the Department of the Environment's policy, and so we brought in the use of visual media as a means of getting very much more directly closer to the Department of the Environment's policy area, which hadn't been used before. And also there was a lot of, brought in just on the community level, was that there were a lot of sort of teenagers and youngsters with nothing to do underneath this derelict area of the motorway, and to suddenly have amongst them a very energetic film-maker, actors and this, they started a whole lot of acting groups, and you know, quite a number of these, what had nothing to do teenagers started putting in for art and acting applications, you know, educational applications where they had never done before, and they participated in acting and things. So that was a sort of community level thing, but also a community to the policy-makers came out of it. And also Roger Coward[ph] made a film which was a Time film, this was... I don't think, I think that's what I was saying, I don't think that the film quite succeeded, and also it was quite expensive and we had to keep going back and getting more, but I think that the big success of that was being right in there, and being able to operate between Small Heath, the Inner Area Study, and Marsham Street, and Birmingham City Council. And A.P.G. as it was then were able to come in when the artist was saying, well you know, they're going to have a committee meeting in the town hall, and this that and the other, and we've got to get to this guy, Reg, it wasn't Reg Freeson[ph], it was another guy, somebody Freeson[ph], at the time, so that the Minister actually heard that we were there. And you know, there would be occasions in meetings where the committee concerned would say, why do we have to have these people here videoing us? And the Minister, or whoever it was, would say, 'No, this is part of the process of the work,' you know, 'carry on filming,' you know. So we had, it was very good that

we had all these contacts right across, and it was quite a hard placement. But the result of all this was that, there was a big report which was a Department of the Environment report, on the Inner Area Study, Birmingham, in which it was proposed how artists might be incorporated into the planning and the something, you know, the effect and the policy of the inner cities. So that went into policy and is used. So, that was a long-term thing, which is used and going on, and I think was a good and strong placement, and I regret putting some value judgements on Roger, because I'm appreciating his, and I think we all appreciated, his energy and his commitment to it. But I think I brought that criticism in, criticism, or value judgement in, because of course all the time A.P.G. was getting criticism from the art world, like, what is, you know, what is the quality of this art? Is it social engineering, is it product, is it, you know, was it good art, was it something...? So all the time we would be getting the art world saying...well there's the art establishment which was the Arts Council, and they were sort of saying, social engineering, we don't want to know. Then of course they all picked up on the idea and thought, oh what a good idea, we'll do it, and put lots of... You know, at the time they took our grant away they started advertising for an arts placement officer at vast State expense and poured a lot of money into artist placements, you know, which is why we've changed our name now, because the principle is very different to what they do, but you might say one of the big contributions we made, I made, was to show them another way of utilising, well I don't like utilising because it means used; another way of bringing the artist's perceptions and skills to bear on those people who actually shape, you know, those areas of, the organisational structures that actually shape our future affairs. So, I feel that good work has been done there, but all one is requiring is, one, acknowledgement, and two, the fact that artists have to keep themselves free from their own arts establishment, because it just then becomes a bureaucracy, and bureaucrats decide how it should be done rather than art bureaucrats, and they set up little jobs on it and they all have massive jobs now all doing these placement schemes. And the actual way that it was done, and the way it can be done, and keeping it free, was all written up in this treaty that we had negotiated with the Civil Service Department who helped us actually write this treaty in Civil Service-ese, so that it would be explained to the Government departments. And so we are saying that the apartheid that exists between, say, administration and art had, we built into it certain stipulations which would maintain the autonomy of the artist and have an agreement

between the organisation and the artist that they would take the risk of having this free agent working with them in certain structured ways, which was what was written into this Civil Service document.

How were you financially rewarded, how did you survive?

Well, on voluntary work throughout. The energies of the people involved, i.e.... But how we actually survived was, we had... When the Arts Council grant was taken away we did then, soon after that, as a result of this negotiation with the Civil Service, we then had our most successful period of placements in that there were numbers of these placements which were, whereby the artist was funded and whereby the A.P.G. got a commission for the servicing of it, and although it wasn't much it was something. And also travel and expenses were also written in to the contract with the organisations, so a certain amount of that was carried. So we were able to do these really good placements, because...I mean the whole idea is that they are paid for by the organisations because, what we were saying all the time is, the artist is part of the whole of society, and it's not on the outside, therefore you pay the artist, as Ian Breakwell has written very well in 'Art Monthly', that it's on strength, like any other employee in an organisation, so that the artist goes in on strength with the same expenses and provisions that any other employee would have. Well you didn't actually have a company car, although, I mean when John was in the Scottish Office he could always get a company car out to go and look at some things that he was covering in his report. So we would have the same subsidies supporting the action so to speak, and that's how we survived, with that little bit of percentage coming to the A.P.G., which I suppose would be me or the stamps or travel or whatever it was. But we did have odd grants, like, I can't quite remember when I got personally a Gulbenkian grant to do this, and I know I...I'll have to look it up, but I can't remember if it coincided with this, but I know I got... Oh yes, '78, oh, '79, that would be just, yes, no that would be after. Yes, it would be just at this time. So I got a nice Gulbenkian grant, which was very helpful to this going on. And there would be odd sort of foundation grants that we would get things from. I mean I always see this thing being financed in a number of ways, you know. If the Arts Council would, one, acknowledge and free up and allow this body of work to go forward as an independent artist initiative and not something they wanted to control, because of

course they could do it better or get it to more artists, which would be their justification for it; but then how would they get it other artists and what would be the principles lost or gained, you know, is always the thing. And we would... Well anyway, the withdrawal of the grant, I see that I got this Gulbenkian grant, which was very helpful, and then as we went in, I told you how we got covered for the running of the thing. And also, there then began to be enormous interest from overseas in what we had done, because no artist had ever been in government before, like I was saying about Joseph Beuys was being talked about, and we were, and Joseph invited us to Documenta, oh to Kassel Documenta, and it was there that we met the wife of the Minister for Education and Science in the Bonn Government, and they were both, he in particular was a wonderful guy, and she was very enthusiastic and helpful. And she said, 'Well Joseph talks about...' this is where my thing about Joseph came from, she said, 'Joseph talks about this but he's never actually, you know, worked in Government in this way,' and that is Margaretha Jorcomson[ph]. So she said, 'How can I help?' So I virtually said, 'Well take me to your leader and we will talk about it.' So she said, 'Well that won't be too difficult, he is the Minister for Education and Science in the Bonn Government.' So we then went and met them, and we've kept this relationship up over the years, and after we had done this talk to Reimert and Margaretha Jorcomson[ph], shortly after we were invited by Margaretha[ph], who was then the Director of the Bonnerkuntsbara[ph] in Bonn, and we were invited over to put on an exhibition of what we had done in the Government departments, this was in 1977, which was a bit after this, I haven't explained the rest of the Government placements, which I'll come back on to. But, so we were getting lots of foreign interest at the time, that we were doing such things. And, we also, oh yes, around this time we also made a proposal, I think it was around this time, yes it was, we made a proposal to the E.E.C. that there should be a three-party, a three-country idea where each country would do a placement with their Government departments, or we would put it to three countries, so that there would be a project in three countries. And we got an E.E.C. grant to do that. So there were various things that were attracting attention for its originality and its good practice and everything, but we had to...but first of all we had to do these actual placements, so we were doing them and we were getting a bit of money off them, and then there would be interest in what we were doing. And, so the Department of the Environment was the very first one that went off, and so that was being busily worked on. And then there was the Scottish Office,

which was with...because I went to see the guy, I said, who had it been sent to in the Scottish Office, and they said, well the chief planner in the Scottish Office. So I said, 'Well do you think I could meet with him?' And so, this was a guy called Dr Derek Liddon[ph], who came down to meet me, a very energetic, bright guy, who we are still very good contacts with in Scotland. And he came roaring down, enormous eyebrows, looked exactly like Patrick Moore on the television, and he was very excited with this, and he completely understood it and you know, said, 'Well we'll do this.' Oh I can't remember whether I went to see the chief personnel person first. Yes, that was it, I went to see the chief personnel person, a guy called Ford, and I remember going up to Edinburgh and meeting him in the Scottish Office in New St. Andrew's House, and he we had to sit on the floor because they had no chairs, and I said, 'Well that's all right,' you know, fine. So he said...so I talked to him about it. And he was a poet in his free time, and, spare time or whatever time you do. And he thought it was a very good idea, and so he, it was he who then sent down Derek Liddon[ph] to meet with me. And then, Derek Liddon[ph], who is chief, head of the planning of the Scottish Office, said, 'Well we're looking at numbers of things, and we would like your artist to look at certain areas,' and they gave us six areas to look at, but then we thought that was too much and honed it down to three, which was derelict land, urban renewal, and then because of it being an artist, the graphics division, all the area of photography of Scotland, which was really rather useful because you could have this aerial view of what was Scotland looking like, which was very much what we wanted to be looking at, is the perspective of what is going on in planning departments. And, I always remember, after Ford, this is a little Ford thing I forgot, he said two things. One, he said, 'Well Mrs Latham,' he said in his Scotch accent, 'I'll never forget you coming to talk to me about the artist,' you know, or whatever it was, and he was very sort of sweet about it. And another thing he said, I said, 'Well do you think we ought to involve the Arts Council, the Scottish Arts Council in this?' And he said, 'No, I don't,' he said. 'They're amateurs, Mrs Latham, amateurs, and I want no part of them.' I thought, maybe I shouldn't be quoting this either, but you know. And, it was very typical that if you found the right person, I mean these civil servants, all these people, they are really intelligent, interested, committed people, and if you find them, and if you find, and if you, in part of the structure that is to do with the policy, then they're listening, and you've got something new that is something that concerns them in some way, and that is the area that you

have to get to, both in the structure of the organisation and in finding that committed individual, you know, it's like I think I mentioned before, Stuart always used to say, 'When they bring out the rat stories, then you know you're getting the communication across,' because he was always, he was into rats at the time. And we kept having this Boer War guy who would say, 'Oh my father was in the Boer War and the rats in the trenches and everything,' you know, and so they would begin to be talking on the level that you were really talking at. And then you go into, how it works and the policy, and you know, having had the Civil Service Department work out what were the things that as artists we felt were really necessary to maintain, if the creativity was to be maximised on both sides. And again, you might say with all the criticisms from the Hayward Gallery, and to what end? And we would say, and we believe, naively or whatever, that an organisation is only, if you talk about shareholders and the benefit of who you...you know, I mean one is saying, idealistically and utopianly, and even more so now as global warming and global concerns, and we have to think globally whether they like it or not, that an organisation is only part of the makeup of a total force which is a country or a total entity which is a country, and they are only part of the total whole, therefore we are trying to have, suggest that the artist is there on the long term to reflect part of the total whole, and that goes back or in to I suppose John's thinking; my thinking doesn't do it in the same way but John Latham's thinking. He sees the art trajectory of the late 20th century following the material concerns of, say, science and physics, that they're both looking for the zero, and like the Russian Burnt Blank Canvas and the Cage Silent Concert, come down to nothing, and John's own work with his dot on the canvas, his least event, his first, the least mark. And then looking at the physical sciences where there's the black hole and the zero action, and how that joins together and comes up on the other side, that, you know, there's been a paradigm shift from object into event and time base, which is something he will talk about better. But that...so that, when you have a placement, we are seeing, we are seeing the artist very much as that, and we try and put that across, and as I think we've also written in our thing to the Kulturvorsch[ph] in Germany and Bonn about the role of the artist, and they've taken forward lots of our ideas there, and are very pleased with them, is that, it requires an understanding between the A.P.G. and the artist and the organisation, and a trust of wanting to take this risk and not know about something, to pay for not knowing about something while you find out whether it can be relevant, because first of all the placement consists of a

feasibility study, looking at those concerns, like in the Scottish Office, urban renewal, graphics and derelict land, and listening and being in on the meetings when they're looking at it, and then putting a point of view, and coming up with some ideas and projects which, John came up with a lot of very far-ranging ideas and projects for regenerating the Clyde with small fish farming as a result of heating water off little Cumbria island[??] from the nuclear power station there, and that got a lot of criticisms as well for obvious reasons. But actually they didn't tally, but anyway. And, so it's always this utopian, but actually very practical bringing in of the artist perception and media and skills to look at the same things that an organisation might be looking at in the long term. And this was another thing that John in particular drew attention to in the Scottish Office thing, one of the first meetings that he was in of the chief planner, of all the planners for Scotland, and they were each going round, and again they said, and what would our artists have to say about this? And he pointed at the big map of Scotland, and he said, 'Well pointing to the map of Scotland, I would like to ask you your question, what is the time-scale on which you are making these considerations and decisions?' So they rushed around the table and tried to think what was the time-scale, and never did quite sort of address that. And so they sort of said, 'Oh, between three and five years,' which of course is a political time-scale in a way, an election time-scale. And John said, 'Well, obviously they are not far, you know, long enough, you know, it would have to be twenty years that some of these considerations have to be addressed.' And I'm sure they do do that, but the very fact that one has to come into the short term, so what's the long term, was another thing that was pushed out quite a lot by all the placements that we did, was this extended view, which now of course they're saying, oh we mustn't do boom and bust, we must view in the long term and everything. But they still do the boom and bust.

Just thinking about you and John, coming from these different perspectives, I mean he's on his sort of trajectory and you're in this more pragmatic territory. Did you ever sort of discuss or question each other's approach?

A lot, a lot. And, I of course had, and I mean it still goes on now all the time, and that is, in the setting up of the O. & I. and whether it gets taken on by the younger generation, and having an artist forum aligned to it, there's John's very particular approach of how he sees the art trajectory, and I think a lot of them are interested in

that, but my particular approach, I mean, I think...well I have to say that, I think my instinct about artists and their quality and their, you know, abilities and stuff is good, very good, and that's been backed up by the artists I think that, you know, have come to it and everything. But, I do query John a lot on, well, this is actually what we're dealing with here, you've got these people and they don't want to hear that, because they've got their own concerns and you know, how does what you are going to say rub off on them, how can it be socialised and humanised? And John is actually very good when you address those questions, but he can talk over the top, that will sound very elitist. And I always say, but what you are saying is making me feel like this, and it must make other people feel like that, so that when we were doing the negotiation after this particular feasibility study in Scotland, where you know, there's a lot of stuff on the books still to be taken forward, and we have all the contacts and everybody was very interested in it, and a lot of, well, for instance the... Well, some of the things John recommended in his report to the Scottish Office were adopted and taken on, like his proposals for some of the derelict land, derelict shale and coal sites between Edinburgh and Glasgow, you know, to leave them or to mould them or to make those proposals, they were adopted, some of those were adopted. So I mean all those things sort of happened. But in doing some negotiations you could see the local interests, you know, resisting John's attitude. Well not John's attitude, but they weren't going to listen to John's possibly special way of talking, because, I mean whereas Derek Liddon[ph] and Ford could be hearing that, because they would have to be thinking more long-term and everything like that, where, you know, at some of the places on the ground where the things would actually happen, a different approach was needed. And then, and John would be very good at that, like I mean, very good in the canteen stuff, but he could sound very obscure, I mean it's still very obscure today, his idea of bringing the art and the science and the physics together, and I still don't know in myself how the peer group that he is addressing...I'm dying to have them echoing back, you might say, the truth of what John is saying, but then John will quote it to me, well, when Einstein came out with his equation.....

End of F6689 Side B

F6690 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni, on the 13th of August. Tape eight, side A.

Now would you mind if we went back, before we move too far forward, to your experience of having a nervous breakdown. How did you actually sort of experience that?

Well I think, after the trauma of the Hayward Gallery, and that it was both public and private, and it was such a stress, and I sort of felt, well had the whole thing, had the whole idea, and had the whole work so to speak fallen apart because...because of the tension around John, and perhaps the tension around me, attention and tension. And I suppose I needed to find where I was in relation to a belief, or a trust in John's ideas, and John as a man, and trusting him and everything. And I, in going off with this person, who was not an artist, I broke with John, and that was a very big break for me to sort of break with him, and it was very hard for him and hard for me, but all the work and stuff and the tension and organising all this stuff anyway, and the amount of contact I was in with numbers of people, and the different ways they were relating to me, particularly the men you might say, I was definitely, I was definitely wanting to make a break and a change, or, it wasn't very structured or known about, but I knew, as there was this great attention coming at me from this particular man, I allowed it to happen if you know what I mean. And I remember him coming round to the house, and, our house in Portland Road, and I, you know, John was aware of his presence so to speak, but, I was already on a lot of sleeping tablets, I wasn't sleeping, because, well as all the time I had been working on how to keep this project viable, and was it viable in my mind, and who was there, and you know, both the organisation, practical side of it, and having to look at its relevance and my perceptions of it. And anyway, so I wasn't sleeping, so I was under a great deal of, I was taking Mogadons and whatever it was to get me to sleep, and then you feel very tense, and I had lost a lot of weight, so you know, all those things were against. Then I went off with this guy, and we went and lived in a flat quite near, quite near our own home, and our daughter would come across and see us and everything, and John would wander up and down outside. It was absolutely, it was a trauma. And then gradually this guy was going to obviously go back to his wife, although, I mean you know, sexually and physically it

was all very exciting and this that and the other, but then I realised that it was going to separate. And I remember at the time, you know, to begin with we had all this business of putting all your clothes together in the same chest of drawers, and gradually he would take his out and you know, and gradually... I mean it was a nightmare, because, I remember before I went off with him I had this dream, which had, we were lying on top of a cliff in Cornwall and there were the whales down below, which is an actual thing that we often do, sharks down below. And, there was John and this guy, and I remember that, I could only save one of them by pulling them up, because they were going to slip over the cliff, and I let the other guy drop and held on to John, which was very symbolic. But anyway, I can't remember at what point this was, but... But the breakdown consisted of, when this guy eventually left this... I think I was there for about three months, living with this guy, and, I couldn't eat anything, and this was... I mean I would forget how to get the spoon up to my mouth with the food in it, you know, I would forget between the bowl and my mouth what I was doing, and I absolutely couldn't do it, and I was gradually, I couldn't sleep and I couldn't go anywhere without a sleeping, you know, without knowing I had got my sleeping tablets, and if I went, you know, and I would be ringing up the doctor for more sleeping tablets, and you know. And, then in the end, when he left I just sort of lay in this flat, and, well I went right down to sort of six stone or whatever it was. And John came, and, it was a friend's flat actually that she had let me and this guy have. And he stopped paying the rent of course and everything, you know. And John came and collected me and took me back to our home in Portland Road, and I just sort of lay there on this bed, and you know, I just...it took me a long time to sort of be able to walk around if you know what I mean. And it was very very awful for Xenia, our daughter, and awful for John, because I absolutely didn't want anything to do with John, you know. And, so that took a long time to get over, and the only thing, I remember when I was with this bloke I would get up, because I couldn't sleep with him either, and I would get up in the middle of the night and write.

[MIC NOISE]

Sorry, we're just collecting a microphone that's dropped off.

No, I remember when this guy left, well before he left he couldn't understand how I would get up in the middle of the night and be writing proposals and things for, well for the next bit of the work, and, he couldn't understand that I would be able to do that, or could do that. I would sort of hold the things in the work to do, which I feel I've always done, but I don't now, as the only sort of piece of structure I had, because I obviously didn't have any internal structure, I didn't know what I was doing any more, you know.

Well the one thing I wanted to ask was, when you left John, did it cross your mind that the break might actually destroy the work completely?

No, because I would keep in touch with him over the work. And, well I'm not quite sure in answer to that question. I didn't think I separated at that time the work from the John and me relationship, you know, I would feel that the work was intact, I was only destroying that; it did not occur to me that I might destroy the work, and I notice that I did go on with the work in what, wherever it was in whatever way, although of course during the month I was completely out, nothing actually did happen from me.

Did John manage to keep it compartmentalised in that way too?

[PAUSE FOR THOUGHT]

And did you have a comfortable working relationship, even though you had this other sort of personal dimension?

Oh no, no, no, no. Actually now you say, I can't quite remember that but, because it was so totally uncomfortable. I think I was past being able to work. Although I would get up in the middle of the night when I was with this other bloke and try and do some of those things, I was totally occupied with actually staying alive I think, although I didn't know it at the time, you know, I was trying to understand. No, I wasn't even trying to understand, I was just hoping that this relationship with this guy would go on, because this is where I had picked myself up and put myself down, was in this new relationship, and it was obviously nothing to do with me.

When you were in this non- art world, did you have completely different experience of life, or were you quite confined within the relationship, so you didn't get on so much?

We were quite confined within the relationship, although he did take me, and this is one of the things where you might say, I failed him, and he failed me, he took me in to his sort of like business world where you would go out for big dinners and meet people, and get drunk it seemed. Well I couldn't actually, he accused me of not being able to carry my drink and how this was letting him down. Well, maybe I was in such a bad state I couldn't carry my drink, but the excess to which everybody drank and bonhomied was not something I was used to. And, I didn't feel comfortable with that, and so gradually it was much more, it wasn't a real relationship, it was very much a physical relationship and just going to odd do's that he would feel OK to have me there for, because I would be quite attractive or whatever it was, but... No, I mean...

Right, well we won't keep you in this unhappy territory any longer.

No, absolutely not. No, it was very crucial though, because it was the cause of John and I then eventually living separately later, you know, which was much better all round.

Moving back to kind of work territory, what happened after the Scottish Office?

Well, several of these placements ran along roughly, you know, at the same time but they started differently. Another placement that we did which was very good and long-term and that we are hoping to repeat – well, when I say repeat, a different context and time, now – was with the Department of Health. And that was through, we had got good contacts with Tony Benn at the time, and we told him about this idea and he sort of wrote about it and he, whenever I bump into him in Notting Hill Gate he always remembers, 'A.P.G.' he says. But he introduced us to Barbara Castle, and Barbara Castle put through this idea to the personnel and architects division of the Department of Health. And we went and had meetings with them, with Ian Breakwell and a musician, Hugh Davies, who had worked with Stockhausen. And we made a proposal to them that they would take a couple of artists to look at what they were

looking at, which at the time was the big institutions like Broadmoor, Rampton and how, well I suppose it was the beginning of how you de-institutionalise these places and bring them back into the community, which was not terribly well done as we know. But, they worked a lot on that, they worked in Euston Towers, was the headquarters, but in the field, in Broadmoor and Rampton, with the chief architects, and as a result of their proposals, they were quite radical proposals, they all contributed with this department of the Department of Health, which was this architects and personnel division of the Department of Health, they contributed to a big paper called 'The Broadmoor Community Study', and it was official secrets, so nobody could actually read it, although a lot of its stuff has seeped out, we've found out about it. But Ian was a very strong, Ian Breakwell was a very strong operator in that placement, and Hugh was very, they both had very sensitive and good ideas. But one of the things that, through working with them in the first feasibility, looking at what they were looking at, they came up with an idea for a reminiscence aid, it was the very first reminiscence aid that has been used and was taken into the community by Age Concern, but it was...they were looking at old people, particularly, you know, from the special hospitals as Broadmoor and Rampton were called, and they were looking at how... When people go senile, just before they go senile, there is a point at which if you can capture their memories and if you can make, you know, help them to reminisce, it will prevent that process happening so quickly, or happening. And so, they were thinking how to do an audio and visual aid that could do this, and so they got together with 'Picture Post' library and soundtracks and tapes and stuff, and created a reminiscence aid. And this was an idea which was also put, which I think came up originally from Mick Kemp, who was the head of, who was one of the chief, you know, architects in the division that they were in. So he came up with an idea; in a way he was quite a good guy for them to be working with, he was a drummer in his spare time, and he came up with this idea, and Ian and Hugh sort of worked on that. And then, the Department of...they ran some tests from Euston Towers, you know, going round and talking to old people on the radio, they set up radio programmes and stuff, and went into special hospitals, and I went in as part of the team as well, you know, we had, it was a multi-disciplinary team, with psychiatrists and artists and photographers and nurses and, you know. And sitting in this hospital with the old people, they would have their arms on the sides, and we would show these films of cigarette factories and in the war, and this sort of thing, you know, from their period,

and sound tracks and everything. And you could feel them moving, and then they would, you know, start, from the visuals and so on, and begin to talk and everything. And so they made a proposal to the Department of Health that there should be a reminiscence aid programme set up, and you know, they would go round to a whole number of hospitals, this was all the test feasibility they did, this was one of the projects. And the Department of Health funded this for two years. Well it actually went on for about five years, because it was taken on by Age Concern, and Age Exchange, and I went only a couple of years ago down to the Greenwich version of it, which is all the reminiscence aid and people, and the old people in the community run it, and they put on soundtracks from shows and show all the culture from there, and that... It was just before the election actually and, John Major used it for a photo-opportunity to go, because they had just got an E.E.C. grant for it, so it was quite nice that I could see, you know, about 25 years or, no, 20 year or whatever it was, the result of one part of the Department of Health interchange between the artist and the personnel division. So there was the Broadmoor community study which, the results of that have come right out, and another thing was that, the young psychiatrist that was on the team – Ian Breakwell, if you ever did him could talk much more about this, but, I go and talk to him about it, but, the young psychiatrist on this interdisciplinary team that we were working on in doing this, who was attached also to Broadmoor, was then attached to Broadmoor much later, and he invited in Deborah Warner to do ‘Lear’ in, you know, this is just recently – well, two or three years ago, in Broadmoor, and everybody said, oh my God! you can’t possibly have ‘Lear’, you know, well why don’t you have a nice sort of one, not that Shakespeare one. And no, he pushed for that, because he, well he had had the experience in talking about, well, I mean if you could have murderers in there you might as well have, well, I’m doing this very trivially and it ought to be much more precise, but the interesting thing was that he pushed to have ‘Lear’ done rather than one of the more mild plays, because, whereas Shakespeare got past the team, the idea of doing ‘Lear’ was something we had to fight for quite hard. And it was interesting that the effects of some of the things that we had done have sort of gone on through in various ways. So the reminiscence aid thing has gone into the community, and then the Broadmoor community study, and we were able to sort of quote, when I do quote these things, that they said as a result of having Ian Breakwell’s perceptions there, he was able to echo back to them in their feasibility study alone, preconceptions which they didn’t

know that they had, about what it was like to be an inmate or whatever it was. He was that person to them, and he did that in both acting and text and audio skills, which they said, as a result of that, we think we saved about three million in the feasibility study, not that we should quote what they said, because it was only what they said to us and is not written down, but... And they were very pleased with that exchange, and I am very pleased with it, and Ian's very pleased with it, because it's gone on. And it's the example that I have quoted to the present Government with Tessa Jowell, with our negotiations; whether we would be able to get it through in this time, because the structure of Government has changed such a lot, I don't know. But that's what we're pushing on, and that had a long-term effect. And there was one other one which was Peter, one other of the, I call it precedent setting examples. Though maybe you see, Government, looking at it now, might talk about the creativity in the culture industries, but they might not like this precedent, but they might prefer to have the artist on the outside and kept there, we don't know, because one of the things in talking to my colleague, this is currently, who is in the Civil Service college, who advises us and is on our current O. & I. board is that, Government might be quite frightened of precedent-setting, you see, whereas then, because that will mean, oh, are there going to be others done like this? So we have to think of this in terms of the context of the present day, but in the context then it was seen as very interesting, you know, experimental things that they wanted to do, but maybe the structures are all different now, so we'll...well they are, so we'll see how it lies. Again that's, where is the artist in relation to decision-making?

Is the concept of O. & I. different in many ways to A.P.G., or not?

Well I think that it's been there all the time, which is that the artist is...we were going towards, in the industrial placements we were finding out ways of optimising such an arrangement, and moving away from existing things of support and patronage; all those things of course still exist, but what one has put into the culture you might say is an expanded notion of residence, or placement, as active projects not as passive projects, which the original artist-in-residence which was set up by Herbert Read in universities were, but into actual action where the artist is addressing with those parts of the society that, you know, we elect, who apparently take decisions on our behalf or whatever. So the concept has always been the same, but in the beginning we were

learning, and moving away from the very hidebound notion of where the artist could be, like applied artist on the outside, or patronage and stuff, and setting a culture for such a changed arrangement. But then one went through the Eighties entrepreneurial and Saatchi and very, I need my show, my something, and my this, and where's my grant, and all that sort of attitude. So, it's only again now that it's being looked at with real interest by a lot of the younger generation, and...but also, there is a good climate for it, but there's also a huge amount of rhetoric, and also a huge amount of this entrepreneurial expectancy of art worlds, both artist and arts establishment, of what the artist can expect, and then the media attention on it, and one of the things we couldn't have at that time was media attention, I mean we were sworn to official secrets for some of it, although we came out and, you know, Ian did something with Yorkshire Television, which everybody bounced up and down about rather madly at the time. Did I answer that question?

That whole question of artists' expectation, young artists' expectation, I mean are they prepared to make the sacrifice, are they still seeing the sort of social potential?

A lot of them are doing interventionist work now, like in the streets and in this, but they've all learnt their curatorial and arts administration skills, so they know the funding bodies to go to, and they are thinking, oh yes, and we could get a certain amount of arts in the community business support from so-and-so. Because all these structures have grown, you know, and quite a lot from what we set up, you know, has gone into local authority governments and arts councils and stuff, so there are lots more structures there. But when we talk about making the sacrifice...

What I mean is that, in a sense the way you've positioned yourself, although you will undoubtedly be well written into history, you are nowhere in any of the mechanisms that produce, you know, a reasonably amount of wealth for artists, like the gallery or whatever.

Well, when the artist is in position they get a very good fee, they get a fee equivalent to other employees in the company, and so the negotiation is on strength, you know, it is on strength in the company, and that's what we push for. So when they're in placement they're doing fine, you know, and they have their art school jobs and their,

something, but on placement they get... But now, in the present day, corporations, you know, commercial companies, it's seen as a consultancy perhaps, although we shy away from such words, it will be done on consultancy terms, say if we were doing it with B.T. or something, but with the public sector we would have to put it in very much more as research, so it would be, you know, artists would be on a research grant or fellowship or whatever they may do, but it would be...but they all have their good pay, but also to come with it would be the prestige of actually engaging in such a thing, so it's prestige and money in there, if they want to do that; if they're quite happy with Saatchi, which a lot of them are, or some of them are, maybe they'd go for that, but I think the younger artists have, some of the young artists have a wider responsibility. But they are all the expectances of the Lisson or whatever structures they've got there. It's up to... And it's only those that want, that are attracted to such an idea because they feel they want to do that, and they are prepared to listen and discourse and everything, that would want to do it anyway.

How have you sort of selected the artist to approach, or have some people come to you?

Well, one of the things is that, we are in the art world at a sort of known level, you might say, through John Latham, and through now my work, and the artists that have been attracted towards us, I mean like, the first time round you know, it was the artists who were working out of the gallery and out of the studio that were attracted towards us, but they were also the strong leading edge artists of the time, Barry Flanagan, Jeffrey Shaw, Stuart Brisley, John Latham, and now, with all these heavy structures, you know, there for them to...there's a big choice of structures of what they've got. And again I remember at the beginning of A.P.G. people saying, yes, well, you would have to have very good artists to do this, like Philip King or this that and the other, who was the artist, Anthony Caro, Philip King type. Well, whereas Philip King and people were interested, of course they were head of the Royal College of Art and they were doing their sculptures, were being commissioned everywhere, and so it was the second lot that we actually got, like the Barry Flanagans, who was the next lot coming up, and the Jeff Shaws and the David Halls, who were into, more into a wider media than sculpture, and painting; they were already moving into the new media, like inflatables, or film, or, well video came afterwards. So, and now, talking about

selection. So in a way, because of where we are in the art world ourselves, you know, and the people associated with the group, they come in through the network of interest, so they select themselves in their motivation and strength of wanting to do it in a way, but they are from a leading edge area, like you know, Cathy Rogers[ph] is one of the earliest people working in virtual realities and she would, somebody would put forward to B.T., and Richard Rosell[ph] who is a performance artist, international performance artist. But again, I mean Anish Kapoor, if, I mean we haven't asked him and he's like, the top, busiest artist, but, if the placement and appointment was right, they'd do it, like Tony Cragg in Germany would have done one in Germany if we could have pushed it through there, we had no money on the ground so the idea is that, an O. & I., ideally an O. & I. will be set up in Karlsruhe, Germany, and be taken on by Jeffrey Shaw in Karlsruhe, who will be interested to do that. He's now a director of Z.K.N. in Karlsruhe. But whether we can get the funds and push it through and everything depends on who the 'we' is, and the energy of the younger artists, you know, and how it's going to go. Now, that's for now. But, did that answer the question?

I'm going to stop now because we're getting to the end of the tape.

Oh right.

End of F6690 Side A

F6690 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 13th of August 1998. Tape eight, side B.

We were just talking about O. & I., which stands for Organisation and Imagination, and I wonder if you could tell me how that name was arrived at, because it does have a rather different set of meanings to the Artist Placement Group.

Right, well, to begin with when we called it A.P.G., it started as Art Placement Group, but then we realised that, whereas we had a wider meaning of the word 'art', as incorporating more than the product, that Art Placement Group was at the time totally equated with the art object, and so, as we were about actually the artist as the strategy and the intervention and the carrier so to speak of the process, and the maker of work, we changed it to Artist Placement Group. It's a lot of times mis-spelt into Artists Placement Group, which is hideous and makes it like helping artists, and I must say that recently at the I.C.A. conference a couple of, well last month, we saw that it had been put into, by Donald Davis[ph], this American art historian, that A.P.G. had been set up as an administrative ploy to help artists, rather like Space Studios by Peter Sedgley, and that it wasn't aesthetic, and I totally disagree with that, but that's what he said and I had to sort of correct that at the conference. But, moving from Artist Placement Group, the reason that we changed the name was that the Arts Council, after the Hayward Gallery, around that time, '77, it might have been before that, '76, set up their own placement scheme, subsidised by the State so to speak, and were running their placement scheme. So one of the things that we had to do was, taking the concept of Artist Placement, was to change the name, because of being associated, because it could get confused with their concept of what placement was. And although one might have, although we can say, well, we initiated the whole idea, artists in hospitals, prisons and schools, and that concept of it, nevertheless to define what we had negotiated, this open treaty, with the Civil Service Department, which was what we had learnt from industry and then had put into this document, and the basis of our placement schemes, which was very very dependent on an agreement of both parties, and a feasibility study and the special method that we had devised to maximise the exchange so to speak, that we would change the name. And this sort of

coincided shortly afterwards with me going to Europe and talking about it at E.L.I.A[ph]. But before that, round about, in the mid-Eighties, we got the artists together and said, what about this idea, is there an interest that we take this forward? And this was with some of the original artists, like Stuart Brisley and ourselves, and Carlyle Reedy who had been associated, and [INAUDIBLE] Kelsey[ph] was involved at the time, in not doing placements, because it had been most difficult to do placements at that time in the Eighties, with the entrepreneurial system and you might say the Saatchis and the, what was the structures that were being pushed through by the Arts Council. So, we decided on changing the name, but taking forward the principles which we had negotiated and were in this document, our method of procedure that was in this document with the Civil Service. And, so we changed it to Organisation and Imagination, which I suppose has quite a ring of, a recognition of administration, organisational structures. So I mean in the current climate of lots of business gurus saying, let's have creativity in management and this that and the other, it sort of swings along quite nicely there, but it was also, and I noticed that it was picked up when I was in Stockholm, what it could mean, it's also, O. & I., which is also from nothing to one, which is again a John-ism, but it's going from nothing to finding out, which is the way an artist would go about, especially in the context that we are suggesting is, that they don't arrive with their preconceived ideas of what they are going to do; they take the context and out of that context, context is half the work, will come what they will do. So it's from nothing to finding out, so it's from nought to one, which is from zero to the first mark you might say. So that's how we came at Organisation and Imagination. And we had, we felt we had to change it, because placement had become what the art establishment and administration wanted it to be, and whereas we were pleased about it going forward in some sort of way, it was necessary to make a difference, and so that's how that came about.

So tell me how you sort of tackled its development. Has it actually had an active project so far?

We've had some, some active projects under Organisation and Imagination, in the Eighties, at the end of the Eighties; we had a big project with, just when Inner London Education Authority... I actually approached... Well, I don't know whether I've said this on the tape but, the Thatcher Government had been in for some time and we went

to...we had been keeping it going, the artists wanted to have it, but we hadn't got any active projects going, but I did in, I think it was '84/85, it might have been after that, went to an opening of the Henry Moore show at the Royal Academy, and we were sort of standing behind a heavy Henry Moore, and Thatcher came in with all her minders, and, I was sort of leaning on this thing, and she came out with this speech about Henry Moore and his sensitive hands and his... 'Oh, what a sensitive man,' something. And we sort of said, my God! who wrote her speeches, you see, rather sarcastically, as we would. But then I realised this was an opportunity here, as I would, and so, I went back and wrote her a letter saying it was so interesting to hear you expounding the value of the artists in our society, this that and the other, perhaps you are not aware that artists have actually worked in Government, and this this and this, and that also overseas, you know, we had put it to the Bonn Government. I don't know whether I've covered about our meeting with the Bonn Government, I might go into that a bit more later. But, she...so I sort of fired... So I said, 'Perhaps you would like to bring it to the attention of your Secretaries of State, you know, it needs to be at that level,' I said, you know, because that's the level that we work at, or that it goes in at. Again in the early days much criticised that we only worked with management and never on the shop floor, which was again a non-criticism, because we worked across the structures, but you see where you go in and you can come in through the trade unions or whatever. But anyway. But, so I wrote this letter, always assisted by John, usually, or by whoever else is there, you know, when we were discussing whether we would do this, depending on how much we consisted of at the time, because in between getting the things going or not having any money or having money, we had some money from overseas at the time, there would be numbers of us working on it, like with our foreign policies or whatever we were doing. And so I fired this letter off, and I said, 'Perhaps you would bring it to the attention of the following departments at Secretary of State level,' and so I said, I can't remember what I said, health, you know, the crucial ones. And I also said Northern Ireland Office, rather, either naively or...because one just felt that something could be done or what[??]. But again how utopian and ridiculous and arrogant and, is any of this? God knows. Somebody asked me that the other day. And... They're always asking me, especially when John comes up with some proposals for the Government. Anyway, so I sent this letter off, and a letter came back saying, the Welsh Office, Sir so-and-so and something would like to meet you. And so, we started firing off. But at the time

there were very few of us to take it forward, you know, having opened on this thing it was almost left to me and John to follow it through, because although there might have been some people who were helping us with overseas programmes or something, the artists were all doing their residences or their, you know, Ian Breakwell was in Durham, so-and-so was somewhere else, and the younger artists, or the different artists we were talking to but hadn't been recruited yet if you know what I mean, we hadn't gone through the principles and stuff. So, we made these approaches, and it might have been premature to have made those approaches without having teams of artists to come behind. One can always say that, but the point was that the opening was there, and we have the track record, and our track record people will always speak for us, as does the track record when I describe it myself, when they say, how does this work? So, and as there is no other track record of artists with government, it stands quite strongly. Anyway, so I sent this off, and we did start some openings. The Northern Ireland one was quite tricky, needless to say, but we did...because the only two parts of the Northern Ireland Office that would be useful or interesting that was actually operating at the time of course was education, and what was the other part, that the English Government were involved in that one could sort of ethically, that's not the right word, but one could politically correctly have anything to do with, but of course the artist, when we discussed this, and we were talking to some Irish artists about this, Rita Donagh was one, and another very good Irish artist, Ann Tallantire[ph], we had some artist meetings about, you know, going forward and doing these things, and she said, well she couldn't possibly do that, because she had come with her coat, if she was Irish she would come with her coat and her coat would not sort of work there; whereas John would be saying, we don't come with any coat, but an Irish person would come with their coat, of course. So, that was an interesting one. But John and I went and did a recce, and we got quite a long way with, I went and did the Education Department, stayed in Belfast for a time and I gave a lecture in the university there, and, because years before I had been invited to Londonderry by, to talk in the Orchard Gallery by Declan McGonagle, and I remember at the time when I talked then that a soldier had been shot at the bottom of a drive of the bridge going over, and I was going to speak on the radio, on the B.B.C. radio behind bars, and it was the first time I had been into Northern Ireland, which was a complete sort of police state at the time, then, when I went. And so... I remember the first thing they said on the B.B.C. at that time was, 'Ah, that's a nice English accent you've got

there,' and so I thought, oh God! what am I saying, you know. But I struggled on. But the next...and it was quite difficult, because Declan McGonagle was, he was keeping a very, his art profile, and he had done a lot of work there, but it was very interesting. But the next time when I went this time, you know, through the Irish Office, Northern Ireland Irish Office, and I went first of all to talk to the education people and to try and draw it together with, the Department of the Environment and Education were the two parts of the Northern Ireland Office I operated with. But when I went to, over the first time, and there was a taxi to meet me, and I was going to Stormont Castle, and I thought, oh my God! I don't want to be associated with the Northern Ireland Office, and I lay down on the floor of the taxi and I went up the drive of Stormont. I thought, oh God! you know, hang on a minute, what's going on here? In spite of there being...done this. And when I got out, they were having a meeting or whatever it was, and I had to wait outside, so I busily went round with my camera photographing all the outside of Stormont Castle and inside of it, and nobody stopped me.

Those were the days.

Those were the days. But I, well a lot of my career in doing these things has been, you know, like when I went to Tony Benn in, you know, ages before, in Millbank when he was Minister of Technology, and there was nobody there, and there was a red alert and I went upstairs and dumped my thing on his desk, at which Securicor people rushed out and frog-marched me out of the building and said, 'How did you manage to do it?' I said, 'Well there was nobody here, I just went the stairs.' And so, a right terrorist. Anyway.

You will be shot one day Barbara.

I will be shot, there's no doubt about it. [LAUGHING] But anyway, this Irish thing, I met a very good guy in Environment who tried to sort of pull the whole things together for me. I just didn't have, and I tried to involve some artists, a very good artist in Belfast School of Art, and I did some lectures there, and the women were very pleased that I had gone over and done this, and I had a great support from them. But there was no sort of backup for me to go backwards and forwards; although I got,

you know, the cost by giving a lecture in Belfast, there was no backup for this activity, we weren't backed at all at that time, so it wasn't until later that I, you know, after I, 1990 that I again approached the Arts Council for seed funding, so that was much later on. But, anyway, talking about those projects. We got quite a long way with them, but the one that actually went through was an educational project which was with the Department of Education here, because that was one of the departments that we approached. We...oh and Trade and Industry we got quite a long way with too, that was quite interesting, but we didn't actually contract a placement. But the placement that we got with Education, it was quite interesting because they were just, the Government, the Thatcher Government at the time, were just closing down the Inner London Education Authority, having closed down the G.L.C. they now were going to close down the Inner London Education Authority, and one of the people who is on our advisory committee now was a guy called Lloyd Trott, who's a marvellous character. He's actually, he's a text-based dramaturge associated with R.A.D.A., and he has taught a lot of the very sort of best students that have come out of R.A.D.A., you know, Kenneth Brannagh, Juliet Stevenson, and lots of people. But he was also governor of a school locally in Southwark, of a school, and he was all...but he was on the Cultural Review in I.L.E.A., I think with Tessa Blackstone, who was not Lady Blackstone at the time, and you know, various sort of people. Very political, very committed person. And, winding through our educational contacts and stuff, we went to I.L.E.A. from the Department of Education, and we made this proposal to them that we would look at change in education as it passed through. So we weren't there being artists in schools, artists in, whatever it was; we were actually looking at change in education as it passed from I.L.E.A. into the local authorities, and I went and had big meetings with other people in County Hall and, in fact the last days of I.L.E.A. we filmed County Hall and all the offices and officers and Lloyd in his great room, and we made a lovely film of the last days of I.L.E.A., of County Hall I suppose as a Government building. So, I hope we'll be able to use some of that film material, it's interesting and good. And then, we did this negotiation, and as a result of that, and with the help of Lloyd Trott, we got some of the slush funds from I.L.E.A. to do a project which would look at the changing education as it passed, as I said, from the local authority, from I.L.E.A. to the local authorities, and then we would take one particular borough, which was our particular borough, and we would site it in Southwark, and we would look at six primary

schools and six secondary schools, looking at the drop away in secondary from, you know, people going on to higher education. And it was a very interesting project in that you would...it's very multi-cultural, so you could sometimes have 46 different languages in one school, and there were huge exclusion problems in, you know, some of the schools. And, we did a lot of videoing and taping and working in the schools, and we were given a base by Southwark in one of the big libraries or school buildings, which we refer to as the base, and we had, you know, meetings and set up shop there so to speak. And that went on for about two years, and all those tapes you see behind you are all the video tapes from the Southwark project. And we put on the results of that, or the process of that, in Southwark Town Hall. We always choose a venue which is not like the art gallery, it could have been the South London Art Gallery, but our venue would be the town hall where the officers and where the people, you know, proposing the policy were exchanging with us, and that was a useful project. So we got that one going. And then, then I got attached to the London Institute, and... Oh yes, and in the, before that, sorry, chronologically I'm being hopeless now...

Before we go forward actually, can you give me some idea of what sort of results came out of it?

Out of the Southwark project? What results came out of it?

What was your kind of view, did you see it as a catastrophe that there was this change, or there were beneficial aspects to it?

Well the whole idea of looking at what... Well we were able to see from our interviews with the people from, who were I.L.E.A. and then who were the local authority people that were going to take it on, and the schools and the passing over of the responsibilities, and also looking, it was also, they were changing the curriculum at the time, so there was a huge thing about, what would be in the national curriculum. And so there were lots of local lobbying groups which, you know, we were involved with or weren't involved with, so there was a lot of process going on. But one project which came out of it, which interested Southwark very much, one, we got a lot of information there, and there were fabulous interviews with some of the primary school heads of the schools, a lovely interview from one of the primary schools, he

was so articulate, he was so beautiful. And also, doing all this filming in the schools, and the amount of energy that went into the primary schools, and then you could see where the schools were really bad and had teachers that were shouting, screaming at the children, and you could just...I mean the amount of information we've got that is on video for use or not use and everything, is extraordinary, and Lloyd, who was a governor and other people have looked at it and... We haven't made an edited version of that.

Has that been logged anywhere in the official system? I mean you know, are there copies of these?

We've got all the copies. We haven't logged it into a system, but one of the things that, a project that came out of that, and that's why I want to take it back into the educational thing with the new Government, with Stephen Byers and you know, the schools, and we re-approached them on that, and Lloyd is there on that too, is, a project which was devised called 'Recycle and Discuss', which was the... Because we were artists, we would immediately be headed towards the arts departments, you know, and this that and the other, and we said, no no, we're doing that, but every now and again we would do that, you know, depending whether it was relevant or not, as we would go towards the science departments and other departments. And, this 'Recycle and Discuss' project was one that was again devised by John Latham. John was one of the people working on this project, but we also had Rita Keegan, who, she now works as an independent artist, she's an American black woman artist, and she was marvellous on the project, and then Carlisle Reedy[ph], who is this poet and performance artist from the past, and then a younger guy called Dave Carr, who was a student from Chelsea who did a lot of the technical side, the videoing and the setting up of a, you know, he was in charge of the technical side, and John. And to begin with a film-maker called Rabina Rose, she did a lot of the filming in County Hall but then she didn't follow on with us. But one of the results which was a very interesting result was, this Recycle and Discuss project, which Michael Huzzy[ph], who was the Inspectorate on this project, you know, from I.L.E.A. and Southwark, thought that he had had something they really wanted to learn from, which was to make objects just out of materials that the children would collect from anywhere. But then that there would be a very careful questioning of why they had done what they were doing and

what was it that they thought they were doing. So that, it was to do with motivation, which was one of the things that we were discussing, which we were looking at in seeing what was the great fall-out at secondary school, you know, age group, and the motivation of why they put a piece of material with another piece of material, and what they were doing, and what were they thinking about when they were doing it. So that the questioning was very very careful questioning, and I think could only have come from an artist who makes things anyway and has gone a long way down the line of externalising, say, a personal form of expression in another medium, so to ask the children while they still had their creativity about them before it was drowned out in whatever the circumstances of their life, which are quite difficult, you know, the background in these schools. And, Southwark were very pleased with that project, and that has been sort of written up, and, it hasn't gone into anywhere but it's in the files and everything, and it's talked about, and they liked that very much. And it's things like that that one would push forward with the Department of Education and Employment, you know, as one sort of way now.

Did you do that with different age groups of children?

Yes, we did them with primary and we did them with secondary.

And did you get a big difference in response?

Yes, there was quite a difference in response. People were much more guarded in the secondary group, and... The primary schools you see were always, either just full of girls, you know, it was just lovely to see what are they to do, and it's sort of awful to see the back being broken, you might say, in the secondary. Not always, I mean there would be fabulous teachers. Again I think you, perhaps if you are going to interview John Latham you might like to take that up with him, because he conducted that. He also talked with the science department who were taking, you know, questioning the science area, which was very much his field.

I mean did you ever discuss any kind of awareness of when that change might have happened, whether it was in the organisation or whether it was just a natural part of changing self-consciousness?

Oh we used to have, we used to have the team, the Southwark Educational Project would come together and discuss things and invite teachers in from the different schools for discussions, and then we would go in to the schools and discuss, you know, we did a lot of those discussions, around such topics that you've just said. And I don't like to sort of claim it, but I think there was quite a, a relief in a way, to have, well it might be just another pair of hands and eyes, because they were very under... Putting attention on some of the things that they couldn't put attention on because of the stress of teaching. I mean that was something we had to take great care with, was that, we wouldn't get in the way of them meeting the new schools curriculum, which was what they were doing, this was in a way, might be experimental or longer term and therefore could well be seen to be getting in the way. But where it worked, it worked wonderfully, but we had to be very sensitive to that and the pressures they were under at the time.

I'm going to stop you there because we're quite close to the end of the tape.

End of F6690 Side

F6691 Side A

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 13th of August. Tape nine, side A.

Just stepping back a little bit to 1985, you did mention getting some E.E.C. funding, and, just touched a little bit on that. Could you develop on that placement?

Yes. I think I mentioned when you asked how we were getting by and how we were funded at the time after, when we were doing the government department placements, and I said how they, you know, were self-funding and we would have odd grants. But also that there was interest from overseas in the time, in particular from Germany, through our contact with the Ministry of Education and Science, the Jochimsen, and we put on, and they invited us over there to demonstrate to them how art, how we had done these artists with government department placements. And that was, so they had invited us over, and we had talked with the German artists. Oh actually that was earlier, it was in 1977, and then again in Vienna. That was in Bonn and then in Vienna we put on the same presentation again the following year, and the proposal was that the governments of those countries might adopt the notion of having artists with them in government looking at some of the issues that they were looking at. So in Germany the Jochimsens[ph] set up, one, an exhibition, but, a podium discussion with four Ministers in the Bonn Government, the Minister of the Interior, Reimert Jochimsen himself, who was Minister of Education and Science, the Minister for Health, and...oh, there was a third Minister. It was Health, Home Affairs. The Minister of the Interior, which was Home Affairs, the Minister of Health, and Education and Science, there were four Ministries anyway. And, so we had this podium public discussion with in the audience the German artists, and politicians and other people, and it was recorded, and we had some great exchanges. It went very well. I think one of the reasons that it went so well was that it was, we had interpreters, and in the interpretation, in between, there was very good time to phrase your questions very well, and I know I was quite nervous because I was going to make the presentations, and...

[PAUSE]

We're having a short break for a lost microphone.

What is the strength of the recording?

Oh it's very powerful, don't you worry.

Right. Oh I can't remember how this bloody thing works now.

That'll be fine. [INAUDIBLE] the outside then.

Technology will defeat me.

I'll just stop a sec.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Yes, the people in the audience were politicians, German artists, what have you. We were very pleased I think both at how it went, and it was considered a success, because it was very radical to be proposing, actually using this opportunity to make a proposal to these government departments that they adopt the principle, and invite artists, you know, German artists to participate in the way we had suggested and the way we had done in our country. And I remember, I had all my notes and my everything going over, and I went by train with Ian Breakwell, and of course I left all my notes and everything in the train, so I arrived on the platform, and I had no notes at all. And here was this formidable array of Ministers with interpreters to each, and Jogenharten[ph], who was Director of the Düsseldorf Kunsthalle, was going to chair it, because he had been at our Hayward meeting and we had done the, between, to German industry, and he had been very interested in the idea right from before. But I remember because of having the interpreters, that each of us spoke very carefully, and I did the presentations first and then introduced them to the artists and everything, and I remember Hugh Davies leaning over, whispering to me, 'It's going terribly well Barbara, you're doing terribly well,' and I thought, gosh, and I haven't any notes. And then I thought, well why was this? And I think it was the space in between and then the interpreters echoing back the thing, you had had plenty of time to then bring

on your next bit, and I thought, what a nice format this is. But it went very well, and then afterwards we met up with the German artists and lots of pictures of us all shaking hands with everybody, but then, to follow that, we had, a meeting was then set up in the Stadt Bonn Haus, which was, you know, the parliamentary house in, you know, the house of parliament in Bonn, with these Ministers again, and with the German artists. And that was a very difficult meeting. One of the things was, we didn't have enough time to talk with the German artists, we didn't know them, they had been selected by Margaretha[ph] Jochimsen, who was the director of the Kunsthalle in Bonn, and with their knowledge of the German art scene, and some very good well-known artists, I mean Stuart Brisley knew some of them. Stuart came over, Ian came over on this, John and me. Was there somebody else? No, I think that that was the team, you know, three of the people who had done the placements, and myself, and Hugh Davies, and Hugh Davies, and, he spoke German as well which was a great help. And, but when we met in the Stadt Bonn Haus, it was...it was quite difficult, it was very heavy and in all the pictures of it we are absolutely sort of dropping in our chairs, it was very stuffy, and... Because each of the German artists had their own notion of how they would relate to the community, and afterwards there was quite a sort of furore with the German artists where they would say, thank you very much, one of the phrases was, 'Thank you very much for introducing us to our Government, and we'll screw them for every penny we can get,' you see, which was...because there was a very good...that was just one of the things, and perhaps I shouldn't be saying that, but the point was that the German art world structure had lots of money and lots of things to do, and there was...and they hadn't thought of doing this. Because again Government was dirty, and there was the Baader-Meinhof and you know, you've got to think of the times in which it was. And so, that's one of the things. But one of the artists who had been chosen, you know, selected by the Jochimsens for us to associate with was a young couple, Rolf and Rose Sachsse, they're now professors in, he's associated with Karlsruhe University and, oh I can't remember, another, two universities anyway in Germany. And, his line is photography. And he came up and said, 'Well you know, this is really interesting, we really want to work with you on this,' and they've been associated with us ever since. And they tried to get some things going along the lines that we were doing with some of the artists they knew who were particularly interested in environmental projects. But in a way it went wrong, because we weren't there to help back it up, and the

Sachsses didn't have enough money or experience to be able to sort of push it through and get funds for it, and we have ever since been working with them to get a unit set up in Germany, because there was a lot of understanding in it and it's endured over the time, and Jeffrey Shaw is going to, who also works, Rolf Sachsse works in Karlsruhe, at the Centre for Multimedia in Karlsruhe, to set up a unit there to take it forward in this way. But you know, since then, numbers of the artists have been interested, and we've talked to them since, for instance, Ulrike Rozenbach[ph] has been over here and I've talked with her and she remembers it well, she was just joining...when we then, on our European, the idea was to get some funds from the E.E.C. and make a European project that would have three different countries in it, so, to see whether we could do this in three different countries. The first one to go off was with North Rhine-Westphalia, where Reimert Jochimsen had moved from being Education and Science in the Bonn Government to being Minister of Economics in North Rhine-Westphalia, and so he said, 'Well let's do a, let's look at traffic, because traffic in your country and our country has about the same amount of road area, and we have many more accidents than you do, so let's take a project and let's look at this'. And so there was a European, the first international placement project was set up in Germany to look at traffic problems. And there again, one of the artists that had been at that Stadt Bonn meeting, he joined on to it a guy called Klaus vom Bruch, but he again had his idea of what he wanted to do before he went in, rather than using context as half of the work, and he was quite an arrogant guy in a way: I'm putting my noise on that. But the person that we had selected on that, not just us but had been proposed that we should put forward, was this Ulrika Rosenbach[ph], who was actually his partner, but just then she joined the orange movement and went rather Buddhist or whatever was, so she didn't want to do this. So, I mean you do get things like this, like when we were doing the Esso placement, and they wanted to have Ian Breakwell rather than Andrew Dipper or whatever it was, although Andrew did very well in the end, Ian was having a problem, like changing his partner, you know. So you have these human things coming in the middle of the things as well as the political and stuff. And the Sachsses had enormous difficulty being treated as artists by the Bonn art set, because weren't they photographers and weren't they...you know, so there would be all this preconceived idea of what was an artist. And then what was this role we were suggesting the artists should take? And so, always one was coming

up against the particular prejudices and preconceived and hard-held ideas of a country, a culture, a context, you know, whatever. So, we would have those.

Can I just ask, do you or John put any sort of formal boundaries around the term, artist?

We go over this over and over again. We don't put any formal thing on it at all; it is reassessed practically every day in every context, in every meeting, what do you mean by artist? It's always said by the host organisation. Then we always, you know, on our method or procedure, describe the artist as, you know, the contemporary artist, whether we use a boring phrase like leading edge or anything. John and I don't put a description on artist; we are constantly reassessing it. John would call it the incidental person, and in Germany both Joseph Beuys liked the notion of incidental person. 'The artist, no; incidental person, yes,' he said at Documenta when he had invited us to make a proposal in his honey pump or whatever we were doing at Documenta. And so, artists liked that; there was more difficulty with the term artist with the host organisation, but one could describe it, but this idea of being an independent representative of the future but from within an organisation, you know, which then would have its shareholders and this and that, was always being gone over, depending on the context and the things.

So the key thing was that this person acted independently of the organisation...from within it?

Independently, but of course, you know, with the responsibility. When we say acting independently, as they are being paid by them, you know, one takes that into consideration in the treaty so to speak, but that's what we went over with the Civil Service Department, and the particular treaty, the particular Civil Service document, was translated into German by the Minister of, you know, this Minister of Education and Science. Reimert did all the translation to his government thing, and he did bring in his interpretation in German of what it was about, which, well it's in one of these documents, I could read it out, but it virtually said, 'For the contribution of...for the artistic contribution to the solving of governmental problems,' you know, it was a special stipend that he put in that the artist was there to do, which came up off our

Civil Service memo. So it's in Germany, if you know what I mean, it's planted in Germany, there to be taken forward. But, does that answer a bit? So, yes, so we tried to rustle up with a German contingent so to speak with Tony Cragg, who was at the Düsseldorf Academy and who of course knew John's work, and admired it and this, but, we had very little funds to do this. Although we had a bit, a bit from the E.E.C., it was difficult to get off the ground, and we only got, well we got the German one off the ground. Because they did do, you know, the German placement was done, and there was a big report about it, I don't know whether it was used...it looked at the psychology of, of obedience was one of the things, and we, that you know, Germans are more inclined to obey the rules or, you know, I can't remember which way round it was, but it was quite an interesting thing on the psychology, and we went and looked and discussed the psychology of rules. And again John would be able to talk more about this. He did it with this Klaus von Bruch, who actually was much more interested in taking the money, as the saying...I shouldn't perhaps be saying this. But, a big, a drawback there was the language problem, was that, there was a great respect for John in the, you know, the Ministry of, wherever it was, but not being able to speak the language he needed, well he can speak it a bit, but he needed to put over very much more... It was all right when he was showing films and demonstrating and making things, but when it came to the actual talking... Rolf Sachsse, Rose Sachsse worked with John on this, with videoing a lot of the traffic things, they were videoing all sorts of different places where there were traffic accidents, and on-site and stuff, there's a very nice lot of film footage and stuff on it. And there was a big report about it. But, we didn't get the next one off the ground, and it needs a unit over there. What one needs all the time is, and who's going to be the engine to run with this in that country, or whatever it is, so you always need the engine to run.

I mean do the Germans have more accidents in town as well as on the motorways?

Yes. Well they...well, so the report was, yes. I wouldn't have thought so, because they are so good about obeying the rules and the traffic in the town, and stopping at everything. As my son said, when we first went to Germany, 'And don't forget the trams arrive on time and leave on time,' but we never did this.

There's a lot to be said for a bit of vagueness. Have you ever tried to kind of infiltrate countries like France or...?

Yes, we...well, there again, one of, I can't remember when this happened exactly. Paris, let me just look up quickly. Absolutely, I mean, where we did a thing in Paris, which was 1980. Yes, when we were talking at one stage to one of these Ministers, he turned up to be Ambassador in Paris, so we thought, oh great, you know, and we roared over to see him in Paris and he said, 'Well what do you want me to do?' you know, in this sort of helpful way. He said, 'I could give a lunch or a dinner or something like this, and we'll invite all these people.' So, they invited also... When we did this E.E.C. thing we also negotiated, we got ourselves into a document, an E.E.C. document, which was...well I've got it here somewhere. But it was a report on the employment of artists in the cultural sector, and it was by a statistician called Marie Madeleine Cruzt[ph], and she had written, as a statistician had written this report for the E.E.C., and we went over on a very hot, when I say we, it was me and Nicholas Tresilian, who spoke a very flowery, wonderful French, and we went over, and we negotiated, well, we..... [BANGING NOISE] Help.

The dustbins.

The dustbins. It's so violent. We went out on this very hot July weekend, and you know, did all the Civil Service document and how it worked and everything into, to be translated into this E.E.C. report which was then in the E.E.C. report, what the U.K. had done in the cultural sector that we had introduced artists in this way. So that's in that E.E.C. report. And as a result of that it was a great help for us to use the E.E.C. report so we could, you know, show it in France. And this guy, Reginald Hibbert, turned up as Ambassador in Paris, Hugh Davies was a great reader of 'The Times', picking up all the news for us. Each of us read a newspaper so that we could research things, so Hugh came up with 'The Times' stuff, somebody else came up with 'The Guardian' stuff, and, nobody came up with 'The Mail' and 'The Sun' I have to say, which is not very good stuff is it. Stuart would have got me for that, not that he reads any of those, but anyway... And, my mother read 'The Mail', as she would as a good Conservative. Where was I?

The E.E.C. report.

Oh yes, the E.E.C. report. Oh yes, and France, yes, what happened was that Reginald Hibbert gave us this dinner in the British Embassy in Paris, a sort of fantastic place with chandeliers and butlers in white gloves up to here, and we had these amazing sort of people. And the British Council turned up and they were all very angry that the artists had initiated this and not them, because it's the British Council to do this thing. But one woman who was there, who is still in the British Council, she never forgets this, she thinks it was absolutely wonderful that we had done this, and we had all these people, and, Madeleine Cruzt[ph] came, and you know, everything, to make this proposal that this should be done. We wanted to actually have an artist attached to the British Council in Paris, and I, and I am again renegotiating such a thing, we've now got somebody on our board, but, not in Paris necessarily but we, you know, we've got our connections with the British Council, what's the name of her, she's terribly good. She's still in the British Council, and we went and saw her last year when there was an exhibition of 'Live Live' in the Museum of Contemporary Art in Paris, and Hans Ulrigulbrist[ph] had put it on, and we had made a proposal then, in that exhibition: when I say we, I sent a proposal through, John was showing his work and I had sent a proposal through, you know, that I, my proposal was that, to the Minister of Culture in France, that they would actually do this thing, but there was a very boring Minister of Culture at the time, Jack Laing[ph] had gone. So this is still on the books. But anyway this meeting in Paris in 1980 I think it was, we put it into France so to speak, and so it is there really with the British Council to be taken forward, so, yes we will put it to each of these countries.

Just move forward a bit. I'm quite interested that you had an involvement with the London Institute.

Yes. When we started the O. & I. business again, and we were doing the educational sort of side of it, we were doing Southwark and everything, I had been a student at Chelsea anyway, and I went to talk about what we were, you know, doing to Colin Senor[ph] who jumped on it, knew all about what we were doing; a very political animal is our Colin Senor[ph]. And he was just being associated then with this European group E.L.I.A.[??], which was European League of Institutes of Art and

Design, which was just getting set up, and the inaugural meeting of it was in 1990. So, when was I doing this London Institute? Yes. So round about that time he invited me to come and devise a course on interventionist placement in the art school. There was great opposition to this by certain members of staff, who felt it was going across their departments and they were all fighting for their bit of funds, so I was seen as very, not what was needed by numbers of the departments. And when I put up the posters and everything they were torn down, and Colin Senor[ph] had come out and said... No, with 'Cancelled' underneath these, and they had put up sort of things like, because it was an option to begin with, students didn't have to come to it, so there would be very busily, the other departments would put up other options for them to go to you see. So I thought, well you know, why is this being so difficult? Here I am in a little art school, you know, and it would be far easier outside, you know, whatever it is. And so the political infighting of art schools is not something that I need in my life, but, I was quite surprised, I thought I was being paranoid, but no, I wasn't. My posters were pulled down, Colin Senor[ph] was slapping them back, so you know, they hadn't been cancelled. But we got some very few but very interested students, and there was a big turnout to begin with and they really found it very interesting, because we had, Ian Breakwell came and talked, and, I don't know whether Rita Keegan came, but you know, numbers of us came who had done these placements. And then John came, and, now John of course has this very specific thing, so, he would be talking about his very specific art to physics, or his art trajectory. So that's one line of John. The other line of John of course is his placement actually in the Scottish Office, and there was quite a lot of discussions in there. Anyway, we did all that, and when I say we, after those options and everything I worked with, it was me doing it, and I got paid, you know, as a, whatever rate it was, to go and set up this interventionist placement thing, and I approached, so that the students could have actual practice, you know, action practice, I did a negotiation with some organisations. I was going to get Islington Council but because they would, because these would, they would be placements, they would not be being professional so to speak, therefore they wouldn't have, I wouldn't be negotiating for the funding, I would only be negotiating for an educational placement you might say, which is quite sort of different, it's much softer, but to give them the experience in a real setting. So one of the things I negotiated was with the Department of the Environment, which was in the royal parks, which was quite a sort of close one for them to do. We had all

the parks, we had Hyde Park, Brompton Cemetery, Richmond Park, St. James's Park, and the students took some placements in each of them, after they had had the lecturing on the options and everything they went. And I worked with Kevin Atherton at the time, who did know about A.P.G.. I did find the whole business of doing, of working in Chelsea and the London Institute a nightmare of male-orientated art politics, which I was absolutely staggered at, you know, because that's only 1990, '89/90, whatever. Anyway there were lots of interesting students there. There were two very interesting students who came to all our option lectures, and, because it was quite interesting, it started off with lots of students, and you know, a lot of interest; then there was this political sort of objection to it from within, and then they dropped away a lot, and then, but there were some that just kept going all the time and then it came up and you know, went... But what I could see was that, the London Institute wanted to take the placement idea and have it as theirs, you know, that it wouldn't...and so, that was also quite difficult, I could see that it was to be sort of handed over and everything like that, but as long as the authenticity and the payment or something came towards the O. & I., you know, and yes, I got a little payment for it, but I mean the amount of sort of specialist work that went into it was...and it was also of course very labour-intensive, because you had to do all these negotiations and nobody was paying for this, and they weren't...well they were paying a bit for it, but, and I would write up all the things and they would say, 'Oh you've written all these things up, I'm so glad you've done that'. But I mean, they had no idea how labour-intensive it is to get a negotiation through on an understanding and good way, you know, so that you could do it. Anyway, a good one was established with Islington Council but wasn't followed through, but the one with the parks was followed through and it worked very well, because the students had to work in the real time of, if the St. James's Park people were looking at how they could light up the St. James's Park to make it safer or anything, that would have been the time-scale of their meetings and things so the students would have to actually attend the meetings, and you know, in the real time, and it wasn't going to just be what would fit in in their B.A.s or their whatever they were doing that was going to be in three years' time and, you know, and they would have, they would be thinking like that. So they would be having real time placements, although just in that period of the year. But I think they were very pleased with this, especially the one in Hyde Park, they were very pleased with the students there, they did some nice things, and then, what's the...Kew Gardens, or, no,

was that one of the parks? I know one of them, a student did a conceptual one where they had, where they made little statements about smell and sensitivity, and they were painted on those little green labels that you have in the royal parks, you know, and people were reading them, and they were getting asthma from, they thought, the pollen of these flowers, but it was just conceptual, it was not actually the pollen. I haven't described this very well, but they just read these conceptual statements on the labels that were the park labels, you know, these green labels, and.....

End of F6691 Side A

F6691 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni on the 13th of August. Tape nine, side B.

Yes we were just talking about the London Institute placements with the royal parks, and I was just saying the power of the message of this guy who, I can't remember what he actually said on these notices, but some of them drew attention to flowers or whatever would be around, that they might expect, but it's just really about the power of the message in places that you would expect it, and how it set off things that wasn't the case. And this was brought back to us as, not as a complaint but my God! you know, look what has happened here. But then there was one in, I've said about the St. James's Park one, the girl who was working on that put up some very nice lighting project on the trees and through the park that was, you know, quite sort of different to the lighting project that the other people were putting up for safety reasons, because at night time the whole of the park becomes dark, it becomes a closed area, but now of course you will notice that, you know, there's lighting right the way through St. James's, but she worked with that, and she came up with some original and different ideas which they either incorporated into it or not, I don't know, but anyway she worked with that real situation. And then, there was another one with, in Brompton Cemetery, where, that was quite a dangerous one for the girls to work in because it was another, girl student, and she...it was a place where a lot of gays meet, not that that's anything, but, you know, she was hustled a lot for being there, and she had to be on her own and it was quite a sort of, either violent place or not violent place. And the cemetery has a thing whereby they clean the graves or, you know, scrape off the growth of the grass and the lichen and everything, twice a year, and she made a point about the passing of time on this, that she took some of the gravestones and she would clean them absolutely in half, you know, so that you would have this absolutely clean side of the gravestone, and this lichen-covered one, and then she took some great big photographs of them, and then she made them into almost more gravestones, as big pieces. And it was a very interesting project, both about her time in the cemetery and, you know, how she encountered it and how she addressed it. And, the result of, you know, how people liked that work very much, it was much liked by the royal parks, and...

Just out of interest, they were being assessed presumably as, you know, graduate students. Did you have any connection with the art schools in terms of helping them evaluate the work?

Kevin Atherton, who I said took on this project, he went in, and I did come in, I was invited to look in, but they were very much beginning to take this as Kevin Atherton's work and stuff. But I was invited in, and I did have talks with the students which I recorded and I wrote down about how they felt their projects were, but I didn't actually take part in the evaluation of those projects as such, I wasn't asked to do that. But as a result of these ones... And then there was another nice one with the round pond where a girl dressed up as a duck and she had a lot of people coming after her. And the thing that was very interesting about, good for the students on this placement, was that they were working on real projects that they were actually doing, so that the ones attached to Richmond Park, I mean, they could have used, they could have gone out on horseback, they were all given mountain bikes and the huge place to do their work in, because they thought these artists need to go back and do their work in here. So they had much bigger studios than they had in the London Institute and Chelsea, you know. So this was the real world in a way, and, with what we've always brought into placements, which is that you have the same things that anybody else on an assignment would have, like you need your space to work, your office or something, and they would be connected up to, well the park manager or the guy, the steward who's out, you know, looking after all the equipment or something like that. So they would affiliate to those people who were doing the job, and get what they needed and ask if they could do these things, and so it would be very real in those terms and they would have to make their relationships and then report back. And the royal parks were very pleased with these, and they wanted to then take them up and do them with the Royal College of course. But I still know this person. But I think Colin Senor[ph] and people were very pleased with this project, because, what they did was, to make an Erasmus programme which, in a number, in three countries, for which they got the money straight away, because it was seen to be such an original project and one that they really wanted to do, and so there was an Erasmus programme in Bergen, Norway, Spain, and, where else was it? Rotterdam, Holland. So, I went out and negotiated some of those things, and roared around and did that. And I also went to the first E.L.I.A[??], European League of Institutes of Art and Design, that was set up

in Europe for the purposes of, well they realised that education in the arts was going to be a big thing and here we were going into Europe and we had better have this thing too. So I gave a paper at a fringe meeting about repositioning of artists in decision-making processes, and it echoed the, it echoed keynote speeches at that conference from Ernst Jung and, Ernst Jung was a Swiss writer and thinker, and other people, which was, how can we get the cultural balance to the commercial and political component? And you know, the fact that artists eventually worked in this way was again completely new to everybody. And so, we set up a network for repositioning artists in the decision-making processes of society. And again you see, I sort of feel this whole concept, well I know this whole concept, prefigured the idea of cultural policy which was, you know, as I said, the Stockholm conference of the environment in 1972, they had said don't collect your artists, use them, and also, U.N.E.S.C.O. conference in, I think it was 1980, whenever it was, or it might have been after that, in Mexico, where they said there needs to be a far greater participation of artists in decision-making. And you know, all this thing, we had sort of prefigured and actually done, so that when they started to talk about it here, it attracted a lot of attention, but I was actually so exhausted, because I had...whereas all the institutes were all being paid for to go out, and they all had their expenses and they all went off and drank together and this that and the other, and the British Council, I managed to scrape out of the British Council £100 just, one, to pay my ticket over, and two, to be somewhere, to eat something. Well luckily I could eat during the conference in the hotel, but in Holland they just have buns or something in the middle of the day, it's buns all day, and then at the end of the day, you know, it's just a sort of sliver of salami or something on a bit of cheese or something, and then at the end of the day there were these big meals where everybody would go out together, unless it was a conference meal, it was in a big hotel in Amsterdam, a central hotel in Amsterdam. And, I could have got far more people on to my, onto, you know, because I was a fringe thing, they all wanted to come to it, and I had to put up posters and everything. Luckily I there met Colin Grigg[ph] who, when he heard me giving my talk in this room with, I could have had many more people than I had wanted at it, but, I didn't manage to get to the meeting because I was so faint, I had to go for a coffee somewhere, because I didn't have the backing of an institute behind me; although I was working for the London Institute I was still an outsider, you know. So I didn't have the support of the London Institute's funding to be there, I was there for, you

know, as usual in my usual way. And so anyway I gave this talk, and Colin Gregg[ph] turned up who was at the Arts Council at the time, and he said, 'Barbara, I'm going to help you get this going.' And I said, 'Oh and who are you?' And he said, 'Well I'm at the Arts Council,' and I'd been raving away in my lecture in the special fringe meeting about the Arts Council being the enemy within and this that and the other. And so, there he was, lovely Colin. And he has been with O. & I. ever since, and he, when he moved to the Tate, we have meetings in the Tate, and he's a great supporter and speaker for us all, because he's very socially and conceptually orientated, but a good educationalist. And anyway, so we, as a result of that there was a French contingent, and there was the Bergen contingent, Norway, and Dutch and various people, and so we set up, you know, this group. And, I was invited to Norway to speak at the Scandinavian conference, which was a management conference, but the head of the school of art and design in Bergen, Norway, paid for me to go there, and you know, they wanted me there and I gave talks in the art school and everything, and I took Graham Stevens who was an artist of inflatables who was a member of O. & I. at the time and he showed his film. And I gave this talk on the same platform at Anita Roddick, or something like that. And, so, anyway, so there was, there is, these two things, this European network for repositioning artists in society, which is, and I am a member of E.L.I.A.[??], or O. & I. as a member of the E.L.I.A., I never quite understand how this is, but I keep bumping into the, now the head of E.L.I.A., Carla, I can't remember her other name, who is a Dutch actress, and I met her at the conference, the European conference on Culture, Creativity and Work, which was at the National the other day, and there was also Marie Magdalene Cruzt[ph]. So all these people are there, and it's all there, but... It was interesting that... And Colin has been very backing me ever since, but I think inside our political world there seems to be quite a little light there in there. But it was good getting these projects going in Seville and, you know, the art schools then took up in their way what they thought it was. The Norwegian colleges, because they're very much more design, texture conscious, took it in rather a design way, you know, so they didn't do it in quite the same way. I don't know quite how that's going, I'd have to ask Colin, and I will be asking Colin because he's, I'm speaking to him next week.

I'm interested that, in the London Institute context you just worked at Chelsea. Have you ever thought of spreading it further, either within the London Institute or beyond?

Oh, yes, I mean, with the London Institute, we did actually make a proposal that the London Institute would take on this thing as a whole, but I noticed that Colin Senor[ph] seemed to want to hold it in his hand, so that was very noticeable I think. God! I hope he's not going to listen to these tapes immediately. And... But, yes, Central and St. Martin's of course are very interested, and also Central and St. Martin's set up a placement scheme, and when they first set up a placement scheme, which was a long time ago, well quite a long time ago, they did ask me to come and tell them how to do it, so I said, 'On a professional basis?' And they said, 'What's professional?' And I said, 'That you pay me.' So they didn't, but I gave a lecture there with a film and stuff. But, the idea that anybody should pay anybody, it was very harsh frankly. Yes, to the London Institute. And also to institutes of further education and polytechnics, which then became universities, yes certainly, certainly, the educational arena, very much so.

I'm going to stop there.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[40 SECS OF PROBLEMS WITH RECORDER]

Recommencing the interview with Barbara Steveni, on the 19th of October 1998, at her home in London. Part way through tape nine, side B.

Now, we're both very conscious that this is a sort of winding-up interview, and we're up to about 1992, and, you know, this is your opportunity to update us on what I know has been a very exciting period in terms of bringing your work into the contemporary period.

Right, well, actually since our last tape there has been quite a few conferences and speak opportunities around the whole subject of what is now being called apparently socially engaged art practice, which I think is the term that one must destroy as quickly as it comes on. But, we were recently, John Latham and I, at a conference in Dublin called Literale, which was an international conference which was looking at

so-called socially engaged action, which could be environmental projects or agitprop or interaction, and people had come from South Africa, the Argentine, Germany, it was very international, and we were looking at what this actual action was, and John Latham and I opened it as the pioneers of this 'out of art' context action. And it was very interesting, because, what I found interesting and sort of very affirming was that the principles that we had hammered out through our experience over this period of time, both through the industries and then through working in Government departments in the decision-making process, and how, if you go to the decision-making process, the responsibilities of what those contexts give to you, we found that context is half the work, coming through good and clear globally. Because there was quite a feeling from artists operating in Asia, Bangladesh, Singapore or whatever, in fact I had a lot of contact with an artist from Singapore who operates out of a power pack, which he takes round to conferences and then it goes up on to, with a digital computer, a digital projector, so you can see what his works are, and they're all on his power pack and Internet. And everybody is connected by e-mail. And so, using that technology, the important thing that I was referring to, which was that context is half the work, is the sensitivity to a context that, if you, as an artist, are deciding to do an action, like lots of people now, the younger artists are doing actions in the streets again and in shops and in sort of the market venues; there was just recently a thing which actually the Tate Gallery backed, which was of a wedding in the Borough market. I actually personally didn't think it worked very well, because it was...it was not about the art so much. It was quite well choreographed, but it wasn't an interaction, it wasn't the way we had operated to do with change and a raising of consciousness; it was very much an entertainment, this recent work, but it was quite a young artist. But this business about context and how important it is when operating in a global situation, because when we started this action, we were finding out how it was to be in those parts of the society that the artist definitely wasn't in, like in industries, in, as an artist, not in an applied way, and again associated with Government departments and what they were looking at. So again those principles hammered out in the present day are still standing very well, because you cannot impose, say, a Western notion of, say contemporary art or what art is, on a culture that has no experience of that at all, and it would be absolutely hopeless in Bangladesh or this that and the other, unless you were very sensitive and had done the research to that context, on what it was that you were intending to bring about, and your concern

with the people and the context and the culture and its history. So, it was very good to feel how, the context is half the work, can go anywhere and stand and be anywhere, and I also felt that our method of procedure, of how you go into a thing, how you research it, stood very well and stands in a global, in its global day. So, I felt very encouraged by that, and I was getting it echoed back to me, and it was from numbers of the people from South Africa and from Singapore and, you know, how this worked. It was interesting also to see how the whole notion of repositioning the artist, how the whole art form, what the form of art would be for the future, what the responsibilities of art action are when you go into these wider contexts and how the contexts completely change, what the art form is, and then of course we have a context of the Internet and the technologies and how those, how those are going to be used by the artist, or will the artist be used by them. You know, all these questions came up, and come up, of which I feel we have a lot of experience to offer, you know, in contexts which haven't been sort of approached before. It's noticeable now that, well, just recently talking with them all, that again the notion of engaging with, say, political organisations like Government, on the whole the artists don't consider that an area to engage with, and it's been something that's been quite unique to A.P.G. and O. & I., to actually engage with Government structures, but it's like engaging with cultural policy, where does the culture fit? I mean it's very interesting just now, we are having, we are trying to take forward this action with the present Government, and of course when the present Government came in and, you know, I actually voted for the first time for any political party, because one did feel, my God! this will be the change, and of course when we did it the first time round we had Barbara Castle and Tony Benn and, you know, it felt good, and we came in through that level, and with those people, and at a level that, our level of intent was listened to seriously. Now, this Government has swept in, intending and knowing exactly what it was going to do, and proclaiming a lot to do with, you know, sort of... I must stop saying 'you know', I say it all the time. Can you go through the tapes taking it out please. But anyway, the thing about this Government wooing the cultural industries and the inverted commas around the word 'industries', because, I might have said this before on a tape, it's been quite difficult to get to the people now. I mean we got to them just before the election, you know, we got to Tony Blair and people, and they advised us to go to Stephen Byers whoever it was. But once they were in, you couldn't get anywhere near it. But I mean I've hung on to my Department of Health, Tessa

Jowell, and I'm pushing through with the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and we did have a very interesting meeting just recently about culture, and you know, what was this culture and how was it operating with its so-called arts bodies, like the Arts Council, and there was quite a sharp lady there who was objecting to quite a lot of our written stuff that we had sent, quite a lot of it of course heavily weighted by Mr Latham's terminology which of course they take great difficulty in getting, but I mean that's quite interesting. And, she asked some questions, like, 'Don't you think there will be a conflict of interests?' And we said, yes, there could be a conflict of interest of what the Department of Culture thinks is culture and what we as artists, using our method of procedure in your department, would see what you were doing, yes there could be a conflict of interest. And she then said, 'Well supposing you come in?' I mean, they had actually got the idea once we were talking to them that we would come in, we are not management consultants, we are actually artists, but we are coming in in this particular way that we had operated in Government with before, which had been very successful in the long term, and by successful, it went into the culture and affected policy. And, she also said, 'Well supposing you...supposing, after you've done your feasibility,' because we always do a feasibility first, 'after you've done your feasibility period, supposing you find that we are doing it anyway; would you say so?' And we said, yes. You know, so, we had a very nice discussion on a level with it, and whether it will go through or not, I don't know, but... And also I'm...we're talking to the British Council about a placement with the British Council on the same sort of level. So it's very interesting that in these big conferences with people operating now in all different countries, and of course America doing a lot of 'social action art', and have written books about it and all this sort of thing, I still feel very confident that the method of procedure is standing, so I'm reinforcing that. And it is also interesting that, because the times have changed, and again, and because they are global, this is very, this makes a great difference to what sort of interaction you do where, and how, and whether the Western models, you know, relate to the so-called developing world. And so that's an interesting development and change, because of course when we first started to do this thing, I mean, we hadn't, I think I've said this before, there wasn't even an awareness of the hole in the ozone zone, so all these organisations, the multinationals and this that and the other hadn't had to be aware of a lot of the things that the public consciousness was forcing them to be aware of, and I

think it's very interesting to see how B.P. are currently being tackled on their arms to, is it Colombia or...

Yes, Columbia.

Yes, you see, because that whole business of trade versus human rights, all these things are coming up, and are very much in a field that we had looked at, because we always said, the artist is there as a representative of future generations, using the medium of the art form which are, noises and marks you might say, sounds and visuals, but it's the form of communication that, it's the communication that's the important action, and... Oh God! I've lost my train there. Well, I think that... I've completely lost where I was. You'll have to...

Well, it's a good way of expressing it actually, being, you know, a kind of spokesman for future generations, it's a very interesting idea.

Well yes. No, that was it. What we are saying is that, the artist is there as a representative of future generations, of which an organisation that you are with is a part, and therefore the responsibility is for the future. And so, we are not there to make the profits, we are not there to do this that and the other; we are there to put up a picture of the possibilities of where it stands in the future, and I think that this is, when we were talking with B.P. and we talked to them about, well what, how are they going to, what are they going to do about the fact that it's not going to be fossil fuels any more, what's their development to wind power and, you know, other forms of development, and they were very quick to come back and say, 'Oh we've got our research departments,' and this that and the other, and that's sort of coming up. So, all these issues are huge issues which you might say, what on earth can the artist do? Well, the artist can do something, we know that they can from the way they work, the way they are committed, the way they use these different forms of communication and information. And it was very encouraging to see how this movement and these artists, some of the artists from, you know, like Argentina and Singapore and places, were operating in the way that we were talking about, but in a way we had something to offer them in terms of experience and stuff which, I found it very exciting to feel that this was happening.

I mean did you get a strong sense of their being very differently placed in terms of political freedom, for example?

Oh yes, absolutely. I mean, we talked a lot about this, I mean like, we got put in prison for our actions which were seen as anarchical, burning books and you know, stuff, but that was because we were just seen as subversives at that time, you know, in our country. But of course in other countries, you know, political action, I mean like the Chinese in Tiananmen Square and everything like that, obviously there's a big difference. But it was interesting again talking to this Chinese artist that.....

End of F6691 Side B

F6692 Side A

Continuing the interview with Barbara Steveni on the 19th of October. Tape ten, side A.

And we were just talking about politics and art.

Yes. It's the difference about the Western, and if you are actively suppressed for discussing ideas or, let alone enacting out ideas, you know, the complete difference with oppressive regimes. And of course to a certain extent these artists weren't operating in too oppressive regimes, although...they were drawing attention more to, through their art action, as far as I understood it, I mean I didn't have time to get all of it, you know, to concerns of minority groups, like oppressed groups and you know, environmental, and concerns of minority groups, you know, women or children or, they would... You know, they would address issues that needed to be confronted and brought out. I think there is a big feeling that there is possibilities to do something in Burma soon, you know, in spite of, I mean this particular Chinese artist is going to do something in Burma; I mean he's very strong, he's called Jay Koh, K-O-H, and he was initially from Singapore but, you know, having grown up with nothing, and having fought his way right through to live in Cologne and be an artist, I mean he was a scientist before and, you know, different trade, and then he took up this action and he publishes books and everything. But he's come right through from having no country, and this is very interesting, you know, for this period, the whole business of having a country, and do you belong anywhere, because everybody now has to belong everywhere but they carry with them their own culture. So all this is being a very new area for this type of action, which, this type of art. And, I'm very pleased, as I speak now, to have been part of an action where, which is to do with the way the world is going and can go, and I'm quite thrilled with it as I speak to you, because it's looking so interesting. And I feel, I feel optimistic that strong artists are a very cohesive, valuable quality for the world, and the more they can develop and be strong and not just be little entrepreneurs from Thatcherism and seeing how to use funding structures to do their work, the better it will be that they're strong and they respond to contexts and to concerns and issues. And I feel very strongly about that, because, I was horrified to hear that a group of artists in this country, but they work a lot in Europe,

had stopped doing projects because they hadn't had any funding through, you know, through the funding structures. I mean God! we would never have done anything, I would never have done anything, I'm still on Social, you know, I mean, and I'm meant to have retired and all these things that you are meant to do, which I don't believe any artist ever does. So, I think it's very encouraging to know that there are some strong people. And I was thinking too also, in fact we were discussing this, perhaps there's only, in the whole world, a thousand really strong artists, and we were trying to think what number we would actually think of strong artists there could be, you know.

I mean there is a practical problem of basic survival underlying that, isn't there.

Oh yes.

I mean can you imagine any solution in a sense to not being corrupted by the kind of financial possibilities?

Well, I found in my experience, I can't answer it fully because I know how desperate one gets when everything has broken down and you can't move. I'm very lucky now because I have a roof over my head, and I know that people sleep on the floor, you know, this particular artist sleeps on the floor in whatever country he's in, but he still manages to do these things, and see where to get... You know, because his work is so good, there are the funding structures there that he will get his books published, you know, he will get his exhibition, or he will get his thing documented by the funding structures that are there. I think that... I think that one builds up a network of, you build up a network of support on quality, and I think that that grows around you as you stick to your guns, I think. It's not going to be there all the time, and you will go...and it certainly isn't, and you have to keep sort of dipping in to where there is a funding source or something, but I definitely think that it's terribly important to, that the motivation is not geared by the funds, and that it's the other way round, and that's why to fill in forms where they talk about the funding structures, I find, well I would do in my own experience, sorry, [laughing], I would do in my own experience find it very difficult to go that way round, but I know it also hampers me, because I cannot, I have enormous difficulties filling in applications for funding and trying to twist

myself into something that one is not, and I think it's very bad. I mean it might be useful as the administrations and the bureaucracies come behind what it is artists have shown them to do, and then they make, they set up a funding structure for that form of art or that form of activity. It always comes afterwards, they never acknowledge the origins, and they usually weaken the form of action, but this is me speaking from my experience and it might not be the experience of the younger artists who use those funding structures. I'm talking about this country; in, say, in America and Germany where they have enormous funding structures for artists, and of course in the developed world it's a completely different thing, the developing world. And I just hope structures, funding structures, don't become the priority. I mean what one finds all the time is that, you know, the developing countries will take models from the West, you know, not all the time they don't, of course they don't, because the culture is very different. You can hear that I am of course very against State funding, you know, I would like to put quite a bit of time into dealing with not letting the funds go to... If there are going to be State funds for culture, that there's a much greater emphasis on the artist doing it, and... Perhaps I don't want to get into this discussion, because, to get into a discussion about art bureaucracies is rather sort of narrow, but at the same time, I mean if a country is going to put funds towards its culture, and each country uses, absorbs or controls its artists in different ways, well I just feel it's up to the artist, I don't like to even hear about the funding structures, because I think if the art is good and there's track records and there's history and there's motivation and perseverance, that all the structures and not just the art funding structures are there for the artist to engage at a proper professional level, and I don't like it sort of being allowed through on a special level through a funding structure. Perhaps I shouldn't say any more on that one.

Well, it's a good point, not often raised. You were mentioning your engagement in an Irish initiative earlier that you wanted to come back to.

Yes. Well, in the sort of late Eighties, which was still Thatcher, I think I might have mentioned it before, I went to...I went to a Henry Moore opening at the Royal Academy, and I think I mentioned before, and Thatcher came in with her minders, and she started roaring away about Henry Moore and his sensitive hands, and we were thinking, Christ! who wrote her speeches, you know. And anyway, I think I said it on

another tape, I wrote to Thatcher saying, perhaps you haven't been aware that artists have actually worked in Government, and please draw this to the attention of your departments, at Secretary of State level. And, so she did. So there was the Department of Education, Environment, and the Welsh Office sort of came back, and we were able to use that letter and everything to approach the Irish Office in Northern Ireland. But of course it was still heavily in a difficult time, and the two parts of the department, the two parts that were to do with British Government I suppose, was Education and Environment that could have been anything that one might have felt that one could have done anything with. Anyway, I started some sort of negotiations with those departments, under that Government at the time, and it was enormously difficult, and, I had no backup over there at the time, you know, one needs some people running with it. I mean Declan McGonagle, who is now a director of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Dublin, was there, but you know, because of the political thing, it was enormously difficult, so I couldn't actually take it forward very far. Although they were interested, I didn't have some artists there who I could do it with, you know, they were not strong enough. Anyway, that was in '80. So, the next time that I made sort of any move on the Irish front so to speak was, when I went to the Labour Party women's conference just after the Labour Party had got in.

We're just going to break for a moment there.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Re-starting the tape.

Yes, I was talking about my next sort of engagement on the Irish front so to speak, came at the Labour Party's women's conference, it was all the new delegates, and it was particularly the women's action, because of course there was an enormous number of new Members of Parliament that were women, more than there had ever been before. Anyway, as a new Labour delegate, I went to this conference, and I did meet Mo Mowlam there, who of course was on the platform. In fact it was a very exciting conference, because, well they hadn't announced, they said two speakers were unannounced, and one was Tony Blair and the other was Mo for obviously security reasons. And, of course it was great. I mean it was very, we were still sort of

reeling from the Labour Party having won with such a landslide victory, and, I must say, you know, Tony Blair, it was so believing in it all, they were so believing in it all, and all the time I was saying, you know, having sort of worked a bit in the Labour Party offices with a lot of Old Labour people, because I was working for my particular constituency, and I had heard them being very sort of sceptical about the New Labour coming in, and all the rhetoric as, it was something. But one just felt, well, you know, they are believing in it, and... So it was very, it was...I did feel that this guy, Tony Blair, really was believing in what he was saying; he was believing in it. Whether it's possible, you know, and once you are in power it's all sort of different and everything, but at this particular conference it was quite uplifting, you really felt something could happen again. And I'm sure if John had been there he would have been completely sceptical, not at all impressed, because he is not...his idea is not my ideas about that at all. I must be more explicit about that later, but... At this particular thing I did hand to Mo Mowlam my package on O. & I., and said I would like to take it up with her at a later date, and she said, 'OK Barbara, hand it to my...' and she had a, because she had had this health trouble, as you know she had had cancer or whatever it was, and so she had a special person looking after all her stuff, that was taking care of her health as well, so I gave it to her, and anyway... But, it was, I was very pleased that I had handed it her, because, later on, after I had been in Literale – oh there were, at that conference, Joan Ruddock was a very good speaker, Clare Short, and I actually did a drawing of all their profiles as these women were sitting there, and they were just so magnificent, and I was going to do a photograph and stuff round them. Anyway, that's on the side, I might get it into my film. But, anyway, so, in Ireland, when we were doing this thing, this Literale conference, I did say to Declan McGonagle, 'Now Declan, now you've sunk to being a museum man,' I said, 'I'm going to get you to help me take this initiative through now in Northern Ireland, because the time is much better now.' Now of course they are going to, you know, there are going to be artist projects, this that and the other, but it has to be actually in relation to, you know, policy and how, whatever the Irish Government is going to be. And so, I said, because now I've got quite a lot of people in Ireland, you know, there to carry the things forward, not just Declan but a lot of artists and interesting people to do it, in fact Ian Hunter, who is running projects, environment, who put on this Literale conference would be very pleased to, he's going to have me over there to try and take it through, so I'll see if I can do that. I

mean, the thing is that, in the long term I think it is still important, I would say this, that we engage the so-called decision-makers in the activity of incorporating the cultural dimension and activity of artists, not just speaking about them as cultural industries, not just on think tanks and this that and the other, and not just the hype and the Turner prizes, but actually in a committed and experienced way of how one might work together and utilise this force, which is not used. So, still determined to do this. This could be completely mad, but no madder than I've ever been, so, I'm hoping that these young artists that are working with us and comprising the artist forum who are working with the new O. & I. will be engaged in taking these things forward with me now, you know, so, that's what I am looking forward to, and they do seem pretty keen. So, maybe this will all happen, and it isn't just a madness. So, that's one of the projects I'm wanting to take forward. And it was interesting, because at the time when the Thatcher, you know, when I went at it first and I was talking to a very good Irish multimedia artist who heads up the multimedia at the London Institute, Central St. Martin's, Ann Tallantire[ph], and she is very good, and she said, 'Well we couldn't do it, we couldn't do it now, I couldn't possibly do it, I would come with my coat,' you know. She would come with a coat which would mean that she couldn't do it, so, because of the, you know, the divide, and the left-right divide. But it's a different environment now, possibly, there's still the divide but it's something that we can look at again in its new context. I mean, it might go out the window next week, by the time Gerry Adams and the rest of them have sorted it out.

I mean Ireland is probably the most politically sensitive area in Britain...

It is.

...in which you could kind of enter.

Absolutely.

How confrontational would you choose to be, or would you always choose to sort of expose things more quietly through...?

Oh absolutely. Nothing is, you wouldn't...I mean I would speak for the artist who would be the person who would be running with it. Obviously, the...well, I wouldn't take the decision of the artist who would be actually doing the placement, or the group of artists that would be doing the placement. Presumably they would sum up accurately, or as near accurately as possible, the context in which they would do their actions, or their activity, and I would imagine that confrontational would not be it, but I mean, I'm saying, they would be sensitive and good enough for the action, otherwise we wouldn't, well one, we wouldn't put them forward, but I don't want to take a...we would have a big debate about how to take it forward, and Ann Tallantire[ph] would be right in there with me and John Carson again, who are both Irish, and some of the people we met over there, you know, the discussion on how it should be done and what should be done and whether it would be done would be taken in the context in which it would be being done, and of course if one was invited to do, you know, to work in this way by, you know, that bit of the Government, whether it was the Irish Government or this part, or the new Irish Assembly or whatever. So, the context would dictate, the context and the artist together would home down on what could most creatively be done. I say, carefully avoiding words like 'useful' or 'help' or...

I'm just going to stop for a moment.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Re-starting the tape. Your sort of working relationship with John, you have mentioned sort of different points of contact and difference, and the fact that you are working from separate establishments at the moment, even though you obviously see each other on a very regular basis, how has that affected the kind of product in terms of the organisations that you have developed between you?

Well I think that, as I operate very much more you might say in...well when I say instinctively, I didn't have a standard education you might say, so I've operated, I don't like to use the word 'instinctively', because it feels quite weak, but, it doesn't sound very constructive, but, I have worked very differently from John, because John's strong orientation and focus was around language and words, and his actual medium, working with books, and also with the dot and the mark and the least mark,

and looking at matter, meant that, and his looking at the power of language, was very analytical, and I think that I worked through the experience of finding out what it was like being out there, as did he, and of course this made me feel very vulnerable, because I always felt that I personally didn't have the intellectual, or you might say academic background to back me up. But then, as I found my feet so to speak, in the actual doing of what I was doing, of course I gained a lot of confidence, and I think that John recognised that I was good at doing what it was that, which was the bringing together and the action, and you might say the assemblage of the organisation, as an active generative force for, as an artist's vessel so to speak. And I found that John has, all this time has been distilling very precisely what it is that, what he saw as he calls it, the dimensionality of art does in its relation to the sciences and the particular dividing sciences, and he's been looking at that art track and getting it more and more distilled, what it actually was. So in a way he has, what he is saying is, by a careful mapping of how arts dimension relates to the physical sciences, that is a great underpinning to the action of O. & I., or A.P.G., of the artist in the society, looking basically at the dividing effect of language and money and say, the sciences in their own capsule so to speak, if they are not related to the dimension which comes in through the art medium of noises and marks. I probably haven't said that very well and you will probably be doing it differently. But it's, I've had to all the time deal with John's determination of the importance of that area of his focus, on the action which I would be getting going, and John would be very helpful on the specific actions and always very, very perceptive and very rigorous on, you know, any of the placement things and talking with artists, but there was always a problem, or, at different times, I mean it sort of reared itself mostly at the Hayward where everybody said, it was too personalised around John's individuality, and that, who was he to be dictating the work of a group? I mean Caroline Tisdall wrote in 'The Guardian' about that, and Peter Fuller and everything, and there was a lot of clashing on that. But nevertheless, his presence there, and his conviction and his work as an artist, has been very holding as a founding member with me, but it's always been quite difficult, because other artists at different times have either, at various times have resented John's influence you might say, and you know, and his influence on me. So there would be a bit of that. But now I see that, you know, it is nothing that, that is a very trivial, short-term thinking, like I think left-right politics is short-term thinking, although everybody has to be socialistly Left. Anyway, so, it's always been difficult.

It's always been difficult because, I mean when I first split up from John, which was after the Hayward, for all the pressures that were around at that time, it was because I needed to know why I was doing this action, that wasn't only being done through John's action, because I had to separate myself from that. And I find it all the way along the line, if John for instance, I mean John wrote to the Minister, you know, for Culture, Chris Smith, and needless to say, his language and talking about the dimensionality of art and flat time to Chris Smith in there, is going to go, you know, glazed eyes, and you know, then I have to counteract the glazed eyes and sarcasm that will come up around the language or something. And yet I know underneath it that, if there's the right audience, I think that you know, a lot of the times John will misjudge his audience, because he's so committed and focused that sometimes his audience, it's not the right audience for him to be speaking to at that level, because he hasn't got them with him. I always say, well who's the audience and who's the...and who are they, you know, I always ask those questions. And who's the we, you know. I always need to get that clear with John, because, he talks in the broadest terms, and that's sometimes difficult when you're down on the focus. But I mean he's absolutely marvellous when it comes to artists asking him specific questions. If they ask him the questions, and then he comes back that way, it's ace, you know, but if John is going that way, he could lose a lot of it. And that's always been quite difficult in doing this thing. I mean I've found that, it's been very good for me to be in a separate establishment, I know it has, I mean, because I can feel my edges and my boundaries, although I work a lot with John on specific projects, obviously, and also on the doing of this, although I will say, getting together the Artist Forum has been about the most difficult bit of it, because of the personalities of the artists, you know, and whether the younger generation are happy that John has this influence. A lot of them are, because it's like Joseph Beuys or John Latham or something like that, that's really.....

End of F6692 Side A

F6692 Side B

Continuing the tape with Barbara Steveni, 19th of October. Tape ten, side B.

Yes I think one of the big things about operating as an artist group, and allowing for the individual, I mean when we do actually placements it's very clearly, any placement is the responsibility of the artist doing the placement, although, you know, the O. & I. artist is always there for us to discuss the thing. But in relation to John's influence, I think it's always been a continuous pushing and pulling, how the personality relates to the group, and how, you know, in different times, say the younger artists are able to accept what, the time of Stuart Brisley and everything, they weren't prepared to go along with quite a lot of John's terminology, because as soon as he used a word, like, say, the Noit Panel, that then belonged to John, or 'incidental person' was a John phrase, and therefore, did that make everybody else have to concede to John? They were sort of, very worried about that then.

I mean does the validity of terms like that, get questioned with each generation that comes into your net?

Absolutely, and it's very interesting now because, I think it was very great when Joseph Beuys said in Kassel in '77 or '78 or something, 'Artist, no; incidental person, yes,' because all the time one is questioning artist. So, what do you call a person who is doing art and, you know, are we still using the word artist? So all those questions are questioned all the time. And, we were just talking about what we should call this paper that we are putting back over the Net, this discussion on this Literale conference, should we use it critical dialogue? Even the word 'critical' now hangs around and becomes part of the academic industry. So every word has to be very carefully, actually, not personalised, person personalised, but each word has to really mean what it's trying to mean at that moment in time; we hope we can give it a longer generation before it's captured by a bureaucracy, but you know, you have to do it all the time. And, yes the artists continue to question this, but, John if questioned is very good at coming back with satisfactory answers, I think, but he does need to be questioned, rather than just put them out.

Just sort of looking back over your career, which political environment have you most enjoyed working in, sort of then or now?

Well, the trouble is, when you are in it, you are just in it, and it's difficult, and it's exciting, and it's always like that. I mean, I am hoping that it's going to be very exciting now, and I am finding it exciting again with this excitement coming in our direction. I mean there was an awful sort of lull in the Eighties of, you know, I mean, like nothing, you know, that was difficult. I think there's an exciting time now, because I'm an idiot, and, it was very exciting then.

You're an optimist.

Yes, optimist, visionary, eccentric, you know, you choose a word, whatever it is. So, I'm thinking it's very exciting now. I hope that some of these things will be able to be pushed through at a level where they can actually affect, you know, policy, and I'm hoping that there will be some strong enough artists around to want to do that with me. Maybe they won't, they might want to go off on a completely different direction, but if it feels right to them, then it will feel right to them, it might not feel to me, but I hope it will. I mean, I'm quite excited at this, if we get this Web site for the Artist Forum, you know, this international Web site, if we get the money for that, which, I've wasn't going to, as I say, put in for any money, but they actually encouraged me. I was encouraged by 'the them', in inverted commas, to put in for this thing, and as it only took a week to put in this application, rather than a total and utter agony of twisting, we could actually put it in for what it was that we wanted to do. It felt better. But I would rather that, say... The whole idea is to get these other bodies to invite artists, the whole idea is, invite in the artist along these methods that we found optimised the exchange of communication, invite the artist in, you cannot afford to lose this very valuable resource, but don't get the administration from the bureaucracies to farm artists and hold them down and control them, and artists have to be very strong that they don't let this happen to them. So I'm feeling quite optimistic, because I am crazy.

Can you describe how the Web site might work?

Well I'm of course, as I say, I'm, technologically I'm a Bambi stapler here you are speaking to; they all tell me about it, and they say, 'Oh Barbara we did like you being so up-front about not knowing anything about the technology,' like they said, 'Oh move aside, shall I sit in the driving seat?' they said, sitting down in my room and saying, 'Oh I just love this room,' which I keep all my assemblage rubble on the floor, because I like to feel that it's still about me, even while one's going into the technology. Well the idea basically to start with is that we have, well I mean, lots of them have this, that we have a power pack of portable computer and that we have regular monthly meetings at which papers will be delivered and put up simultaneously. It sounds very labour-intensive to me, but anyway, we...I'm not doing it, I told them, you know; if you are doing it, this is what you want. That we put up these, we respond to papers and, you know, an artist group is no more than fifteen at any one time, probably be less than that, and that it goes up on the Web site and is put out internationally to other people that we, you know, through e-mail, and our distribution is through e-mail, but we also have stored on there our archives and our history and some video stuff that we've done recently, and that can be used, for example, later on when we, you know, at conferences and stuff. So that we are getting response to what is this action now, what is the role of the artist in the 21st century, you know, how does it all fit, and all that is in the O. & I. Web site hopefully. And so, that will be a good thing. At the same time, the other thing is that I really hope that we will get some good projects going with decision-making in different countries, you know, with governments and whatever, there are people coming over from, I think I mentioned, America and from the United Nations who are interested to do something with us, God knows what but we'll have to go into it. And all this sounds very ambitious, and none of it might ever happen, and I'm always being accused of, well not always being accused, some people say, oh God! Barbara, you must, you know, focus, you've got to be realistic, and I'm very aware that, you know, I do have to be realistic, I'm very aware that there's £138 left in O. & I. at the moment, and the telephone has to be paid and this that and the other, but nevertheless this is what I'm doing, or what we are doing, and we will see what happens to it.

Now we're sort of up to date on your professional life.

Mm. Do you want a bit of poison[??]?

It's your last chance to review your personal life before we come to an end.

Oh my God! my personal life. And we're not doing the Anaïs Nin on this tape are we?

Entirely up to you.

No no. That's my book. Yes, well, lovers have come in and out, needless to say, but... No, on the personal life, you were asking questions on how it actually affected our children.

Yes, because you were sort of producing your babies in a very radical time, at a time when you were very positioned very radically, in terms of lifestyle.

Right, well, yes I think our two elder boys, Noah and John Paul, I think had an easier time of coping with our behaviour. Well I say that, I mean they will roar opposition to this if they hear this tape. Like Noah said when we were first, I might have said this already on the tape at the beginning, when we were first... We were in the first colour supplement, I don't know if I talked to you about this, I possibly did. The first colour supplement was 'The Times' colour supplement, and there was a sort of interviewer called Pauline Peters, and 'The Times' newspaper person at the time was Elspeth Uder[ph], and she said, 'Well, why don't you...why don't we get something written about this in...' she was the wife of Thomson newspapers or whatever, and she was at the Royal College and she was doing design and you know, whatever. And she said, 'Well why don't we get Pauline Peters to come round and interview you in the first colour supplement of "The Times",' you see. So, we thought, oh my God! well let's see what Pauline Peters writes, you see. So we tried to get an article from her, and we got something. It might not have been the first colour supplement, it might have been the second, you know, it was just when the first colour supplements had come out with 'The Times', they were the first ones to do them. And, so we got, we read this Pauline Peters thing, we thought, oh my God! you know, it's going to be all gossip and, you know, this that and the other, it won't be serious and, you know. No, we can't have this. And then we said, well we can't have her in our home. So, we

won't turn it down, because it will obviously be useful, but let's go around the corner and, you know, have the interview there. But unfortunately she was determined to come back into the house, so she came back and of course there was all this stuff about, you know, kitchen and pots and you know, what we cooked in and, you know. And then out came all the awful things I'd said about the children, which was, you know, that I was...it came out that I was very proud of them and I hardly ever go up to their rooms, they're upstairs, they're getting on with their own lives, and this that and the other, I hardly ever go up there. And all this of course came out in the colour supplement at which both the boys were absolutely furious, especially the eldest one, and I said, 'Oh I never said that,' and he said, 'Oh of course you did, that's just the sort of thing you'd say. And how am I going to live this down, you know, in our school?' So they were, they were at Latimer at the time. And so, I really did badly with them in the colour supplement. But, anyway, so, that was at that time. But seriously, I mean J.P. used to, that's the second son, I mean both of them used to go around art exhibitions with us and slide around on the floor, and generally raise eyebrows. And then when we did events and happenings and things in, like we did a thing called, what was it called? Something in Better Books, where we had inflatables and helium balloons, and also in the I.C.A. and everything, and we had the boys inside and J.P. was in a hammock with, we were feeding him junior aspirins because he had such a terrible headache because I think the helium was coming through, and you know, I mean, it was a tough time doing the events and happenings, you know. And we noticed we were all falling over in this enormous inflatable in the I.C.A., because helium balloons were leaking and, you know, I mean altogether they...they did the events and happenings with us, and they were excited and pretty good with it. And then later on when we did the Destruction in Art symposium, Noah did events with Yoko Ono, which there was one event which was to do with, it was called Steam Event, and we had the steam kettles a long time with Steam Event written on it in red paint, and where Yoko did a, she sent a message via steam to, you know, we boiled the kettle and then Yoko at one place would be reading what it was that Noah was hearing through the steam of this kettle or, I don't know, it was a conceptual work done by Yoko and Noah. And of course Noah was instrumental in making the first film with John making any films at all, because he suddenly came in one day and said, 'I want to make a film'. I think I told you this, did I, on the tape? Well he came in one day and said, 'I want to make a film.' So, John hadn't actually

thought of making a film at the time, but... So, he made cut-outs and set up a rostrum camera, and just moved them a little bit at a time and then, that became a film called 'Speak', which has got these whirling things and the soundtrack is cutting through some books with a circular saw, and the vibration, you know, the syncopation is the circular saw coming up against the staples which held, you know, binding the book together. But Noah was... Noah was very inventive with the ideas, and so the very first... and he made some works to watching John doing this thing, and there is a work called 'Noah's', which is somewhere in the collection. And J.P. was very active in the actions. And now in their inner maturity, Noah is a philosopher and he was also a musician, a concert pianist, and then he changed to being a philosopher, but he still plays, and they exchange papers, and Noah is a very fierce critic of John, and John always... Well Noah sort of says, 'Well I think that John just thinks I am a space-based individual, and that I am not a time-based individual,' and so I think he has agreed to the fact that they can't really come together on work, because Noah's very sharp philosophical mind is inclined not to accept quite what John is saying, although they do struggle with it, and it's very interesting how they struggle with it. I mean their e-mails coming through, because, from Noah in New York, he's at Columbia and Barnard, on consciousness and, you know, he's, all his questioning that he asks John. So there's a lot of exchange there. And J.P., who is a scientist, is very, very pro John and practical with John, and, I think they're both very admiring of him, and, he's very admiring of them being academics who have all their degrees behind them. I mean one day – oh he won't like me saying this. Oh I'm going to say it. One day he came in and he said, 'Look what John Paul is called, look what John Paul's got after his name.' And he came in with an envelope, because J.P. lives in a flat upstairs at the moment, because his marriage broke up and everything, and anyway. And he came in with this envelope and it had 'Dr J.P. Latham', you know, and then, and all the things ran right off the envelope. And John was just so, you know, he was just enjoying the fact that there was this guy who was J.P. who has got an enormous amount of human attention to put on things. Both of them are very very human and very very – Oh God! I'm a mother here – very very bright and very very human. No but, what I mean is, they've kept their child and they've kept their inquiry right through, so that they come cross in a very, I think, human way. I think that there's been a great exchange with them and us, and you know, I mean I said the other say with, I think to J.P., 'Oh God! you know, mothers are just, it's just so awful being a

mother,' or something like that, at which J.P. came across with, 'Not all mothers,' you know, he was being very supportive. But I know I've...I think both of them are very pleased with the work I've done on myself, to make myself into an individual, because there was a lot of shouting and screaming in their younger days with me completely not able to cope with what I was trying to bring through in myself. My understanding of my relationship to John and all that was, it wasn't I think until I separated that that became very much easier all round, I mean both the boys said that was better, although Xenia did suffer from the break-up around the time of the Hayward Gallery, when I left and lived with somebody else, and she did suffer from that, and she's had, she has had a much more difficult life, because, it was very confused for her and she's had a lot of violence that has happened to her in her school and, you know, I told you about her assault and everything. And it's been more difficult for her to understand what that art activity was that John was engaged in, in particular with the books, because she rather revered how hard it was to write a book, to write anything. She actually writes terribly well directly from herself, beautiful stuff, I think it's actually pure poetry but I can't tell her anything because I am me, and it would immediately fall into disrepute. And she's very talented visually, very practical, but if she comes anywhere near John she just wants to clear everything up and bin it and order it and make it clean, you know, she's obsessed with, what was all that mess about, I think. But that, she's getting through that, you know, it was difficult for her. But, better for them.

Now, I think we really are winding up now. So just think if there's anything really important that you want to put on tape at this point.

[PAUSE FOR THOUGHT] Well again, I really, for me, and I suppose it's in my book and what I do, is, I would really like to see how John's view of art in relation to physics works out with the physicists, because I know that he feels that that is a very underpinning, hugely important principle, and therefore affects the role of the artist. So I am hoping that that, that some form of exchange will happen with the scientific side, because John has put a lot of...I have felt, he hasn't meant to, I have felt the pressure all the time of John saying, this is the way it works, this is the way it is on me personally, and therefore of course I want to see that being echoed back in some way from the other discipline, you know, so that art goes into the discipline in the way that

he wants that to happen. And I have sat in on a very interesting meeting with Chris Isham[ph] at Imperial College about what it is that John is seeing, and he is a very interesting scientist, he's theoretical physics, and he is looking, he said, 'I'm always interested at different ways of viewing the world from, you know, different angles, like the artist,' and he said, he had tried with religion and has been deeply disappointed that it hadn't come through, and I was thinking to myself, oh my God! I hope it comes through through the art, you know. Because a lot of the terms John was using were terms that are their terms, and John was using them in his way, but this guy was open enough to want to say, well could we use...this is what energy means to us, this is what event means to us; now, could we use another word for it here? And they were working it out and pushing it through, and that was very gorgeous for me. Whether they will be prepared to do that enough, and I'm hoping we can set up this exchange in Oxford, because this guy said, well, 'I've lost a lot of friends by stepping out of my discipline to look at, you know, other views of the world, you know, so we'll do it in Oxford rather than London.' Anyway, we'll see how that comes through. But, so for me it's very important, I think, as I see John, you know, also going in to hospital and everything, how, I hope that will come back to my satisfaction, because I'm quite critical, because I really, I can't just, I can't just wipe it under, sweep it under the carpet as, OK, it has to satisfy me that it is the case, and also, whether it is or isn't the case, I know that the action that I have been responsible for initiating a lot of and getting through, I think it stands anyway through its work, although John will say, well it will stand so much stronger if it's seen that at the end of the 20th century, going into the 21st, you know, the whole dimensionality of art is in a different position to the dividing disciplines of science and stuff and therefore it's very much stronger to do this action, so we'll see.

Well I've got one last question for you, which is, this sort of, throughout the period that you've both been working, John has continued to produce what one might call sort of visible artefacts, you know, individual items.

Mm.

Whereas your kind of legacy is going to be this enormous project in effect, it's going to be a lot of documentation and history. Do you ever have a temptation to come back to your kind of artistic roots and just produce something?

Well I.... Yes, well, I always feel accused, because, when that question comes up, because I feel, I very much want to do that; that's why I don't clear away the bits and pieces of the assemblage in my room, in my studio or whatever we like to call it, and it's just been put on to a video, which I'm not very pleased with, it's not my video but somebody else has done it. Because I want around me the visible bits, although this big action is, you know, my performance, or you might say whatever it is, I am hoping that, and I have done this filming, you know, two years ago, with this film-maker, this woman film-maker, Rene, and doing, you know, walking across the rubble, and we are trying to make this film of my actual journey, which is a film, and which will be on CD-ROM and will be an installation and, you know, so, I've got that there as the way I'd like to take it forward as a visible output.

It will be your final art work, as it were.

Oh well I don't like...

Lasting art work; final sounds terrible.

Well I don't like...you see I never never use the word final my dear.

No, quite.

How could I use final? Because it's a journey.

It's part of your journey, it's your...

Yes, it's part of my journey. Yes, well, it was my path you see, this is a film about the path. But then I don't want it to be illustrational, but I hope it will be interesting visually, I think it will be, it's got the most lovely colour, and peeling wall and rubble and all the things I like in it, but it's also got the big doors of the Scottish Office,

which are big lead doors being pushed through, which we'll do in CD-ROM, set into the thing. So we've done quite a bit of that, and that is what I'm looking forward to doing, and working with other women artists on shows and, you know, so...

There's plenty still to do.

There's plenty still to do, and I hope I'll do some more of that, yes.

Well thank you very much, we're going to end there.

End of F6692 Side B

End of Interview