NATIONAL LIFE STORY COLLECTION

Artists' Lives

KENNETH ARMITAGE

Part I-III

interviewed by John McEwen and

Tamsyn Woollcombe

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F2396 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by John McEwen, at Kenneth Armitage's studio, [address], on June the 8th, 1991.

Right, well I have been asked to speak about the past, and the things that went into one's background so to speak. And the point is, how far does one go back. Well I'm going to go very far back, but shoot over the ground very quickly, starting mainly with my mother and father. My father's family I know hardly anything about, but my mother's family I know a great deal. So I will start with her first, and she was called Quin, QUIN, and she was born in Longford, a county in southern Ireland which is very quiet. It has no particular features in it; it's pastural land, cattle and the like. And originally it was occupied by the O'Quins and the O'Farrells. They were Catholic landowners. Now my great-great-grandfather changed from being a Catholic to a Protestant, which I as a young man was rather disgusted at; I thought he had given up something he believed in for material gain. Now, one can't really judge him because the penal laws in those days were harsh in the extreme.

This would have been what date?

The beginning of the 19th century, the end of the 18th century. And especially the Catholics; all Irish people were subjugated to this sort of thing, but especially the Catholics, which were really about 80 or 90 per cent of the population. And they were prevented from political office of any kind; education had to be of the most elementary kind, they were not allowed to have any advanced education. They were allowed to be Catholic, but that was limited. There were no new priests, and you may have seen photographs of the people taking mass in the mountains where no one could see them. Great hordes. Have you ever seen that photograph? It's very exciting, a great gang of people up a glen. But the main limitation was in ownership of the land, and they were not allowed to own land, or very little. Now, as a landowner O'Quin, the great-great-grandfather thought he would keep the land, and he did it by marrying a dean's daughter. He made it quite clear that he had changed to Protestant, and to make it even more clear he dropped one n off his name, so hitherto it was double n,

and so he became QUIN, one n only, and he brought his children up as Protestants. So that shows the effort he made to keep the land, which alas was going to be lost by his son...no, not my great-grandfather, he was OK, it was my grandfather that did the damage. So he had a family of course, and my great-grandfather was William Henry Quin, and he became a naval capitain, and he built Lackan, the house two Irish miles from Edgeworthstown. The Irish mile is slightly longer than the English mile.

Lackan is spelt how?

LACKAN, and it means the house on the hill, but there are many Lackans in Ireland, because there are many houses on hills. And it was two Irish miles from Edgeworthstown, on the Longford road, and I'll talk about Edgeworthstown in a minute. But he built the house; he was going to build a larger house behind my uncle, set on a slight rise, but he never did. He had a job towards the end of his life, a curious job in the Navy. The slave trade had been abolished by Wilberforce in a parliament here, and also by the American Civil War, which was partly fought because of that, the abolition of slavery. But there were still slavers going over the Atlantic to try and still make a bit of money if they could, and his job was to intercept them and escort them back to Africa, which he did. And there was a silly legend in Ireland that he was given a huge gold ring from one of the chiefs he took back, but it was lost in some rocks in the front of Lackan house, which I spent many hours trying to find but no one could ever find it at all, and it was probably a tall story. However, he was thrown from his horse very wildly, and he was very badly wounded, and they took him aboard and they set sail for England, and they went via St. Helena, I don't know why, and there he died at sea, just outside the port. So they put into St. Helena, and they thought we'll bury him here, and the story goes, according to my mother and my uncle, that Napoleon had just been taken out of his tomb on St. Helena where he died, and was sent to Paris to be fitted in to what was then going to become Les Invalides, which was the great tomb and mausoleum of Napoleon with all the bric- -brac all round him. So the tomb was empty. I told one person this who didn't really like me, and he said, 'Oh no, they would never do this, no no'. But they might well have done. Anyhow, that's what my uncle and my...

Don't say he ended up in Napoleon's tomb in St. Helena?

Yes. And so he was shut up there. And there's no proof for this, unless of course one went to St. Helena and had Napoleon's vault open. If there was a Captain Quin inside, it's true; if there wasn't, he was buried somewhere else. But they said, and my uncle...a very early film I went to in Dublin, one of the very earliest I ever saw in O'Connell Street, and it was also about St. Helena. And my uncle said there is the tomb where your great-grandfather is buried, and that tree behind, I think it was a willow or a laburnum tree he said, his officers on the ship planted to honour his death, or, you know, the sort of thing like that. So, there it is. And he had I think nine children. The first one went to Belfast and was successful in business in Belfast, and his son, my cousin, was made a senator there. And the next down the list, my mother's eldest sister, was educated in Germany, and then she spent the rest of her life in India. So then by this time however, my...oh, am I jumping it here?

Can I just get this straight. It was your great-grandfather Quin who landed up in Napoleon's tomb.

That's right. And I've made a mistake here. My grandfather also went into the Navy. I'm so sorry, I've made a mistake already. He was also called William Henry, and he was sent to Nelson's flagship, HMS Victory, which was then moored at Portsmouth and used as a training ship. The time lag in this is so enormous, it's hard to believe that here I am, certainly an elderly person, that my grandfather could be trained on Nelson's ship is hard to believe, but he was. I had until recently the list of his requirements when he went as a cadet. I've lost it, like everything else. Now, he told me when he was 90, lying on the sofa in Lackan, that he couldn't stand the harsh discipline. All hands drummed on deck to witness a flogging, and my god, did they flog 'em in those days, in the Navy and the Army. I mean people were flogged up to 800 lashes. There are instances of a thousand, in which the meat was whipped off their backs and their ribcage showing, and how they survived we don't know.

Of course many of them didn't.

Many of them didn't. And he couldn't stand it, and he pulled out. I don't know if he had to buy himself out, but he did, and he would go back and live on the land that his father, my great-grandfather left him. But he did a job first. He was perhaps thinking of being an engineer or something, and he built...he designed and had built the bridge over the river at Ballymahon, a town near Longford. After that he packed it in, trying to earn a living, and he lived, but he took as many Irish people do, he took to gambling. And he...I'm trying to think.

And he fathered nine children?

He fathered nine, one of which was my mother.

Now, while we're on Admiral Quin, and he was buried...this is not Admiral Quin but your great-grandfather.

Well she said he was a rear admiral at one point, but he was then back to Quin again, captain.

So this is the father of your...

Grandfather, that's right.

He was a rear admiral.

No, he was a captain, but my mother did say, I didn't mention this myself, but she did say at one point he was made a rear admiral, or an acting rear admiral, because he had three ships in the Atlantic at one time. But he is always called as captain, Captain Quin RN.

And wasn't there some talk of a sword?

Yes. When I used to go to Lackan as a child there was his naval ceremonial sword, and they said, 'This will be yours one day'. And I thought, oh, that's great. Then, the

family died and my aunt moved away, and Lackan was sold, and one thing and another, and I rang my aunt, who was my uncle's husband, the one who lived in Lackan, and said, 'Whatever happened to the sword that you were going to let me...' She had forgotten all about it, she didn't know. You know how you say to children, this will be yours one day!

But that was his sword, that wasn't a family sword or anything like that?

That was his sword, and that went to my second cousin, who in fact had the better portrait. I've got some tiny portraits upstairs but he had the real ones, and he also had the painting of the Captain's first command, a sloop, HMS Britomart, and I never knew who Britomart was until I read a little bit about the Fairie Queene, and the Fairie Queene was one of the characters in...

Britomart was one of the characters in the Fairie Queene.

Yes. Now I don't know if I've got this straight. The naval captain built Lackan, then my grandfather built the bridge over the...and also he was trained on Nelson's flagship, got out of it, and lived in Lackan and became a gambler. And he gambled on the land, he had no money really, not much, and he soon got rid of that. Gambled on the land, and he wasn't very good at gambling and he lost all the time, until he got down to about 60 acres, a kind of smallholding round the house. Then one last desperate bid, he gambled on the house, and lost. And so my mother has the story of how they had to...all the furniture was brought out, put on a wagon or wagons, and the eight children, or nine children had to climb on top, and they were just going away under the watchful eyes of the bailiffs when up rode at speed a relation with money to pay the...

The debt.

The debt, or most of it; maybe not all, but enough for the bailiffs to say OK, let's forget it, and so they moved back into the house again. Now this is something which is very interesting about Ireland. My mother never criticized my grandfather for

losing every penny they had, gambling on the land, even on the house, whereas in Yorkshire they would be tut-tutting and saying you know, how terrible it was. It was rather interesting that she didn't, that it was something that happened to people, and that was it. So, when he had then, by the time the older two children went off and they were successful, by the time he got down to my mother they were very poor indeed, and my mother anyhow had to look after the two young...

She was where in the family?

In Lackan, she was the sixth.

Sixth of the nine?

Yes, sixth of the eight or nine I think. Nine children I have here. And she had to look after them, and so she hardly went to school at all; she was very badly educated and always had difficulty with reading all her life. And so they wanted to get rid of her, and so she was sent to Bradford as an under-nurse in a house with a big family. And it must have been a shock to go there from carefree Ireland to the stone houses of Bradford and the chimneys belching smoke and one thing and another. And it was there that she met my father. Now, I get on to him, and...

And this would have been...I mean this was obviously shortly before you were born, so this would have been round about the time of the First World War.

Well my eldest sister was 15 years older than I am, so that would be...it would be 16 years before I was born, 16 or 17.

So it would have been at the turn of the century almost?

Yes. And he was a strange man. He said that he really...he was almost an orphan. His parents died when he was about 12, at very nearly the same age, and he had two sisters slightly older, and he had to earn a living to help support them, because there was no National Security of course in those days. And he wanted very much to take

up music; he was good at music. In fact his schoolteacher said that he should, and somehow he came to the notice of the organist at York Minster, who said that he would give him free lessons if he could get to York. Well he couldn't afford it, and he got little jobs to begin with; he was probably an office boy at Lister's Mill or something, and eventually he got a bit better, and eventually he moved to Leeds, where he joined an oil firm.

He was born in Halifax?

Bradford. Yes, in Manningham in Bradford. And he was intelligent but reticent. He was good with languages and chess and mathematics, and he loved music. And so really he lost his way. He sacrificed his future. He had no alternative but to help his sisters, and he more or less gave up after that. He married my mother, then he had children, three children, and so he was...

So he was an intellectual really.

He was really. And he was very thoughtful, and moral, but not as dynamic as my mother, who was the dynamic partner, although she was a bit crazy too being Irish. So they were opposites.

What about their physique? Where do you think you get your physique from?

I don't know. Jo says I take after my father, but I have the what is called robust physique of my mother, as she was later; she was once a sylph-like girl, young girl. I've got a photograph somewhere of her. But she was stocky. And she liked people who made things. Going past builders, she would always talk to builders. Strange sort of...she had a link with building, and... Well, now, my father then got a job at an oil refinery in Leeds, which in those days, at the beginning of motoring it was really, it was quite well known; there were advertisements over bridges all over Yorkshire, Filtrate Oils it was called. And it petered out, it couldn't compete with the big firms, you know, like we know now. And about 20, 25 years ago it packed up. However, he went on as cashier until nearly the end of his life when he became a director. I don't

think he was an organising director, I think it was more like an honour, an honorary director. He may have done, I've no idea. He was a useful man in the firm anyhow, because he understood the business side of it. And so there it was. I had two sisters, one was 15 years older than I was, but I will start with the middle one, Nora, who died when I was four. She had, like many people had, TB at the time, and I can remember her with an inhaler. I don't know what was in it, but with a towel over her head, breathing this stuff to try and clear her chest. And I remember sitting on the front corner seat of her wicker invalid chair as she was wheeled out into the street, and that sort of thing. And she was astonishingly talented. Although she died about 15, she did that painting up in my bedroom, did you ever see it, of her still life? Which I can only assume it must be a copy, but I didn't know they had coloured illustrations in those days. And it is really beautifully drawn, so she had great skill.

I must have another look.

Have a look before you go, because I've had it lying around for years and I framed it I like it so much. And tell me what you think.

Just hold on. She would have been born when, what year would she have been born?

She would have been then born '12, 1912.

1912. You were born 1916.

I was born...oh no no no, wait a minute. I was four when she died, and she must have been about 14 or 15.

So she must have been born round about 1906.

Something like that. Anyhow, my mother was passionately fond of her, because a sick person brings out immense nursing in mothers...

What was she called?

Nora. But the other sister, the oldest, didn't turn out very well.

Now she was called...

Doreen.

Doreen. And she was born in about 1900.

Yes, or before.

She was 16 years older than you were?

Yes, 15 or 16. Or 18...15 I think. I don't know, I forget. And because my mother's affection went on to the daughter who died, she felt left out.

Or was invalid.

Or was invalid, and constantly had my mother's attention. And then I as the boy, I was the next in line for her attention.

Both lots, because then you got both the boy and the loss, so you got the two...

Yes. So she felt absolutely left out, and it made her a bitter person all her life. And she was in fact very...

She should have been away from home by the time...

She didn't leave for a long time, but she said that my father and mother made her marry someone she didn't want, or...that first of all she was very much in love with someone and my father said no, and then she married someone he said yes, and she didn't like him very much. So she said. She managed anyhow. So, she died about 10 or 12 years ago, in Leeds. So that was the situation. Now an interesting thing about

my father, a curious incident happened about three months ago. A man I didn't know rang me called Regan, and he said...[can I get my specs]. He said that he was doing research into sculpture on Underground buildings, of which in fact there is quite a lot, especially the big block at St. James's, where there are the Epsteins at the entrances front and back and the reliefs at the top, which look tiny from street level but they are quite big, they're about ten feet long by four to five feet high, done by Gill, Moore, it was Moore's first commission, Gerrard, the man taught me at the Slade, and a few others, I forget. But the whole thing is excellent, Holford was the architect, and he did involve sculpture on that building, and other things too. Now in the course of his researches he found someone called Joseph Armitage, who was...he didn't consider himself an artist at all, he was a master mason who did very well. At the end of his life he employed over a hundred people, carving capitals for churches and stuff he sent abroad. He did carve the Queen's Beast at Windsor Castle; he designed the National Trust emblem, which had just been started. He won a competition which is somewhere here, I don't know, of an omega shape with a cornleaf thing inside which is on all National Trust land. And other things like that he did; he did a lot of stuff. Then this Regan went to the Tate and found a great deal about me in their archives. So he thought, not unreasonably, that I must be the son, his son. So he said could he come and see me, and talk about my father. So I said well it's no good coming to...I don't know anything about my father's family, it's a waste of your time calling. And then, he did say that this Joseph Armitage did come...had something to do with Harrogate, and there were Josephs in my father's family. His father was called Joseph, and also he thought his relatives were in Harrogate. And I said well maybe there is something in it in the end, you had better call. So he called, and we talked about various things. And he told me that Joseph Armitage did have a son who lived at No. 1 Strand on the Green, near Kew Bridge, that very nice row of houses right against the river. And in fact Joseph Armitage, who was quite well off at the end of his life, bought it. And so I thought, well I'll go and see him, and we had a long talk. He had a bit of a family tree, and I had a bit of paper I had put what my father told me, next to nothing. But we couldn't make a clear connection, although he said, and I think there might be a connection somewhere, all this is all about nothing. But it was an interesting near connection if you like.

So there could have been a bit of sculpture going on somewhere in the past.

There could have...yes. And the other thing was, Joseph's family, quite a few went to the very early art school there was at Harrogate, and so they had a kind of...a certain artistic leaning. And his work was, I will show you the photocopies that this Regan sent me. Now that was the business about my father, and we can leave him alone. Now, my sisters, we've done that. Now my childhood. This was...first of all I went to a little school very near in a field. It was called The Tin School, because it was corrugated iron, one room, a small room, one teacher, and a girl helping her.

This was in Leeds?

Yes, near Roundhay where I was born. And it was a lovely school, from the age of five to ten, and I enjoyed every minute of it. [Could you pass me that] And I've got some notes here in case I wanted job references. And the headmistress said, in her report when I left, 'Shows marked artistic and inventive abilities in connection with handwork'. So...

In connection with handiwork?

Handiwork, or handwork.

That was very astute of her.

So that was something. And I remember thinking that I was good at it there.

What did you do do you think there? Do you remember the sort of things you did?

No, I can't remember.

Was there Plasticine?

No, I made things at home like mad.

Was there Plasticine in those days?

Yes. I don't know, I can't remember at the school. They had hardly any money.

But at home?

But there were little pictures... I did at home, my God, and how!

But will you go into that later?

Yes, I can go into it now. Meccano was the thing; like all boys I thought it was absolutely marvellous, and I made things the whole time. And what I noticed quite small was, sitting in my father's first Austin 7, turning to the right and looking at the mudguard, it described a big arc as you turned round to the right. And I knew that the wheels underneath, not visible to me, were also turning. But I didn't realize just yet, but I did very soon after, that the wheel on the nearside was turning more than the one on the left. Because if you imagine a car turning in a circle, there is a focal point in the circle, and the wheel that is nearer the focal point must make a sharper turn, because the circle is smaller. And then I found, soon after, that this was achieved by a marvellously simple device on all cars from the beginning, called 'Ackerman Linkage'. Very simply, there is a rod going between the two wheels, mounted on two short arms for the axel carrying the wheels, so that if one wheel turns it pulls a rod and turns the other wheel. But, due to the careful placing of the length of short little arm sticking out, it is so designed that the inside wheel turns a bit more. And so this can then make a perfect circle within the framework of the circles going round the focal point. Now I do remember hearing about that, and trying to make a model of it in Meccano. But this wasn't my main thing; my main thing was a passion for boats. Very tiny I used to look in shop windows at wind-up boats, mechanical. The tops didn't interest me, the funnels and the superstructure, it was the shape of the hull which I used to look at with enormous delight, always painted red. I didn't know anything about water dynamic then, but the shape caught my eye. And then my family started going to Filey, and visiting first Filey and Flamborough Head, and I

saw for the first time the 'Coble', the famous Yorkshire boat that you have seen, which extended from the Tyne right down to The Wash, and only there. Very special, elegant boat, with bright light colours in the strokes along the side, and it is thought that it was descended from the beach ships of the Norsemen, because the whole of that coast was invaded by Danes and all the people coming from Europe. In fact you walked a little on Dane's Dyke at Flamborough Head.

That's right.

They dug a trench and a ditch as a...they had an enclave there before they went further inland. And this boat really hooked me, I was fascinated with it. To launch it, it had a flat bottom, and it had bilge-keels at the lower corners, or storkels as they called it. They even had a Swedish name, a Norwegian name. And it would be poled out to deeper water, through the breakers, therefore the bows were very deep to go through and over the breakers. And then when it was deep enough they shipped the rudder, which is enormously long. The bows were deep, it was broad in the beam and small in the stern, and for the rudders to be effective they had to extend it well below, to about five or six feet below the bottom of the boat, which was 30 feet long. And so that couldn't be shipped until it was enough into deep water, which must have been quite a job. There were three men. And then the mast was shipped, and it was a simple jib sail with a gaff on the top. And it used to fish five or six miles out for cod and ling. Well this extended right up the coast, and it occupied a lot of my thinking. Meanwhile, my father had sent me to a school to toughen me up. I hated these two years, from this lovely little school. A headmaster in a house living near said, 'You ought to send him.....'

End of F2396 Side A

F2396 Side B

So I went to a school more into the city, which was the remnants of an industrial era, red brick built, but black and dirty. Rows of terrace houses and a big school, brick, black, and concrete, and the yard, and we used to line up and were marched in, left right, left right, left right, all that kind of thing.

What sort of a school would that have been?

An elementary school.

Elementary.

Yes, the lowest.

That was a State school?

Yes. But it was a tough school, and they were tough children. And in fact, two little boys ran away. I'll never forget it, they wanted to get to the seaside, and they got as far as...oh, about 15 miles from Leeds, when they were rounded up by the police and brought back. And I remember the headmaster with a cane, standing holding these two by the scruff of their necks so to speak, and shouting at them, how dreadful they were. But I secretly admired them enormously for having the courage to make the effort, even though it didn't work. Anyhow that ended, and I was then sent to a much better school, what was called a secondary school, where my father I think paid fees, not much, but he paid the fees for that. And that was near my home, it had playing fields, and it was near Roundhay Park, which you know. So that was fine. And it had, oh, to my great delight, an art department. So then things started with art, and the art teacher, Mr Walker, whom we all called Foxy Walker, took a tremendous interest in me, and we used to go back after school and experiment with sculpture, which neither of us knew how to do, but from bits of books we found, and in fact made two little things which his daughter has somewhere in the south of England, which I saw when I went to see her. And in the end he said, 'Well look, you could get

a scholarship to the art school', so I went in for it and got it, but my mother said no, you must get a job.

You were 15, 16?

I was...I left at 17. I decided when I was 16 to take up art. I can remember the day. And she said no, you must... Well, unknown to me, he went twice to my mother, and this is why I'm eternally indebted to him, to try and persuade her to let me go. In the end she gave in; she said all right, he can go. So I had a scholarship. There were no fees to pay, and a little bit left over but not much. I was living at home. Meanwhile...

Can you just describe the day you thought of taking up art. What was it that persuaded you?

I had a friend who I used to walk home with from school, and we were both saying, when we were 16, what we were going to do. And that day he said, 'I am going to be an architect', and he did become an architect, and I said, 'I'm going to be an artist', and I did become an artist. And that was all in, you know, ten minutes, walking...well, quarter of an hour walking home, that day.

Was art thought to be a very drippy thing to do do you think by most schoolboys?

No, I don't think it was. No one actually felt they were any good at it, so they didn't really...I don't know...I hadn't any competitors. So that's why, when I left that school, another clipping from my father's diary says, Mr Farrow who was the headmaster, talking to Mr Fletcher on the phone - Mr Fletcher, I don't know, he was another teacher I think who told my father, 'Well this boy is the most promising art student we have ever had in the school since it opened'. Well that sounds very good, but I don't remember anyone else with any talent there at all.

That's amazing. But I mean I'm not surprised, but it's so amazingly...he probably...do you think he would have told you that, or not?

My father never told me, but I found it written in his diary. He was that sort of person.

He didn't encourage you in that sort of way?

No, he didn't encourage me at anything. He remained aloof. And it might be for what I am going to say a little bit later.

Were you good at rugby and that sort of thing at school?

Yes, I liked rugby. I know you are! (laughs)

I can't imagine you as a rugby player!

And because I wasn't fast, I mean I envied the people who were in the wing, racing along with the ball under their arm, I was a forward, not only a forward I was hooker. So I had the bangs on my nose from their knees, the worst of the worst.

But you enjoyed that?

Oh yes; I didn't like cricket.

What about English?

No I wasn't any good at anything else. I remember liking very much a book of poems I still have on that shelf there, which I liked. And I remember doing...who was the poet in Cromwell's day? The famous poet.

Milton?

Milton. We did a lot of Milton and that kind of thing. I never really liked Milton all that much, except the similes. There were similes for about five lines, and that kind of thing. No, I wasn't really very good, but I was...so far as the school was concerned,

I saved myself with art. And so, I went to the art school. Have I mentioned yet Peter Storey? No I haven't. Now when I started at this school, at the time when you become Boy Scouts and things like that, I met a boy who lived quite near my home, a bigger house, Peter Storey. And he outdid me in making things; he was excellent. The first thing I noticed about him, with a big iron tube he had built the handlebars of his bike straight. You know how bicycle handles curve up into a comfortable position? He straightened the whole thing out so it was like a motorbike, and this I thought was very stylish and very good. The next thing he made was a thing - I followed him in - a throwing stick. I don't know if you have ever heard of this. In those distant days there were still things hanging over from the discoveries in Africa and the Empire, and even Australia. For example, I remember at school, the first school, seeing a Zulu shield, which I have never seen since; that is an oval shape with little slits cut down the front and a rod behind to hold. Now the throwing stick was a very simple thing about three-and-a-half foot long, pointed end; the other end had a notch. And holding a string with...or it would have been a throng, a leather throng with the Africans, that had a knot tied at the end of it, and holding the knot against the end, one turn, round in the notch and down to the point, holding both then tight, holding the surplus throng in the palm of the hand and with the fingers, you could then throw the stick, and as you let go with your fingers you pulled with the cord, which gripped on the knot and pulled the thing much further. So you increased the range by about 50 per cent. Now Peter did something dreadful. He got, at the pointed end, he got a brass or steel tube just fitting tightly over the end by about four inches, then he got a nine-inch nail, hammered that in. Of course it split the wood, but it was held tight by the tube covering it. He then cut off, sawed off the head of the nail, and sharpened the rest of it to a point. So he had a formidable weapon. And it's a wonder we - we both had them by the time he had done it - it's a wonder we didn't hurt anyone or kill anyone.

Where did you go off with them? To the wild wood?

No, I used to throw them in the road. And landing, it would sink into a tarmacadam road to about half an inch, it was such a deadly weapon. Now that was the second thing I was impressed with. He radiated a kind of energy did Peter. And then he

made a model aeroplane in the back yard. It wasn't a small model, it was let's say a quarter size, a huge thing, filling the yard, which was about 25 feet square, the width of the house. And he made it in laths. It was the structure of the thing, it was going to be covered with canvas I suppose. It never got off, they couldn't lift it out of the yard by the time he had finished. But I didn't see that. But what struck...I do remember noticing, but I didn't know why it was so at the time, that the wings had sections going for and aft so to speak so that the canvas could go over it. But they had a curved top. And then I found later, when I had a lot to do with aircraft, that this in fact was one of the methods of obtaining lift in an aeroplane. The wing of an aeroplane is slightly at an angle to the fuselage, that is the line of flight, so that there is pressure from the wind on the underside of the wing, which pushes the plane up. That is known as kite action. But a great deal of lift comes from the top, which is curved. It's too difficult to go into in a proper way, but it's due to a theory by a Frenchman called Bernoulli, who found out that where a fluid or a liquid passed over a given point, an increase in speed brought a drop in pressure on that surface. Now, because air is glutinous it likes to be with its friends, parting at the leading edge and going back over the wing; the bottom of the wing was flat, but the air on the top was curved, and was longer, and yet the air wanted to catch up with its mates at the trailing end, and it did this by going faster. So there was greater speed. This isn't a lie, it's a fact of flying. There was greater speed on the top of the wing which brought a drop in pressure. And that is the secret of why a plane flies, forgive me. But now, I don't think Peter could have known this, so his father must have had something to do with engineering. I never met his father. Well, as young people grow up they part and I never saw Peter again, but I've often wondered what happened to him, he was brilliant.

How interesting. Is there any way you could find out?

No, because... Oh, what was also...forgive me, there is a tiny little episode before we leave him into the twilight of history. He had an older brother who I didn't know so well. Peter was my great friend, we used to cycle all over the place. He had a younger sister, and one day he said to me, had I ever see what was between a girl's legs? So I said, 'No, no I haven't; I must admit I haven't'. Well he said, 'Let's go and

have a look'. I said, 'What, your sister?' 'Yes' he said, 'we'll go up to her bedroom'. I said, 'No, she'll wake up' (she was asleep). 'Oh no she won't, I know her, she sleeps like a log'. So we tip-toed up to her room, and he pulled her bedclothes back, and I don't honestly remember what I saw, but on the way down I said to him, and I do remember say this, I said, 'It's like a boat'. Which is not a bad description, because all graffiti all over the world have a kind of boat-shaped symbol for the female genitals. Now, looking back, thinking about that, the little girl must have heard us go in. You can't see what is in between a woman's legs unless she presents it. And so the little girl...he must have done this before, so she thought, oh oh, here they come, let's give them a good look. And so she must have made it available to see, that's the only...I mean you don't sleep in the position with... And so, this leads me on to that book which I told you about I was so excited last year, Camille Paglia, 'Sexual Personae', which, among hundreds of things in its 700 pages, does refer to the fact that men's genitals are exterior and can be seen, while women's are hidden between her legs and can't be seen. And this, together with the mystery of creation, inside her body, frightens some men and also gives her a mystery, and almost a divinity, and women are almost goddesses as creators. In fact they would make very good gods; in fact as you know they were originally. Before God became a man, she was a woman! Women goddesses occur in very early archaeological finds, but not men.

Yes. [INAUDIBLE]

Yes, and they found in Yugoslavia the little goddesses. And so, that brings me to another thing. Did you ever see that witch on the wall look? A most extraordinary phenomenon in Europe at the time of Romanesque sculpture were carvings, never larger than about two-and-a-half to three feet, and some very small, on churches in a prominent place: not hidden, I mean in no way hidden, you were meant to see them. And on the corner of castles there are... There is a map that's a definitive study by a Swedish thing, for a university study of humanities, it's a kind of official book. And there are several in France, there are three or four in England, and one of which is one of the most famous of all at Kilpeck, have you seen the church at Kilpeck?

Well, we've talked about it many times.

Yes. Because there's one there that surpasses all...

In Herefordshire.

Yes. Surpasses all of them. There is one I'm afraid to say only, in Scotland. But in holy Ireland there are about 30. The more religious the place, the more you have of these...the name was 'cheela-na-gigs', a strange mixture of English and Irish, 'cheelas' for short. And they are grotesque, they have hideous faces, they have their ribs showing, everything is offensive, and they display their genitals. This is done in a cumbersome way which has brought me to talk about this, with putting their arms right round their legs and opening their vulvas and so on. No one knows why these existed; there is no reference to it in literature, as there was no literature in those days except in the Church. And so it's purely conjecture. And there's a photograph in that book of I think an early 19th century print of a devil with hooves, and looking at something he is terrified of, he's going to run away, down the steps. And then you turn and you see a very demure and attractive girl, holding her skirt high up, and displaying her private weapon. And this was a means of frightening away the Devil, who had been tormenting the Church or something. And the woman...it was believed, the woman's private parts was a defence against the attention of the Devil. So this might be the reason for it. Well that's a long story all about that poor little girl in the bedroom, Peter Storey's sister. Now, the only person to match Peter was much later when I was at Leeds Art School, which I will mention now because...no, I'll leave it till I come to him.

I don't know if you're coming to this, but could you describe...I mean you say you went bicycling a lot with Peter Storey.

Yes.

But what was your life in those days, at holiday time?

Well holiday time...

Didn't you go off to Ireland a lot?

Yes. Now I had forgotten this. How is it that I have forgotten the most important thing of all? Thank you very much. From the very earliest years my mother took me to her home, Lackan, in Ireland. I learnt to walk there; I don't know how old you are when you first walk, about six months is it or something like that. I was born in 1916, which was a time of the Rising, the first outbreak.

What particular day?

Well I can find out in my book but it was in...

The date.

The date was...1916. The date of my birth. The month I don't know. But it'll be in my...

Don't you know your birthday?

I know my birthday. 18th of July. But it might have been on the same birth day. Is that what you're thinking?

No no no, I just meant the 18th of July, 1916.

We went very early on, and I remember going when...my uncle then, first of all he met us in a pony and trap in Edgeworthstown and drove us to Lackan, and then he had a tin Lizzie, and I remember in Dublin being driven about by him. And there was, I can see it now, a tall building, black, it had been on fire. And I can only assume that this was the famous post office. But that was burnt, absolutely gutted, in 1916. Had it been left for two years, and not been rebuilt, it might have done, until I was old enough, say three I could recognise it. But I remember driving back in the Ford to Lackan along the roads, there were trenches dug across the roads and trees felled by

the Sinn Feiners, to be an obstacle to the Black and Tans, who were much hated by everybody. And in one village there was a piece of artillery left in the middle of the village to intimidate them. And they visited my uncle he told me later, but he said if they did anything harmful to the house he would not be able to employ - he employed, not always but he had two or three people helping him most of the time on the land, looking after the cattle and so on like that. And they left him alone after that, sensibly. Anyhow, I adored Lackan, it was...the memory of it is the happiest time of my life, and everyone who has seen it that I took, for example, what was her name, the actress, Susan, I took to Ireland.

Susan Hampshire.

Hampshire. And she loved the house, and wanted to buy it. And my wife I found later also was hoping that we might live there one day. And I certainly during the war had moments on duty dreaming for a few minutes, I used to think how lovely it would be, going back to Lackan. It had this effect on one. And also it was rich in things around it. The land went down to the road, a long thing, and immediately there the other side of the road there was a barrow, and I used to climb on it. If I went early in the year, springtime, there were daffodils growing up the edge, and there was a tiny hole on top, and I used to drop pebbles, and you could hear it go, drop down inside, which fascinated me. I didn't really know much about it. Opposite the farm were the gates. In those days they were big iron gates, later they were lost, the road was widened. And there was a farm opposite. In front of that there was an Iron Age rink and ditch, there was an Iron Age settlement. And then on the road to Longford there was an esker, which is a ridge left by the Ice Age - I'll come on to that in a minute - and there were three barrows on the way to Longford. So I was aware of these archaeological things very much, and my uncle used to talk about them, and he said that much of Ireland, I mean remember this was in the late Twenties, was totally unknown, there would have been no archaeological digging at all. And that was one thing. And there were outcrops of limestone in Lackan; that is pastural land, grassland with cattle, but in the green grass there were sometimes white stones showing. And I love this; it makes me very happy. In Ingleborough in Yorkshire there is a lot of limestone, and there's that gorge, what's it called, a great big cleft in

the rocks, which is all limestone. Limestone and green is very nice together. Also, when I got to Ireland I forgot everything, and I as it were turned native. I used to run around with no shoes on my feet, like the little boys in the cabin. And you soon get used to it. I befriended the men who worked for my uncle. First was Paddy...was Jack Toher, who lived with his father down in the bog; there was a little lane and a thatch cottage. And in those days a young man couldn't marry until his father died, because there was nowhere for him live. And his father was an old man; I suppose Jack Toher must have been about 40, still unmarried, and I used to go there and Jack would pull out his accordion, and he'd say, 'Give us a dance'. And I was tiny, and I used to dance around, I don't know what, skipping and jumping, and the old man at the turf fire nodding his head with satisfaction. And this sort of thing. Irish people are terribly good with children, they treat you as a grown up, as a person, talk to you, and I loved it so much I wanted to build a similar house next to theirs. And they used to tease me that they were getting on with the plans! (laughs) And things like that. And the next man I befriended was when I was a teenager, and he was called Paddy McNearny, and his job for a while was pointing the walls, putting mortar in the gaps between the stones, with a little ladder and a trestle and things like that. And he was a great drinker, and my uncle, who understood drinking, he had been also a terrible drunkard, and it was my strong-willed aunt who cured him of it. And Paddy worked all day, and my uncle used to put his pay in the post office, so he would not drink it all, he would have some when he got out. And I used to meet Paddy [am I boring you?] after supper each night. At the back of the house there was a yard and the stables where he slept, and the Dutch barn, and beyond that a bank with a gap. And in fact, until those days water was still collected from a well out in the field beyond. Many is the time I have carried two buckets back from that. Well I used to meet Paddy at that bank, and watch the sun set, with him. He was an oldish man. He could talk about anything. Very refined. I mentioned Egyptology, he could talk about that. And have you ever read Elinor Bellingham-Smith's marvellous book, 'The Great Hunger', which is about the great famine of 1840. And she describes how Irish people are very mixed; there are some noisy Irish, but there are some very refined. And she said, two or three times in Irish history the so-called aristocracy were ploughed back into the general mass of the population by invasion and one thing or another; the Normans first and Cromwell and all the rest of it. And so you do get the occasional

people who are quite different from the others. Or they were descended from the bards, because they all had, like in Scotland they all had, a bard. Tyrone, the earl, he would have a bard in his camp. And all that kind... So I loved talking to Paddy McNearny, and I never forget him.

This was Uncle Willy wasn't it?

Yes.

Now, Uncle Willy, did he have children? I mean did you have cousins there?

Oh no, he was without a child, and I think really he wanted to adopt me. My father had very little money and my uncle was all right, and he liked me, and I think I told you this, at night when I was put to bed earlier than the grown-ups, he would come up to my bedside and talk for a quarter of an hour every night. And this was so lovely, this man talking about this and that, and I looked forward to it. Well we had a great rapport.

He wouldn't tell you stories, you would have a conversation?

Oh yes, he would talk about this; for example, he would say, 'Do you hear that?' and it was the Dublin train going to Sligo. He said, 'Can you hear it straining?' And it would be puffing up the embankment. And you could just hear it on a summer night far away. And odd things like that. No, he didn't tell stories.

And he told you about grass?

Oh yes. You see there were only 50 acres, and so he wanted more money, and he became as it were a gentleman commercial traveller. He went out once or twice a week, whenever he wanted, for a margarine firm in Limerick, the name of which I forget. Could it be Stork? It was a very well-known brand of margarine. And he used to set off in one of his cars - he then had Chevrolets, he had two, one to drive and the other to cannibalize for spare parts, and later he had a big Austin. And he

used to disappear all day, because he loved, he was a great conversationalist, he loved talking. It was like being paid for pleasure for him. And I used to love going with him, and I used to wait in his car and he would go off into shops, and no doubt he came back with his order book packed. And if he didn't want to go out he didn't; maybe one week he wouldn't go, but one week he would go twice, and so on, so he had a very easy life. And leaving me in a car once I told you this, I was wearing my first long trousers, white cricket trousers they were, and I saw an old woman eyeing me in a black shawl. Eventually she came over and gave me a lot of blah to begin with, 'Ah, you're a fine young man' sort of thing. And then she got down to it, 'Now have you got a penny for a poor old lady?' Well the minute I got into Ireland I didn't carry any pennies. I knew I hadn't, but I pretended to look in my pocket out of politeness. So I said, 'I'm sorry'. So she changed into a tigress. 'The curse of Cromwell be upon you!' And I've never forgotten that, because she hadn't forgotten Cromwell at Drogheda, 300 years before. It lives in the subconscious of all Irish people. And that kind of thing was...

A rather nasty curse.

It was a nasty curse, and it was said very fiercely.

Now, I don't know if you want to touch on that at this point, but the...well no, Uncle Willie I think used to take you around the farm.

Oh yes, yes. In fact he said if you sell your old bike and get a new one, you can have a calf, and I had, I got a calf, in Lackan. But sadly it died. There's a worm. They have a terrible cough, you can hear it in the field [makes sound of dry breathing]; an insect makes a cyst in the throat or something, and the poor little thing, it was a blue Angus I suppose, it died, so I didn't have that. But I think he tried to get me interested, and travelling with him in the car, we used to try and judge how good the land was, and I got quite good. What it was, whether it was the height of the grass or the colour, but I would say, 'That's good land', and he'd say, 'Yes, that's good land', and we would, going on, say, 'No, that's bad land there', and one thing and another, it made it all very interesting. And he described...he knew Ireland like the back of his

hand; for example there is a Quinn Castle over towards the Shannon, and that was not a Norman keep it was an Irish keep, fort, and so on. There's a place, a little town called Quinn.

Now should we continue with thoughts of Ireland or do you want to return? I mean things like the timelessness, and all the rest of it, the way that...

Well we're going to get to Leeds Art School. As you like. I'm sorry it's so long about Ireland, but it was...

No, it's incredibly important.

It's very important.

It's something like the grass, the observation, the noticing, that could have helped in some way, which was reinforced by the aeroplane, the...

The shape of the land, one thing and another. And we used to go a lot to Grannard, which was a huge Norman lot built on top of a hill, and from there there was a view all over the place, and that was a wonderful thing to go and see.

But I would say a lot of your interests, which have come out of your past, were spawned there.

Well it might well have been.

I mean you're still passionately interested in Ireland.

I love the land. I love the land more than people really! (laughs)

You love ancient sites.

End of F2396 Side B

F2397 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by John McEwen, 8th of June 1991. Tape Two.

There was another little point about Ireland. My uncle had friends who lived in what was called Kingstown, where the ferry came in. It was then changed by the Irish Government to Dun Laoghaire, which was its real name. They had a house, a big house overlooking the harbour, it was very nice, and he had the top flat as a place to go to when he went to Dublin. And I used to sleep up there, and it was lovely at night. There was a lightship out at sea, I don't know how far out, about a mile out on a sandbank or rocks, and it was called The Kish. And a ferry now goes past it; it's now a big buoy, but then it was a little ship, boat, with a bright light, and that used to light up a little bit; there were flashes, sometimes you could see a flash on the wall, and that was lovely to see that. Another thing was, my uncle took me to two things. He took me to the Abbey Theatre, where I saw of course 'Playboy of the Western World'. This was the old Abbey Theatre, before it was burnt down. And he also took me to the best restaurant in Dublin - I think we only went once - Jammet's. And it was Jammet, his grandson it would have been, married Liz Frink, and Liz Frink had a son by him. But it closed down years ago, but it was an excellent restaurant, and Jammet sounds a bit French doesn't it? Must have been. So my uncle did...in fact he did all he could to be.... He also took me to Trinity College, and everywhere he took me, and that was fine. Well now, I only come back to...

So, would you say, before we close on...well maybe we are not closing on Uncle Willy, but in a way he was more of a father to you than your father.

Oh most certainly he was, yes.

Because your father really played a very small part. I know he was at the wheel of the car, but he wasn't...

I don't remember having one conversation with him more than one sentence. I was very fond of him, but he was never curious about what I was doing, or anything. But

Uncle Willy took a tremendous interest in everything I did, talked about it and talked to me about other people and things and everything, as one would normally expect someone to do.

He was keen on you doing the art, although you...

This I don't know. Well he must have been, because he always talked about my drawings, which I was doing tiny portraits and things.

In fact you have this one here.

I have the one of his leg, as you say! (laughs)

It's very good.

It's awfully like him. And that was done at the time, with what was called an Aladdin lamp. You pumped it up; it had a mantle and used paraffin, a paraffin lamp, and it was a lovely soft but bright light, it was very nice.

But that drawing, I remember you being quite excited at finding that, but not only because it was of Uncle Willy, but it seemed again to have a vague...a little hint of what was to come.

Well it had some link with what I do. I don't know what it was, I couldn't discard it. No, I'm going to leave Ireland and come back very briefly later, when I am later at the Slade, on a visit. And then there's a big gap of many years through the war and everything else, which I was frightened to go because I loved Ireland so much, I thought it would be changed, and I went back about eight or nine years ago, but it was just the same, hadn't changed that...

What about Uncle Willie, when did he die?

He must have died just after the Second World War, because my...I remember it was then that my aunt sold Lackan, and he came to live in Bristol, in England.

So Lackan is now owned by...

No, it's flattened out. When I went with Alastair... I took Susan to see it, it was not lived in for years, it was empty, and it was still all right, but then I was talking about it to Alastair and Zandria, we got near, it had gone, it had been dismantled. This was a terrible shock; I didn't tell them, but for the rest of that day there was an ache in my heart more or less, because it was the big link with the past in Ireland. And so it had been used for the stone. But Susan lifted... It was quite a nice house. It had shutters and it had terracotta white handles on the shutters, and Susan characteristically went dashing round and screwing them off, to put them into some other building. So I got two or three from her as a souvenir, they're somewhere here, I don't know. But she really liked it. But now, the reason why...you see it's interesting. I think this I ought to talk about now, because taking her there, while I'm mentioning it, she wanted to live there - and so did I - but it really is impossible. It's a long journey to go by car; it takes five hours to get to Holyhead in Anglesey from London.

You always went with your mother didn't you, you never went with your father? Your father never went on these...

No, well we once went the three of us together, but it was mostly with my mother.

I can't imagine him...or did he relax a bit over there?

No, he didn't relax at all, because there were always cats, and one of his big horrors in life were cats.

How I sympathize with him!

He told me, he said, 'I hate going to Lackan'. He said, 'When we're having a meal the cats come into the room', and he said, 'I'm constantly moving my legs' - he had a

horror of them - 'in case they climbed on my legs'. He would have had a fit! So imagine, I never knew...

So he did talk a bit, you did talk a bit.

Well he...oh no he did, he did talk a bit, but it wasn't as it were now, as we are talking, a thing going on for five minutes, it would stop in a sentence or two. And he was a terribly nice man, and he was very kind to me, but he was restrained and reticent, and thoughtful, and so...

Would you say he was a typical Yorkshireman, or not really? Or not typical, because he wasn't a typical man, but would you say he was...

He wasn't robust enough for a Yorkshire man. A Yorkshire man doesn't give a...

Because they're quite...I notice going up to Yorkshire...

They're ebullient, they don't give a damn for anybody.

They don't talk much...

They are reticent.

They don't yack do they?

No no, they never yack. So in that sense he was. But he had no aggressive element in him at all. But even so, I...I say even so, I was very fond of him. And it was horrible what happened to him in the end, and my wife going mad and all the rest of it. My mother, not my wife! (laughs)

Well we'll come back to that.

We come back to later. So...no, I was going to say something else, yes, which...it is not easy to live in Ireland, so you either fly, then you have to wait for the ferry, that goes through the night, so you get to Lackan mid-day next day, so it takes one-and-a-half days by car. Well you can't do more than, I mean once a fortnight would be a bind, and to fly every fortnight or three weeks is expensive, to go to Dublin, and you've still got to drive to Edgeworthstown. So really it's not a practical thing. But there is something else, and that is the atmosphere. And this is where I'm going to read you this bit about Essex. Where is it, there's an Essex page somewhere here. Now first of all I mention this. The Irish Government, the D il, tried to get people to go who were as it were specialists in their way, let's say professors and artists and so on, and they offered tremendous tax reductions.

No income tax.

No income tax at all. It stopped after a few years, but it was...even I was tempted to think about it, but even then I couldn't do it, because if you go to Ireland, inevitably something comes over you, and...(laughing)...if the rain comes through the roof you let it! And this has happened to all people going, and I wanted to mention J P Donleavy, who wrote the excellent book, 'The Ginger Man', which was a huge success in the mid Fifties. And he went to live in Ireland; I don't know whether he was Irish or whether he liked Ireland, but it was possible that he was...

What, he came...he was brought up in New York I think and then came back.

But was he Irish?

He was Irish.

But he was born in New York. Or brought up, I see.

And then returned.

Anyhow, well this makes sense, because I thought it might have been the fact that there was tax reduction, because that novel was so successful.

No I think it was before that. Then he went back to Ireland of course to get the tax reduction on all the rest of it.

Oh he did live a bit, to do it. But the sad thing is, so far as I know - well it may not be sad, he did his bit, a lot - I don't think he has written anything since comparable to that book. Maybe he has, I don't know. But even so, there is something in the atmosphere that does have an effect on one. Where have I put that bit about Essex? I had it. It was in there, and it's come out. There, is that it? No, that is Dali, and...oh my God! This is sad. Is that still ticking over? [BREAK IN RECORDING]
Irish seduction is terribly well illustrated in a book by Lytton Strachey, which I have only just read, about Queen Elizabeth I and Essex. To be very brief, what everyone knows is that Elizabeth sent the Earl, Essex, to suppress the rising of Tyrone, who hitherto had been a fairly loyal subject, and he promised to honour the Queen and so on. But he was deeply worried that the Irish, the way of life would change if he went on doing that, so he felt that he had to form an army and go against her. And Elizabeth then sent one man who was killed by Tyrone, he conquered one lot and he...she sent Essex, who was a great favourite of hers, and he professed to adore her. And he went with a big army, I don't know whether it was 4,000 or 40,000, but it was a huge army, and he landed, and instead of meeting Tyrone straight away, he mopped up the smaller elements around, and by the time he got to Tyrone three-quarters of the army had deserted, this huge army had dropped to one-quarter its size! And...

The English...

The English army, yes. And...

With all the pubs!

Yes, all the poteen got them. And so, he was in a terrible state, because he knew he couldn't win Tyrone, and yet he dare not go back to Queen Elizabeth, who they were

all absolutely scared of. And anyhow, Tyrone, who was a very shrewd man, he said let's parley, and so they met on horseback, the both of them, over a river, and Tyrone made various suggestions, all of which Essex agreed to. Now, this is what Strachey says about what led up to that meeting. 'Subduing a few recalcitrant chiefs with a powerful English army seemed a simple enough affair. Essex marched into Leinster, confident that nothing could resist him, and nothing could. But he was encountered by something more dangerous than resistance: by the soft insidious undermining atmosphere of that paradoxical country which, a quarter of a century earlier had brought his father to despair and death. The strange air engulfed him, the strange land, charming, savage, mythical, lured him on with indulgent ease. He moved triumphant, through a new peculiar universe of the unimagined and the unreal. Who or what were these people, with their mantles and their nakedness, their long locks of hair hanging over their faces, their wild battle cries, and gruesome wailings, their kerns and their gallowglas, their jesters and their bards? Who were their ancestors? Scythians, Spaniards, Gauls? What state of society was this, where chiefs jostled with gipsies, where ragged women lay all day, laughing in the hedgerows? (laughing) Where ragged men gambled away with each other their very rags. Where wizards flew on whirlwinds and rats were rhymed into dissolution. All was vague, contradictory and unaccountable, and the Lord Deputy, advancing further and further into the green wilderness, began, like so many others before and after him, to catch the surrounding infection, to lose the solid sense of things, and to grow confused over what was fancy and what was fact'. Now that, by an Englishman, is an extraordinarily good account of what can happen! So, much as I longed to I didn't go to live there.

I mean you have I feel...you think of yourself really as more of an Irishman than a Yorkshireman.

I have come to think that very much, and in fact my heart more and more lies with Ireland. But earlier on it was...I was concerned with the Yorkshire landscape, and that is a book you haven't seen, and the American who wrote it in 1962, with tapes and marvellous photographs, I have had it in...

No, I've never seen it.

I'll show it to you. For '62 it's marvellous, and it sold out and you can't get them, and he was trying to find...

Now hang on a minute, we had better just read off what the book is called.

It is called 'British Sculptors Work and Talk: Moore, Butler, Hepworth, Chadwick and Armitage'.

And it's written by...

It's not written, it's a taping of what we said.

By...

By each...produced by Warren Former.

Warren Former.

Yes, and he took the photographs, and they're marvellous photographs.

Published by...

Published by...he turned up two weeks ago, Grossman Publishers, New York. 1964 published.

1964. 'Five British Sculptors' it's called.

'Five British Sculptors', that's right. Yes, it would be five because there are five. And so, this is what I wrote, taped then about Ireland. I said, 'The landscape itself in the West Riding is completely bare. There are no trees, no houses, just hills covered with heather, and the sides of the hills lined with drystone walling, which give a kind of section line to the shapes, and nothing else at all except gullies of icy cold water that

feed the rivers in the valleys. The valleys by contrast are thick with industrial congestions, these dating from the Industrial Revolution. These buildings still stand, black buildings, rows of black windows, surrounded by terrace houses for the workers, back-to-back with white washing hanging between the buildings, and over all the black chimneys, belching smoke, pulled away by the wind in big curves. All this kind of thing. This is the landscape of contrast, black and white and shapes, always clearly defined'. Now then I talk about music and one thing and another, but then I do mention the Yorkshire character, possibly why four sculptors came within nine miles of each other, Hepworth and Moore. She was nine miles from Leeds, and he was at...where was it...nine miles in another direction. And...

Who were the four? I mean apart from them, there was you...

And then...no, and Herbert Read was something quite different.

Ah right. Quite different I should say.

Yes. Well I say that there is perhaps something in the land that might...and the fact of the people itself that might have a practical sense in the making of sculpture. There is this time lag in sculpture of thinking of an idea, of assembling materials, of going through various stages, which don't necessarily have any visual bearing at all on the final product, all of which requires a kind of sustained effort, and almost slave-like activity. That I somehow in my mind connect with a dogged Yorkshire character. It is supposed that the Yorkshire people were never totally suppressed by the Normans, the Brigantes or something they were called. Anyhow, there's more about that later, I come to...

But I mean I don't...well, continue, yes, continue.

Now we come to Leeds Art School. I got the scholarship, and I went...I did the first year of drawing and then I wanted to do sculpture so I went to the sculpture class, and this is always smaller than painting, fewer people do sculpture, and this was very small, there were about six people there. I don't know why they were able to continue

the class. And they were very much a clique, and I was shy and I felt...I felt I didn't quite like being with six people who were very close and I was the odd man out. And so I said please could I go to painting, which was a ridiculous thing to do. So I went next door and took painting for the year, and I don't think I was all that good. I did one good painting which is downstairs at home, I'll show you. Then there came the end of that year, and I got another scholarship. Leeds was terribly good for...

What was this painting? You might just point out...

It's called 'A Pond near a Swing', and it has two swans on the right-hand corner, and a pond with a tree trunk over it.

And do you think you like it because it has the tree in it?

Maybe, but I like it as a painting; compared to the painting I did, I like it much more than the painting I did, with the teachers in these...

Because you felt it was more personal, more...

Yes, I felt that I had gone further with it. And there was a student there that we all thought was marvellous, Sid Hobbs, and everything he did seemed to be incredible. His paintings by the standard of the time were superb, and his drawings, wonderful drawings. And then we all applied to go to the college, except...oh maybe Sid Hobbs did too, yes.

The college...

The Royal College. And I, to my horror, I didn't get in. I wasn't even accepted. And this...

Sorry, I had better just for the tape say the Royal College of Art.

Yes, that's right, it was a scholarship to the Royal College of Art, which was traditional for certain students to get that, to go to the College from Leeds. Henry Moore did that.

Hang on Kenneth. I mean, were you...after all your headmaster of your secondary school had said you were the most outstanding boy that they had ever had in art.

Yes, well the headmaster...but that was what the headmaster said, but it must have been from the teacher.

From the teacher. Were you the king-pin of Leeds School of Art?

No, I was...

This Hobbs chap was.

This Hobbs chap, I myself thought he was better really. Well he was more talented in a way. I was next to him.

You were second? You felt you were number 2.

Yes, or maybe I...maybe I thought I wasn't as good.

But I mean the teachers weren't all going about saying, 'Armitage...'?

I don't know. I know one thing, that I got involved for the first time very much with a girl.

Ah!

And this is something that I will talk about, because it might have been instrumental in the quality of the work I did. I'm not going to say anything against her. She didn't...wasn't interested in art at all; she was at the art school. I was say 19, and she

was...no, I'll be 19, she was 17. And she was, as Boswell would say, 'admirably formed for amorous dalliance', and I was simply hooked on her as a girl, as a body, and spent every summer...I mean every night I used to meet her, and we used to go somewhere. And I showed you the shelter in Roundhay Park where we used to get a tram up to go to and sit in for three hours. Well all this should I suppose have been spent on painting. But I was 19, and I suppose you do these things. One of the teachers tried to persuade me to give it up, he felt that I was not...

Damaging your work.

Well, I was not giving enough time to my work. And so then, I didn't get into the Royal College.

Did you, if I may say so, I mean did you sort of...were you having a full affair with this girl would you say at this point, or were you just sort of necking?

Almost. No, it was the most terrible necking everywhere, in cinemas, in huts, in the woods. Her mother had dinned into her that on no account must we go the whole hog until we got married, so I went around for months on end with a terrible ache in my stomach! (laughing)

Not only in your stomach!

Well exactly. So...

While we're on that...

Oh go on, yes!

Did religion play any part in your upbringing?

Now this is an interesting point. While I was at Leeds I found two books in the public library. One was that book there, if you pass it to me, and that was a book that gave me a tremendous excitement. Friedrich Nietzche, I didn't know who he was, and...

This was when you were at the art college?

This was at the art college in Leeds, and...'Also Sprach Zarathustra'. And I...

Although in those days you would...it was just 'Thus spake Zarathustra', because you didn't speak German in those days.

Right, no. And so I had already tried to give up... Oh, I must say this. Oh, I've forgotten something. I forget so much.

No...

When my sister died, a few years later when I was nine, my mother took to an American religion called Christian Science, but being her she took to it absolutely like a fantatic. Her theory was that doctors hadn't been able to save Nora, so she would put her faith in God instead. And Christian Science believes totally in the power of prayer for sickness. So it was dinned into me from the age of nine that doctors couldn't cure me, only God could. This is rather frightening because I thought, well other people seem to be cured by doctors, but apparently I am not going to be cured by doctors.

I was going to say, this has preserved you from doctors...

Yes, well it did, it did! But on the other hand I couldn't quite believe that God was going to cure me too. And if I had a child's disease like measles, well it was because I had sinned, and I had to pray for forgiveness, and she used to say, 'I wish I had never had...it's a sin to have children, I wish I didn't ever have children', which we'll come to in a minute when I talk about that. So she was mixed up by all that kind of thing.

What was your father's...

Passive, didn't say anything. He just towed along.

What was your father's view?

I don't know, he just did what she did.

So he was a Christian Scientist too?

Yes, but for peace of mind he did that.

So he was never taken in by that, he never felt he really was, I mean you could recognise he just did it...

I'm sure that he did it for peace of mind, because she led him a bit of a dance. At one point he said he wanted to cut his throat. I don't know...well, this Christian Science.

When did he say that?

Later on, when she...there are things called 'practitioners' in Ireland. Instead of getting a doctor you pay them to pray for you! So she had not one but she had about half a dozen, and my poor father, who was never rich, he was paying out to these people who were praying for her, which was a terrible racket as far as I could see. Well I tried to leave it, but she...

This was later then, when she was ill, or was it all through?

No, it was all the time.

Oh right, praying for you all, so that you would be preserved?

Not praying for me, praying for her! (laughs) But I got...I had to put up with it as they say. And the point was, I tried to leave but she blackmailed me to look after her. 'All we've done for you, and now you're going against us, with this wonderful religion'. And so I felt trapped. And I had already said no, I'm not going to go any more, but this was my...

Break.

Break. Reading in 'Zarathustra's' prologue, he has a very...I don't know if you've ever read it, a strange weird style. 'When Zarathustra was alone however, he said to his heart, could it be possible, this old saint in a forest has not yet heard of it, that (in italics), "God is dead"?' Ah, I thought, great! I mean this was a reaction to all her religious mania kind of thing. I went around until I bought this copy and I carried it in my pocket for weeks. Rory my brother said it was for comfort, I kept it in my pocket for comfort, and I was a violent, anti religious person in a silly way for a long time. But, it went in due course, and I became then more normal. Now, the second book I found was very different, and it was this book by a man called R L Praeger, Dr Praeger, who was a kind of gentleman botanist, biologist and all the rest of it. He knew all the learned societies in Dublin. He had tramped all over Ireland making notes, measuring things, and collecting plants. And I was thrilled with this book, he had had so many wonderful things. In that he talks about The Burren in County Clare which was the first I had ever heard of it, and which led me eventually to going there.

Eventually, how many years later?

Oh, after the war. I mean, this I read before the war.

When did you read this, at Leeds College of Art?

Yes, but from the library, and then...

And you went...you really went to The Burren in a bad way in the Seventies.

Oh much later, and this book I bought, I see it was...I bought it in 1947, just after the war. I got it from the library at first, and then I bought this book after the war. And I went to The Burren about, as you say, mid Seventies. And he wrote about this, the Clonfinlough stone. And this is something I might as well talk about at this moment. I read about it and eventually I met him, but not until I got to the Slade. And perhaps I ought to talk about the Slade before I get on to that, should I, or talk about this now.

Well it affected you then didn't it, it affected you first.

Yes, it affected me first there. There's that extraordinary picture. Now, I hadn't seen the stone then; I've seen it three times since, and it's about...

In reality.

In reality it's about nine feet by six feet. It's lying at about 30 degrees on the top of an esker, the residue from the Ice Age, deposited by a glacier. It's called 'an erratic'. You find these huge blocks lying around at the.....

End of F2397 Side A

F2397 Side B

[Side four, Tape two.]

8th of June, 1991.

Now, in this book there was this extraordinary picture of a drawing. It was too early to have a photograph of it, I mean that was available, no one appears to have been handing round drawings of this stone when this book was published, when he wrote it, before the war.

Could you just, I'm sorry, read off the title of the book.

The book is called rather embarrassingly, 'The Way That I Went'.

Right. And who is it by?

By Dr Praeger. PR...

And who published it.

Well, the actual date of the publishing...would be earlier than this. This is the new edition.

Yes, who published it?

This was published by Methuen in 1947, but I had read it... Oh, '37 was the first one.

Just in case someone wants to refer to this, 'The Way...

'The Way That I Went: An Irishman in Ireland', by Robert Lloyd Praeger. Then this is Methuen.

Methuen, 1947.

Methuen, 1947. There was a second edition and a third, '37, '39, and that's the third edition. Now, this picture fascinated me. I didn't see the stone until really in the last ten years, but it had features that were quite extraordinary that I didn't really appreciate then; the most extraordinary little symbols, which I felt were of figures. Praeger writes that this was noticed first in the middle of the 19th century, and people were...it was quite famous in Ireland, and the Abbe Breuil, a foremost French archaeologist, had been to the Spanish caves which were occupied in Neolithic times, I'm not reading it at the moment, where there are the caves of Altimara. And it's interesting, after the war the Altimara mammoth was often illustrated. The marvellous cave paintings, in red ochre, of these huge mammoth animals with tiny legs of enormous power, rather like Lascaux. And I suddenly realized I hadn't seen illustrations of these for...since the Fifties, what has happened? Are they closed to the public, why aren't they illustrated? They were tremendously important. Have you seen images of these things?

Yes I have, yes.

Well he came from there, and they showed him the drawings, and eventually they took him to the stone, and he was... I'm sorry, Breuil, BREUIL, however you pronounce it, with some astonishment, recognized in its scribings an exact analogue of the Spanish drawings he had just been studying in Spain. The stone does supply clear evidence of a connection hitherto unsuspected between Spain and central Ireland in Neolithic times. And I could talk more about that. I've got material from the museum in Dublin here, but we'll go on to that. But that is as far let's say as they got at that date. And then I looked at them...when I saw them, I've been to see the stone three times within the last eight years.

But I mean, this excited you at Leeds College of Art, for what reason do you think? It's a connection between Spain and Ireland and this picture?

Yes. First of all the picture is extraordinary, and the fact that it had lasted all that time, and after; they're saying really that it's about ten thousand years old, or more. It seems incredible that carboniferous limestone, even though highly polished, can last

with still these marks to some extent on the surface. They are worn of course, but... And the fact that...I mean the Abbe Breuil I must have heard of, I knew of him; well, I don't know. Anyhow, I did see it first at that first reading of the book, and saw the stone later. Now, Jo is wanting you.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Kenneth Armitage interview, June the 16th 1991.

Kenneth, last time we finished on Leeds, and you were just about to leave Leeds. But before we do that could we say something about some of the influences on your sensibility while you were there.

Do you mean in the environment?

In the environment or in the people that you met there. Well in the first instance those sculptures in the town centre.

Yes. I was a student there, so I didn't know the personalities of Leeds except the staff teaching at Leeds College of Art. It was not the most dynamic art school. Henry Moore was there I think about 25 years before, or approximately at that date. Leeds is not a very attractive city; even Bradford has more character, although it's more blacker with chimneys. It's very mixed is Leeds. But it does have an extraordinary city square, with a large equestrian statue in the middle in bronze; at the moment I can't remember the name of the sculptor but he is very well-known. And half a dozen or so great nymphs round on a...there's a sort of central area for walking on in the square, and these nymphs I used to look at because of their physique, their feminine shapes were very attractive to a boy of 16.

But they were good ripe raw nymphs weren't they.

Absolutely.

There was no nonsense about gossamer wings or anything, they were just naked girls.

No imitation Greek art or anything like that, they were raw nymphs, and very exciting. Well I thought so. The other thing was, my mother, who had been in Ireland in her earliest years I think was longing for country life, and my father eventually moved to the extreme north of Leeds, to a place called Roundhay, beyond which in my earliest days there were fields, so she had then fields. But near it was a marvellous park which you saw, which had two great lakes and woods, and follies and various kinds of things, which all my life in Leeds I visited, and it was beautiful. We seemed to have cold winters, and there was always skating on the lake, and that was something, where I also took Pauline, the girl I mentioned too often. I did want to say about Pauline that my time spent with her was my own responsibility, I'm not blaming her. She gave me what she could, and that was immensely important in a way; my first real contact with a woman. But it was my fault if I spent so much time, if that in fact...it might just have been that my work wasn't good enough, and I'm making an excuse for it, but I have a feeling since one of the teachers did say, could you perhaps not spend so much time with her, or something polite like that. So I think that's all I really have to say about Leeds. But the country round about was marvellous. Almscliff Crag, the great volcanic outcrop on the way to Harrogate was wonderful. When eventually I went to Leeds on the Gregory Fellowship, I had a party and we took...we all went up in about two cars to this place at three in the morning, including, have you ever heard of John Heath Stubbs?

Yes.

He's an extraordinary man, who was on a Gregory Fellowship in poetry, and I was in sculpture. He was very blind. Now this cragg is full of enormously deep fissures.

The Gregory Fellowship, this of course was in 1955.

'54 or 5, whenever it was, that's right. And I suddenly thought, my God, what is Stubbs doing? And he was crawling on his hands and knees, getting over these deep fissures in the...we were all very drunk and terrified that he might fall in, and he

didn't, he was very careful. Now, I think that's all about Leeds at that time. I'm not sure if I...I come back later for the Gregory Fellowship, much later. And then I got the second scholarship to the Slade school, where of course I...

Could you just say a word about Hendy before we leave that bit about Leeds. Philip Hendy.

Oh, you mean about the...when I was still at Leeds?

Yes.

Yes, well he was the new director at the Leeds City Art Gallery, and he also had a marvellous building, Elizabethan mansion, about nine miles out, or six miles out, called Temple Newsam. In fact it does date from the Knights Templar. And it was a half-way house from London to Scotland, and people used to stay there, and he had modern art there, as well as the old city.

This was his official residence?

No no. I don't know about that.

It must have been an old family house.

Nothing to do with him. No no, it was a...Halifax...I forget who now owned it, but the family sold it to the Corporation, and it was part of their parkland and facility for Leeds. But it was...he had responsibility for the contents. And so...oh yes, at Leeds College of Art there was...we had an art exhibition, and he came to look at it, and award some prizes, and I was very thrilled to have two prizes from that exhibition. So I met him afterwards and in fact knew him, meeting very occasionally, until well after the war. [I'm going to stop there again for a second.]
[BREAK IN RECORDING]
The teacher was a very good man called Gerrard, A H Gerrard, who was part of the contemporary artists at the time. He had a very good piece of sculpture on the

Underground building at St. James's, where Epstein had two large figures on the ground floor at the two entrances, and about four or five winds they were called at the top, which looked quite small from street level but they are quite big when you get up to them; they are probably about ten or twelve feet long. And his is I think one of the best, it's really exciting. And the main thing about him was, he was a great character, and...

Could you just repeat his name again.

Gerrard, GERRARD, who is now 92 years old and as fit as ever. I don't think he wears any glasses. And he made such an impresson on the students that I know, this only two months, three or four of his students from those years long ago, old people, went toddling along to see him, to go to his 92nd birthday party.

You didn't go. You should have gone.

No. No, I must see him though before I do, because I'm very fond of him. But a terrible thing happened, it's the time to say it, he rang out of the blue years ago when I had a very bad phase of drinking, really bad. I got pills from my doctor and one thing and another. And I had a terrible hangover, lying down, I couldn't move, in the middle of which he rang to say that he was leaving the school that day, the college, would I go and say a few words! (laughing) Well, I could hardly stand up, and I somehow...I didn't like to say no, because I was so fond of him, and I don't know, I got there, and I mumbled some rubbish. But it was no good, I know it was no good. And I don't think he ever knew that I had this terrible hangover. I must go and apologise to him before it's too late. Now, where had I got to? Now, what was interesting about him, he was very interested in carving, which I had had no experience of at Leeds, or had I? Yes, I did my own carving; that was the one that Hendig gave a prize for, but no one else did any carving there. And the way of carving since the First World War was what they called 'direct carving', truth to material in the material itself. In the Edwardian days, and in Victorian days, if a sculptor did carving he didn't cut much the marble as it usually was, he modelled the thing in clay; it was cast in plaster, and then professional expert stone carvers would

reproduce it in marble by means of a very simple device called a pointing machine, which was simply a long rod on a fulcrum, and the measurement on the short end would be made so much larger at the other end you see. It's difficult to talk about without drawing it, but it was done to maybe a quarter of a inch of the surface, and then the sculptor would put the masterly touch on the thing. Well that all went by the board; you couldn't do that with so-called modern art. And so, since the First World War Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska and people in France were busy carving direct, and Gerrard was left over in the circuit of these people, and so naturally I did carving. I've lost the carvings I did, except two tiny ones which are in Jo's yard I think.

They...were they in stone, or in wood?

One was in slate, and one was in stone. Hopton Wood was a stone we liked. And I've got a note of it here. In fact, during the two years the three of us went to a place called Worth Matravers on the coast in Dorset, where there are some quarries. It is really part of the same bed of stone; Portland Bill is not far away, and the Portland stone then sunk down by the time it got to Worth Matravers, it was lower underground. But these quarries had Queen Anne rides, it was like going into Palestine. They would dig a shaft down into the ground, let's say about 20 feet, with a ramp, and then they had a donkey with a winch. And they eased the blocks out, they were already made almost with their strata and vertical splits in the stone, you could ease it out and the great cubic shape would be then hauled up by the donkey. And I went with Jo and two other girls from the Slade, we stayed at a marvellous pub called the 'Square and Compass', where only shortly before Augustus John used to go a lot, and it was a lovely coast, and we did more bathing on the rocks than carving. But it was very interesting there, because this was an old firm, they'd been there, father and son, and we were really squaring up, getting it as they call, 'out of winding'. They don't say getting it true, but getting it 'out of winding'.

Out of winding.

Yes, the opposite. And so that was..that is really an example of the extent to which we were involved with stone carving. Now, because of that, and the British Museum

being very near, only a quarter of a mile away or less, down Gower Street, I spent really...made a visit every week, going to the Egyptian Hall in the British Museum to see the Egyptian sculpture. This amazing amount of carving in the hardest known stones, granite, basalt and even diorite, was very exciting for one to see and look at. And that, I thought perhaps I was seeing it too much. People say that Egypt is just wrapped up in death, because of the pyramids and the tombs and everything else, but in fact I think they loved life so much that they wanted to keep a hold on it, and mummify it. For example, the things they did, their wonderful eye makeup of women, with the line going out almost to their ears. The enormous wigs. The transparent dressing, painted fingernails, one finger a different colour, and marvellous jewellery. What an impact to see. So there was a feeling of...a real feeling of life, in spite of the despotic nature of the civilization, and one must remember it was 2,000, 3,000 BC. And I went in 1985 with Jossy and some friends of hers on a trip to Egypt.

Is that Jossy Dimbleby, Mrs. David Dimbleby?

Yes, who was a girlfriend of mine for three years before she met David. And it was a wonderful visit, because I had this long memory of Egyptian work. But the thing I hadn't seen, and bowled me over, was Abu Simbel, that is where the Aswan Dam was made. And this thing was moved back by UNESCO, and experts shifting these vast, you know, colossal figures. And they made a whole hillside behind it, a replica of what it had been like. And of course one can't tell seeing it. But these things were overwhelmingly good to see. I don't normally think that huge sculpture is of necessarily great importance in itself; it can have. I mean a Cycladic piece that you can hold in your hand can have just as much impact as a large piece. But the combination of stone cut, and the feeling of power celebrating I think it was...who was it, Rameses III was it, or II; III I think it was, this was...I couldn't speak after, it was so wonderful to see. And Jossy got very cross, she said, 'Mealtime is a time for talking'! (laughs) And so I really had to apologise, I couldn't. So there was the British Museum and the Egyptian sculpture, and through which one day I saw an extraordinary figure. One must remember that in the Thirties men's clothes were very formal. The management and higher, white-collar workers wore bowler hats. My father had a bowler hat; he also had a trilby, but when he was feeling a bit grand he

wore a bowler hat. The workforce wore cloth caps with a peak in the front, so you knew where you were straight away; at a distance you could see. Well instead of that, walking down, striding down was this amazing figure with, I found out later were mediaeval Polish robes going down to his ankles, and sandals, blonde hair down to his waist, and a very intelligent and aristocratic face. This had an absolutely amazing effect on one. I mean these days of extraordinary freedom in the youth movement, and flower power and one thing and another one's so used to these things, but I think that even today he would have made an impression with this thing. And little did I know that he would be coming to my house on several visits after the war.

Now this was Count Potocki, King of Poland.

Yes, he was self-styled Vladislav V, King of Poland.

POTOW...

Potocki it's spelt, but pronounced Potovsky.

So POTOW...

POTOCKI. And Jo knows very well...what's she called, the widow of the famous Japanese...Arthur Waley, scholar. In fact Jo was involved with him when he died because she...she lives only 300 yards away from Jo. And she came from New Zealand, and so did Potocki, and so did Douglas Glass. She said Potocki and Douglas Glass did a milk round together in those far distant days. But there was no mistaking, because he did have...his father must have come from Poland; he did have an extraordinary aristocratic bearing, and authority - he had studied law. And you had a bit of a problem with him through something you wrote you told me at one time. He threatened to take legal action against you or something like that! Anyhow, we'll come back to him later. Now, the other things of interest at that time, there was of course the great Surrealist Exhibition, but the thing that got me most was Epstein at the Leicester Galleries. There were two exhibitions when I was there. And the Leicester Galleries was of course in Leicester Square, and it had an extraordinary

feature, a turnstile going in. You paid the equivalent let's say of 10p to get in, so they had a rake-off, they had an income. And Epstein attracted so many...people luridly attracted by this monster that he in fact, I was told then, asked for a percentage of gate money...(laughing)... He would do that. Now, the two things that...they were of course portraits in bronze, no one has ever ever had any trouble with them, they're always good, vivid likenesses, and done in a very free, fluid modelling clay and cast in bronze. But it was the carvings that worried people. And the two absolutely stunning carvings I saw was 'Adam' and 'Jacob and the Angel', both in alabaster, both about seven or eight feet high, of such enormous impact. They were titanic in their feeling. And it amazes me...there's nothing like that; I can't think of any sculpture, here or abroad, certainly not in America where he came from, that sculptors have produced the same kind of thing. And it's surprising they haven't been toured round the world. I think there was this enormous hatred of him. Partly he was very foreign with his name; the people called him 'Epsteen' and not Epstein, they didn't know which way to pronounce it, and he was Jewish, and various things that...he was very spectacular with what he did, with the carvings anyhow. It was as much hatred as anything else. But why his very good carving of 'Rima', to commemorate...who was the man, 'Long Ago and Far Away'... Hudson, in Hyde Park.

W H Hudson.

That's right. They loathed it so much, but I can't think why, they in fact tarred and feathered it, some unknown person did. And he seemed to attract; maybe he liked this notoriety. Reading the papers, he had a weekend meeting of his fans used to go and he used to go through all the press, reading them and throwing them up into balls onto the floor, that kind of thing. And as you know, I'll just mention, he lived almost next-door to Churchill. He was successful; he had many commissions and so on. But for those two works, the big carvings, I think that he is remarkable. There is a weird sculpture at the gate opposite Knightsbridge going into Hyde Park of a kind of hunt; very weird, something wrong with it. But this is typical of Epstein, there very often was something wrong. And he didn't mind being vulgar. And this is why he's different from Henry Moore, who really was vulgar. Henry's...I'm not running Henry down, who has my greatest admiration, but Henry was, while powerful, more polite.

For example, Henry was a bit strait-laced; he said Schiele, Egon Schiele was pornographic. Well he certainly is erotic, I wouldn't call it pornography, having seen some horrible things, books and so on. This is the trouble with art. If you depict women in a way that does reveal their attractive points, which men find attractive, people can say it's obsessive or pornographic, whereas it might just be that all men happen to admire women's corporeal reality, otherwise we would have no children. And so, it's a very strange thing this business of what is pornographic and what is not.

How would you describe it yourself?

What?

How would you describe it yourself?

What, pornography?

Yes.

Well, I would say, when there is...I mean I haven't thought about this very much. I know that 'Adam and Eve', those wacking great carvings, were certainly not pornographic; they were for many people revolting, they had brutish, what Camilla Paglia would call 'konig', or Dionysian quality, bursting with light and power. Now the thing that is pornographic is where you get glamorized seductiveness, almost like a photograph that can lure men into erotic thoughts. And this perhaps you could call pornography. Now Schiele, he draws too well for this. He loves women and he loves drawing her nudity, but I personally have never had any feeling that he was pornographic; he's brilliant. And apparently at the Academy show they had difficulty in getting the support financially for him, because people said no we don't want to support a pornographic artist. And they did get someone to anyhow. But there is that same quality, it's hard to define.

Now when you went to the Slade, weren't you in the first instance a painter?

No, I don't think I did any painting there. I was at Leeds, but not at the Slade, no, I spent my whole time doing sculpture.

Now do you want to talk about Jo at this point?

Yes, I can say that during the first year I was there, a young woman turned up I think to see Gerrard, and walked around, and I immediately started talking to her and liked her very much, and met her privately. And then...she was sharing a real studio with a friend she had found, not far away from the Slade, and the friend.....

End of F2397 Side B

F2398 Side A

Tape three. Kenneth Armitage interview, 16th of June, 1991. Off we go.

I was talking about Jo, and sharing the studio was marvellous for me, because I could work away from the Slade as well as in the Slade, at night and so on.

Could you spell her surname?

Well it was Moore, MOORE. Yes! (laughs) No relation to Henry! No relation to Henry at all. And...I can't quite...we were in fact married about 18 months later, but for the time being it was a very good period at the Slade. Oh, she had been to Paris the year before, or the summer before, brought back two books - well she didn't bring them back, but a friend of hers was Swedish, who brought back through the Swedish diplomatic bag a copy of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and James Joyce's 'Ulysses', neither of which of course I had read because they were very firmly banned in England. Now everyone...it's common reading since...now for 20, 30 years.

1958, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'...

Yes. And our dear friend Larkin's famous poem, 'Sex Began for Me' at that time. And...now, 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' doesn't really need much talking about, it's so familiar, but 'Ulysses' had a tremendous impact on me, partly because he was Irish, partly because I knew what he was talking about in Dublin, and where he had lived very briefly in the Martello tower at Dalkey, what, about two miles from the centre of Dublin, south, on the coast. And there was a pool there in the rocks called the Forty-Foot Hole, where I sometimes swam as a child with my mother and aunt. But I didn't then even notice the Martello tower standing behind. But I'll come on to that a little later, when I meet it more personally. I also, while at the Slade, I met Stanley Spencer once or twice. He used to turn up for things like...idiotic things like strawberry teas we used to have in the summer. I also did a course of bronze casting at the Central School in the basement, taken by a marvellous man called Galizia, who had a bronze foundry in London.

How do you spell him?

GALIZIA. And I had then many things cast in bronze by him after the war. I don't think there is anything else I can say, except that all the time on the radio one heard Hitler's voice shouting in a very disturbing way. But even more terrifying was the response of thousands listening to him, 'Zieg Heil!' 'Zieg Heil!' roaring out like that. And one knew in one's bones that there was going to be trouble with that. During the...some time in the second year, I told you I went to the quarries in the Matravers. I also started planning an Irish visit for I think the holidays in between the two years, the summer holidays. This, I have already mentioned I knew about Praeger, the man who wrote the book, 'The Way that I Went', about Ireland, Dr Praeger. And I wrote to him, care of his publisher, asking, I said I was going to be in Ireland and I would love to meet him if he was in Ireland there at the time, and if he could spare the time for half an hour or so. And he very kindly wrote back at once and he said yes, if you can get to Roundstone in Connemara, I would be glad to meet you. And so I kept this in mind. I also wanted to do something else, that, being involved with carving, I thought of the marble quarries there were in Connemara. They were famous marble quarries, of a hideous kind when polished. Places like banks had outside a veneer of Connemara marble, or other marbles of that kind, heavily marked with figures in the marking. But I knew that if it was not polished it was an attractive grey, with very slight hint of green and blue in it; you could just discern the different colours in it. But left matt or unpolished it was OK. And I had the crazy idea that it might be possible to ship from Connemara, from Galway, Galway Bay, to let's say the south coast or the Thames I could have got sent this stuff, which...I don't know, it was better to use Hopton Wood. It was just an idea, and I thought I would try and find the quarries. So then I was staying at Lackan with my uncle, I borrowed a bike from the store in Edgeworthstown, and I would like to mention about Edgeworth in a moment, but first of all the marble quarry. I put my bike on a bus to Longford, changed at Longford to Oughterard, changed at Oughterard for Clifden; in the west coast of Connemara I got off at Maam Cross and cycled down then to the sea at Roundstone. And that was my first visit of many I have made since. And I met Praeger. I stayed at a lodging house by the harbour. It was a tiny village really, but it had a harbour

which serviced the rest of the coast, with a few boats, fishing boats, and a wonderful setting with the 12 bends of Connemara in the distance, and the big mountain behind, Errisbeg. Well it's not very big, I've climbed it three or four times, but it was black and brooding. Gabbro I think it's called the stone; it wasn't like the main grey-white peaks of quartz of the 12 bends of Connemara. And so it was lovely to meet Praeger, who must have been rather perhaps disappointed that I was a student and not a full-grown man, but he was very nice and kind, and we talked about the area just north of Errisbeg, it's a vast area of bog with lakes.

He's...just to interrupt. PRAEGER.

PRAEGER, yes, it's a kind of German name. And he had gone with various learned gentlemen, probing the depth of the bog up there and he found it was all about nine feet deep on a bed, as it is right through the centre of Ireland, on a limestone basis, like a saucer holding...

Quite shallow.

Yes. Well nine feet is enough to...

Bury a man.

Bury a man! And so, I stayed at this charming place overlooking the harbour. The woman, as I was a student she was very kind to me, and I used to go off on my bike every day, and she gave me half a lobster from the harbour, and some brown bread and butter, a bottle of Guinness and an apple.

Oh...!

What more could you want? Every day. And so I used to have this delightful picnic, and I then...I knew where the quarries were, off a main road on the map, on a minor road, up a tiny track up a crack, where I found a deserted railway, overgrown, and I came to the quarries. And there were some great blocks around. But the railway

hadn't been used for years. In fact...it had carried the marble blocks down to Galway Harbour. Suddenly I heard a woman singing, and I thought strange, there was not a house for a mile near. And so I climbed up the bank, looked at the top, and there was a young woman stooping slightly, using a sickle, the implement seen on the Russian flag, gathering presumably fodder for her donkey or goat; black hair, attractive face. And she had on a Connemara skirt, or was it general in the west of Ireland, I don't know, but it was the only time I have seen it before or since, a heavy woollen skirt, down to her ankles, dyed a russet colour from either berries or seaweed on the coast. And she was singing in Gaelic. And this really was a real Irish impact. Well I listened to her for a few seconds, careful that she didn't see me, and I slipped away without her knowing, or she pretended she didn't see me. And I went back then to Lackan. And I passed, on the way to Maam Cross where I got the bus, a large house, it was like a mansion in the lakes and the woods, but it had been a castle, and it was called Ballinahinch Castle. And since then, I had then read about Maria Edgeworth, who was a famous member of the Edgeworth family near Lackan, where my mother was born, Edgeworthstown. My uncle used to say, 'Don't write to me "Lackan House, Edgeworthstown", call it Mostrim, that's its real name, and it will arrive, don't worry. But they did in fact try it; years later I went with Susan, and the signposts, it never said Edgeworthstown, the signposts directed one to Mostrim. Well I knew that it was Edgeworthstown really, so I found the way. Then they changed it back. Too many people were confused, so...it was better known as Edgeworthstown. The area in London called Edgeware was named after Edgeworth, who was an immensely rich man, who owned lots of land round the mountains. Now, Maria - he had 20 children, by two wives, and was scientifically-minded, an an extraordinary man. And he had Maria about...I don't know, in the middle somewhere of this gang of kids, and she was a very gifted writer indeed. This I told you before, she was a great friend of Walter Scott, and they wrote to each other, and I think he went to see her at Edgeworthstown once, and she visited him in England. And she was the first to write in the vernacular, which of course is not original, it has been used right from the days of Chaucer they had used some vernacular, even Boccaccio. But this was the first of the days of the English novel leading to people like the Brontes and the others; she was ahead of her time then. Not that the Brontes used vernacular, but that this 'Castle Rackrent' was. Now, what fascinated me more were her diaries, for example going to France, where

she was made an enormous fuss of. Very often people in England are received better abroad than they are in England. And she could go anywhere, and she was a celebrity because of 'Castle Rackrent'; she saw Napoleon on a white horse reviewing the troops at what became Place de la Concorde, or the Champs-Elys,es or something, I don't know where. And other things of that kind. But she decided in England to do a tour, and she went with some friends of hers on a coach journey to Connemara from Edgeworthstown, which I mean is what, two or three hours by car, nothing. But her friends were very grand, and they had a huge carriage with six horses and postilions, and a companion was called I think Sir William Culling Smith and Lady Culling Smith. And they used to stop at a very grand house on the way. People were sociable in those days in that strata of society; they would stop where they wanted. And they got as far as Connemara, and they broke down in Ballinahinch Castle as it was called. In fact Lady Culling Smith became ill and they had to stay three weeks; no one seemed to mind. Well, to cut a long story short, what struck me, and I'm sorry I'm going to read a paragraph of this, was the daughter of the house, who caught Maria Edgeworth's fancy...[sorry, I want my reading specs]. She said, 'Then came in, still by firelight, from the door at the far end of the room, a young lady, elegantly dressed in deep mourning'. All the time, you must remember, for miles around there was nothing but bog; no other house at all. 'My daughter, Lily Culling Smith, Miss Edgeworth, was introduced. She had a slight figure, head held up and thrown back. She had the resolution to come to the very middle of the room and make a deliberate and profound curtsey, which her dancing master in Paris would have approved. She seated herself upon the sofa, and seemed as if she never intended to speak. I found Mary one of the most extraordinary persons I ever saw. Her acquirements are indeed prodigious. She has more knowledge of books, both scientific and learned, than any female I ever saw of her age. Heraldry, metaphysics, painting, and painters' lives, and tactics. She had a course on fortification from a French officer, and of engineering from Mr. Nemmo[ph]', who at that moment was building the road that they got stuck in. This great carriage at every gulley, men from the mountains came, and hauled them over, carrying them and Maria Edgeworth bodily over the water. It was a real exercise for them. 'She understands Latin Greek and Hebrew, and I don't know how many modern languages; French she speaks perfectly, learnt from the French officer who taught her fortification, M. Dubois, who was one of Bonaparte's Legion of

Honour', L,gion d'Honeur I suppose. 'And when the Emperor was outsted he fled France, and earned his bread at Ballinahinch by teaching French, which...Miss Martin talks as if she had been a native, but not as if she had been in good Parisian society'! (laughs) With an odd mixture of what she calls, '"ton de barnissant"[ph], which might be expected from the pupil of one of Bonaparte's officers'. I find that so funny, laced with swear-words and things of that kind I suppose. 'She imbibed from him such an enthusiasm for Bonaparte, that she cannot bear a word said in his disparagement. And when Sir Culling sometimes offended in that way, Miss Martin's face and neck drew carnation coloured down to the tips of her fingers; she blushed with indignation. Do think', she says, 'of a girl of 17, in the wilds of Connemara, intimately connected with all the beauties of Aeschylus and Euripides, and having them as part of her daily thoughts'. Well I think that's a wonderful picture. That girl was presented at court either that year or the following year, and one wonders how she got on with the other girls. She had two black stallions, and she got Maria Edgeworth seated on one of them, who was very nervous, and the girl said, 'What you must never do is look angrily at him, otherwise he will kill you. He chased me into the house once'. So Maria got down and wouldn't ride it any more. Well that was a little vignette of this strange life in the bogs of Connemara. So that visit ended, and the good Leeds people, education, were going to send me on yet a third scholarship abroad, to have one year to finish me off. But the political situation, they said that was too dangerous for them to think about it, so I returned to Leeds for a very bad month or so. I had no money, I needed a job, I was staying with my parents. There were three million unemployed, and the population then was much less than it is now. In fact there was no teaching at all, everything was full, and the only job that would accept me was selling Hoovers door to door, but I baulked at that, I put up with my parents' grumbling rather than do that. Well, Hitler invaded Poland.

Yes, I just wonder at that point whether we might dwell a little bit on the, very briefly, on the Slade. Here you were, you denied having a great literary interest at school.

Well I didn't know much, but I did like...I was supplied with books to read by the teacher in the class, and I didn't really know much more than that. I still have their book of poems.

But...I mean you are intensely...

Boswell I did then.

But you are an intensely literary and cultured man if I may say so.

Well I don't know, I love books I must say.

I wondered where this grew, and whether it was perhaps stimulated by Jo, or indeed by your friends at the Slade during that...

No, no they didn't, no. No, it didn't affect me. I was working very hard then with the art work I was doing, such as it was, and I was reading all the time, 'Madam Bovary' and various things that one does read as a young man. But of course the 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and 'Ulysses', which Jo brought back were important, and many other things like that. But no, I wouldn't say that I was literary minded at school. After all I was interested in the art, and that was where I spent my spare time, in the school art class, painting.

What was the order in those days? I mean at an art school, how did it work? In your first year you did such-and-such.

You did a year of drawing, that was traditional.

The first year.

Yes. And then you...

This was from the cast or from life?

First of all cast drawing, and then you got on to real models, which was an extraordinary shock for a young man, to be in a room suddenly with a naked woman.

Because you hadn't had this at Leeds?

Oh no, no. I was a schoolboy then. Maybe they have models at schools now, I don't know, but I didn't certainly. And...well you don't... I also found it extraordinary being in a class with girls. They rather sent vibrations through one, being seated so near to girls all day long, and as I have told you before, it didn't take me long to get involved with one! (laughs)

But now this must have been a vast release. I mean in those days...I only say that because this is just a shade before my time. But in those days...

Much before your...

No not you. But in those days, I mean this was quite...society did not approve of sex before marriage.

Absolutely.

But in art, the milieu of as it were Bohemia, this was as it were a kind of free area.

Not at first. They had different rooms for men and women, so they weren't mixed when they were drawing the models naked. They did...

You were segregated?

Yes. But not at Leeds I think; this must have been a little earlier, at the Royal Academy for example - if women went to the Royal Academy, I don't know. But I know, I've just read recently the different classes they had for the sexes in some of the art schools in those very early days.

But at the Slade, when you were there, were you all drawing nude models together, or not?

I'm trying to think. We must have done, yes. Well maybe not; no, maybe there were two rooms. Quite frankly I can't remember.

And were the models...?

Maybe there were two rooms.

Were the models young girls, or were they old women so as you didn't get too excited? Well not old women.

They were fairly young. Now, I think I am right in saying they were mixed, because in the sculpture department we had a model for life modelling, and there we were boys and girls modelling away. So there is no doubt about that. It had been more liberal then when I got there, to the Slade.

And apart from Epstein, was Henry Moore a figure to you then, or...?

Oh yes, indeed. I know that he came; I wasn't there at the time, but he had just been there, or he had made a day visit he would spend. He got #9 for that! I was bowled over, to have this fortune for a day's visit to an art school.

But apart from him, would you say he was a great influence on you at that time, or were there people who you looked up to in particular?

No. No, I think I...you must remember in those early days, Epstein was more well known. Henry did have a close following by people who knew him, in the, what is that, Unit One Group I think it was, and Herbert Read and so on. And of course Kenneth Clark later, or at the same time.

There was a big Yorkshire element, and I wondered if you were aware of that, or...?

Not at the time, no. No, I didn't think about it. What, you mean Barbara Hepworth and...?

Well, Read and Moore, and...

Yes. No, it was only later that I realized that Barbara Henry and I were all within about nine miles from Leeds. And Herbert Read was further over in the East Riding.

So you knew none of these people at that time?

No.

And you had no even acquaintanceship with a famous artist at that time?

No. Only Stanley Spencer by meeting him at the Slade. Strawberry tea.

Did he impress her in any way?

Oh yes. I've got a note written to my art teacher at Leeds. I wrote to him irregularly really until I came to this house a few years ago.

To your art teacher in Leeds?

Yes. Right through my Slade period, through the war, through my period at Notting Hill Gate, going to Corsham. And a lot of letters I wrote to him he kept and dated them. It shows you how much he was really thinking of me, which was very nice. Now, before I left Leeds I did a portrait...no, when I went to the Slade I did a portrait of his daughter Angela, who was a very attractive young girl, and I did it in plaster of course - no clay, modelled it in Plasticine. I think I had just gone to the Slade, and I gave her a present of this, or did I show it somewhere? Anyhow I gave her a present at some time. And eventually years later he died, and...oh no, maybe she had given it to him; that's right, she gave the head to him. He died, and so she got the head, plaster model from him, and she also found all these letters that I had sent him. And it's a

pity I didn't remember while were doing this what I had said about...whatever it was that we were just talking about.

Stanley Spencer.

Stanley Spencer. I said I had met a marvellous man, I liked him very much. You know, that sort of thing. And I got to know his work, and was very impressed with him. The thing about those days was that if you were a student you were terribly impressed to meet someone famous, whereas these days you are rather despised. I mean every young artist thinks at once that he is - as he may well be, very very important indeed, and has very little regard for the average run of artists. I mean unless he has chosen one or two. For example, when I taught at the Slade I don't...

At what period?

When I taught at the Royal College of Art, much later, when I had left, '72, when I had left the Marlborough and I hadn't a penny, and Bernard Meadows gave me a day a week at the Slade for about three or four years. And there they really had no respect for Henry Moore. Certain people had great excitement if say Richard Long was coming for the day, and then there would be ripples of excitement for someone nearer their own age. Henry Moore was to them a very old man. But in my case in those days it didn't matter how old they were, I was still very excited to see them. Because the gulf between the provincial areas and London was greater, you could get to London and so on.

But then, might we not say that older generation of Royal Academy type of artist was possibly not your cup of tea at the Slade as a student. So in a sense, they have rejected their fathers. I mean you know, some of the old codgers who had been very famous before the First War.

I don't think there were any artists in the Royal Academy that I had a great respect for as I knew them at all. It was already to me an area that I didn't even think about. And what made it worse was then, later, Munnings became President, and he abused the

great American painters, like Matisse, Braque, Picasso, and all the ones that one knew so well, as mere rubbishy daubs and all the rest of it, that I swore then that I would never have anything to do with the Academy. And Kelly followed the same. All the other Academicians followed Munnings saying, 'Oh, he's a real character, yes, he lays it on you know'. And of course Churchill agreed with him; probably he wouldn't like Picasso at all either. And so there was a gulf there. But this you must remember, sculpture was my main interest, and the sculpture in the Royal Academy is never the brightest part. Oh yes, they've got Paolozzi, and they tried...Caro went for a while till he saw the kind of work that was shown in the Summer Exhibition and resigned immediately. And so I never had...there have been marvellous painters, I do agree, there have been some. In those days Spencer joined the Academy, and Sickert, and they resigned for some reason. But it was really...for sculpture, I didn't think of the...I don't know why, I didn't think of the Academy at that time. Not that my work was all that avant garde, it wasn't, and I don't really think it is to this day.

And were you aware of Picasso and and that sort of thing?

Not so much. At Leeds they had one tiny book about, you know, nine inches square, that's all I knew. And it wasn't really until I heard more about him at the Slade. There weren't any paintings I saw of his in London I don't think. In fact it wasn't until the end of the war, immediately at the end of the war, they had put on some stunning exhibitions of Picasso, shown I think at the V&A.

End of F2398 Side A

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And artists from Paris starting at the Slade when it started. It was a drawing and painting school. I mean the Royal College of Art had marvellous things, they have had great painters. [Is it on now, or not? Oh, I see.] The Professor at one point was talking to me about something, a carving I had done, which was slightly humorous. In fact, a lot of people have said that my work can easily be humorous, there's something funny about it. I don't know, I can't tell myself, but this has been brought up. And there was a stone carving I did which was a bit humorous. I can remember it now, and I can see his point, and I say well, maybe I...stupid, I said maybe I won't get my Slade Diploma if I go on doing this funny sculpture. And he said, 'What on earth do you want a diploma for?' Now that was a Slade Professor, speaking really on rather grand terms. He wasn't thinking of it as a teaching qualification, he was thinking of it as fine art. Whereas the Royal College of Art, the associate business with the MA, BA things they have, is very much geared to qualifications when you leave. I may be wrong about this, but from my contact with the colleges it's very much thought about, whereas the Slade was really a tradition of drawing and painting, which had come from Paris and was started in a wing of London University for...called Slade School of Fine Art. It was really to produce artists, painters and so on. So there is a slight distinction between them. Mind you, there were marvellous painters at the College, there's no doubt about it. So, now...

Who was the Professor?

Oh, he was not in fact a very marvellous one. He was called...what was he called? (laughs) Schwabe. Randolph...you won't even have heard of him. Randolph Schwabe.

How do you spell that?

SCHWABE, in the German way. I'm sorry. Dear Professor Schwabe, I'm sorry I forgot your name.

Who were your fellow artists who subsequently made a name for themselves?

Well at the same time there was Patrick Heron, Brian Winter; these were the same years, but they were in the painting department. And at the Slade one really didn't mix very much. The sculpture was down and along to one side, a separate establishment. Apart from drawing, and if one wanted to do any painting, one didn't go up into the painting studios, so that one didn't necessarily mix with... Well those are the two I can think of mostly, Patrick Heron. Paul Filer you may not know, he was another one of that year, or those two years. Maybe there were others, but...

And you didn't particularly meet them?

No, I was with my own friends in the sculpture school.

None of whom subsequently blossomed?

No. No, I don't think so.

Good. Well, on to the war then.

So, well now...I was talking about Poland. Yes, war was declared on the 3rd of September, 1939, in Britain and Germany. And I had then to decide what to do. And...

Kenneth, can I just interrupt there. Let me get this straight. The Slade course, or your period at the Slade, your scholarship, that lasted for two years.

Two years.

That was what it was intended to last for? It wasn't just cut short by the war? You completed your course?

No. It was my two years. I was on a scholarship don't forget, I had a scholarship for two years.

So you had finished that scholarship.

I had finished there, and I went back to my parents at Leeds. Oh I talked about this already, that I couldn't get a job. And so the war came then, and then I realized that...

So you had left the Slade that summer.

Absolutely. And also, an interesting point, I left all my stuff there, because I thought I might be popping back, and I had a scholarship from Leeds which was cancelled. My things were still at the studio. But my mother refused to give me the fare to get there; I was penniless then. I was living - it's interesting - while at the Slade I was living on #1.50p a week. Now, this seems unbelievable, but in fact that represents #1.10s, 30 shillings, on which, if you were immensely careful you could just live. I lived on porridge with dates in it, and bananas and things of that kind. And I had one meal a week in a restaurant, not Bertorelli's, but Poggiolis I think the name was, you could get a meal for ninepence. Well that was something now...infinitessimal; it was a tiny little spaghetti meal you could have. You could live very cheaply indeed.

And where were you living?

I was living in the studio.

This was in the Slade?

No. No, I told you that Jo had shared a studio with a young woman who went somewhere else, and therefore I paid something for that rent, and I also worked there, and I also slept. Jo was in fact sleeping at a school she was teaching at, so that I had the use of the studio. And I worked there, and I could sleep there as well.

She was a fellow student?

She was a Slade student but she had left before. She was seven years older than I was, so she was in fact doing a teaching job elsewhere, at a children's school, a very good one.

So you met her...sorry, how did you meet?

She called in at the Slade. I thought I said this.

Yes, well I wasn't in fact clear about it.

To see Gerrard, and walking around, and you know, as one does in an art school, she was talking to various people, and I started talking to her and I liked her, and arranged to meet her again, and so I did and got to know her. And that was why I got in the studio, and... So when I was at Leeds I wanted to wind up the thing, but my mother refused to give me the fare. You know, we want you to get some money, this sort of thing, and you haven't done it. And I rang Jo, and she said, 'Well I'll send you a cheque'. She sent me a cheque for #2! (laughs) On this I could get to the Slade, stay a night or two in the studio and come back. My mother was furious that Jo had given me the #2, like that kind of rival.

Interesting.

Yes.

I mean did Jo come up to Leeds at that time, did she meet your mother?

Oh no, not until later. Not until we got married without telling my mother.

So your mother was very jealous of rivals?

I think so. What really she wanted was me to have supplied an income, and if I married someone I would immediately have someone to support. Jo in fact did have a

very very small private income, something so small now you wouldn't notice it, but it was a help in those very early days. Her father was Registrar to the Archbishop of Canterbury; in Lambeth Palace he had an office, and he was...I suppose a solicitor. And Jo always knew a lot about the law at that time; well she said she did anyhow. So, with that #2 I got back to the Slade. And it was a worrying time, because I had been brought up with people talking to me about the First World War, and all the trenches and all that kind of thing. And I really thought, well, this is it, my days are numbered, in a year or two; I'm sure for the coffin so to speak. And so I went back to Leeds and tried to get jobs, couldn't. War came, and I thought well, I shall be called up anyhow in a year or two, and there will be conscription as there was in the First World War. The other thing was, if I joined up immediately I wouldn't be a burden on my parents. So the next day after war was declared I volunteered. And they were very pleased to see someone so prompt, and they said to me...(laughs) Because I wouldn't have been called up for a year later, at least. And they said, well where would you like to go? They were so open-armed! And I thought well, I don't want to go into the trenches. Artillery I thought, that'll be cleaner, not so muddy. And so, I was sent within a few days to Deepcut a camp north of Aldershot, just outside Aldershot. And that brings me up to my Army headings year. I think that finishes the Slade doesn't it?

When you set up married life with Jo, was that in the studio? Because she was a sculptress wasn't she.

Yes, well we saw a lot of each other.

But what was the address of the studio, can you remember?

It was Varndell Street.

How do you spell that?

VARNDELL I think, off the road that goes from...the continuation of Tottenham Court Road, over what I think is Marylebone Road, and then about two or three

hundred yards the other side, and along the street was a little...now pulled down, it was pulled down during the war and made then into big blocks of flats. But it had a top light, it was a real studio. Slummy, very slummy area. But it was wonderful.

Had you been to London before you went to the Slade?

Yes, I had been on one or two day trips from Leeds, maybe for a big exhibition, let's say like the Chinese Exhbition or whatever it was in those days. A cheap excursion return from Leeds, that's all.

And was there a particular characteristic of London at that time that you recall?

No. I remember going to the Houses of Parliament with other young students, and just wandering around a bit, seeing the exhibitions, going to an evening...not theatre, there was a sort of jazzy thing we went to see. And then the train back, I mean we probably only had about six hours in London.

But when you came there as a student of the Slade, what struck you about London? I mean did you immediately take to the life?

Oh I loved it, yes. I can't remember what I thought of it. It was so full of avenues you could follow, and various things to see, and the city... I noticed very much, my first lodgings, where the dray horses... This was before I met...one of the students from Leeds came, a man called Murphy, who wasn't a very good artist but he was an immensely strong man and I had him as a kind of hit man...(laughs)...with me, and we shared a flat off Gower Street, within, you know, a hundred yards of the Slade. And...why are we mentioning him? My mother was...he was a very ardent Irish Catholic. My mother had a horror of the Catholics, and she was worrying that he would malpractise her. Oh, you can't imagine the extraorinary thing it was. And then I got to know Jo, and then I moved into the studio where Jo was. Otherwise I was just a normal person in London, living hand to mouth. So eventually I went back to Leeds. Then I went...

Right, so there we are, at the brink of your military career.

At the brink of my military period. About which I knew nothing at all. I went to Deepcut camp. And I ought to take a moment about the... Because I was so early they sent me to a field training regiment, RA. Now field artillery was rather the ,lite of guns at that time, as opposed to anti-aircraft or anti-tank, because you're shooting at visible targets. Field artillery was the smallest mobile gun that was shooing at targets out of sight, over hills, and one had an observation post officer there up a tree, or on the hilltop, looking down at the target. He could see the target; he was connected by a telephone cable to the guns, and he could direct the fire. A shell would be lobbed over, he would then see it land, next to the target, he would say, let's say, 'Right three degrees; more two hundred yards', and within about three shots they could hit the target, with accurate map readings. A very excellent, precise business. And in fact it was so ,litist that gun it became what was then the King's Troop of Artillery, the gun salute to kings, operated by a gun team which were not of the ranks, they were all colonels pretending to be gunners. Maybe they still are to this day, but I think the guns now will have changed long ago. But insofar as one could like a gun, that was a spectacular one. Also it had horse-drawn artillery, and when I was commissioned, like an idiot I got riding breeches and puttees, but never...(laughs)...never needed...I couldn't ride anyhow, so I never used them. It was a thing that one did at the beginning of the war. So, the next day at this training regiment, standing up queueing for tea, with mugs, I saw a man in front with nice clothes and brown shoes, and a stick under his arm, and a moustache. So I said to the bloke next to me, 'What's that man there?' He said, 'He's an officer mate!' So well, I thought it would be nice to be one of those. I started growing a moustache! Well, in a very short time I was made a specialist, and then I was sent to an officer cadet training unit at Catterick near Richmond in Yorkshire, where there was a fine new building, there were four cadets in a room with beds, excellent food, but very hard work. It was a six-month training, really entirely wasted. We were doing something impossible that was called 'Stage Three', and the most meticulous mathematical process for making the shooting more accurate which was abandoned the minute I left. I am mentioning this because I was rather proud of my battery commander's report for me was, 'Eccentric, untidy and should be curbed'. Now, the final report was much better, it was above average or

something ordinary like that. Then Jo came up to be married in Richmond. I didn't have any money, I didn't have a ring; I had a curtain ring or something like that. And the man in the next bed to me was very interesting, he was a poet, and he knew all about surrealist art. He had worked in a gallery before the war, owned by someone called Messening or a name like that.

E L T Mesens?

Something like that. And his wife came too, and she was very attractive, very intelligent, and alas I had a very brief affair with her later.

Why do you say alas?

Well no, I tell you why. Because he had been a very brave soldier. He had gone...before D-Day, he was...by parachute, and directing fire, and he was very badly wounded. And it was just at that moment I was meeting her, and it was a slight lapse, and I vowed then I would never have anything to do again with a married woman, and didn't, so far as I know; no, I didn't with her. Now, towards the end of the six months there was Dunkirk. Hitler had ripped through, right through France, and to save cutting us off we escaped, the whole army escaped, and all the little ships took the men off, almost all of them. It was a miracle. But we lost all the equipment, every single thing. And I was posted then to a unit in Davenport, which is just inland from Plymouth, Plymouth Sound. It was a bottleneck, and there was a large area of water behind, which we were I suppose defending. We had two guns, 25-pounders, like the one I had been trained on, and 6-inch howitzers. But we had the wrong ammunition due to Dunkirk. And it was an absolute waste of time, couldn't use them. All day long there were dog fights in the sky, with Spitfires and Messerschmidts, and Hurricanes, making vapour trails just like the Paul Nash painting in the Tate Gallery, and bits of shrapnel landing on the parade ground outside. It was a very old barracks we occupied.

Did you watch that or...?

Oh a lot, yes. Fascinating.

That must have been very exciting.

It was. But they saved the situation, the Spitfires and Hurricanes then. There was no possibility of a land battle, we had lost everything, except the men. And that worried me. We were not able to use the 25-pounders, and I thought well, really the thing to do is somehow to change to anti-aircraft, which was a retrograde step in terms of status symbol, because these 25-pounders were the ,lite, it was down a bit, forgive me, you know...

You hadn't got a commission by then, or had you?

Oh yes, I was commissioned at Catterick, I was second lieutenant.

Right. Your parents must have been pleased about that.

Oh they're like that, yes, I think so. They wanted more at once. They thought it was a thing that was automatic.

And you had married Jo basically because you thought you were going to be killed?

Basically, yes.

You probably would not have married had it not been war...

No I wouldn't. I didn't want to get married. But I thought well, here is someone I like very much, and I know, and really...she wanted to get married, and for me it's an anchor, although I may not meet her again.

But did you want to leave a child behind or something like that? Did you think of that?

Well there was hardly time. Maybe, but I don't remember. I don't remember thinking about that.

But it was more to have an anchor when you were in the trench somewhere, or whatever you were going to be doing, or when you were abroad?

Yes, I didn't immediately meet her and immediately try to have a child. I must say that I didn't do that, although we were having normal intercourse, as between any young people. But it never even entered my head. Maybe I didn't think very clearly about it, otherwise I would have done.

However, it was definitely a matter of the war. This was a wartime marriage then.

Oh yes, it was a wartime marriage. And I knew that Jo was...intuitively, and at once I knew she was a marvellous person. And so, I thought well what can I do about this? And then I remembered the colonel at Deepcut who, in spite of being just a recruit, I had already met the commandant. It's unbelievable that the colonel should get around meeting the people who were just called up, civilians so to speak. I was only there what, three months. And there was with me, in the same intake, a very good young man called McFarlane, whose father was a general. This boy had the makings of a really good officer, it stood out. He was posted somewhere else and I was posted to this place in Devonport. So I thought, well I'll write to this colonel, who already was interesting to me, because he was eccentric. He was a regular soldier, a DSO, badges on his breast and so on. He had been in the Army all his life; he was nearing the end of his Army period, he was approaching 50, whatever age they retire. And I thought, I'll try writing to him. Lo and behold, within ten days War Office instructions, or Headquarters, I was posted as once back to Deepcut, the place I was at seven months before. Now, Barmy - I mentioned him once, the colonel - oh yes, he was called 'Barmy' Bill. He was so eccentric, and he was famous in the War Office for his eccentricity, and this I loved.

Now Barmy Bill...

Buckland. Colonel Buckland, BUCKLAND, DSO, RA. Served in India all his life. 20 times through the Red Sea was his boast. And so on. And I was posted back to his camp. And he never batted an eyelid, but I think when I turned up...in fact he told me later, he had got me mixed up with the general's son, and if he hadn't...I had some kind of divine intervention in this whole business. If he hadn't got me mixed up, I never would I don't think have been posted to this place, which resulted in amazing things for me. And Barmy, my letter must have been impressed him very much because he quoted it to me when I bumped into him after the war, 'These stupid guns' I wrote. And that, oh he liked that, that was eccentric. Anything a bit out of the ordinary. So there I was in this camp, the person they didn't expect! (laughs) They didn't know what to do with me, and I was made MT officer, that was Military Transport, and I looked after the guns, cars, motorbikes and all the rest of it; not understanding it very well. And within a month or two I was sent off for a course on aircraft identification at a small school miles away, because we had been shooting down our own planes in the evacuation. And I did very well there I think, because I had been involved with shape as an art student.

Where was this?

I can't remember. It was by car let's say an hour's journey. And I went back to the camp, and almost simultaneously they started another outfit there in aircraft identification, which sounds a sloppy thing to do, but it was important to save our own men and our own planes, which were being shot at. And a captain was appointed in charge of it, and I was made assistant lieutenant, or something. I wrote to Foxy Walker, my old art teacher, and I said to him, [I'm turning over the pages of these letters], 'I'm back at Deepcut. But conditions are much better; I am now second in charge of a War Office school in aircraft recognition. I have been doing this for four months, and in a little while we are going to blossom forth, be made much larger, and become a permanent feature. At present it's a trial run, to see how we worked out, and then we would have a proper establishment with staff, offices, equipment etcetera etcetera. 80 students a fortnight.' And I say, at last I have found something I really enjoy doing, because it concerns shape. And I forgot to add, there's another note in the previous letter to Foxy. 'Did I tell you I was married?' It was only two months

after my marriage. 'A most curious person!' (laughing) I say, 'Most interesting, you shall meet her one day. She carves and paints beautifully'. That's all I had to say about her, because I thought I would never meet her again [INAUDIBLE] like that. So, there was a very minor report on the situation at the camp. Now, where is that page I had? So there we...what we did, we taught people by means of silhouettes and models and visits to two things. Well first of all there was the...at Farnborough there was the famous aeronautical establishment that still exists, where they made trials on aircraft, and they had water troughs, wind tunnels, for tests. They also had a lot of our own planes and captured enemy planes, so that our students, we would drive over, they could see the actual things. Later when we started on tank, I was asked to do tank identification: we'd been shooting up our own tanks as well - which wasn't very good! There was a tank range behind Pirbright, about four miles away, which was the Coldstream Guards training regiment, where the regimental sergeant major jumped to the salute of his officer, if the Colonel rang him, although the Colonel was out of sight, miles away, this kind of discipline. And they had their tank range; it wasn't attached to them, but there was a big tank range. We could see tanks, our own tanks and captured German tanks which had all been disinfected, because of the bodies that had been in them, that kind of thing. So, there we were, well under way with this thing, when I was asked to go to see Colonel Buckland with Captain Farrell, not knowing what it was all about. Got there, saluted, and Barmy Bill, who was let's say like an eccentric intellectual: he was in fact a very tough man, unbelievable, and he laid into Captain Farrell at once. Dressed him down absolutely, and said, 'You look like a washed out French letter', and other abusive things. And then he turned...and to my horror he turned to me, because I was only lieutenant, and this other man was a captain. And, 'What do you think Armitage?' Well I just couldn't talk about someone who was my senior. At the same time, I had to agree with Colonel Buckland, that this person was not at all satisfactory. Well, it ended...

What did you say?

Nothing. I kept silent, on purpose. Which I think was a thing that Colonel Buckland admired. He was very nearly retiring. He had had a life-long...in the Army, and above everything else, so he had a broader view than most officers. As well...I'll give

you an illustration in a minute. And so, Farrell was posted elsewhere, and I was made captain. I was then in charge of the unit. So that was the first thing that happened to me. And it went on, until one day the wife of a major I knew in a nearby unit, Major Jackson, she was Belgian, tough, attractive, disappeared. I found out that she was dropped by parachute. She had joined the resistance in France. She was also very friendly with the Free French, which Barmy, this colonel, with his broader view of things, he was very friendly with them too. He used to meet them when they came, with my unit. Well we had drinks in there, and we met in London. I never met de Gaulle, who.....

End of F2398 Side B

F2399 Side A

So there was this young lady, who was called Olga. She was extremely tough, and one of the people who could do this. She had dropped by parachute when she was a schoolgirl in Belgium. But the same day, or next day in the officers' mess I found I was sitting next to a brigadier who had just come back from Burma, a horrible time he had had. And he was called Lion Smith, Brigadier Lion Smith, and his nickname was 'Tiger', 'Tiger' Lion Smith, because he was a ferocious character. So he looked me up and down, and I had no campaign badge on my front, and he said, 'What are you doing here? Are you unfit for service?' And I said, 'No sir, but I do the best I can wherever I am sent' or something, I can't remember, something like that, which he seemed to think was at least an answer, and he changed the subject. But his saying that, he was getting at me for not being in Burma and all the rest of it. It worried me deeply. And for a day I thought about it, and thought about it, and well I thought I've got to...here is a girl who has dropped in France, here is a brigadier saying this to me, I've got to be a bit more of a soldier. So I went to Barmy, Colonel Buckland, and I said I want to volunteer to be a commando. Now, anyone else would have said just very good, that's fine Armitage, we'll see about a posting. No, not so Barmy, the old soldier all his life. He said...thought a bit, he said, 'Better be a live donkey than a dead horse. No one will thank you for this in 20 years' time'. And he said something else, which I forget. 'Go away and come back tomrrow when you have thought a bit more about it'. Well, I wasn't desperate to be killed. I wanted to get on with sculpture if I could after the war. And I had made an effort; at least I had made myself available. So I don't know what I said when I went back, something like probably I wouldn't make a very good commando or something like that. And the result of it was, I went on until the end of the war, and I think this is probably a good moment to end. Except that for a while, Jo, who I hadn't seen, came to live out; that is, she hired a...we got a little house near...horrible little place, about two miles by bicycle away from the camp. And for, let's say three or four months I was able to go and sleep there, which was wonderful. And Barmy, Colonel Buckland, came to tea. And she had been knitting, and she had a knitting book, which I had never noticed, but his remarks made me look at it. Women's knitting books, I don't know if they are the same today, had a strange language. Knit one, purl two, and things like that. Well,

with Barmy's trained mind, he said, 'What's that? Ah', he said, 'I'll do that'. So he bought mountains of wool and some knitting needles. He never knitted anything, he just made lengths of the stuff. Always he had about a foot or two of knitting the width of a needle. But he was a dedicated exhibitionist. And he used to wait until he got on the train to London - I used to travel a lot with him. We got as far as Pirbright where the Coldstream Guards officers got on, in those days it was always first class, and then he would pull out his wool, a big ball, and he would say, 'Armitage, hold out your hands', and he would wind the wool - I loved it - round my arms. And the officers who got in at Pirbright, their eyes would go round and round. Who the hell was this? The colonel doing this sort of thing. Oh, also civilians in the first-class compartment too were amazed. Well that was just one of the many things that he was up to all the time. And in fact he was a wonderful man. But he was also tough. I remember earlier on going out on an exercise on a very cold, freezing cold day, he wouldn't have a great-coat on. I would be wrapped up to the eyes with a great-coat, and he would say, 'Armitage, take that coat off. What are you going to do when it really gets cold?' That sort of thing. He never slipped up with a thing like that. People were terrified of him, but I wasn't; in some way I knew his mind, and his intellectual interests. I mean he spoke perfect French, he could read Latin, and took an interest in everything. And so, eventually the war came to an end, and I was released.

I would like just while we are on that, you said while the tape was off an interesting thing. He was the second person who influenced you. Now who was the first person?

Oh yes. The first person was Mr Walker, the art school, the Leeds school, who had persuaded my mother to let me go to an art school. Although as I said, many people like Bacon and Lucien Freud never went near art school, but as someone in a provincial town, in a suburb, with no one interested in art, it was the only way I could do any art and that kind of thing. So he really was responsible for my being able to go at all, and the fact that I had got a scholarship through his recommendation.

So in a sense, when you say influence do you mean changed the course of your life?

That's right. And Barmy was a miracle. He saved my life. In fact, after the war, I don't know if I had moved in here, but I was in a bus in Kensington High Street, and there was Barmey's voice at the back. 'Armitage!' And there was old Barmy, sitting on the back seat. And so we had two bus stops' conversation. 'Those stupid guns' he reminded me, of my letter I sent to him, what, five or six years before: six or seven years before. And he said, 'Probably' he said, 'Armitage I saved your life'. Now his reason for saying that was, after I had asked to be changed to a commando, which action by...drop by parachute, there was the disastrous attempt to capture the bridge at Arnhem, where they were nearly all destoyed by the Germans, and I suppose more than 50 per cent chance was that I would have been killed; had I been in it I probably would have been. I met one person when I started to teach at Corsham who had been in that episode, and he never spoke about it. He was taken prisoner but it must have been appalling. They were mown down. A very bad bit of planning. The defence was greater than was expected. So, that really was the end of my wartime experience.

Not quite. I've got one other thing to remind you of, which is that this was on Salisbury Plain wasn't it. You were posted to Salisbury Plain.

No that was when I finished my cadet training, and I was made an officer when I was then sent to have gunnery practice; before I became a gunner, one had to shoot off the guns a few times on Salisbury Plain where I saw, out of the officers' mess, Stonehenge, looming. I had never seen it before, but I knew it from photographs. With a friend we walked over on a Sunday morning and saw it. No barbed wire in those days, just open to the countryside, and that was a great thing. In the officers' mess there was also General Wavell wandering around, who had just been dismissed, or was going to be, from the desert.

The desert?

Yes. If that had happened then, but he certainly was in the officers' mess at the time.

But that must have been one of the biggest artistic jolts.

Oh the impact was tremendous. To see this thing, let's say two miles away, or a mile and a half away, in the sunlight, glowing, it was a wonderful thing to see, and walk round it.

What did you know of it before?

Not very much. I only had seen it in photographs, and maybe the odd painting. Not Paul Nash. I loved Paul Nash from what I had seen, because he had things like the clumps where there was usually a barrow underneath, hidden in it, and things like that. I only knew very...it wasn't till I got to Corsham later that I knew about it, and there there was Avebury as well. Well I knew it was a Stone Age monument of course.

In a sense it was at Corsham, and we'll finish perhaps on this, at Corsham after the war that your interest in primaeval art really came out.

Yes, I think so. [BREAK IN RECORDING] I am ashamed to say that I had overlooked one of the most traumatic experiences of my younger life. When I was still in the Army, just before the end, I went to see my family in Leeds for a weekend's leave or something. And I heard that my mother wasn't very well, and so I went there and maybe I got...I was able to make a brief visit. And she didn't seem at all well to me, and I found out what had happened. She had been sent to a Christian Science home; there was apparently such a thing where I suppose they cured their patients with prayer, something like that. But they sent her back very quickly saying we can't cope with her, she's mad. Now this astonished me, because I would have thought that someone with a mental disorder would have been more susceptible to curing by prayer than if you had lumps of cancer stuck all over you, that kind of thing. However, there was another point. Then she said...they were going to send her to a mental home in York, whether under doctors' instructions or not. My father was at his wits' end. My mother had led him such a dance, having absent treatment by prayer; she had about six people doing this dotted around Leeds, but he couldn't have kept going, the cost of this was too much. And maybe he thought that it was intended that she should go there for a little while, while she had drug treatment or something, if it

existed then. And so she said look, 'Don't let me go to the retreat in York', which was an awful shock, because I...my father first of all had the right as to whether she should go or not. And I didn't know what had happened, whether...if it was on a doctor's recommendation. The Christian Science home was not a recommendation, and I don't know...I said, 'Well look, you're only going for a temporary visit, Father says, and you'll be back I suppose in a few months, having had drug treatment, or something like that'. So she was sent, I couldn't make a stand on that. But when she got there the confinement was too strange for her, being Irish and brought up years ago in an extremely free for all place, having stuck Bradford and Leeds all those years. She smashed her glasses and tried to cut her wrists. So, they said well she was a bad case. They took her off the temporary list and so they put her in a ward with the other serious cases. And so I went up on a visit with Jo and with my father to see her, and it was shocking. You see the drawing over there. And she was in a room with three other...

This was in 1946?

Yes. Just at the end; the war had ended. About that year maybe I went up in uniform, maybe not, it was a borderline thing, I don't know. And it was an awful business, dismal, because there had been six-and-a-half years of war, there was no painting and decoration, the awful dismal cream and green paint in the building. And sad paperchains: it was Christmas. And there were four mad women in this room, all with beards, small beards, which as a young man I noticed. And my mother was rambling, and I noticed she had...her nightdress was torn. And suddenly she became very clear and said, 'Kenneth, there's something, while I can I want to tell you. You're not the son of your father'. So, this didn't shock me; I mean I was intrigued. I wanted to say, 'Well who was he?' Because she had referred to something in the past. She had said I could have had a very different life, once or twice when I was young, indicating that she was at least involved, even temporarily, with someone else. And I wanted to ask her, but of course I didn't like to in front...out of respect for my father, who was sitting next to me. Well, within let's say, I don't know, not long, two or three months, she died, and so that was that. But the fact that she had said this about me, whether it was true or not, did make clear what her problem was, that she was by nature a fanatic.

She had taken up religion because doctors hadn't been able to cure my sister who died of TB, and she threw away her medicines, it being her character, and relied on prayer. And certainly she survived in the physical sense, but having been caught out on the mental sense. And also, it accounts for my father's reticence, who must have had an idea - or maybe not, I don't know, but it may account for the reticence he had with me. He really didn't talk to me very much, although he was always kind, and he was a wonderful person who was kind to me. But maybe he had an idea, that there were some doubts about my parentage. And I had no feelings at all about who my parents were; for some reason or other I didn't mind. Although Jesus said, 'Honour your father and your mother', this sort of thing, he also said, 'Let the dead bury the dead'. And I was obsessed with art, and that was the thing that had priority in my mind. So there was another conclusion. The war had ended and my mother had died.

And have you ever discovered who your real father was?

No. Jo says that I look like my father, and she thinks that probably he is. I have, in spite of sculpture I have...I don't know, I'm not an intellectual, but I read a lot and things like that, and I love music, and there are things that I have in common with my father.

But he was a tough-built man?

Oh no, fragile.

This is what I thought.

No, fragile. I was much tougher than he was. Physically not at all like him. So it may have been someone else, but does it matter? It doesn't matter at all. No. I never starved, I had enough...although my parents were poor I had enough to eat, and I did manage to get to an art school, although my mother opposed it, and I am grateful for that. And so that ends this episode. And then I'll come on to the next one. I went almost immediately to teach at Bath Art School after the war.

But one other thing. Did you have a broad Yorkshire accent in your life?

I never had, and people often refer to this. My father had a Yorkshire accent, but not pronounced. But my mother hadn't at all; she had a kind of non-accented voice, except - it's interesting - you couldn't tell she was Irish talking to her face to face, but on the telephone, which has an amazing way of revealing little tendencies, you could tell she was Irish over the telephone, but not otherwise. And people I knew said, 'You don't speak in a Yorkshire accent' when I was younger. I maybe did have for years the broad 'a', which is what, in a word? I forget; there are certain distinctions in the Yorkshire speaking. Not broadly so, but...I've forgotten what it is now.

On Ilkley Moor ba tat.

No, that is definitely...without hat. There is another thing which gradually I lost. So I don't think I have a Yorkshire...I don't think I ever had a Yorkshire accent.

But you didn't consciously remove an accent at any point?

Oh certainly not, oh no no no no no no no. But that was because at home it was...I spent most of the time with my mother I suppose as young, and she didn't have a Yorkshire accent at all. And my father's wasn't broad Yorkshire. I mean you can't really understand broad Yorkshire. 'Has tha' got tha' boits on?' Have you got your boots on, and things like that, the way they speak in the country. It was a diluted Yorkshire. Oh, I suppose I wish I did have a Yorkshire accent. After all there was Rory who spoke with a Devonshire accent. It doesn't make any difference. But it must be difficult to speak French with a Yorkshire accent! (laughing)

<u>End of F2399 Side A</u>
<u>Side B is blank</u>

F2400 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, 1st of October 1991. Tape One.

Well, off we go. And what I wanted to say was that the last tapes came to the end of the Second World War, but there are one or two points I would like to add to that before we move on to things that happened in the Fifties, which I think are of enough interest to include. The first thing is that the camp where I was, Deepcut, was just north of Aldershot, and near Pirbright where the Coldstream Guards were. We were nearly all artillery. And the whole lot were near Farnborough, I suppose five or six or seven miles away. And there, there was a wonderful place called the RAE, the Royal Aeronautical Establishment, where designing of aircraft, testing of aircraft, all kinds of things related to aircraft were done. They had hangars with an enormous range of British aircraft, plus occasionally captured foreign aircraft, and that was why it was excellent for our course, to go once a fortnight to see the aircraft there, a sort of first-hand experience with the planes itself. And on one occasion, at night there was a most extraordinary roaring noise, a sound that I had never heard in my life before. And it happened the next night. And then, in the day we saw what it was. A little plane with square cut wing-tips, streaking across the sky. And this was the first jet engine, the Whittle engine.

Oh right!

Yes. And it was thrilling to see this thing. We were told...of course we talked about it a lot, and we were told it was very difficult to steer. And when you think of it these test pilots were extraordinarily brave. They were taking up things that had never been flown before, and some were killed, especially in America where they did much more daring things. And so there was the first experimental little prototype of a jet, which influenced the whole of flying ever since. Of course, in the Second World War all the operational planes were propeller-driven, traditional prop jobs; there were no...there was nothing like a jet until after the war. And in a way it was a bit like Hitler's secret weapon the doodle-bug, which was propelled by jet. And I saw one once.

Did you?

Yes, at night, flying very low. It was off course, hadn't dropped in London, and it was skimming over, about 200 feet over the ground, with its deadly warhead, and it exploded somewhere else in the distance. But that was a thrilling thing to see. The second thing was, walking round the RAE they showed me the prototype of a monster, the Brabazon. This was one of the biggest planes we ever built, and this was a wood mock-up. It's interesting that the high-tech finished job had its origins in a wooden model, all beautifully carpentered, put together. And I found I could walk down the wing upright for the first third of its length, it was so thick the wing was. And then one saw it flying.

Not wooden presumably.

Oh no, no it was made...a real prototype then was made, and it was lumbering round the sky. It think it had...certainly it had four engines; it might have had six. But I think wisely they decided not to go into production, because it would be like losing a battleship if it had been cut down; it would of course have been a good target as well, and so it was not. The Americans had also the biggest flying boat ever made, and that was a six-engine job. I think it was American not ours, I don't know, but you know, it was like a little ship. And these experiments were amazing, and there has been a programme on television about early flying, it was really... They also had the flying wing; that was a plane without fuselage, without a tail, just a wing, with about four engines. And this was zooming along, but it crashed and the pilot was killed and then it was discontinued. Oh, many, many designs put up and tried out.

So there were two. But with that really it finishes what I feel there is time for about that period. And so the war came to an end, after six-and-a-half years, and very wonderful it was. I was what they would call de-mobbed, got my suit free from the Government, which I never wore.

But weren't you still in uniform when you read that advertisement?

No, I was going to come to that in a minute, yes. Now...sorry, thank you for reminding me, I had forgotten that already. I was still at Deepcut about three months before the war ended, and one day in the officers' mess a friend tossed me 'The Times', he said, 'There's a job that might interest you here'. And it was an advertisement, an application for people to apply for a job at Bath Art School, vacancy, teaching. And it said, 'Opportunities of unusual interest'. So I said oh well, that's interesting, and I wrote at once, and Clifford Ellis, the Principal, replied very quickly, I have his letter in front of me. He says he thought there were about ten individuals in the country who combine the qualities necessary to make a first rate art teacher, such was his high standard. And rather than cut people out he was asking a wide range of people to apply. He was well supported by people who knew the school already, but he wanted more to apply. And he left it like that; he didn't say anything about what the opportunities were, but he did say that he wanted to reorganise the school. And anyhow, I went for an interview at Bath. It was lovely to go down there. I went in uniform, as a major, with a moustache which I had grown especially to be an officer. And of course I didn't get it. I couldn't say when I was going to get out; it might be a month, two, three, four, five months. However, when I was leaving the school Clifford came up to me and said, 'Look, when you know definitely when you're going to be released, let me know and I'll see what I can do'. So that was wonderful. So I was released from the Army, and I was just going to say, my wife and I had found a very nice flat in Redcliffe Square, which cost us the enormous sum of #1.50 a week; two huge rooms on the ground floor and three in the basement. And I walked round that night to look at the streets lit up, and I remember it was six-and-a-half years of blackout, and suddenly it was like walking in fairyland, it was really really good.

And so what date was that that you got...?

That was 1946.

Yes, but vaguely what month was it that you went to see Clifford Ellis in Bath?

I can't remember what month it would be. I think it must have been autumn, because I don't remember the blackout being early, I remember seeing Bath. It was wonderful to see the city and its Bath stone, and the beautiful buildings everywhere.

Yes, because they hadn't moved to Corsham Court.

No, this was before.

Yes, I think they opened that in September of the next year, in '46.

That was next year. And so, I had a short holiday with Jo in Appledore, which is in Kent, which is why I went to this exhibition at Rye, because I knew it very well. And then of course when I saw it that time there was barbed wire all along the coast; there was the end of, what was it called, the pipeline that took the fuel to France. Not Percy...a name, it has a name; it's on the tip of my tongue.

I know, I can't remember it either.

Anyhow, and then I went straight to Bath, and I was going backwards and forwards each week. I had four nights in Bath, staying at a little lodging house near the station, and I would come back by train.

Right, so you were teaching at the Bath Art School in Bath.

Yes, the old Bath School.

Right, in Sydney Place wasn't it.

In Sydney Place, a lovely building, and opposite a tiny park. And I must say, it was extraordinarily daring of Ellis to take me on. I had had six-and-a-half years in the Army and nothing else, and before that I was a student. So he had some kind of...

Intuition.

Intuition, that it was not just a dead loss. Of course it wasn't easy; I was trying to pick up as I was going. However, after a few weeks then it began to unfold what was happening, and we made a trip out to Corsham, which is a little town or village nine miles east of Bath, a very old town, with 14th century weavers' cottages, and there was Corsham Court, this huge grand building which belonged to Lord Methuen, and a great estate designed by Capability Brown, based on a manor of the Saxon kings, it was very ancient. And there was this extraordinary building, first designed I think in the 16th century, added to, and Capability Brown himself designed the Triple Cube Room for the exhibition of paintings. And it was quite extraordinary seeing this thing. And so what happened was this: Clifford knew Lord Methuen who was a painter, he was an RA by then, and of course he knew the Director of Education in Bath, who was an exceptional man, very far-seeing and daring, and these three decided what they would do. Methuen had let half of Corsham Court become during the war a convalescent home for officers, wounded officers. In fact I have a blue jacket upstairs which is a bed jacket, a lovely blue one with white buttons which I picked up off the floor. And it's lasted all these years, and it's still comfortable. I hardly ever wear it, it's a museum piece. Methuen agreed, he liked the idea of its use as an art school, or training college. And Ellis had big ideas as to how it should be. Apart from the fact that it was in this magnificent pile of Corsham Court, which he felt was a social experiment. These young students had been deprived of things during the war, and they were then to see and take part in at least the environment of a privileged way of life, such as it was before. And there was lots of space. They took a house called Monks Park, where the girls would be put up. The men, there weren't so many, were lodged around in the town. And they eventually took another house called Beechfield. So it was quite a big organisation. And I think the idea was that, after the war there was a shortage of teachers after six years, and so there were generous Government funds to get the thing going, and in fact we seemed to be short of nothing, we had everything we wanted, it was marvellous. We even had our own bus, for taking people around, up to Monks Park and going out on trips, and things like that were absolutely wonderful. And so, next to the big gates, which you have there on the photograph of the...that thing there, just to the right are the old riding stables, and I was to have that for sculpture. William Scott did the painting, and the

staff, there were some very good people. And it was also very wide. It had...in subjects it had music, drama, literature, painting, and sculpture, and printmaking, a great deal of stuff, so that the students going could have the widest possible contact. And this was part of Clifford's idea. I think also that his idea, so far as I understand it was, that hitherto people had gone in for art, they had gone to art schools, and either weren't any good or couldn't get any work or anything like that, and they took up teaching, fell back on teaching as though it was a way to make some money, without any interest in teaching at all. They didn't want to. And his idea was that this would be, right from the beginning it was understood that they would be teaching. Which of course was a very good idea, because everything was geared to that, you had a teaching practice and all kinds of stuff like that. There was however a handful of people who were what you would call normal art students, full-time, and while all the students were marvellous, really they were very very good, I felt always restless because they were not taking up art as a real career, they were going to be teaching. Although sometimes they...you could never tell, in those people there were some very good artists. Rosemary had an amusing story once. One girl having gone on for weeks doing all this teacher training said, 'When are we going to do the cooking?' A mistake in administration, she thought she was being sent to a domestic science college! But she was in fact very good, so they kept her. So it just shows you, at that age in fact you could do anything. And so...

Sorry, am I right in saying there were two lots of courses there; there was the NDD course and the teacher training?

This I can't be sure about, because I was occupied with doing sculpture and I rather...both Rosemary and I were rather at loggerheads over this. She called mine the sordid side of the academy, and I rather looked down on the teacher training sort of thing.

Yes, I think a lot of your colleagues did probably.

And I didn't really want to know about that. Because, anyhow, I was learning myself how to do sculpture at that time. It was really hard work. I had these students coming

up, open-mouthed like little baby birds waiting for information, and I was learning myself at the same time. Very good really, but I was young, and so I could take it. And...now, some interesting things happened. They had lots of visitors, and so one never felt one was short of anything, deprived by being in the country. And my great luck, it was incredible, the fact...[BREAK IN RECORDING]...in my life, little things have led to big things. Let's say - I suppose it does to everyone - that man in the officers' mess, throwing me the paper, we didn't think about anything, led to a very wide field, and also influenced my work enormously. For example, when I left the Army and was demobbed, and then went to Corsham, I pulled a blind down in my mind over the whole of the six-and-a-half years in the Army; I didn't want to think about it. I had been waiting to get on with art. And on the other hand, I didn't realize that the six-and-a-half years had a tremendous effect on me, because of the work I was doing. Studying for six years, allowing six months for training at the beginning, meant that I was looking at shapes of aircraft all that time, every day, every week, every month; being in them, looking at them, and the shape of tanks too. And this was a constant awareness of shape, but particularly of aircraft. And these shapes of aircraft came in to my work when I started working in a freer way at Corsham, and no one knew where it had come from. And even I didn't realize until later. Now, the work I did was...oh, first of all, I had a little room in the court there, a clean little room next to Clifford's office, where there was a bed, and the housekeeper used to clean it and tidy it up. It was a tiny place, a camp, for when I was fed up with my rather squalid camping out in a tin hut up the road. And there, and I'm pointing now at a photograph of the Court to Tamsyn, who knows it all well. That was a huge dining-room to the left.

And the students all ate in the dining-room, is that...?

They all ate in the dining-room, which had Gainsborough portraits on the wall and was very elegant and very nice. On the right-hand side was a room very important to me, was the old music room, which had an organ, polished floor, also portraits all round the wall. Now, what was I going to say about the work. Oh, first of all, I met...found Peter Potworowski, who was a great friend of mine in the painting, an excellent painter, Polish, and he...

He arrived a bit later than you didn't he.

He arrived later.

1949.

Being Polish he made a tremendous impact with the girls; he was a very kind of romantic figure. But he was a really really good painter, and he became a very close friend, more so even than William Scott, who I had known even momentarily before the war. And I think it was Peter who said that...he said, 'I have a feeling in Priory Street there is a hut that I've heard might be available for you'. So I went to see Miss Spackman, an eccentric country lady, whose father had lived in Rose Cottage and she lived there. And she had in her garden a corrugated tin hut, lined inside nicely with wood, and a stove and a toilet outside with a wash-basin, which had been used as a kindergarten school, she used to teach in it, empty. And I said I'd like to take it as a studio, and she was delighted. So I had that.

So you could do your own work in there.

I could do my own work in there, completely free from students and anybody. And I had...the rent was also, like it was in London, it was about #1.50 a week, which is hard to imagine these days, but in the Fifties, I mean it was then quite a good rent. And I had...she left some bits of furniture at one end, and I had made two or three folding screens, typical things with little thin legs, and I tacked on some corrugated cardboard. This only just to conceal; I didn't want to be looking at this rather unpleasant pile of furniture at one end. But before that, before the war I had noticed something strange, as a student in London at the Slade, that people making terracottas, if they were at all big, let's say half life-size figures, or even life-size figures, if there was an extended arm, or an arm down by the side of a body, they would put further down a bridge linking the arm with the body, a little kind of neck, so that the arm wouldn't snap off. Or, if they had two figures, there would be strange joinings here and there, rather like I imagine Siamese twins are joined together, but

I've never seen one. And these fascinated me, or the memory of it fascinated me, to such an extent that the models I made after a bit... Oh, first of all I was going to do stone carving, because...I'm sorry I'm jumping, it's very hard to remember all these manifold facts. I went to Bath for one reason really, it was really for a job of course, but there is a limestone belt crossing England, south-west to north-east, and Bath was at one end of that with Bath stone in the millions of tons underground. And I thought I would be doing carving for the rest of my life so to speak, and I did in fact two carvings, I don't know what happened to them.

What, you did them down there?

I did one when I was still in Bath, for the two terms I was there, and one when I came to the riding-school there, neither of which I know anything about, I've lost contact with them, I wonder where they are.

I wonder where they are, yes.

The first one I think was quite good, and someone must have taken it, or...I don't think...too hard to throw away.

It's probably lying in a garden somewhere.

Lying in someone's garden. But what happened, when I got to Priory Street and Corsham I started going on the railway of course from London, which fascinated me, because it was designed by A[sic] K Brunel, the famous Victorian engineer.

The suspension bridge at Bristol.

Yes. And I used to go every week from Paddington, looking at Paddington Station, he designed that; the whole of the line he designed, and he also designed the fabulous bridge over the Clifton Gorge at Bristol called the Clifton Suspension Bridge, which was almost like one of the wonders at the time, a huge suspension bridge. Nothing of course compared to the giant suspension bridge over the Humber, or even over the

Severn that we have now. But it did have a profound effect on me, because it was doing something else; it was suspended in the air, chains; you could see how the functions worked in it. And there was I, carving away, and I got rather irritated with that. The other thing was, I was looking at modern architecture. There was a lovely magazine, I think it was called 'The Architectural Review', or Journal, with photoraphs of modern architecture, and the English firm or name, Rogers, in Italy. Nothing to do with the Rogers who built the thing in Paris.

The Beaubourg.

The Beaubourg thing, but another, oddly enough another name. And they had the newest kind of architecture there was, comparable let's say, well at the same time at Le Corbusier, and I got fascinated with Le Corbusier. Now this affected my work, and so, instead of carving I started making little models, first of all maquettes, of things with an armature, which was standard, the way he...steel rods, iron rods, inside. I gave up clay modelling, and modelled direct with plaster over wire netting, the usual kind of thing, with scrim on top. And made these. But first of all I made these little models. Now, I started, going back to the joins in the terracotta, I started joining figures together compulsively, I had to. And more and more, until they were one mass. Two or three figures would be unified into one mass, and then I could arrange the arms and legs as I wanted. Because if you look at a crowd, you don't count the arms and legs, you just see the odd arms swinging and the odd leg moving. You don't say there are six legs there and six arms and so on. And so I could use the arms as I wanted in the design of the maquette, which was a completely free thing to do. And then, one day in London (I had this flat in London where I kept going to, but less and less), looking out the window on a very windy day I saw a woman walking, holding two children, all three leaning against the wind. And I thought, oh, this is an idea. And I started making tiny maquettes with I think three figures, long necks, and they had a little bunch of arms in the front, extended forward with hands. And also, surrounding them were clothes flapping out in the wind, rather like washing on a line. Now, there were two or three things involved in this piece. First, seeing the actual people in London; second, the studio door had a little plant outside it, which I often...I saw every day, and it had half a dozen stalks coming up from a small area, absolutely

upright and straight, and opening out at the top. And this impressed me, and also seeing washing on the line. And then something else happened. I had already started the maquettes of 'People in a Wind', and maybe I had set up the beginning of the larger versions of 'People in a Wind', of which I did two. And...I'm sorry to go on so long about this.

No, but it's an important piece, it's leading up...

But it is crucial really to the whole of my life, and when something happened of great interest to me. Clifford Ellis knew the Principal of the Architectural school, the Architectural Association school in a square just behind Tottenham Court Road, I've forgotten the name of the square now. And these excellent staff, and excellent students had very cramped quarters really for working in, and they had the idea that it would be lovely, of benefit to them, if they could come to Corsham and have a summer school during the summer, and they could use unlimited space. And so they came, and I volunteered to be part of the staff, and a really excellent month it was. And I had I think about four or five or six of them volunteered to come to me in the riding school and make something out of sculpture. The rest were doing things you would expect with young architects; they were making space frames out of bamboos, slung out from walls, and all that kind of thing. But the men and girls with me, it was hard to know what to do with them, because how can you make a piece of sculpture with people who have never done any before, in one month? So I thought right, you had better all come up to my workshop, my studio, and I had some of the earlier maquettes which were more figurative, and I said look, let's arrange these (they were all about, with two figures), into little groups, see if you can make shapes that you like. In fact, in the end they decided to make a frieze of about four or five standing figures. The thing would be six or seven feet long and four or five feet high; it would be modelled, as I was doing, on a steel rod frame with model direct with concrete mix, cement and sand, applied. It's not easy to do, because you've got to put it on and let it dry off, and then put more on, but it was the only thing to do with them in the time made. And they actually made this thing, I have photographs of this, and it was not at all bad, it was all right. In fact they took it to London, and they had it showing in the Architectural Association school for two or three years. They also asked me if I

would teach in London at the school, Architectural school, which I was very tempted to do because I liked them, and it would mean I would be in London. But, I realized that Corsham had much more opportunities for meeting all kinds of people to with art and everything else, and so I didn't, I didn't do that. [Can we have a pause please?]

End of F2400 Side A

F2400 Side B

Now, I wanted to talk about the visitors at Corsham, but before that, to make quite clear what my movements were. At first I was going, especially in Bath, weekly, staying in London, and at first in Corsham, going weekly. But I got...

Sorry, for how many days did you teach when you went weekly?

First it was called full-time, which I think was four days, and then I had an unfortunate occurrence. That is, you must remember that I was a young man, I was married right at the very beginning of the war, I had no married life during the six-and-a-half years of the war, except for about two months when my wife came to live, what we call living out, when I was at Deepcut. So there was no real marriage at all. And I suppose in a way, although I was extremely fond of Jo, I never really felt I was married, because of that peculiar situation. And so when I got to Corsham, there were almost hand-picked girls for their intelligence and beauty. It was...

Were they picked for their beauty?

No, but it seemed to be like that. Peter Potworowski said it was like being in a sweet shop! And he would! However, inevitably I fell in love with a girl, and... Now, the point is this, I began to move more and more to Corsham, because I was completely hooked on it, with the reservations that I knew that it couldn't last forever, I would have to pull out at one point. But also, wartime we were starved, I loved the countryside and the grey houses and everything else, and the Corsham estate, the path, the elm trees, as there were still then. And I did it up to the hilt, really, and loved it all. And so in the end I was more or less living there. I had a camp-bed in the Priory Street studio, and then I had a clean place I could go to in the Court when I wanted. So that explains a little of the movements and the peculiar life that I had. Now unfortunately, Rosemary, the girl, her work apparently deteriorated in that time, and the parents came to see Clifford Ellis, wanting me to be expelled.

Oh, it was you was it, yes.

And I remember I was in the room by accident at the same time that Herbert Smith was seeing Clifford Ellis, asking for me to be ejected, because I had interfered with the time of his daughter and this business. And so, Clifford then, in his extraordinary calm way after, he said look, would I like to come a little walk up the north walks, so I went up with him, and he told me about this. So I said well look, I'll make a deal with you. I will cut down my teaching to part-time. So he said, 'Done, that's all right'. So that was why I started teaching two days a week instead of what was called full-time. But it meant a drop in pay. It was harder to...after all, a full-time teacher is paid through the holidays, and I was just paid by the session as part-time. I had promised not to see Rosemary for a whole year, and that more or less was the end of that. But I met her at Bath, this time we had your exhibition - I'd like you to say something about that in a minute - and she is was as friendly as ever, and a great strong woman she was . And it was quite amusing. However, to get on with the story, there were at Corsham, I explained, that one didn't feel out of touch, there were visitors all the time. One outstanding one was a man called William Glock, a musicologist who was of almost breathtaking interest. He had learnt to play the piano from Schnabel in Berlin. He was first of all an art critic; he then ran the summer school at Dartington, and before Dartington, what was the other place before that, I've forgotten now, but he had got really the best musicians ever going to Dartington. Stravinsky, Luigi Nono, you name it they all went to give courses at this school. He also, towards the end, just after he came to Corsham, was given the job of Controller of Music in the BBC. He ran everything with music. He also ran the selection of music for the Proms. And Clifford got him to come to Corsham and give lectures. I think he probably gave about four or five or six, in the Music Room with its big organ. He didn't play that, there was a grand piano. And he talked in his buoyant, wonderful way, accompanying himself on the piano, to...we were all spellbound, it was really so good, excellent. And he is still alive, although he is not very well; I went to see him once or twice in London. And I don't know how many people benefited from it, but I thought it was really wonderful, because I was very attracted to music all my life. My father was very interested in music. And I was then...sometimes at night I would go alone into the music school, to play the records they had, because there was a musicologist

teaching the students as well. And there was no electric turntable in those days, it was a hand...

A wind-up.

A wind-up job. But it was the best you could get. It had an extraordinary huge funnel, trumpet-shaped, grey, about three feet high.

Classic.

Yes. I've forgotten the name of it, but it was a very special one. And the sound was good, very sweet. And going through these records I found some Bach that I didn't know, and it was Bach's 'Die Kunst der Fuge', the Art of Fugue. And from that moment to this present day, it has been my number one Desert Island Disc. And I would like for a little break just to play two or three bars of this, for some people who may not know it. [KA plays extract from 7th Fugue] Well that was Bach's 'Die Kunst der Fuge', the Art of Fugue, which to my mind is one of the most magnificent pieces of music ever written.

Absolutely stunning.

It was written right at the end of Bach's life; he never quite finished it. And it's very severe polyphonic music in four parts. And I once read one review of it, that the human brain cannot follow equally four...there are four parts to it playing interwoven all the time, it's the fugue, and you can't grasp all of it at the same width all the time. The ear tends to pick out one line or two, but not four altogether. So it is eternally satisfying; you can go on and on with endless things to discover. And that fragment was Contrapuntal 7, the 7th Fugue, of which there are 22 I think, played by the blind German organist, Helmut Walter, all from memory of course. Well, that has remained all the time. Of course I love other music as well, but that is something I go back to over and over again. Now, have I talked about the Architectural school?

Yes.

Yes. I then...

Sorry, I was just going to say you were talking about what led up to 'People in a Wind'.

Yes, but just before that, the various things that influenced me unconsciously, the screens did. Although I had them there, I never thought about them, but I actually started making screens. I've got models downstairs, you can see. And I didn't know quite that I was doing that. They were also flat membranes. Now this was the result of looking at aircraft with their wings, and various things came out from that time. Tanks for example, there was one piece I did, 'Roly Poly' it was called, a flat lumpy thing with legs in the air, and that really came from the tanks. And also I started then making irregular oval shapes. This featured more when I came to a commission through the Rothschild vineyards, making the sun, but this really came from the side view of a tank, side elevation, the tracks always had an irregular oval; the lower ends were sheered up so that the tank could overcome problems, obstacles. And the top, there were small bogeys on the top to lift it, so that it was an irregular oval shape. All these things came back in my mind, and so the screens appeared as if they were flying almost. Also I made a piece called 'Family Going for a Walk', which was slightly heavier; they were slabs rather than thin membranes. But again, with economy in mass. The screen fascinates me all my life, because it is a shape that is extremely rigid to stand up, the folded screen, but as it's made of membranes it has no or very little mass, solidity; it's a very light structure. And this sort of thing I got involved in. Also the end of the Architectural Association school, they had made the hot-air balloon, which was great fun: the whole thing was fun, and they launched it on this, you know, August night, with its little...you could see its burner flickering in the distance, and it came down about three or four miles away. And they also then had a firework display, which was the first I had probably ever seen in my life. And then I noticed the rockets were doing just what my plant was doing outside the back door; three or four rockets would go off and open until they reached the height of the parabola, and then they would fall to the ground. So, now, my first exhibition was at a gallery, a premature exhibition I had, at the Freddy Mayor Gallery, a good gallery,

got better and better. He was then in Brook Street, it was the father not the son, and he gave me, in 1947, an exhibition, and I had some drawings. I don't think they were drawings that I would like now at all.

And was that a one-man show?

Yes, a one-man show, probably about 20 drawings. And there was a power cut, no light.

On your opening night?

On the opening night. Just candles. And only about three people came, that sort of thing. Dreadful. And I don't know what happened, but I must have sold them at some time, or given them away, because I don't have one left of those drawings.

And were they...they were related to your sculpture? Were they sketches for sculptures or were they just...?

No, they were odd figures. It would be interesting to see what they were like, but I don't even...I didn't like them very much. But at least it was something I did.

And they were sort of life drawing kind of...?

Well no, they were...you would call them compositions if you like, figures lumbering around. They were rather massive, in massive frames. Not very nice I don't think.

And were they in charcoal, or what...?

I don't know, I can't remember. And anyhow, there was a new gallery, Gimpel Fils, they had come from Paris, and I went to see them, and they looked at my work, and they said, 'Well,' flicking it with their finger, 'we can't sell that'. But underneath they must have thought otherwise, because they did take them in, and not only that, they did something for which I am ever grateful, they got Lilian Somerville, a very

important person in the history of English art, who was the Director of the Fine Arts Department of the British Council. She had the responsibility of sending English art abroad, whereas the Arts Council was concerned with art in England. And time passes, it's so extraordinary to realize that the Arts Council didn't exist before the war, it was only formed after the war. And so Lilian liked the work, and I found I suddenly had a committee came to...oh I was then in London, yes.

Right, but still teaching at Corsham?

No, I must jump back a bit here. I'm sorry about this. It's very hard to get all these threads going together. I began to be a bit worried that I had been seven years at Corsham, and I was offered a thing called a Gregory Fellowship in Sculpture at Leeds University. This was somewhere round about '53 to '55. And it was both a good and a bad thing for me, because first of all I knew Leeds like the back of my hand, I was born there, so it was no surprise. The second thing was though, that it was an opportunity to make a break with Corsham. I didn't want to leave Corsham, but I thought I ought to. And so I went to Leeds, they found me a little place to work, and the idea was, Peter Gregory started this, it was the first of many examples in which artists were attached to institutions. There is even one at the National Gallery now.

Yes, Artists-in-Residence.

Yes, Artists-in-Residence kind of thing, was a very new idea, well it was the first there ever existed. And he had a painter, a sculptor, and a poet, John Heath-Stubbs was there, and a musician, whose name I regret to say I can't remember.

And who was the painter, Terry Frost was it?

The painter, first of all it was Martin Froy, and then he left and we got Terry Frost followed on. I don't know what happened after that. It was only #500 each for a year. Now this of course by our eyes now is nothing at all, it's worth probably about #20,000 now, or certainly 10,000. But 500, you could just live on it then. And Peter Gregory was a very nice man, and he ran a printing firm for Lund Humphries

publishers, and he printed the big fat books on Henry Moore with Alan Bowness writing the written material for it. And so, this was a way of making a break. But I still made visits to Corsham, because I had got to help me there a colleague called Bernard Meadows, and he and I did the teaching, and we built, just before I left the Gregory Fellowship, our own bronze foundry, at Beechfield. We dug a pit, we made a furnace, and we made a kiln for baking the moulds, and we cast quite a few little pieces, which was great fun to do, but it took a long time.

Yes, because up till then where had you been having your bronzes cast?

At Galizia. Galizia was a man who, when I was at the Slade, although carving I went to the Central School to do a course in bronze casting, and Galizia was doing the teaching, so I knew him already. And he had a very good foundry in Battersea, and I had things cast by him, and also by a man called Fiorini, an Italian, who was excellent, and Morris Singer, who were not where they are now, they were in central London somewhere. But mainly it was Galizia in those days. And...I'm sorry, where did I get up to?

Sorry, I interrupted your thread. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
So you were gradually breaking your link with Corsham.

I was breaking my links with Corsham, in fact during that period I resigned as it were officially, and so did William Scott about a week or two later.

Yes, you both actually left, according to various records you left, in '56 was when you officially left but you probably faded out before then.

Yes, you see I was making visits, let's say once in three or four months, for just two or three days, something like that; I had a link still with it. But the final break-up was then. It so coincided that I found a place to work in London, in Notting Hill Gate, at some old stables which then, for four years, was really the most active creative time of my life, I really worked full flux there. Loved it, I had endless girlfriends and everything else; it was a sort of burner. And now, during that time, earlier on,

Gimpels had got Lilian Somerville to see the work and she liked it, and so then they had a committee with Lilian, with Sir Philip Hendy, who was then the Director of the National Gallery.

Who you had previously met at Leeds.

Who I had met at Leeds, because he was Director of the Leeds Art Gallery then. And Sir John Rothenstein, who I think was the Rector of the Royal College of Art [sic], and also Herbert Read. And the idea was that I should join. I was the last to join, of the people selected for the 1952 Venice Biennale, which was called 'Aspects of British Sculpture'. And what I loved was, at that meeting Philip Hendy brought out his cheque-book and bought the little maquette of 'People in a Wind' on the spot, and this, you know, a very low price of #30 or something like that, and thrilled. And he called it, rather wittily, 'The Reception Committee', because there were these people leaning forward, with their long necks and their little hands stretched out receiving people. It was a very good title for it. And so, we had this 'Aspects of British Sculpture', was the 26th Venice Biennale, and it was an instant success. I was totally unknown before that, and from those few weeks I was a known figure throughout the world really. It wasn't a big name I had, but I had a name, and I sold practically everything. The first person there to buy was Peggy Guggenheim; the second Madame Schiaparelli, the fashion designer; the Museum of Modern Art, New York bought two things, 'People in a Wind' and 'Family going for a Walk'. The Museum of Modern Art in Rome bought something, and others too. It was practically a sell-out.

And Peggy Guggenheim also bought 'People in a Wind' didn't she.

She bought 'People in a Wind' and also 'Two Seated Figures' later. That was 1958. And so, I had...'People in a Wind' was illustrated in most art books throughout the world. And it was quite astonishing to be someone totally unknown, and then known in two months. That was really the beginning of my professional life.

Indeed. And I'll just ask you, who were your co-exhibitors in that? Were there other sculptors?

Yes of course. There was Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Bernard Meadows, and I'm trying to think who was the nice man who was at Gimpels, who did little bronze things. Oh God I can't...two more; it's gone from my mind, forgive me. Died.

Not Reg Butler, have you said him already?

Yes. Now, I knew both Reg and Lynn. Lynn I had known from 1950, going to what was then an important party every year. Julian Trevelyan had the Studio on the Wharf at Hammersmith, very nice, actually on props over the river practically. And he had a party every Boat Race day. And in those days the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race was an important event in the year. I don't know if they still have them, but one doesn't hear so much about it now.

They do, yes, but no, I don't think...

But then it was a big thing, and so this was a wonderful party to have. People crowded into this, because they had a front seat view of the whole thing going past the window. And we had drinks and a little bit of food, and Mary Trevelyan was very nice. And there I met Lynn, and so we became almost instantly friends. And this friendship developed over a few years; we made journeys abroad and so on. I was attracted really by his...he was very funny, and was great fun to go abroad with, that kind of thing. He was then working in metal, he was making mobiles la Calder. He went to try and find Calder; he went to America but Calder wouldn't see him, he said, 'I don't meet imitators', which is a clue to the problems I had with Chadwick later. I liked Chadwick, but he had...he was totally different from myself and from Reg in his attitude. He believed that you could help yourself to anything that anyone did. He said, 'We all do it'. Well we don't all do it. We do get influenced, but we didn't know that we're being influenced. But he ruthlessly picked what he wanted. For example, Reg Butler called the little figures in his maquette for 'The Unknown Political Prisoner', 'The Watchers'. Lynn liked that title, and he called almost everything 'The Watchers' for three or four years; it went on and on and on. He liked the idea that Liz Frink had done polished areas, and he used polished areas. He said that I was his

teacher when I was at Corsham. He also got the idea of having an armature, filling it with filler, and then rubbing the armature down so that it was exposed, leaving little lines. He said he got that idea from me, but I don't want...this is only a technical device, I didn't attach any importance to it. But I just mention this, that there were certain factors in his work that he got nearer and nearer. He gave up doing metal things which I liked, and he started doing bronze casting, and now he has his own foundry and all the rest of it, and I began to think that really, this had to be...we had to separate. And bit by bit I began to withdraw from his friendship. Well he kept coming here, I didn't dare, and it did bring complications. Sometimes people said, 'We can't tell the difference between your work and Chadwick's'. And it also confused me. I found that sometimes when I was working, I would be thinking of him, you know, and it was just no good. Now, one thing I have not been short of is ideas to follow up, and very soon after I moved on to other things, and have done so every since. Chadwick has remained with the work that he formed at that time. Now, I am not really running Lynn down, I'm just saying there was a difference. The difference was in priorities. He wanted something else that I did. Reg was more my own kind of man so to speak, although I wasn't so friendly with, and I knew it. He started as an architectural writer. He ran the 'Architectural Journal' or something for a while. I don't think he ever was a practising architect, but he knew a great deal about architecture, as he knew about everything really, he was an extremely clever man. And during the war he was a conscientious objector, and he was put in a forge to work in a blacksmith's forge, and it was that that gave him the idea to weld sculpture out of iron. And those were the things that he made his name with, and there's a famous one in Kenwood House, in the garden there, of a kind of birdcage kind of thing, and they were very elegant and distinctive. And he was showing at the Hanover Gallery at that time, with Erica Brausen. And there is an interesting little episode. After the 1952 Venice Biennale, I had a letter from a man called Kurt Valentin. He had a gallery in New York which was very well known. He in fact put Henry Moore on the international map. Henry Moore was known in England, but he made him an international figure. He also made Marino Marini.

And what was his gallery called?

The Kurt Valentin Gallery. And he was an exceptional man. He would be at the gallery at 8 o'clock every morning. He worked very hard; he loved sculpture. He drank a bottle of brandy a day, and died of it in the late Sixties. And he wrote saying he would like to do business with me. This was 1952, straight after the show. But Gimpels, he wrote to them too, because he knew that I was with them, they said, 'No, we don't like him', so I didn't. Had I gone to Kurt Valentin my life might have been different, although I wonder if I had been able to stand it, because I was very slow to develop, and I was shy, and not able to cope with large numbers of people and that kind of thing. And perhaps it's just as well that I didn't. But Reg did. Erica Brausen didn't stand in his way, and he showed with Kurt Valentin, and when Kurt Valentin died he went automatically to the Matisse Gallery in New York, which was also very good indeed. So Reg's path was clear.

But you later were to exhibit in New York weren't you.

Yes, I did later, but not as good as Matisse.

End of F2400 Side B

F2401 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London on the 1st of October 1991. Tape Two.

So, before we leave this period of your life when were connected with Corsham, can I just ask you about who you were particularly close to among the other members of the teaching staff, because there were obviously Peter Potworowski, who you have already talked about.

Yes. I also liked particularly Peter Lanyon, and I stayed twice with him in Cornwall. It wasn't that our work was similar in any way like that, but I found him...he was very stimulating and friendly, I liked being with him. Well a funny thing happened once, he said...there were great cliffs where he lived in Cornwall, he said, 'Now let's go climbing cliffs' one day, and I could see commandos climbing up some other cliffs near. This is a horrible thing. He had played a terrible trick on me, and he said, 'Have you got running shoes, tip shoes?' 'Yes' I said. 'Right, put them on'. So he drove down to the sea, and walked along a path with a sheer drop, oh, I suppose about 20 feet, down to the sea. And then suddenly the path went up at 45 degrees, with loose sand on it, and he said, 'This bit is the difficult bit' (because he had done it many times) 'you've got to run it!' Well, I didn't mind dropping into the sea, but it was just, once there, how to get out! And so, I thought oh well, here goes, and I had to run up this slope. Because if you walked up normally you would slip. And I just got to the top and I held out my hand and he pulled me over the bridge, over the top, so I just made it. But it was wonderful to get to the top of that.

Oh yes, I'm sure.

But it was great. He drove me around, and it was great fun meeting him. So really Peter Potworowski and Peter Lanyon, the two Peters, were the people I saw most of. Except one other, a very nice man called Tower, James Tower.

Oh yes, the potter.

Who did the pottery. And he lived in one of the weavers' cottages in Corsham with Maureen, his wife, who you met. And he was terribly nice, and with all the turmoil in the academy and meeting students it was very nice to go to his home to have a quiet drink, and enjoyed meeting them very much, and have kept friends ever since, and of course he died, sadly.

Yes, because he was there for a very long time. He was there from '49 to '64 or so.

He stayed on after I left, yes. So, then I am at Notting Hill Gate, working away.

This was the mews in Notting Hill Gate where you were from when, 1956?

I have the dates somewhere here. '55 to '59. And I worked constantly there and on larger work. They seem to go in series, but I did do things which you might...one piece you might call 'King and Queen', thinking of Henry Moore, which it wasn't meant to be, but it was two seated figures, again a slab joined together, and the Tate own a cast of this, which you saw, pulled out from its cobweb.

Oh yes, for your birthday.

For my birthday. And I made a bigger one with three figures, nine foot long, and a big thing called 'Sprawling Woman', which was nine foot long, and several smaller things. Constant work all the time. It's silly to say constant all the time, but...

And you were photographed there weren't you by Roger Mayne in your studio.

Yes. And there was something I wanted to say about the photographers. Yes, Roger Mayne lived near, and he took some excellent photographs.

Yes, the street photographs he did.

But there was another photographer I met who was terribly good at that time, called Lidbrooke. You won't know him. And this led on to other things. As it started then, I might as well refer to it now. Lidbrooke took photographs, but he was also mainly a photographer of fashion models, and one day he rang and said, 'Look, I'm having a party tomorrow with all the fashion models I have photographed, would you like to come?' And I said rather, yes I certainly would! And went to his home, and he had these girls. And I think there was one other sculptor, Ralph Brown. And of course this man liked doing sculpture photographing. And so, I left; I noticed...talked to one tall model. And he rang me next day, he said, 'You know, do you remember talking to a tall model?' I said yes. 'Do you know who she was?' I said no. Well he said, 'That's Bronwen Pugh', who was in fact at the time the most successful model they had, 'and she would like to meet you again'. So, I said yes, I'd like to meet her. So I met her, and we became friends. I saw her several times, during which, she had a flat near Marble Arch, she said, 'I have become friendly with someone called Lord Astor', and she also talked about a man called Ward, who did drawings.

John Ward?

Yes, the one who committed suicide. The man who influenced Astor into having...

Oh right, not John Ward, no, right.

No no. I've forgotten the Ward's Christian name. And she had one or two on the wall; they were not very good drawings, I didn't really notice. Well, I thought this is a good match. If he's very much in love with her, I think top model ought to marry rich man! It was the traditional thing to do. So I was asked to the wedding, and I didn't know what I was in for. I had a dirty old Land Rover, drove to this vast place, Cliveden, and drove through the gates, and he said, 'Is it Mr or Lord?' I said, 'It's certainly not Miss', and with that sort of attitude I had in those days I drove on. Well, we had a wedding I should think, yes, in their own private chapel, and then we had a wedding breakfast, or lunch, and little tables. Two very nice people sat at my table, but I hadn't yet found out who they were. Nancy I suppose, the famous Nancy, she gave a talk. And then I began to notice who I was sitting next to, and they were Rory

and Romana McEwen. And it was from that day that Rory became a close friend, until the tragic end of his life a few years ago. And this was again an instance of one little tiny thing leading on to another. And so with Rory and his family, I used to have holidays at their Scottish place, first of all, what was the big one south of Edinburgh...oh, it's dreadful this, my brain has gone. It's a place like Buckingham Palace in Scotland it was. But it was the...another brother who really suddenly took over for a year, called 'Gumeye'. And Gumeye said, 'Why don't you come; it's the Edinburgh Festival next week, why don't you come up and we'll go and see it'. So I said all right. He said, 'There's another thing too. I know a girl whose father does nothing but make for himself fireworks all the year, and then sets them off at a party'. Well I said, that sounds fun. So, we went up by plane, and we went to the Edinburgh Festival. And the extraordinary thing was, I knew about 'happenings', but it was for me a new experience. We went to the McEwan Hall - not the same McEwen, spelt differently - and there there was an organ, a big organ, and hundreds of people, and I don't know what was going on on a little platform, but suddenly odd things began to happen. People started scrambling over the front three or four rows to get to the front, most extraordinary. Why, I kept thinking. And then, a nude girl came out of one door and walked in front of the organ and went into another door, and little things like that. And I thought, my God, this is life! What's happening? Of course it was all contrived, I didn't realize that. But it really worked on me as an ideal victim if you like. I didn't stay for the second half, which was more ordinary, putting car tyres one on top of the other outside. And so that was the first instance of a 'happening'. And we saw other things too. We stayed in a little place. And then he said, 'Look, we'll go back now'. He said, 'You ought to see where I was born'. Marchmont was the name of the place. 'You ought to come and see where I was born', so I didn't know what it was going to be like, this vast place. They were very nice, and I walked with the mother, I've forgotten her name, round the estate a bit, and then we came... Oh yes, this wasn't the firework time, it was the same time. So that was my introduction to... Although I had met Rory before, it was Gumeye who had a capacity to zoom in with enormous warmth often, and I had the full blast of his warmth for about year. And he could do this with anybody, especially girls. He wasn't attractive, he had a red face, thin sandy hair, rather fat, and little piggy eyes, but girls adored him, I could never work it out. At Clonmanel or at Marchmont you would see him with two of the most

beautiful girls in the country, leaning on his knees and looking up into his face and all this sort of thing.

And what sort of date was this? When did you meet him?

Well this would be immediately at the end, from '59 to '60 to '61, 2 and 3. In fact Rory went on all the time for ever, all his life. But then, coming back on the plane, drinking Scotch the whole way, he said, 'There's another weekend I'd like you to come to, next weekend'. I said, 'No no, I've got to get on with some work'. And then he started talking about this girl and her father who made fireworks, so in the end OK, and we went down. And we drove with Rory and Romana that time, and we stayed at pubs round about the place, because they couldn't...they hadn't enough room to put us all up. And we went to this house. Oh, I had to share a room with Gumeye, who I had already met. I said, 'That's a very nice girl you've got there, you want to hang on to her', this sort of thing. I didn't know I was going to be her girlfriend (sic) for three years after. And so, we went to this house by the river, I forget which river it was, and this funny man, Jossy's father, had been making fireworks all the year, and he let them off. It was a really excellent firework display. All kinds. You could see this little cap going round behind there, and urgently he was setting matches to these things going...very eccentric. So this was great fun. But I did meet Jossy, and she was ravishingly beautiful. If you go upstairs you will see some photographs by the window where I have a little thing, my only contact with my family, and certain people I've known. And that was how I met Jossy, and I don't know how it was we got involved, but she did become then a girlfriend for three years, and it ended and then she met David Dimbleby, and married him. And we have remained friends ever since, and she has some nice children, and I am very friendly with the whole... Most Christmases I have a Christmas meal with them, except last year I didn't; or I have a meal with Alastair, or with Jo, or...there are three or four people I have Christmas with. So that was that. Now that, I don't know why, I diverted to this...all this happened really because of this photographer saying come to a party with Bronwen Pugh.

That's right.

Now, the thing about Cliveden was, I had a few times there. I was never really happy there, because I was in this slum in Notting Hill, to go there with a dinner jacket, I did have an old dinner jacket, and it was different kind of life. Cliveden as you know was a centre of people who went there. The Astors had links with various people, and Nancy of course became an MP, the first female MP there was, and it was a house that there were always many people involved with. In fact at the weekend there were always 10 to 15 people staying there. And I didn't know what was going on, and then it all came out. Bronwen arranged it that I didn't go there at the weekends when Christine Keeler was there and Profumo and the others. And there was then this huge furore of Christine Keeler sharing Profumo, and American...the Russian Ambassador, or someone Russian high up, I've forgotten who it was. And Macmillan eventually heard of this. And it was nearly the end...the downfall of the Government, extraordinary. I was then going to Philippe de Rothschild at Mouton, and I mentioned this to him and typical French, he said, 'What the hell, all over a girl, what's happening in England?' He didn't see anything wrong or strange about it at all, but here it was...you know, Profumo had to resign. He did lie.

Yes, it was because he lied in the House wasn't it.

That's right, he lied in the House, and it should have been passed by without notice, but... I did see her at a party once later and she was quite pretty but not extraordinary. Auburn hair. Now, anyhow, that all...it was the end of the Cliveden Set, so to speak. And I went to see Bronwen and Bill Astor in their house in London opposite the American Embassy, and he was sitting on the bottom stairs with his head in his hands. It was all...I don't think he knew what was going on. And Bronwen said he was used to 15 people at weekends; he couldn't see people individually, it was always in bulk. And Ward organised the whole thing, and Ward wanted...he did then commit suicide. And George Melly, who I knew at the time rang me and said, 'Look, I am defending Ward. He shouldn't have committeed suicide', would I lend my name to it. And I had to say no, because I had been going to Cliveden, and I didn't want to take sides in this thing. But what was interesting, Bronwen told me then that in spite of over the many

years, all these people going at weekends, they were completely cut from them, no one would go there for the weekend. So it was rather...

After using...

Rather interesting English attitude to things. Bill died soon after. He died, and Bronwen took up religion. She was always given that way. She was...her style as a fashion model was to be as it were an intellectual. She would walk across the catwalk with new clothes, but reading a book, probably Teilhard de Chardin or something philosophical like that. And so she has remained a friend too, and I see her occasionally. So that was an incident which happened at that time. But one did know, I found...it's amazing the people one did know. London seemed to be smaller in those days. I knew people like Gaitskell and Tony Crosland. But this really happened after my 1958 Venice Biennale, and I ought to come on to that now. These big things I cast, and at that time also I withdrew from Gimpels, and was asked to go to the Marlborough Gallery, and I was the 5th artist in the Marlborough Gallery, and Gimpels were furious, they couldn't get over it.

And what date are you talking about now?

'59.

Right. So that was again after the Venice Biennale.

No, the Venice Biennale was '58. That's right, yes. Now, the '58 Venice Biennale just came before, that's quite right. And that was the...what, I've forgotten which it was, number it was, I think it was the 29th Venice Biennale, in which I had a one-man show there. William Scott had a one-man show, and William Hayter, the engraver from Paris had the other. And that was really an extraordinary experience, because the whole...people interested in art everywhere flocked; those days were the days when the Venice Biennale was very important indeed. And I didn't get the first prize, but a man who became a great friend, Chillida, got the first prize. Now the year before, Lynn Chadwick got the first prize. In that time he had worked like mad, day

and night, produced a great deal of work, and the committee, he had also...they had a kind of, almost like a government representative each year. I had Philip Hendy, he had Herbert Read. And he got the first prize, over Giacometti, which everyone regretted later. But anyhow...but they made a special prize for me. A man called David Bright, who liked my work very much and bought a lot of it, made a David Bright Prize for the best sculptor under 45, or something like that. But Chillida got the first prize, and I was delighted, because I liked him, and I liked his work, and I met him only about two years ago when he showed in London. Then after that the work travelled extensively; it went to Brussels, it went to Cologne, it went to Zurich, it went to somewhere else. To most of these places I went. But that extended over the next few months and so on. Now, immediately following that I had a retrospective at Whitechapel, but I think that was after the whole touring. Now, in 1959 I found this house here, and gave up the studio at Notting Hill Gate, and some other sculptor moved in, as they had moved into Corsham. At that meeting we had, a bloke said, 'I worked there, it was great fun to be in your old studio' and this sort of thing.

Yes, I think several people had your studio didn't they, after you.

That's right, after. And several people had my studio in Notting Hill Gate after that. And so, I think that that is... [How are we getting on with the tape? There's time left?]

We're OK. Perhaps we might...can you just remember what...tell us what...a couple of the sculptures that were exhibited at Venice that year, in 1958, in the Biennale?

Oh I can't remember, no.

There's nothing...

In 1958, well there were several...

Because there were several, because in 1957 you had done a lot of work.

Well I have the catalogues here, so we can easily find out, but I can't remember at the moment. It is quite extraordinary to be in a city where you have a big exhibition; to be in Paris, let's say at that Artcurial show, you see little posters here and there, and you feel you have a right to be there. And to be in Venice of all places, where you are showing at the Venice Biennale. Oh I tell you what, there was one, yes, Tapies was showing in '58, and he also got the same prize as I did, they gave him a David Bright prize. But I didn't meet him so much. One was meeting people the whole time. And I think then, I was approached by Herbert Read's son John Read to make a television film, and he made a film of the...in '59 he made a film of the Venice thing, and it went first to Paris, and we made films in my Notting Hill studio. And he was nervous about my talking, because I never talked very much, and I didn't really talk into the tape very well. Now as you see I never stop! But...I've had a lot of practice!

Was that film called 'The Artist Speaks'?

Yes, that's right, and I have it here. And it's really of interest mainly as a period piece. It's in black and white of course, and it has shots of the work of the time. As he was taking my studio a rag and bone man with a pony and cart came by. Things like that, real 1959 stuff. But...John Read is very nice. And then I was asked to join the Marlborough that year. And rather like the Gregory Fellowship, partly I wanted to do it and partly I wanted to make a break with Corsham. So, going to the Marlborough was a means of getting out of Gimpel Fils. Now, what I must say, in this time I had shows in America, I had forgotten this. [I hope we've got enough room left for this]

Yes, well we can turn it over.

I started showing with...Bertha Schaefer wrote to me, and I started showing with her I think in 1954 or something like that.

Yes, 1954, I've got a note of that.

1954, and I went to the opening. And she had an excellent assistant in the gallery called Ilse Getz, who knew everybody, and Ilse was a great power, and she introduced

me to lots of people, in fact organised a party at which I met all the abstract expressionists who I liked enormously. They were all wonderful men. Franz Kline, Rothko, de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston; also, not a painter of course, was David Smith, who I met several times, and liked. And I liked them all; they were all real men, and they were all generous, and they liked me, and they were all great drinkers. And they said, 'Look, you ought to come and live in New York. We'll find you a studio, we'll find you a loft or something'. Now, if I had been a young man let's say in the Sixties or the Seventies I would have gone like a shot, but sculpture is not so easy, and the other thing is, I had other interests than sculpture. I was interested in history. And I loved England; not so much the people as the land. And Europe, and everything else. And I in fact didn't do it, and that was another thing that I might have taken up, as well as Kurt Valentin, and didn't do. But they were...the drink was the end of them really. Franz Kline, who was the most friendly, he loved English people, and if you can remember his paintings, they were great big black and white streaks over huge canvases. And I remember one night he gave us a party with Gimpels. Gimpels were fun in those days, and he made I remember pork and beans in a big earthenware pot, it was delicious. But he got terribly drunk, and he wanted to go somewhere else, so we put him in a little invalid chair and wheeled him down Fifth Avenue with his head on one side, with his arms trailing over the end of it. But the poor nice man died about ten years later from drink. They all died from drink. Jackson Pollock, the second time I went to see him, first with Gimpel the second time with Bertha, he was all in plaster, he had fallen down the stairs, and then he died, I think he had a car accident. David Smith hit a tree in his car, drunk, killed. And saddest of all was Rothko who committed suicide.

Yes, exactly.

Now he didn't die of drink, he didn't drink very much. I met him several times, once in the Museum of Modern Art, and he was fascinating to meet of course, because by then he was the world's most famous painter, with enormous prices. And I was in New York that day after he died, in fact in the Marlborough Gallery looking at something, when in walked Lee Krasner, who was Pollock's widow. And she said had I heard, that Rothko had killed himself. I said my God no! And she was of

course in a terrible state. Well, he had cut his throat. He was someone who you couldn't imagine going like this; he was more of a philosophical person, quiet, not noisy. Not like the others who were rumbustious. And they said it was because he was a family man, but had lived apart from his wife and he wasn't used to living alone in a big studio and all that kind of thing. But I think there was more to it than that. I think first of all his work was a synthesis of all he had ever done. If you imagine Rothko's paintings, they are solid blocks of very delicate colours, one over the other. And you can't really develop from that, and he had reached an end. Now probably - this is my own interpretation, nothing from anyone else - I have a feeling that he might have felt that he didn't know quite what to do. But worse than that, he was very deeply involved with the Marlborough, and at his prices they really controlled him entirely. He was not allowed even to give the smallest work away to a friend; everything was controlled that he did, and the prices were high. So he could neither move from the gallery, do anything like that, nor could he change his work because the collectors would...a terrible outcry if you changed the work, as there was with Philip Guston. Now Philip Guston at those early days, I was less interested in than the work of Rothko and Pollock. His paintings, Guston's painting was more like European painting. But he changed magnificently, and the collectors all were furious because they had owned previous work. They don't want you to change. But he did, and his work was most extraordinary, that he had changed. He said, 'Well oddly enough I want to do what is a sin: I want to tell a story'. And he did these funny paintings, like a lot of bogey men kind of things, or feet all in the air, and really strange. Have you seen his paintings?

I haven't really, no.

Well there's a catalogue somewhere if you want to see them. They're terribly good. And he made the break, and succeeded, and they were sold at great prices and all the rest of it, so it was wonderful. And the last time I met him, it was at Boston University where I was Artist-in-Residence, and he was made an honorary doctor, and he gave a little talk, and that was when he had changed and was...I hadn't seen his work then. But now that whole gang were marvellous. I never met such a bunch of

artists. They were not bitchy, they were not jealous of each other. They were broad and big, and it was lovely to meet them.

End of F2401 Side A

F2401 Side B

Right. I just wanted to ask you a bit about the landscape that you saw when you were teaching at Corsham in Wiltshire, because that was something that was very important to you wasn't it. Because you had first seen Stonehenge in the war, when you were at the artillery range at Larkhill, and then you remembered.

I didn't know then that I would be seeing it again.

Exactly.

So when I got to Corsham, there was of course the lush countryside of the normal farmland and so on, green and grey stone, and grey skies, it was wonderful. But quite near there were these incredible artefacts. Silbury Hill was on the main road to Bath from London, and this gigantic mound, the largest man-made mound in Europe, which has been excavated two or three times, and they have never found anything in it at all. Behind Silbury Hill there is Avebury, with also the largest circle, larger than Stonehenge, but not finished to the same degree. And there is also of course the most magnificent Stone Age structure in Europe, which is Stonehenge. From Corsham one night I took the bus, our own little bus, and some students, we went for the summer solstice, and we slept all night at Stonehenge. And there was no barbed wire in those days, it was all open to all visitors, no car park or anything. And so, not only were there these three great buildings I call them if you like, there was the Kennet Long Barrow, and other features. Rich, one of the most rich. Windmill Hill, with the first remains of Beakerford to be found there. So rich in archaeological material that it was a feast, the whole time was wonderful. What was interesting that eventually I got to know a man who brought me much nearer to it all, who was and is an architectural historian, and writing other things as well, Alastair Service, who wrote a book about Edwardian architecture, including this studio in it, because this is an Edwardian building, built by a man called Maclaren who was quite a famous architect of that period.

What was his name, James?

James Maclaren, yes. And I didn't know anything about him, but I saw this book and I thought...well I had a successful exhibition in Caracas, I had some spare money and I had the place done up outside, not because he said this, but in the article he said, 'This is a very good example of Maclaren's work, now sadly dilapidated'! So I wrote to him, I said...I got the name from the publisher, and the address, and wrote to him and said, 'You might like to see that I've done it up outside, and it looks rather better. And if you pass by, do call in for a drink'. So he came and he stayed for two or three hours, and we became very close friends, and I found then that he had just bought a cottage in Avebury, he did write in it. And it was wonderful to know him, because he had studied these very much; he knew all the experts, or knew about them and met some of them. We went to Carnac with him and his wife.

Oh right. In Brittany.

In Brittany, and it was wonderful to go there. In return I took him to Ireland later, and one thing and another, and we have remained great friends. So that was the area which was a wonderful area to be in, which was another reason why I stayed so long at Corsham. Now the other thing before we finish entirely was to mention a few of the things made at the Notting Hill studio before the 1958 Venice Biennale. There was a series of reclining figures, I think there were four, two or three of which I showed in Venice. There were one or two standing figures, there were the large works, 'Triarchy' and 'Diarchy'. You might wonder how that title came about. I didn't know what to call these two. They were very similar. One had two heads and one had three heads, and a suitable number, well approximate number of arms and legs, that kind of thing. And it was Gerald Forty at the British...what's it called?

British Council?

British Council, came up with the titles. 'Why don't you call them 'Triarchy' and 'Diarchy'? Diarchy is ruled by two, Triarchy is ruled by three'. Well I wasn't so much interested in the ruling business, because I didn't want it to be, as they are not, like Henry Moore's 'King and Queen', which I never really liked very much anyhow; I saw

it at the foundry. I liked his other work much better. But that was then a suitable title for both, and these were shown in the Venice Biennale, and was there something else? I think there was something called 'The Seasons'. This was another thing like 'People in a Wind', which was an immediate best-seller, a thing rather like bagpipes with arms going up and legs going down.

Is that it?

That's it, that's 'The Seasons'.

That was 1956 that one.

'56, the middle of the Fifties.

Sorry, I was going to mention that in 1956 your model for the Krefeld...

Oh yes, there was a curious incident. I was approached by a very nice man, the director of the museum of a German town called Krefeld, and he had the idea - you see this is not long after the war, only 20 years after the war, that they should have a war memorial in Krefeld, and he was inviting any sculptors with international names - forgive me for saying that, but...

Absolutely right, yes.

And he got Marino Marini to submit a model, and he got me to submit a model, maybe one other, I don't know. And oddly enough, I won, so I got first prize. And I was awfully chuffed, because I got it instead of Marino Marini! But nothing came of it. I think there was an outcry in the press, that's right, in Krefeld, that an English, an enemy should get the prize. And quite right too, it was too ridiculous that I should make a war memorial for Germany, for the German war.

Yes, very open-minded of them.

It was an impossible situation, so it never came off, and it would have been a difficult thing to do. But it was a good piece, and I saw it in the Orkneys last year, it was bought by Margaret Gardiner is her name.

Oh, Gardiner? Who has the Pier Gallery in Orkney.

That's right. Well Alastair and I, we had a holiday in Orkney last year, and I wanted them to see this Pier Gallery [sic]. It's lovely, next to the harbour, and a little gallery with excellent things, with...

Lots of Ben Nicholson.

Ben Nicholsons, and that marvellous man who was a primitive...

Alfred Wallis.

Alfred Wallis, and they had on the stairs by itself my little figure, and it looked very nice, so I was very pleased with that. I mean everything looked very nice, but I was pleased with that piece which she had. So that was a good thing to see. And I loved Orkney, because Alastair was doing something very strange, he was writing a Stone Age novel, of all things! (laughs) Well, because it's so crazy I like the idea. But he was wanting to look at...in the story he got a character going to Orkney, because there were some very early megaliths and things, rings and caves, and mounds that you can walk into. And he had a great feast exploring those things and picking up. So we had a very nice time there. And so that was it, and that was the end of Corsham, that was the end of the work in the Fifties, and it ended then with the '58... Except I joined the Marlborough, and there was this terrible trouble with Gimpels. But I joined the Marlborough partly to get out of Gimpels, because I felt I had been there enough, and it was in a way like stepping out of the frying pan into the fire. The Marlborough however were very bold, and they were good for a while. Oh Chadwick followed me; I went first and then he told Marlborough, he said, 'Well if Kenneth goes, I've got to go too'! (laughs) So, I had this creature running after me. And he stayed there ever since, and he got on well with them, he fitted in with the Marlborough set-up.

And you didn't stay there that long?

I stayed 12 years.

Oh right, oh that was quite long.

But I resigned in the end. I had for a few years only Henry Moore, was the only other sculptor in the gallery. And in a way his prices were so much higher than mine, so anything for sale, obviously I mean they were selling his work rather than mine. I didn't like being owned; they were very much...they won their way with me. I was in a very good position before I joined them; I had Gimpels in London, I had two galleries in Canada, I had one in New York, I had one in Paris.

Who was the one in Paris?

The Paris was not a real gallery but it was Claude Bernard, who was buying...I didn't have a show there, but he was buying work, and it was...I mean I expected I would have a show there before long. And Claude Bernard still exists. But this network I had. And one of the reasons for surrendering to the Marlborough, I say surrendering because it amounted to that, was that it was a lot for me of office work.

Administration, yes.

Yes, writing to all these galleries.

So they could take care of all that.

They could take care, as they were well able to do, take care of the work. I would keep only one, which would be...then it was Rosenberg in New York, I would keep the New York gallery as a separate thing.

And they agreed to that?

They agreed to that. But, when they went, opened up in New York, they wanted to destroy that agreement, and they had a fight with Rosenberg, and they said, 'We don't want Armitage to come to you, we want him to come to us. We have a gallery in London, he started with us, and we are going to show him in New York'. And it was very bitter. I remember Rosenberg came here one day, he said, 'I can't go on. I give up. I'm going to surrender, and as it were give you to the Marlborough'. Well as a matter of fact I never had a show at the Marlborough, and I...

In New York you mean.

In New York. I had two in London. And these were big shows, and I found it, to have a mammoth sculpture show of three or four years' work, to do it all the time is a bit much really. It's binding. And I eventually...I started doing work that I knew they wouldn't like, but I started...

Was that on purpose, or...?

Partly, no. No it wasn't, but I didn't mind, because I was experimenting with bits of bent cardboard, as Picasso did, drawing, and I made screens with printed images of male figures on the front and all the rest of it. And these were things they didn't like. And so when eventually I resigned, I knew they wouldn't say no, they were only too glad that I left. And I left, and I was happy, although I didn't know where the next penny would come from. I was absolutely penniless, depended on them for 12 years, but in my heart I was happy. And then slowly, bit by bit, things picked up.

Slotted into place. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
.....something else you were going to say at one point, which was when you set up your home with your wife in Redcliffe Square there were rather a lot of characters who lived in your basement weren't there that you wanted to mention.

Well there were two, mainly one. And first of all, Ainslie Ellis, who was in the officer cadet training place in Catterick, he asked to come because he liked it, and he

stayed there for a bit. Then he moved into a little tiny back room which he liked, then he moved out, bringing an old friend of his, Hugh Gordon-Porteous, who lived in the front basement room with an old accordion, organ that he got from some chap, all playing Bach downstairs, with books piled all over. There's a drawing in the top room you might like to see. And he had many contacts, mainly Wyndham Lewis, he adored Wyndham Lewis, and was probably a ghost writer for Wyndham Lewis, and introduced me to Lewis twice at the Catherine-Wheel in Church Street Kensington, pub. But he had also, much more interesting to me, was Orwell, who I did meet once, but he came two or three times, and I was always in Corsham and gallivanting around with Rosemary, the girls and everything else, and missed some of these very good things. I did meet though Larry...

Adler? No.

I knew him very well, he was going to...Adler was going to put me on to films. I'll tell you about him some other time.

Oh, Lawrence Durrell.

Lawrence Durrell, Larry Durrell, and...Larry Durrell and his brother, who was the zoo man.

Gerald.

Gerald, who Jo liked particularly, and they were visitors from time to time. And one or two other people. But suddenly there was Count Potocki, who I had mentioned during my Slade periods in the sculpture course in the British Museum, seeing this extraordinary person floating by. And so there was Potocki, looking rather different; he wasn't dressed in mediaeval court robes, he had a suit, but he did have on a large swastika. Now, to have this, immediately after the war, is unbelievable.

Especially being a Pole.

Especially being...you would think he would be absolutely beaten up, but he never was. But he came, and was very friendly, and he mended my wife's sandals and he cast my horoscope which I showed you over there the other side of the room. Now, he did...when I had this first amateur exhibition at the gallery in 1947...

The Mayor?

At the Mayor Gallery.

By candlelight.

By candlelight, I thought it would be a good idea to have a list of the drawings, everything was so rough in those days. And so, I thought well I'll get Potocki. And he typed, he had a printing machine, and he typed the catalogue so to speak, which was only one page of writing, with a list of drawings underneath. But at the bottom of the page, in tiny writing, he had 'Printed by Vladislav V, King of Poland and Hungary, Hospodar of Arabia, Defender of the Faith. 22 Devonia Road, London, N1'. And this was such a marvellous sort of mixture of things, I've never forgotten it. It was absolutely meaningless, but it was very funny. Someone also I ought to mention, who was important, and is never talked about now, in those very early days just after the war, there was someone called Tambimuttu. Have you ever heard of him?

Yes I have, yes.

Now he was an Asian, or near Asian person, charming small man, who published a book of poetry and a few pictures called 'Editions Londres', 'Poetry Editions, London', and in that there was Sutherlands and Moores and things like that, with modern poets, a beautiful little publication. And I met him several times, and he was very nice. I am just mentioning people...they didn't come to Redcliffe Square.

But people you knew at that time.

I knew, I bumped into him a lot. And so, that really is all about that, and so we've mention now the people who came. I missed a lot of it being at Corsham. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
Well, a propos the abstract expressionists, who I liked so much, and they were all inclined to drink rather more than people are in England, at least that one meets.

Yes, these are the ones you met in New York.

Yes. Rothko, Kline, de Kooning, Pollock, and so on.

At the time of both your New York shows.

Well I had four New York shows. And now, I wondered how it was that they did drink so much, and I think part of it was a feeling of making a stand for artists, a kind of bravura: this is how we're going to behave in spite of restrictions of human...you know, how you are expected to behave and one thing and another. But it was also the fact, as well as bravura, they were very impressed by Dylan Thomas's visit to New York a little earlier, and I know for example that Pollock when I went to see him had a recording of 'Under Milk Wood', and Dylan Thomas was extremely drunk when he there, in fact he died when he was there of over drink. And he was also going around, pulling at girls' skirts and one thing and another. I think this rather set a challenge for them to do the same kind of thing. I'm not sure this is right, but certainly they were of that gang, and I'm sure much more liable to drink than the pop group of people who came later, who I didn't know at all.

No, who were perhaps more interested in...perhaps the later pop artists are possibly interested in other substances.

Yes, drugs.

Exactly.

Andy Warhol wouldn't behave in quite the same way as that even. But these were as it were normal working men, in a nice sense, and having a drink and so on, but it did work out like that. Now, there's one instance that I didn't mention, was...what's his name?

de Kooning?

de Kooning. And on a visit about that time to New York, almost on the first day, I think it was the first day, I met a very nice woman dealer called Eleanor Ward, and she had a gallery. And she had a party that night and she said would I go to the party. I said yes, sure, I'd like that, and so I went, and there were a lot of people standing around, let's say two floors up, and drinking away quietly, when suddenly there was this enormous crashing and banging on the staircase, bottles being broken and one thing and another, and telephones ringing and so on. And Eleanor went to the door, peeped round and said, 'Oh my God, it's de Kooning, he's absolutely blind drunk'. And she looked round the room, and then she looked at me, and I was a newcomer, a foreigner, and also quite sturdy, and she said, 'Kenneth, would you do me a great favour and somehow get de Kooning down to the street and put him in a taxi and send him home'. Well, this was something, my first night in New York, and I worked it out in my mind, because he was in a real fighting, drunk state. Still, I'd got to do it, I'll try, and I just got to the door when it burst open and two enormous policemen arrived. They had been fetched, telephoned for by the neighbours, and they strode in. They seemed to be about seven feet high they were so big, and they both had absolutely flat noses from boxing, and they had great truncheons by their side. They didn't say a word, they just came inside, stood by the door, looking forward, straight in front. And everyone became very quiet, and you could hear a pin drop. And also, de Kooning had disappeared, there was no sign of him. Whether he had been taken away, or whether he had himself fled I don't know, but they left. I mention this only as something that perhaps could only happen in New York. Not quite the same thing would happen here. And that really fits in with what I said about the drunken side of the otherwise very nice abstract expressionists. I've nothing against drinking at all, it was just that it was more extreme, as everything is in America, and especially in New York. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

I've forgotten what it was all about.

You were talking about de Kooning, which was probably made on one of your later visits to New York.

Yes. I haven't mentioned it yet.

No, you have mentioned that. You've mentioned your incident with de Kooning, throwing him out.

Yes, and then what am I talking about now?

I think you said you were going to talk about Calder.

Oh, have we done de Kooning?

Well you've just mentioned...[BREAK IN RECORDING]

I'm being very confusing about all this. I keep forgetting little things. During one of the two exhibitions at the Rosenberg Gallery, later, in the 1950s or early '60s, I found there was round the corner in, is it Lexington...

Lexington Avenue possibly?

Yes. Just literally only about a hundred yards away, Sandy Calder. Alexander Calder was having an exhibition at Gallery Perls. So I thought, well I must go in, and he was there. It was a small exhibition, and I was looking at...there were some older mobiles, and there were some stabiles, things that were rigid. And I said to him, 'My God', I said, 'you do weld beautifully. It's amazing'. He said, 'I don't weld them, stupid'. He said, 'I make them out of plywood or cardboard, and I hand them to a professional firm of welders, and they do all that'. And he was so nice, and he said would I go to his home and see his workshop; it was let's say, I don't know, a train or plane, an hour

away, a trip like that. I said I'd love to. But these trips to New York, one books one's dates and one goes let's say for three days.

It's slightly inflexible.

And I didn't fit it in, and I always wish I had done so, because he was such a wonderful man. He was given, as you may know, a ticker-tape funeral somewhere. They were absolutely overwhelmed. And so it was anyhow nice to have met him, and that was just you know, round the corner from where he was. That's all really I want to include.

End of F2401 Side B

F2402 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 8th of October 1991. Tape Three.

Last time we really finished the 1950s. But I do forget little things. It's better as I do, to talk off the cuff, having just a few headlines to follow, to guide me through, but inevitably one forgets some things, so I would like to go back and mention them. I did show you these. The Architectural summer school, there are photographs here of the piece the young architects made with me, and the models in my studio, which they arranged in a position, because that was all they...they didn't know anything about sculpture and how to do it, and so they based their work on that, which was a way of realizing a piece. And they did it very well, and that went to their school behind Tottenham Court Road in that square; I've forgotten now where it is.

Portland Place was it?

Something like that, I don't know.

Architectural Association?

Yes. And the bottom here, taken at the same time, are the little maquettes of 'People in a Wind'. Well they didn't use those, and I didn't want them to really because I was still in...I was then, I had started the bigger version, and they used these older models, which was ideal for what they wanted to do. And that really was that. And it was a happy, I repeat again it was a very happy time.

Can I just get you to just confirm the date when that Architectural...

50.

Right, 1950. It's very good that you've got these photographs.

Yes. I don't know who wrote this, it may be one of the students, '1950'. This is all written at the time, it's not my writing.

It's very useful to have this.

It's not my writing. Lower plate, three maquettes, older ones, and then two were cast in bronze of that. So, that was useful to have that, it confirms it doesn't it, instead of just talking about it. And I think I mentioned that they made a hot-air balloon, did I?

Yes, you did, indeed you did.

That was lovely on a summer's evening, to see this little light going away, and the fireworks. Yes. And I'm rather frightened of fireworks now because in the big exhibitions, I've had two, one was in Australia, Expo 88, where unknown to me they had a mammoth fireworks show, colossal, and there was fall-out, burn spots on the sculpture. Well they're hardly noticeable, it doesn't matter, but I got terribly worried and made a huge fuss. The last thing was my big tree, oak tree, going to our friend in Newcastle, which seemed harmless enough; I'll come to this later.

That was the Garden Festival a couple of years ago.

Yes. And so, with Noack's advice, I was doubtful about it, I didn't want people to climb on it, he said, 'Well why don't you plant flowers round it?' So we did, we had a flower bed. But what I didn't know was that they were going to have a big firework display too, and herding people towards...they herded them all past, and then people wanted to have a better look at the fireworks, and climbed all over the tree, scratching it with their boots. So that was maddening, I had to paint...respray the bottom of it, and there are still scratches higher up which I saw on Sunday when I went to see James Kirkman. Right, now, I'd like to refer to an event in 1953, which was tiny but is interesting. In Paris they had, maybe they still have, two exhibitions in the year. The first is called Salon de Mai, and the second Salon d'Automne. And this was Salon de Mai, 1953, and I was invited to send two pieces of sculpture, so I sent them.

And I thought well I'll go, it will be interesting. So I went there; it was in a...Palais de New York, a place, I've forgotten where it is, and I went in, and I...

We've got the catalogue here haven't we, yes, Palais de New York.

Yes. And I thought well that's funny, there's not many people walking around, just a few, and then I went into a room, and there was a huge mass of people, like a bees', wasps' nest, and I knew there was someone in the centre. And then it moved to another room, and the whole mass moved. In fact what it was, was Picasso; such was the power of that man, like a magnet, he attracted everybody to him. And it's interesting that reading John Richardson's new book which is so good, the first version of his early years, refers to the fact, even when he was 17, when his work was not really fully formed, it was like the others but a little bit better, he still had a magnetic effect on people, whether it was his intelligence, or his black anthracite eyes, or the fact that he was Spanish, because Spaniards, it was very fashionable to be Spanish at the end of the last century, and his work. Anyhow, he did have this effect. Now, a little bit later, I think probably the early 1960s, well from the 1950s I had known a very nice Italian painter, who was very well known in Italy, called Renato Guttuso, and he was a warm man, a great singer, and his work was what you would call social realist. He was a socialist, and represented the socialists in government. He was a communist as a matter of fact, but like many he was married to a very nice big princess, Mimose[ph] or Mimise[ph] she was called. Anyhow I saw a lot of him, and he came to London, and the last time he came here, I had moved. And he said, 'Well next month I'm going to stay with Douglas Cooper', who was a famous collector; he had great numbers of Picassos, some other paintings, and he lived in a chateau nera Avignon, and the man who wrote this book, John Richardson, lived with him for I think eight or ten years, a long time, did terribly well. But that's not the point. The point was, Guttuso said Picasso will be coming to stay that weekend, why don't you come too, you'd like to meet him. I said yes, I'd love to. And I said yes, sure. And then I thought about it. Unfortunately, thank God he's dead, Douglas Cooper died a few years ago, I couldn't stand him. He had such an unpleasant manner. He loathed English art, except Sutherland; he liked Sutherland because

Sutherland had a kind of high life part. I mean he would go gambling in the Casino at Monte Carlo, things like that.

Yes, because he lived down there didn't he.

And he lived there for a while, yes. And so he liked...and also he liked his work, which of course was very good too. But otherwise, he hated Henry Moore, anything like that, anything English, and so it would be difficult, especially if Picasso wasn't there, if he couldn't come at the last minute, I would be landed - although there would be Guttuso, and he would make all the difference. So unfortunately I said no, thank you very much. And I wish I had gone now. So that was a chance of missing the great man.

And did you ever meet him in your life?

No, only that once on the steps.

Yes. You were actually introduced to him.

Didn't I mention that just then?

No.

Well yes, as I left the Salon de Mai, going down the steps and thanking the woman who was organising the whole thing, she turned round, and Picasso was coming down the steps too at the same time, and she turned to me and said, wouldn't I like to be introduced to Picasso. I said rather! So we shook hands, and that was really just you know, 'bonjour'.

Monsieur Picasso.

Which were nonsense remarks. But what I did notice, how tiny he was; a very small man. And I read now this book of Richardson that his mother was tiny too. But it

didn't make any difference to him - or perhaps it does make small people want to be important. I mean William Scott was a bit like that, he was a very small man, and he had great authority, and talked like a big man. And it has an effect. But I'm sure that Picasso didn't notice he was small, he felt too big. Now, you mentioned last time, and I did talk very briefly, you said I talk about American artists with great warmth, but I don't mention the English artists very much. That I think I said was because perhaps they were so familiar. But Potworowski was terribly nice to me, and was a very nice man. Brooker was a good painter; he didn't appeal to me very much, but he was an ebullient person, and for that reason I knew him very well.

Yes, that's William Brooker you're talking about.

William Brooker, Bill Brooker we called him, yes. Lanyon I liked very much, and went to stay with him. Scott I knew well, but he wasn't such a close friend. Roger Hilton became a close friend because in London, when I got the stables, so-called, in Notting Hill Gate, Hilton - and it was very near where Hilton's home was, and so he got one too, so he was bang next door.

Yes, that must have been stimulating.

It was very nice. So I got to know him well. And when I first met him he was a very quiet man in the early days, but he got more and more aggressive, so that he was always fighting with people. I told you about the time he killed an MP's husband.
No.

No.

Well, I forget, he used to get very mad with people. In fact when he went to meet people, before he went to see them he took his glass spectacles off and put them in his pocket, because he'd be sure to get punched. And one day he was asked to meet an MP lady, whose husband was there, and Roger was so abusive to the husband that he had a heart attack and died on the spot.

Oh my Lord!

Which is...an extraordinary incidence. Well now, those people I saw. In fact, we used to go a lot to the pubs in those days, and there were not many pubs where you could go. And there was a pub quite well known in the Fulham Road called Finches, where there was a landlord called Sean, Sean Treacy I think his name was, who was a very good landlord. He had though a special attraction, that he would cash any cheques that his clients gave him, and it was good for business. So everybody...I didn't myself, but a lot of people did cash cheques there. And I had a friend who was a marvellous cellist, Terence Weil. He was the cellist in the male ensemble. I once heard him, he invited me to the Glyndebourne for a dress rehearsal, and I went there with Jossy Dimbleby, she was then my girlfriend, and we had a picnic on the lawn, and he played. It was terribly nice. That was not wearing dinner jackets, because it was a rehearsal. But I met him one day in Finches, a bit white in the face. He said you know, 'I've got a swearing bank manager. And I went to see him, and he pulled out all the papers, and started bawling me out, with foul abuse, which is astonishing from a bank manager', which of course, I mean they're no different from any other men, but you don't usually expect...

No, quite.

The point was, that Terence cashed every cheque with Sean, rather than at the bank. So this man had a great pile of cheques stamped with Finches, and thinking that every penny - and he was always hard up - every penny was spent at Finches. And so the bank manager was going to...really dressed him down. And Terence said, 'Well, it's Christmas, I've got to buy a turkey'. 'I can't afford to give you a turkey, the bank can't stand it!' And one thing and another. So that was... And then anyhow, Sean moved to the Queen's Elm, about 300 yards away at the crossing of the Fulham Road and Church Street Kensington. And he was there until he died, oh, seven or eight years ago. And so we all moved there.

Yes. That was up the road from the Chelsea Arts Club wasn't it.

It was at the corner, yes. Up the road at the corner, the crossing of Fulham Road. And that was a place where you could meet all kinds of people, for example Augustus John's...Caspar John, Rear Admiral John as he became, and a whole lot of other people. And we spent about three night a week there.

And that was quite near where you were living in Redcliffe...or weren't you living there then? No you weren't.

Well no I had moved to Notting Hill; Roger was about a hundred yards away, but we used to drive down, and it was easy to get to. We knew everybody. So I did meet them a lot, and of course Chadwick was a great friend, until eventually, because we had basic differences, his priorities were so different, it was impossible to have a real basis to the friendship, and I withdrew. Butler, I'd like to say one other point about him, that I admired Butler very much. He was not a close friend; I knew him. He achieved something that... He wasn't really an architect, he was an architectural editor...he was an editor of the 'Architectural Review', the journal, and was a very clever man. And he had a very nice wife who apparently couldn't have any children, and he met a girl in the Slade called Rosemary Young, who had a very deep influence on him, not so much, not with the work, but in attitude. And Butler, who was a kind of puritan at heart I believe, thought well, you know, he knew all about architecture and engineering, and artists had models and so on, and so he thought he would do nudes, and he did this marvellous thing of a girl taking off her vest. And he got more and more figurative. And it's interesting, I mentioned before, that in his 'Unknown Political Prisoner' he had tiny little figures about an inch or two high, called 'Watchers', and these grew and grew and grew in size; he forgot all about the welding, and he became more and more figurative, to a great degree. He had casts made. Oh he's technically brilliant. He finished them off impeccably, as I did myself, but I didn't do anything else. He then drilled millions of little holes in the scalp and threaded real hair in so that they had wigs; he had ceramic eyes, which he turned in a lathe, and they were let in somehow into the bronze, and the whole thing was painted, and they were in fact very erotic and luscious. But there were some strange things about them. One, their positions were often grotesque, and this was, I believe, because he used what is called a manikin. In art shops you see in the window very

often a little figure with joints for drawing. I don't know, I have no idea how people use them, but you arrange them as you like, because the knees and the elbows and everywhere they move, and you can arrange them as you like. And he used these to get an idea as to the position he would like, of the figures. And this I believe was the reason why some of them were in almost impossible positions. Maybe he liked that, but they did make one a bit uneasy. The other thing that made me very uneasy was, in spite of the enormous naturalism of the hair on the head and everywhere else, and the paint of the body, and the eyeballs, and the lips and everything, which were dazzling, there was no pubic hair. And this had, to my mind, an almost decadent effect. There are people who shave; there are maybe men who don't like it. But I thought well there are two reasons for this. One, he liked it like that, the other, I have a feeling that he had not shed his basic puritanism. He still was shy. I can't imagine him being shy, but possibly he was still reluctant to have this. Whereas I have always used the pattern made; this very beautiful triangle on a woman, which is sort of advertising her nudity when she has got nothing on, is a staggering eye-catcher. And it's very interesting that the Japanese never include it in their prints. Even the Ukiyo-e prints, which were of let's say the red light districts of Tokyo, the beautiful prints with all kinds of erotic things, of people making love and all the rest of it, you will never see any pubic hair.

Yes, everything but.

Or just a little...perhaps a little...

A couple of little strands.

Little strand or something. But otherwise none at all, which is very interesting. I'm sure the Japanese have absolutely no inhibitions about anything, and I think they are very tidy people, and they thought that perhaps it was a bit untidy having hair there.

But they're not generally particularly hirsute anyway are they, no.

And they don't have beards, or very rarely.

No, no, they're not at all hairy.

They're not hairy. So anyhow, but you can imagine what Japense girls must be like, wonderful with a black triangle down there. So that was odd. And what was interesting, I had only about four years ago a letter from Lord somebody or other, Provost of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, would I be prepared to have published a monograph on Butler, and write about his life and work. Which was a nice idea, and I could gladly have done it. But then he started talking about visits to see his widow in Berkhamsted, and I was terribly busy at the time, and eventually I said no, I don't think I can fit it in, which was sad, I should have done it, because I could have talked about Butler in a way that perhaps other people did not.

Exactly.

And I had known him all the time, since the end of the war, and I regret now having not done that. So I regret not having met Picasso more at Douglas Cooper's house, and I regret not having not written the thing for the Bodleian Library, which would have been a permanent publication. Anyhow...

Well perhaps there will be another opportunity for you to do something.

I doubt it. That would have gone. So there are some of the things that I forgot to mention. And now, you did say that I hadn't referred much to the works done in the Fifties. And this is really because I find it very hard to talk about work if you don't have photographs to refer to things. And it doesn't mean very much if you say I did this and I did that. For example, how could you talk about the 'Mona Lisa'? You could say well, she has a most mysterious and extraordinary expression, but that gives you no idea of the image you have looking at it. And so this is really why I didn't. Well this is a tape job, and there are no visual images. But I can refer to aspects of certain works which make sense if one talks about it. First of all, in the mid Fifties I made a thing called 'Figure with Square Head'. It was about 18 inches high, a very

dumpy fat figure, and 'Seated Figure', which is in fact owned by the Tate, a cast, and it has a square head. There was a tiny model I did before, about 1952 or 3, which I cast myself, and also a square head was used on a later work, on the Mouton Rothschild commission, with Philippe de Rothschild. Now the reason for this is something very odd. I have never been, so far as I know, influenced by any contemporary work. In fact Walter Stachan, writing about me, said my work was so different from Moore's that I was doing it on purpose, which made me furious. One does one's work because it comes from inside and not because of anyone else. But in this case there was an excellent Australian painter, who did a series of paintings based on the Australian...what do you call it?

Bandit, or...no.

Not a bandit, no. When he is banished, what do you call it when a man is...I can't think of the right word for this, it's on the tip of my tongue, where someone is wanted by the police and escapes and you can't get him, and this was the famous, or infamous Ned Kelly. And a most extraordinary refugee bandit, with a gang, gang leader, and he made a helmet, a black steel helmet. And Sydney Nolan's paintings were haunting. It sent an electric shock up the back. There was this figure, naturalistic, with a black square on his head. And this is why it caught on, in my case I did it three times. Chadwick noticed at the same time but he did hundreds of square heads. So that was the 'Figure with Square Head'. Then...titles are very difficult. Sometimes it's very natural to call a piece by what is most striking about it, if there's some means of identification. Here a square head. The next thing I'm going to talk about is 'Figure Lying on its Side', which you can't mistake. And 'Sprawling Woman' and so on. Whereas painters have a much more difficult job, I think, talking about various qualities of paint they might do. So, now 'Figure Lying on its Side', there were four versions, and I mentioned this before I think.

Yes you did.

1957. And this is in the book, you've got a reference there of it. And for the first time I began to be aware of relating sculpture to the ground; always they are in exhibitions,

they are in people's homes, they seem to have no bearing on the ground and gravity, although except 'People in a Wind' did have a relation to gravity, because they were leaning against the wind, and they were off vertical. The natural thing with sculpture is to be very conscious, at least I was, of vertical and horizontal, and I very often made a kind of...had in mind a three-dimensional cross, up down, left right, and that kind of thing. And so here were pronounced lines made by the limbs, reduced almost to sticks. And the interesting thing is, this was very rarely referred to, because people don't understand what one is getting at in a formal element, unless told to do so. In fact people don't look at anything unless they are told to do so! Now, that appeared; it also appeared in the next large work I did. All this work, I worked terribly well in Notting Hill in this little studio. 'Sprawling Woman' was a figure lying on its back, which was like an arch; she had a very arched back, her arms and legs were spread out, but there was a pronounced horizontal line - I hate using the word line, but there was a direction. The horizontalness was emphasised by it. And this was the piece, when I had a retrospective at Whitechapel after my British Council tour in 1958 Venice Biennale, and I found Roger Hilton sprawled on his sprawling woman, as though making love to it, which is rather characteristic of his sense of humour, which was very funny then. So, that was the 'Sprawling Woman'. And then there came in 1958 the Venice Biennale. And this is interesting, that I had forgotten to get out the catalogue. In fact I didn't have it in my list. The 1952 Venice Biennale was so important to me, and this was only a difference of six years, but it was, as I have referred to it before, an important occasion and we did meet a lot of people. And it then toured to museums, it went to the Mus,e d'Art Modern in Paris, it went to the museum in Zurich, in Rotterdam, and Brussels, all of which I made a visit to see, and visit the town. This was three of us, William Scott, Bill Hayter and myself. Now, this I have mentioned before, but there was an interesting connection. There was the Yugoslav Ambassador to England, what is called rather quaintly...he was invited to the...what's it called, the Court of St. James, or something funny like that they call it. And he was an extremely nice man and spoke fluent English, and when after in London he asked me to the embassy house, whatever it's called, the residence, and I often had a meal with him and his family. And he went to the Yugoslav national day reception, which all embassies have, a day when they have a reception. And I met there Gaitskell, the Leader of the Opposition, and liked him very much, and I met him

once or twice after, and he was there with his wife and daughter. And in the middle of this, he said to me, 'Well why don't you come with us, we always have holidays in Yugoslavia, and it would be nice if you came too'. I think then he got nervous about his daughter, because I had by then unfortunately a reputation of philandering, which I could explain later, but not yet why it happened. So that would have been nice, but it didn't stop our friendship. And those, what do you call them, receptions at the Yugoslav Embassy, were very good because they had, instead of all, you know, people, bank managers, businessmen and so on, they had intellectuals and writers and all kinds.

Perhaps they had different categories of receptions.

Maybe they had different categories. But this was excellent. You would suddenly see the Red Dean walking around in his robes, and Auden the poet, and so on. And it was really good, and I went to quite a few. In fact, I got to know three ambassadors in a row, because they were so nice, and Yugoslavs coming to this country very often would also call here during their London visit, and I also made a visit to Yugoslavia as well, so I got to know them well.

End of F2402 Side A

F2402 Side B

So can I just ask you where you met the first Yugoslav Ambassador?

Yes, I should have explained, I'm talking about this because he was at the opening of the exhibition in the Biennale in Venice.

In 1958?

In '58, yes, and so that was why when, later in London, I met him several times. I should also add that when the exhibition moved to Paris, Roland Penrose was the British Council representative in Paris, and it was wonderful to be there with him, because he gave parties and he would ask say Giacometti and Mir¢, and artists that he knew, seemed everybody, and it was lovely. Man Ray I met several times, the American photographer, with him. Now, the other MP, I mentioned this to you privately before that one did seem to know people very easily in those days. I met Tony Crosland. Now this was because we were both interested in the same girl. This was before he married a very nice journalist he met later.

Susan Crosland.

Who incidentally, he asked me whether he should marry her, talking over a drink sort of thing. I said, oh, I always do when people say...'Yes, I think you should'. Now, he was the intellectual of the Labour Party and was a very bright, nice man. And he lived, oddly enough, in The Boltons, a very grand flat there. And one day he rang, he said, 'Gaitskell is coming tonight, and perhaps you would come too, we're having a drink'. He used to ring me and say, 'The planes are flying too low, what shall we do about it?', or, 'Will you meet me for a drink in my favourite pub in Hammersmith?' And so really it was very nice. I went to his flat, and there was Gaitskell, and he also got two painters who were well-known in those days but you don't hear so much of now. In fact only one of them, Colquhoun and MacBryde, have you heard of them?

Oh yes, oh yes indeed, very much so.

And I think one couldn't come, or was he died, or maybe...but there was one of them, I forget which. And so that was all, Gaitskell, one of the two...

The two Roberts.

The two Roberts, and Crosland. And we had a...there were no women, which was...but we seemed to enjoy ourselves. We put on jazz records, and were jigging about the room. Now this is very hard to imagine, doing this with Mrs Thatcher; or maybe she did with other people, I've no idea, but that was very nice. The other person I met was Denis Healey. Now, because of my Gregory Fellowship at Leeds, I was there for two years, I met a man who was very nice, Gillinson, who was a businessman. And in his house, Denis Healey used to stay when he went to Leeds on his...he was the Member of Parliament for part of Leeds, and he always...he had a room where he had his little bed. And so three times I met him there, and...

So that was between '53 and '55, when you were up there.

Yes. But I met him after that occasionally, but I mean he was an extremely clever man, but he had, especially early on in those days, a very aggressive, 'I know best' attitude, unlike Gaitskell or Tony Crosland, who talked to you, you know, just ordinarily. But Gaitskell was very difficult.

You mean Healey was.

Healey. He got a bit more mellow, nice, but... It was a pity. It was this reason probably that led to the fact that he wasn't head of the Labour Party. He would have been excellent at that, because he was bright, had a great presence, and everything else. And it was a tragedy that his characteristic in that way, I think was the cause of the fact that he didn't take high office. He was Chancellor once I believe.

Yes he was. And wasn't he Foreign...

Foreign Secretary? But he never became the leader, and he would have done...very good. The last person I met was Heath, in a very curious situation. Due to Rory McEwen, who was my friend, his sister, Kisty, lived in a house called Easton Neston; it's one of the great palaces designed by Hawksmoor. And so I was invited there that weekend, and Heath came for some reason; whether he was out for...

Was he Leader of the...no he wasn't, we're talking about the Sixties at this stage aren't we?

Yes. Or a bit later, I don't know. I don't know why he was there, because he didn't give a talk. Or maybe he did. He had maybe some kind of constituency there as well, maybe, I don't think so. I mean in that area, Northamptonshire.

Broadstairs isn't it, that's where...

Kisty's son, Lord Hesketh, talked. He was very young, he did very well. And then inside of course we had drinks, and I found I was sitting next to Heath on a sofa. And it was a dead loss; he had no small talk in any way, didn't know what to talk to me about, and I didn't know what to talk to him about. So we sat silently until we moved away. It's a pity, because I think he's a very clever man, and a strong man.

And didn't you also meet the first Minister for the Arts, Jenny Lee?

Oh yes, she was great. And this...she invited a whole lot of interesting people. I apologise for including myself in that, but instead of business tycoons they were people like writers and things in the House, in the House of Commons. In a room we had drinks, and it was there that I met Auden for the first time, and noticed his face was furrowed with little creases all over his face. But I don't...unless of course I've been dropped since, but unless...I think that she was doing this, and it was very nice to invite painters and writers and musicians to...

I wonder whether they do that nowadays.

And it could be done more often, because it made the whole thing seem more human.

And she invited you to the House of Commons did she?

Yes. I once went again, complaining about the lack of...the people in prison in Spain during Franco's regime, and I volunteered to send lots of paints and materials to them; they were locked up. And I had a letter from the Spanish authorities, and there was a meeting in the House of Commons with someone, and Wilson looked in for a moment and then moved off, he was busy going somewhere else. And that's my only contact with the House. Now, next. We're coming to the end. Now what I didn't mention...oh, still going on about the 1950s, it's terrible. Quickly, the last piece I made was a thing, a piece called 'Girl without a Face', and this is...I was looking for photographs of it but couldn't find them in time. And that was the maquette. And Herbert Read's son John Read made a film while I made a larger version, and it was shown a lot in those days, of course black and white.

I think it's the film you mentioned last time wasn't it, 'The Artist Speaks'.

That's right. I don't think it's a very good film, and I was not able to speak very well, not gabbering like I do now, non-stop! But it was in...oh yes, I do remember, it was interesting because it's like a period thing. But now, what is interesting for me about this, another element, like the lines in 'Figure Lying on its Side', this thing had, instead of a face, the front...under a hat, it goes right back as an empty space to the bronze at the back. There is no head or face inside it; the head is perched on top. And I remember how this started, because I was looking, as one did every Saturday, at 'Picture Post', a marvellous magazine it seemed in those days, the illustrated magazine, with all kinds of topical, excellent photographs. And it was run by...

Malcolm Muggeridge wasn't it? No.

No. No, I've forgotten his name. Teddy Hulton, who I got to know. I remember going to the Gargoyle Club in Dean Street with him and I think Penrose. He really supported this marvellous mag. Now in that, there were I remember a row of fashion

models or girls with big hats, and because of that their faces were party in shadow, and I did drawings of it and automatically did a strong shadow under where the face was, and hence, and that was how it started. I mean it was an odd idea, to have no face. It did not mean that women were empty-headed.

No no.

In any way; I love women, more than men of course. It was just an idea that developed. And a few casts were made of the big version, which were made by Andr, Susse, the 'fondeur' in Paris. And that is really the end. The shadow idea was included in the next piece. Now just before I left the studio at Notting Hill Gate the poet Stephen Spender rang, saying he had just come back from France, from Mouton, the vineyard, and he had a message from Philippe de Rothschild, could he call. So I said yes, delighted. So he turned up, and he brought a message. The message was a very exciting one. Philippe de Rothschild had seen just previously, in the Museum of Modern Art in New York, two or three pieces, one of which was the big 'Diarchy', which is a sort of slab-like thing, which is again owned by the Tate, which you saw for my 75th birthday a few months ago. And I had found the idea of commissions difficult; I was working always with ideas as they grew inside, and to compromise with a setting was not easy for me. And also the subject, let's say it would be Bird's Eye custard or something, well how can you get inspired with that? And maybe the building wasn't very good, or there was not enough money. Not that one needed a lot, of course, but it was not worthwhile. And here was a commission of spectacular qualities, to do with the production of wine, and the vineyards, and France. And so altogether I said yes, I'll see what I can do. I don't know if I went out first; I must have done. And anyhow I made half a dozen little maquettes.

And you saw the site where it was going to go did you?

I went out, yes. And this became a habit of oh, maybe six or seven visits. And it was like this: I would be sent first class by air to Paris; I would be met by the Paris secretary, put on a Paris pullman first class to Bordeaux; I would be met by the chauffeur, driver, and in 40 minutes arrived at Mouton where my bath was practically

ready and a bottle of champagne in my room. And so spent three days, feeling...having the best food I'd ever had in my life, with the best chefs in France, and superb wine. In fact I used to come back and eat nothing but boiled potatoes for a few days. Now, I went...it might be thought that I had a leaning towards great houses; it was just an accident. It was an accident that I met Bronwen Pugh and went to Cliveden; I didn't seek it out. It was an accident that I was commissioned by Philippe to go to Mouton. And I must say...

Well not really an accident, because he saw your work. He liked it and so therefore commissioned you.

Well, it was an unusual experience for me, coming from a slum in Notting Hill Gate, to go there and have all that business. The other thing was, he took me to one or two of the surrounding vineyards. Oh my God, what's the name of the slightly rounder, warmer wine. The battles with Spain early on...it was an English name. I've just suddenly remembered, Talbot, Talbot as it's called there. And this really I liked this wine more than the Rothschild wine. It's rounder, and a kind of warmer wine, and I would always have that if I could. But of course these wines I can't afford, except Mouton Rothschild, the Mouton Cadet one can buy, which is...one's got a very good marker for quality.

And you were asked weren't you later on to design one of the labels for their...

Yes, I'll come to that in a minute. What Philippe used to sometimes - or Philippe [pronounced in the French way] I should say, what he used to...to test me out sometimes, which I liked best. Always for dinner there would be three wines, one of his own and one from another chateau near. And I rarely got it right, because I didn't know enough about it. But I did like the champagne, he had champagne as well. Now this area, Entre Deux Mers, between the Gironde and the Atlantic, was superb wine-growing...pebbly, they like...the vines seem to like pebbly ground. Now, going on...so I thought well, I would make this nine foot long, about seven foot high, and I thought I would make...oh no, he wanted it gilded, so I thought right, we'll make it in aluminium because it will be a heavy piece, and slightly cantilevered out from the

wall. 'Oh non', Philippe said. Like the Marlborough, he thought that sculpture had to be bronze. Now, I didn't realize that this ideal set-up would be so difficult, as opposed to the committee in a normal commission; I thought it was going to be very nice just to have Philippe and Pauline his wife. Those two were very strong characters, and they're worth millions, and their word was law. In fact I couldn't bully them! Once I said, 'I don't think I can go on. Why don't you get Picasso to do this thing?' He said, 'Well we would if we wanted to' (money was no object, they could easily do that, even at Picasso's price). So anyhow I did go on, and instead of making it in aluminium I wanted, I made it in bronze, and this was fatal. When I say it was going to be covered in gold leaf, I wouldn't do it in a way that you would...not you, but one would think, all shiny all over; I applied tints of a kind of grey paint underneath in the shadows, so it was a varied gilding; only the projecting parts were gilded, and this made it much more sympathetic than it would have been. But, the Morris Singer foundry cast it, and it was twice the weight it should have been.

Oh dear, which was a problem.

And that was a problem, the fact that it was twice the weight and cantilevered out on two vast great rods, which had to penetrate the wall and be clamped to that.

Of their chateau.

Of the facade, and a pediment at the top; imagine a triangle at the top. The other thing was, Pauline, after I began the commission, had started a library inside, and had spent months getting just the right blue on the wall. I mean she had a team of people mixing blue, and this was such a passion for her, the idea that there will be holes drilled, and big plates put through the back was impossible. It wasn't put up. The resident architect, I kept saying to Philippe, you must get the resident architect to probe the wall. And what I guessed was so, that the stonework on the outside was only about nine inches thick, or twelve inches at the most.

Yes, it couldn't possibly take...

Inside it was rubble, and stone again on the inside, and it wouldn't carry a heavy load at all. It was put in the stables, and I went out, and it was with the oxen! And Philippe said, 'Look well on these, they are the last oxen you will see in Europe'. And he had them walking along the vines; when they collected the grapes they had panniers and they put the grapes into these whacking great beasts. I was rather flattered in a way, it was a compenstion for not having...to have these great beasts rubbing shoulders with my piece. However, in the end it wasn't so bad. Philippe built another building behind, and this he called 'Le Club', the Rothschild club where people...where he had his treasures, gold things and tapestries, that kind of thing. And this was put up on a strong wall outside, where it is to this day. So it didn't go where it should have been, but it was on another wall. Unfortunately, the French had an artistic feeling to things. 'We'll put it just a little bit...we won't have it as it should be, we'll twist it a bit'. And this was to fit it in to the shape. And so the very important thing - I'm coming back to this in a very long-winded way - two of the features was, it was supposed to be a sun; the overall shape was an irregular sun, and this came from my tank identification during the war, the years I had spent looking at aircraft and tanks, because to identify a tank, if seen side-on at a distance, you go by the dark shadow at the side where the tracks are. The tracks run on bogies. They ride on the big bogies underneath; they rise up at both ends to a bogie at the front which provides the power, and then the track trails along small bogeys at the top, otherwise it would flap. And so there is always an irregular shape, and this was stuck in my mind, and became the oval of the piece. And then on this, I mounted some horizontal projecting ledges. Now these I had seen at Corsham years before, on trees in the woods behind. There is a fungus called a bracket fungus. Did you ever see them?

I think I've seen them, yes.

They are whitish and they grow out, absolutely horizontal, in a cluster; they grow up to about six or seven inches, and a series of four or five. And they look very striking in their shape. And I always thought, I did sketches of them, I thought I might be able to use this one day. And so I used this on the sun, the idea being that the facade faced south, and just not bang overhead but a bit to one side, so that as the sun rose in the morning and set at night it would cast shadows during the day rather like a sundial

would. And so this was, again, an attempt to be part of the world; that is the ground with the horizontal lines, and the shadows with the sun. And the photographs that - Stephen Spender again took snaps of it and came once more, or sent them to me - that he had taken, were better in that book I showed you, and there were shadows on that, and it showed them very well. So that was the end of the Rothschild, except for one thing. Years later he wrote...now he did...one of his things, he was a great salesman, and also he used to be a great womanizer, and he was a racing driver; he had Bugattis and things like that; with all that money he could have very very splendid cars. What was nice about him, he didn't have magnificent cars at Mouton, he had about half a dozen 'Deux Chevaux', you know, the little ones, and I liked this.

Very modest.

No he did have a slightly bigger one for his chauffeur. But I borrowed one of the little Deux Chevaux to drive to the sand-dunes by the Atlantic, which was nice. And so this...I always wanted him to, which they would have done splendidly, to make a picnic, a 'Fˆte champˆtre'. They could with the gold goblets and the best wine in the world.

Oh yes, a wonderful setting, yes.

And the best wine in the world, and one could have...you know, like those paintings. But they never got round to it. Now the other thing he did, and then I leave off this, was, he invited artists to design the wine labels. And he had Braque, he had...who was the man who did...a French painter who did 'A Wedding Feast', Jewish. [BREAK IN RECORDING] A terrible insult to this very great artist whose work I know so well, and I can't remember his name. Oh, it's come and gone again. And a few others. Well suddenly he asked me if I would design a label. And this would have been good, because I would...no money was involved, I would have had for life a crate of Mouton Rothschild sent every year. But it was right at the end of his life. I did in fact do them, I sent them out, he scribbled something, and then I heard no more. A little note was really badly signed, and then I got his secretary, and he said he's been taken ill, and he died soon after. So this never came about.

And have you ever got them back, the sketches you did?

Oh they sent me them back, they're downstairs somewhere. And that was an unfortunate mistake.

But so the actual...

I used to bring wine back. I remember sometimes I would go by my own Land Rover there and they would put a crate of Mouton Rothschild in the back, or I would...yes, and then at the customs I would proudly reveal this crate, stamped 'Mouton Rothschild' with my initials KA burnt on the top.

Oh, very smart, yes!

And that kind of thing.

So how long did that project on the...

Yes, it went on till '63, finally; it went on for four years.

It started in '59-ish.

Yes, well it didn't actually...yes, I did made the maquettes in the other place, before I came here, well maybe here as well, it overlapped. And I made the pig piece downstairs, and there's a big photograph I'll show you, when I did it. And they came here one night, and then they said, 'Now, what do you do in the evenings?' So I said, 'Oh well I meet my friends'. I couldn't say, come to the Queen's Elm: I could have done, I should have done. I said, 'Well we'll go to Soho. And we went to some sleazy...we went to Muriel's Bar, and one or two places.

The Colony Room.

Yes. And one or two places like that.

What you and the Rothschilds? Goodness, incongruous!

Yes. I think we went to another place that was in the basement with cracked cups. It was an appalling kind of thing, I don't know if they enjoyed it at all. But it was very...it was amazing meeting them. I once went by air somewhere, and Pauline would say, 'Oh Philippe, there's somethng wrong with the engine, will you go and talk to the pilot'. And he would go and then talk about anything, he wasn't talking about the engine, and he would come back. And we once went to the circus in Paris, and suddenly they all left. He had had a 'crise', and I stayed on. And things like that. So, that was that. Now, that is right at the end of the 1950s. And I moved from Gimpel Fils to the Marlborough Fine Art. Now, the reasons for this are, at the same time as I moved to the Marlborough, did I mention about the contract I made?

About being allowed to show in New York?

Yes, well I made...they left me to design a contract, and I spent a week doing this, which of course any contract is fool-proof...you can get round anything. But I've already mentioned that. But at the same time I had moved from the slum to this address. Why is that funny?

The slum. No, it's all right.

Well it was a slum. I mean there were dirty old mattresses left outside. But I loved it there. They didn't talk for a bit, and after a year there was an attractive young woman with a baby in a little house opposite, and suddenly she said, 'Hi Ken!'

So they knew you were an artist?

And then that was it, you know. And Ken, not Kenneth, or Mr Armitage or something; 'Hi Ken', and that was lovely, to have been accepted in that. Better than

round here. Now, I think...the other thing that happened was very important to me. [Are we running short of time?]

Short of tape, but there's another.

Now, Fischer, one of the two partners; Lloyd was the main genius behind the Marlborough and Fischer was a warmer man who helped him. He knew Berlin very well, and he knew the famous bronze foundry in Berlin, and he encouraged me to go. In fact, 'Triarchy', the big nine-foot bronze, was the first thing I cast there, with Noack in Berlin. Now I didn't realize until later, they were very keen, because the Deutschmark was 12 to the pound in thos days, and it's three to the pound and has been for several years now. So that really they were getting the casts very cheap. And my agreement was with them that, and this was the advantage, they would pay for the casting for me, and when it was sold it would be deducted from the profit. And so this was a way of having a lot of casts made.

Yes, marvellous, yes.

Which was very good. For that reason the Marlborough...the Marlborough was bold, but I had to leave them in the end. The idea of having giant exhibitions every three years was not my idea of life; I have an exhibition...one had one when ready, not every three years.

Yes, the pressure, I see. And Henry Moore used the same foundry didn't he.

Then he, the same year, he joined the Marlborough, and the same year he came to Noack, and of course had most of his work cast with Noack, and big things. Noack did very well out of him, and was able for that reason to buy his ocean racing yacht, which he won the Fastnet Cup, the Admirals Cup.

And was this the present Noack's father?

No. I met the father, and he died almost that year.

Oh I see right, so this was young Noack.

So the young Noack, and we used to go about a lot together, and it was very nice. And then, later, I always stayed with him at his house, and it was easy and very convenient, and he is such an excellent person, and he's such an excellent bronze caster. His grandfather made many things in Berlin. In fact, the Quadriga, have you seen photographs of the...

Brandenburg Gate, yes, on top of that...

Brandenburg Gate. Yes, well Noack founded that, but it was damaged in the war, and Noack's father had to.....

End of F2402 Side B

F2403 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 8th of October 1991. Tape Four.

Right, you were talking about Noack.

Yes. There's still a little bit more to say. The Brandenburg Gates has this Quadriga, great horses, on top, which look...give it a tremendously characteristic appearance. I mean you can recognise the Brandenburg Gates anywhere. Now what is interesting, you see it was damaged and his father did it again, and Noack as a young man helped him. It's made in a very curious way. You would think they would be bronze casts on top and they're not, they are hammered copper. And they made large zinc moulds, and into this the copper sheeting was hammered, and so the thing was assembled. This made it lighter, because the things would be very heavy. Have you ever been to Hyde Park, and as you approach opposite the gates you see a big arch with a great big...

Epstein.

No, horses and chariots, and...

Oh yes, yes yes.

Yes. Now, I mean that must weigh an awful lot, but it's a very sturdy arch. But anyhow, they did it that way. And it's interesting, the moulds were made in zinc, because it had to be hammered in. Now, the Germans had somewhere in one of the German colonies, zinc, and in fact in Berlin the palace at Charlottenburg, which you have heard of, there are some big casts of figures there which were cast in zinc, because they had the mines for zinc available. Well that is really Noack, and Noack had his yacht which he was able to buy from doing the huge casts for Henry Moore, and he won the Admirals Cup racing. But now he's given that up. He gave his excellent yacht to the university for the yacht club of the students, and he stopped

doing it altogether. And I think that is a time to leave off that. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
Right. Now there begins a series of work which took me some time. Well it was two years really. And they were very different from anything else, except for one thing, the use of shadow; like 'Girl Without a Face' these also had a confined shadow which I liked to use. But first of all, just before I left Notting Hill, there was a sculptor living not far away who was a very good sculptor called Fullard. Have you ever heard of him?

Yes, I know the name but I don't know his work.

He was good. And we used to meet for a beer quite often, and talk about various things and sculpture. And we were talking about bronze casts, and I think he said it first, he said well he felt that they always to him looked like a skin; that is, in a bronze cast everything is on the surface, inside it's hollow. And of course I had to agree with that, and I hadn't really thought about it very much myself. It doesn't matter whether...

I don't think that's always the case.

Whether it's on the surface or if it's right through, anything like that, that's how it...so long as one's idea comes across. But I thought more and more about this, and I don't think I started...no, I didn't start them until I came here, well a year or two, from '63. And I began to make these things which had a tall body-looking shape, like a tower, and the tops were pierced with funnels going right through. The idea of the funnel was two-fold. One, you could see the thickness of the metal, the edge of the funnel, and also it made shadows, confined shadows. So there was a third element which was less conscious in my mind, but was obviously what I meant. They were to do with communication. I mean it's idiotic to say that, they were like trumpets. In fact these series, although I liked them myself, were never popular, people never really got adjusted to them, except for obvious reasons musicians, who immediately saw bronze trumpets. And that's bronze, and there was another bronze, but most of them were brass. Now, I was going through a phase in which I was not wanting to do something

that is always done with bronze casting, that the sculptor makes a model in plaster and then hands it over to a foundry and they do everything else. It comes back as a replica in bronze. And I wanted in fact to be more involved; I wanted to be involved at every stage, so that it was my work, and what they did really was the technical job of pouring the metal and making the mould. The reason for this is that there's a great deal of the human element in casting. I could tell at one point, I had two foundries in Paris, Suss and Valsuani, three in England, Morris Singer, Galizia, and Fiorini. I also had foundries, although I didn't use them myself but things were made in Italy. And I could tell more or less at a glance which country had made the cast. The differences were very slight, but the differences were because of the hands being laid on; because many people had worked on them. Noacks' were wonderfully finished; the French were more textural, like Tachism and the texture. I wouldn't have a very textured thing cast by Noack, but in France. And the Italian were warmer, if you think of Marini, and so on. So elements did come out. So I thought well I'm going to be myself involved to the maximum, and I thought of doing it in a way, that the tower itself I would first of all make in clay, a model.

Which you hadn't done for a long time had you, used clay.

No, I hadn't done that for a long time. And here you can see my finger marks on that, making what one critic called 'my hairy chest' on President Lumumba! (laughs)

And we're looking now at 'Pandarus Version 12', 1965, bronze, and 'Pandarus Version 8', 1963, brass.

Yes, well there were several large ones. Now, because I wanted to be involved, I would myself make the waxes, and I wanted therefore the waxes to be of a manageable size.

Sorry, are you talking about waxes or clay, because you mentioned clay.

No waxes now, because the clay, imagine I made this great tower - well not great, it was five-and-a-half feet high. Then I had to make moulds, plaster moulds, in two

pieces that they pull on, and then the inside of the two moulds I painted with wax up to the required thickness. The thickness would be, let's say the thinnest of that there, and the thinnest of that. Now this would be done in one piece; for example here are the two moulds round the clay, pulled apart, I would paint the wax there, paint the wax there, put them together, and paint inside. So then the plaster moulds were removed, and you were left with a wax casting of the thickness of the metal. Now this of course you couldn't make very big, it would flop, and I made it with wax which I put tougher wax in so that they would just stand up. And that was about the maximum size I could do, would be about 18 inches, and they were...of course it didn't matter, they would stand edge on and it would be all right. Now by doing this, I did a lot of the work myself, and it made it cheaper. And also, the join, instead of having a join which would be invisible, sort of welded and filed down, I needed a deliberate ridge going round, which I rather liked as a feature of the design. And so they are slightly sort of at angles. And the pieces then were brazed, it was joined together. The funnels were made separately by the same method, and then holes were made or designed in there, and they were placed through, and also brazed together. So the whole thing was assembled from sections, the waxes of which I had made myself, and so I was as involved as you could be in that piece.

Yes. And who were you using to do the...?

That was Fiorini who did most of those. Galizia did that.

OK, so Fiorini did 'Pandarus Version 8', and...?

And he did the one...the big one with funnels I think is the first one here. Oh no it's not. He did two which were normal castings, but most of them were like that. Now the title. This is something that really links a bit with the next...no, a later subject, Chaucer, Geoffrey Chaucer. My favourite Chaucer is, or was, 'Troelius and Cressida', Troilus and Criseyde, which embarrassingly I love to read aloud. It is so...it was not at all the most famous; I mean 'The Canterbury Tales' is famous, which I used 'The Reeve's Tale' of later, but 'Troelius and Cressida' is stupendous. Each paragraph ends in a rolling phrase. [Reads extract from 'Troelius and Cressida'] Now that sort of

winds up that paragraph, and each paragraph has this roll at the end. And it's very moving, and very poetic. And there's a character in the tragedy of 'Troelius and Cressida', Pandarus, is a go-between, a link between them. He's a noisy individual but not bad; he tries to help them but he is a loud voice. Now, the idea was that this was a good title for the series. I would use brass, because I wanted a change from the normal bronze, because detesting Victorian chocolate bronzes, and I wanted to get right away from that. Bronze is a nobel metal, I like it, but I didn't want to go on, and this...I would have yellow brass, and this is why I used it, and this is why 'The Pandarus' was the title for it, rather linking with the character of 'Troelius and Cressida'. And that is about all I have to say. I made small models of that, and so on. Now I am talking about pieces of work that have things that I can say. You say I can't describe how they look; we have no photographs for people just seeing the tape. But I can talk about these ridges, which might just mean something to...as I talk. And I think that can end...[BREAK IN RECORDING]
Because I was so much involved in the casting, and because time in one's life is short, these were what one calls one-off, only one cast was made. One of the attractions for the Marlborough, when they were so keen on doing bronzes is, that they could have one cast in the gallery and then take orders from it, and more replicas if you like, replicas could be made. Now these...Manzu was the only sculptor who made them unique. And what made it possible for me in the early Fifties, instead of say, in the previous decade doing stone carving, I could have two casts made, and had, as I once did, for a same exhibition, simultaneously shown in London and New York, with other casts. Rosenberg and Gimpels did that, or Rosenberg and Marlborough. [BREAK IN RECORDING] The next event in '63, this coincides with the start of the 'Pandarus' series, was a visit to Venezuela. And I think it must have been first of all the year before, I had a message from the British Council, would I be prepared to go for a period to Venezuela, the reason being that there had been a British Council touring exhibition, it had gone to the USA, it had gone to Canada I think, it had gone...it then moved to Latin America and it had come to Venezuela, where my work was an instant success, they bought three at once.

What, the museum in Caracas?

Yes, the Museo de Bellas Artes, the museum of modern art, and they wanted me if possible to go. And they had an idea that perhaps the British Council would help. And I said well I don't know, I'll have to think about it. I didn't even know where Venezuela was, and I looked at a map, and I began to get more interested. And I dithered so much, it was Gerald Forty again, he said well look, if you don't go, if you don't want to go, we'll ask Eduardo Paolozzi. So, this had a very good psychological effect. I said, 'Well my bags are practically packed already, I'm on my way!' And it worked like a treat that did. And so the idea was that Miguel Oroyo, the very nice director of the museum of modern art would come...[are we working?]...would come to London and we would talk about it. And he did. The British Council would pay my fare there and back, an extremely rich man in Venezuela would be my host, he would look after all my expenses while I was there. The thing is, what should I do? They felt that the painters were well able to look after themselves, but they felt the sculptors had no contact with sculptors outside their country; they loved my work and could I spare time to go out. In fact they wanted me to go for a year, but I said this is quite impossible. What I could do is maybe go for four months or six months at the most. And they said OK. I had...I don't think there were any problems. I was not sure...I knew - I'm sorry to be a bit muddled about this. We decided in fact, instead of giving...I didn't want to talk, I didn't want to lecture. I would work there, and what they would do, they would get seven or eight of their best younger sculptors, and we would work under the same roof for the months I was there, which was a good idea.

Yes, very good idea.

And this was in fact all arranged. Hans Neumann, the very rich man who was my sponsor, was a wonderful host, he looked after me very well. He put me in a hotel in one of the best areas in Caracas; I had a penthouse flat on the top of the hotel, with a little balcony in pink tiles and a green awning, and lifts of course to go up and down. And he found a workshop on the edge of Caracas where we could go. There was one great big room, but there were washbasins outside and toilets and so on, so that we were quite self-contained. And so, I arrived. Hans gave a party, the English Ambassador came, a lot of people, and there was a young woman. Now, one of the reasons...oh, first of all, Miguel, who was here, I said I will come on one condition,

one thing, that you help me make an expedition to the source of the Orinoco. This is a kind of armchair decision which one of course could make, but difficult to carry out. I had had an life-long interest in anthropology. It's hard to know why these things happen, and I think it's my strange father, who was the last person you would think would have a book, two volumes of 'The Living Races of Mankind', made in the early years of this century, all photographs. I have them over there, now falling apart a bit. But every race in the whole world was photographed, from Borneo to Japan, the hairy Ainu, those people who have hair all over their faces, and everybody. And maybe it was this that made me look at the photographs and be interested. And the bushmen of the Kalahari Desert and so on. And also I had been reading Levi Strauss, the French anthropologist and archaeologist and philosopher too. He had a book, 'The World on the Wane' of his visit to the Matto Grosso, where he made studies of the Indians. And I thought I would like to meet the Indians. Now, there was Barbara Braendli, this very attractive young woman, who was devoted to the Indians. Very few of them were in Venezuela; they used to...I mean terrible things used to happen before, they used to go hunting, shooting them, for sport. And she was really vetting me to see if I was the right sort of person.

And was she American?

No, she was born in, or...oh yes, I think born in Switzerland, had early on gone to Venezuela. A lot of Venezuelans are imports. Hans Neumann, my sponsor, was from Czechoslovakia. He had gone through...he had seen different life. His family was always enormously rich. Lost the war with the Nazis, came to Latin America, made a fortune, lost it in a riot, in a change of government in one state and moved to Caracas and built up another fortune. He was a wizzard in that way. And Barbara was really seeing, and I am glad to say, she found no fault with me.

You passed the test.

Now, what was interesting about her, her great contact in the forest, in the equatorial rain forest, was Father Daniel. And that was his name, Daniel de Barandarian. And he was a legend. He lived with the Indians in the deep south, oh, 30 miles from the

Brazilian frontier, giving medicines to the Indians, and he lived alone with them. He got a pittance from the army because he had a little radio and he could send them weather reports. It blew up from the south, and he could radio messages every day to how the weather was; they wanted to know what the weather was like, in return they gave him medicine to give to the Indians.

Right.

And there was no real camp, they were just grass huts, and he had one hut with a token...what do you call it, not a shrine, altar...

Crucifix, altar?

Altar. You hardly noticed it. He was a 'little brother of Jesus' or something, which was giving medicine to the Indians.

Like a sort of missionary.

Yes. He wasn't a missionary in any way. He had been in the Sahara. He had a Basque and Jewish parentage, a very strong mixture, and was very interested in archaeology and anthropology, and things that we were oneself interested in. But he did live alone there, and Barbara was a friend of his. She saw him once in the airport, and she said, 'Who is that?' And they said, 'That is Father Daniel'. 'My God!' she said, so she went straight off, and she said, 'I would like to meet you' - she was very young at the time. He said, 'Well, you can if you like, you can come with me on this plane'. So she jumped on straight away and went off. And so, she was a great friend. She was married, to an architect, Tubito, in Caracas. So I started work in this workshop, and I met the young men, and they were very nice, we became great friends. One especially was like a guide. Hans appointed him because he spoke very good English. He was more European than the others, he had been...he was Jewish and he had been in a concentration camp, and right at the end of the war escaped with his family to Caracas. And for the first week or two he looked after me. He took me to the most expensive restaurants and things like that; Hans had given him some

money, he got through it in lightening time! But Hans gave me money, I had my own income from Hans, while I was there, part of my expenses, as well as the flat. There was nothing...I didn't want, it was paradise. Now the working problem, it was very hot, we would start at 8 o'clock in the morning, and we would work until the heat came in the mid-day, 12 or 1 o'clock, and then we would stop. And we would have a siesta in the afternoon, or meet, and I think that was all we did during the day. But those six house, or five hours were enough, and we covered a lot of work. We worked very well. It's interesting, I, apart from being a student, and apart from being at Corsham with all the students there, I am someone who has to work alone as much as possible. I have sometimes assistants to help when I need more help, but mainly I like to be alone, especially when I'm thinking about it. But there we worked very well. And of course I had an idea what I wanted to do; I would make the second or third of the several 'Pandarus' models there, which had a definite shape and formula.

And you had thought it all out beforehand.

And I knew what I was going to do exactly. There is a photograph here of what was done at the time, with them. So that was no problem at all.

And were they all doing their own work?

They were doing their own thing, I wasn't teaching, but we were talking, chatting, about what we were doing, and we all liked each other. And Harry Abend, he's got a very English sort of name.

What was the name again?

Harry Abend. The Abend is the Jewish part, and I don't know why he was called Harry. He is a friend to this day, in fact I had a letter only about a month ago from him, and he was one of these...Abend, somewhere...[SIFTING THROUGH PAPERS].

And so at the end of...at some point you had an exhibition with them all.

Yes. This is the catalogue, it was in the museum of modern art and we all showed together.

In June and July '64.

The museum of modern art bought one cast of a thing I made, and then, did I tell you this on the tape before?

No.

And then Hans said he would like to have a cast for his house. But he said, 'This time, instead of my paying you, would you agree that I give the money for the young sculptors as a kind of foundation?'

But, can I just interrupt and ask you, you were saying before that the 'Pandarus' series, they were one-offs, each one was a one-off, but in this case...

Yes, normally. In this case I made two. And...for the very weird bronze caster there was, who would never appear on time.

Sorry, that was bronze again rather than brass?

You're quite right, the other ones in England have only been done once, but in that one there were two casts I made.

Both bronze, not brass.

Brass, both brass.

Brass, right.

Yes. And so, the first cast is in the museum of modern art, and the second one is in Hans Neumann's amazing palace in Caracas, with very disturbing big gates. You

press a bell, and then a little eyehole appears, and you say who you are, and then a man lets you in who has a carbine, a gun. They're so frightened of being kidnapped.

Yes, absolutely. Well it is rather...yes. I'm just looking at that, does that mean bronze?

Bronze, yes, 'bronce'.

Sorry. We've got to say this again, because we've...

That is not right. You're quite right, they called it bronze but it was in fact brass. But to them it's the same, they didn't know the difference really.

Right, OK.

They did bronze but I did brass, so it's a mistake in the...quite right. And so this is a kind of brassy colour, and I had...I was delighted to do this. For the first and only time in my life there was an Armitage Foundation, 'Funcaci¢n Armitage', very small, it would only last for one year, a few months, for somebody.

Like a sort of bursary sort of thing.

No, I don't know what they spent it on, but the money went to them. And it was wonderful being with Hans in those days. I used to have, every Sunday I used to go there and have lunch with him and his first wife, and the swimming pool, and talk about the last books he had got, or a big telescope he had bought, his wife's present, looking at a magnification, you know, a thousand times, or something like that. Endless things. A very excellent man. And I said, I couldn't understand, he was so nice to one, 'How is it that you are such a successful business man, it doesn't go together'. And he said, 'Yes, you're quite right'. He said, 'When I am working I have an ice cold mind. My brain goes to that, and nothing else. But when I meet you, my human sides comes out'. So he enjoyed meeting me as much as he could... But he

was an...what do you call it...a man who gives money to...not an anthropologist, what's the word for it. You will forget this too.

I know, a benefactor?

Yes, but that's not even quite the right word. He supported a lot of the hospitals and things like that. A sort of benefactor kind of person, giving money to good causes. And I was one of those fortunately. And so, we had this tremendous time. Now the interesting thing is that they were having the elections while I was there, and believe it or not, this 1963, it was the first time in Venezuelan history they had ever had proper democratic elections, an election, by vote and everything else; it was all properly done. And they were so pleased, they said, 'Only 20 people have been killed'. While we were working in this workshop, in the distance you could hear, during the day, machine-gun fire going off. And at night, having drinks with say people, and old ladies, you would hear a bomb go off. No one took any notice, it was life for them, they didn't mind.

End of F2403 Side A

F2403 Side B

So this period of working in the day, and then in the evening meeting lots of people with music, which I will play a little bit later while we're on records about Venezuela, and bombs going off occasionally; or I would take a taxi from my hotel to where we worked in the morning, and big nails would be thrown all over the road to puncture cars, all do to with the electioneering. And the honking of horns. But this was amazing, because even at that time, I think he was called Jimenez, one of the past dictators was still in prison in America. Because what they did, there were many people wanting to hold office, and they would run off with all the funds, being Latin America, and this was the first time a really responsible party got in, and people felt very happy. Now, the idea was, the Indians. And we were going to go by plane; to go overland would take weeks and weeks. And there was in the camp where Father...have I talked yet about Father Daniel?

Yes you have, yes.

Where he had his grass hut there was a little bend in the river, and there was just enough room for a small plane to land. We would go there, and we had to be in contact with Father Daniel all the time. Now, in Barbara's flat with her husband they had a radio transmittor on the top; her husband was an enthusiast. And so we were in radio contact with Father Daniel before we ever went, and I was able to speak to him. I couldn't speak Spanish, but a little bit of French, and it was rather fun to have direct contact with him. We had to plan it. The trip was unofficial; they wouldn't allow any air flights to unofficial landing strips, so we had to pretend we were going somewhere else. Our pilot was the best pilot of the internal airlines, who had in fact explored a lot of it, and this amazing waterfall was named after him, the Harry Gibson Falls. And he also discovered, flying over the mountain behind near where we were, these enormous holes of something like 150 yards, or 200 yards across, circular, which go down into the mountain, and I had longed to see those, but when we got there the weather was too bad and we couldn't do it. Years later the Japanese made an expedition there and were dropped by, is it called abseiling?

Yes, the one where you go down with a rope, yes.

Yes, and they went to the bottom, and they didn't find anything very interesting, but at least they went to the bottom and they found out. And so we had...Harry Gibson had a rifle, we had bottles of whisky and all the things we might need, and beads for the Indians, so primitive the idea. The beads were not as pretty as the ones left by the Italian...that little bunch there with the shells, which the Italians had left 40 or 50 years before which all the Indians had. And suddenly we found we couldn't go. The Indians had gone on a walkabout; they had exhausted the hunting in the area, and they were moving somewhere else. I wish you could see the black book that...never mind, I'll show you after because we'll have to have a break in the middle. So we had to postpone our trip, the whole great thing had to be done again; we had to plan another month ahead. This brought it nearer towards the end of my visit, which would be a four-month visit, and we were half-way through. And we made another shot at it, this time there was another disaster. A lot of them had gone down...oh no, the first time it was malaria, yes, there had been an outcrop of malaria and...I'm sorry to be confusing, it is a long time ago. And Father Daniel was very busy giving them all injections for the malaria. So we made a second trip, and this was nearly a disaster, they'd all gone on a walkabout, and only a proportion were left in the camp, old men, young children and women. However, we would miss the warriors, painted black, which I show you in the photographs in a minute, which was a terrible sad thing. But Barbara didn't mind, because she said to me, it was my first visit; after this visit well then I perhaps could go alone at another time. Well, life is so short, you don't go back much to places that you have done; there are always... For example, in this Venezuelan trip I also made a trip to the Andes with Harry Abend and his wife, and a young woman I found, to go there on the equator and see a mountain with snow on the top, and all that kind of thing. And another trip I made to New York at Christmas time; from the beach, swimming every week and the sand in the hot sun, going to New York and there there was ice and there was skating, and I went to see a girl I had met in Greece once, I stayed with her. I didn't stay with her family, did I? Yes I did, I stayed one night there or something...yes, one or two nights, and back again. I was glad to get back and have my arm out of the hot window, bowling along from the airport was nice. [Now could we stop for a moment?] [BREAK IN RECORDING] And I don't

know if that was included on the tape; perhaps I should say that in this...I'm talking about this visit at great length because it was one of the most magical periods in my whole life, and I still have a friend going from that time, and I've made two or three visits since to Caracas. Now my mind is wandering, what am I on about?

You were just explaining that those trips you made to New York and to the equator you made on...when you were based in Caracas.

Yes, and then as well there was the trip to Kanarakuni was the name of the place.
[BREAK IN RECORDING]
At 9 o'clock one morning we set off, heavily laden with 'hamacas', mosquito nets, basic food for a start, alcohol, rifle, beads for the Indians, the lot. And flew over the Humboldt Mountains immediately behind Caracas, and then we headed three degrees west of south for the capital of Venezuela, which is Ciudad - the ancient capital, Caracas is the capital now - the ancient capital of Ciudad Bol¡var on the Orinoco. That was about a three-and-a-half hour journey. And we had a little Chesna plane, and we crossed there...towards the end we crossed the Llanos. Venezuela is divided into three horizonal belts. The first belt is the wealthy belt, the civilized part, Maracaibo bay, the oil, the city, Caracas, people living by the sea, big houses, much wealth. Then we come to the Orinoco basin, and that's the Llanos, great heat, cattle, and to my mind the heart, the soul of Venezuela is there. You get music of old Venezuela on the 'cuatro' played, and huge flocks of cattle, piranha in the river, and heat. And then, after that, the southern band of the equatorial rain forests, nothing but dense jungle.

Which is where your destination was.

Our destination was there, 30 or 20 miles from the Brazilian frontier, which was that. And so, after three or three-and-a-half hours we landed in Ciudad Bol¡var. Now Hans being a millionaire, he had a little film camera and he took a film; in fact this was filmed by Hans, and he gave me a copy, and it's over there. And so I've shown this a few times. It's snippets really, it's not a very good record, but it does give one an idea of what it was like. So then we refuelled, and we had our last civilized meal, and we

set off then after that, one hour later, we set off almost due south, and we crossed the Llanos. There's an iron mountain, huge iron, nothing but iron, which is Venezuela's second main export. Oil of course is the first one. I had met Niarchos, extraordinarily, in London, because of Jossy's friends. In fact the woman writing that book, Longford, what's her name?

Elizabeth Longford? I don't know.

The novelist. Oh, it doesn't matter.

There's Elizabeth Longford the biographer.

Yes, but she's not called Elizabeth is she?

Lady Longford, Lord Longford's wife who writes?

The daughter.

Fraser, Antonia Fraser?

No. It was Antonia Fraser's house in fact we went. Anyhow, Niarchos was there, somewhere, Notting Hill.

Yes, Campden Hill.

And I tell you, he said, 'Look, why don't you go on one of my boats. I have boats going up the Orinoco, and we load it with iron ore and we take it to...' wherever it was, Germany or somewhere, for smelting. And I said no, well my programme was all arranged. I would love to have done that, but I couldn't. So we passed that, and a last sign of civilization was a vast Rockefeller estate of half a million hectares, with 80,000 head of cattle, and it took a week for a Land Rover to get round it. After that, fewer and fewer trees, desert, and the trees began to start, and at last there was the equatorial rain forest, which you saw as far as you could see in the distance, and the

rivers spreading through, and that was this extraordinary land that we were going to stay in. We were going to stay for about two weeks; as a matter of fact it was cut short, and I explain why. There were disasters all the way. And so, round about late afternoon we passed this waterfall, the second tallest waterfall in the world, named after our pilot, Harry Gibson, who was the first person to find it, only about three years before we went there, and there were these extraordinary holes on top which he photographed, gigantic in size. I wanted to go over to see them but he said the weather was too bad, he couldn't, because he was a good pilot. And we suddenly went round a bend and there was this tiny clearing, and we landed. And we were met by Father Daniel, and a whole lot of little Indians who immediately went up to Barbara and squeezed her breasts, out of friendship. And we were given our hut. I noticed that Barbara slept in the same hut as Father Daniel. Hans and I were talking, when we could privately, wondering who was going to have Barbara in the hut with them, and we weren't allowed to do that, we had to share a hut together. So we had our own little 'hamacas', and life began. And quite extraordinary it was. There were always a queue of women in the morning, with children, for medicines, Father Daniel, and the afternoon we would explore, he would take us round.

By foot or on...?

By foot, oh yes. And we even got lost, even Daniel got lost. The forest is not dense underneath. There are these giant trees, and the dense quality is in the canopy above.

Right, they're skinny trunks are they, comparatively?

Well they're not skinny, they are vast; they are about, you know, from here to the wall. There is undergrowth, but you can in fact walk through it; you could lose the track and wander through the forest. But the trees have this extraordinary feature of enormous buttresses. Because the soil is shallow the trees can't grow deep roots, and nature compensates for everything, and so it has these thin fantastic shapes, thin buttresses going out very deep, I mean three or four feet wide, spreading out from the trunk, for stability. And we went to see, one day we went to see a house of the Makiri-Tari. This was the most superior of the two...well I say superior, but the most

sophisticated of the two tribes. These were the Caribs that Columbus found when he landed. And they extend right over the whole of the North America. And they build a round hut, you've probably seen photographs of it, with a cone going up, and doors. There are photographs, I'll show you after. And the chief had died not long before, and when the chief dies they move everything, lock stock and barrel, and they find another place. And the interesting thing, talking to Daniel, who I did all the time, the chief, one of his qualities is that he must have second sight; this is something that they accept as a natural thing, and maybe some people do have it, I don't know. And the house was like a cosmos on a tiny scale. There was a centre, there were little rooms radiating where you met, and then small chambers out to the outer walls where each family could have its own area. Interesting, outside there were big drawings, I can show you later, and they even had what they thought were horses, and even a wagon. They could never have seen a wagon; one wondered whether...

What these drawings were depicting?

Yes, and conquistadores. The conquistadores could not have gone down into those jungles in their armour, they would keep to the tracks and the main highway. But legends that they had heard they painted outside, and various things we saw there. And we arrived by canoe, in a dug-out, and it was lovely to drift and be paddled down through the river, along the river with canopies of trees over our heads, and thousands of butterflies and so on. We saw no animals at all; one large frog 12 inches long was the only thing, and a snake, the only living thing. They had all been hunted, that's why the warriors were away. Another time we went though to see the Shiri-Shana. This was a sub-tribe. I say sub because they had not changed for 20,000 years. They had no pottery, they had no musical instruments, they lived fishing by their hands and they hunted, and that's all. And they were also short of men too. These two tribes were interlocked; they depended on each other. The Shiri-Shana were better at hunting, and they obtained things from the other tribe; let's say they might have a machete, an axe, and they would swap things like that. And this was extraordinary. His technique, as we walked through the forest, about half a mile away he would start shouting like, as if you were shouting at cattle. 'Ho ho ho!'

Who would start shouting?

Daniel, who was leading us, to give them warning that we were approaching. And so we had lunch with them.

And what sort of reception did you get? Because he was there, and they knew him, it was all right.

It was all right. There was the head man looked at us very carefully. He was left, he as an older man and he had a big machete, and he watched us carefully the whole time. They were all very friendly, and the women attractive. All the Indian women were attractive. I love...that little piece [pointing at object] in his room. They had nothing on at all except a band round their waist, and a little bunch of beads on each side, which tinkled as they walked, which was charming. And they had behind each ear a white blossom. So it was delightful. And we had I think freshwater crabs to eat, with the Shiri-Shana. That was an extraordinary feeling, to be there in practically just bits of bush leaning over together, of a way of life, apart from the machetes and the odd things they swapped with the superior tribe, was very ancient in technique. Much more than the sophisticated Makiri-Tari, who were strong and big and warrior-like. Now, I think I would like, before we leave the Indians, I would like to play a record. [KA plays record] That was a recording made by Alan Lomax, the American music collector who went all over the world making wonderful tapes and things. It was made I suppose 40 years ago or more. And in this case - he went all over Venezuela - he went to a tribe which was unusual in that it had enormous bark horns, several feet long, the 'piaroa'. And this would be something like 40 miles to the west of where we were at Kanarakuni. And it gives a very haunting sound this horn, and the story was that they...the women would be encouraged to go inside the huts, or grass huts, and the men - it was all kept secret, and the men would pull out their horns and walk round the huts, playing them. And of course the sound was quite extraordinary, and no doubt the women said, 'Oh, they're only playing their horns', and the men thought the women thought they were gods. And that was somehow symbolic of what the forest was like. I do have a recording of bird song there, but it's spoilt by an awful American voice going on all the time, which...

You might just say what this record was actually called.

Yes. It's...will you?

It's called 'The Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music', collected and edited by Alan Lomax, Vol. X, and it's Venezuela. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Now, we were going to spend up to two weeks, and a disaster happened. Suddenly a message came through Daniel's radio that there had been an explosion in one of Hans Neumann's factories, and five men had been killed. So he was in a terrible state, and he had to go back. Now, the financing of this thing was that Hans paid half and I paid half. For a moment I...

For this little mission down here, yes.

Down to the Orinoco. The hiring of the plane was a great expense. Of course when I first thought about it, I thought well, a millionaire, he'll pay for whole thing, but he was very right, it was my idea and I paid half and he paid half. But for me to hire another plane by myself, and as I thought that I might be going back before too long, on another visit, I thought OK, well we'll have to do that. We had to radio for another plane; we didn't have the best pilot, we had a kind of old bush pilot from Ciudad Bol¡var, and he just managed to land in a rickety old plane, a tiny plane, and we loaded up and off we went, up back over the jungle again. And travelling with Hans, as we left and approached the north, and we knew we were going to meet civilization, a strange sadness came over both of us. We had left something that had been more or less unchanged for 10, 20,000 years, and to go back to all the flats and posh houses in Caracas was such another world one could hardly think about it. But this was a very casual flight. He just cleared the trees this pilot, you know, it seemed to me by about five feet, and then after about ten minutes he said would I look down over the window and see if the undercarriage had contracted! And so yes, I said, thank God it has. He said, 'OK, that's all right'. So we landed in Ciudad Bol¡var again, had our lunch. This time Hans had his car, his driver to meet us there, and so we had a huge journey of

about eight or ten hours, driving by car back to Caracas, and that was that. So we finished our Indian journey, and it was a memorable trip. I did meet Daniel again before I left. Interesting, in the jungle he assumed enormous importance. Only he knew the Indians, only he knew where to go. He had total control over us, let's say like dying, from death, control over us. In Caracas he seemed a little man, very brown, a bit spiv-like, if you know what I mean by that, and he lost the grandeur that he had in...I hope he will forgive me if he hears this. But he was an exciting man to meet. I did get bitten there; something bit my foot, and after I showed it to Barbara, and she cut open the wound, and an insect had laid its eggs, already little round eggs in the wound, and she cleaned it - she was used to this sort of thing - and bandaged it up, and I was all right. Now, after that there were final things to do, and eventually I left. Oh the Indians in the forest gave me those arrows, extremely long, with beautiful warheads, the pointed arrows shaped with barbs and so on. One had 'curare' on it, this is the deadly poison which is wrapped up, and I brought them back on British Airways; they thought they were fishing rods! And a few other little trinkets they gave me. I went back to Caracas later to see Harry Abend, to keep in touch, and I stayed with him, and he showed me a newspaper, and inside, they were not headlines outside, but headlines inside. 'Armitage is here, we do not forget', and a little article.

Oh how nice.

And it was sweet, and he read it out to me. And then later I had a big exhibition at a gallery, the best gallery in Caracas as it was then; now it's taken over by another one, another gallery. But this was 'Fundaci¢n Mendoza', and it was a foundation, but they had their own gallery, and a woman who ran it, and I had an exhibition largely of trees that I had...by then had been doing bronzes, etchings, drawings of trees, and a few other works. And it was a huge success.

And when was that, much later?

It was the time of the battle of the Falklands, whatever date was that, I can't remember. It was a terrible thing, because it was the best sell-out I'd ever had, but when I got there, immediately there was war with the Falklands, and there was no

chance of getting my money. Because, although it was a different country in South America, the Venezuelans were sympathetic to Argentina, and I had some doubt that I would ever get the sale money that I had done so well with.

So that was 1982 I think.

Yes, about then. Fortunately the war only lasted six weeks, and so they rang again, they said, 'Everything's all right now Kenneth, you'll get your cheque', and so I did get my cheque. And I had a lavish time then with the...I stayed at the Hilton in Caracas, because it was easier to get taxis from there. I took taxis all over the place. I went to the British Council, and Harry was a tremendous help. We had music. And I think really that is the end of my four or six months in Caracas, plus this trip later for the exhibition. [KA plays record] That was really to remind one of the Llanos, the nostalgic centre band of Venezuela, of the cattle ranches, where everyone has a musical instrument. This is called 'Contrapunteo'. And first a man sings a song; it's not about love, it's about anything else, and about four or five of them will sing one after the other, and they've got to fit it in. There was just a slight change, you might not have noticed there, between the star singer and then Senor Anonimo comes on, fitting in. And I used to love this, hearing this in Caracas, but we have only time for that tiny fragment, and that's all.

So that record was called 'Multivoz Llaneros'.

Llaneros, yes. It concludes the Venezuelan visit.

End of F2403 Side B

F2404 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London on the 8th of October 1991. Tape Five.

Well there is still more to say about my 1982 Caracas visit, which I completely forgot about, and which in fact is well worth mentioning in this tape. Having flown to Caracas from Europe in the past I had noticed before reaching the coast, about 60 miles, a group of atolls, with glorious white sands and deep blue sea all round, and always thought how nice it would be to go there. And Margot, who ran the gallery, Fundaci¢n Mendoza, said she had a plane. And a very strange plane it was too; it had a pusher and a puller propeller, that is, it's a little plane, propellor front, and then the fuselage, and then at the back there were two propellers. Very safe I imagine. Her husband had been killed fooling around in the sky, so she had to have the safest plane she could get. Now she said, 'I'll take you. I go sometimes to this tiny island'. Well I imagined I would be on some kind of desert island, and I got very excited about that. In fact it was a bit more civilized than I thought, but not much, because there were no tourists there at all. It was owned by subscription by people who were studying marine life, terrapins and crabs and things, and they had a man called Rafael who was a sort of half Indian chap, looking after the tanks where they kept these, and two or three huts each with two or three rooms and a little veranda outside, all facing the sea, about oh, 12 yards from the beach. And so, we set off one morning, and we landed, a very short trip, on a sort of cinder path going the whole length of the island. And Margot was a very good pilot. So we unloaded my stuff, the usual bottle of whisky and some food to last me, four days I was going to stay, salad and things, books to read, and sketch-books and so on. And I think they stayed one night and then they left, and then I had four days all by myself. Well I thought...there was Rafael, and I didn't even know there was Rafael.

Rafael?

Rafael. Then...

Sorry, who was Rafael?

He did the cooking. He looked after the tanks. In fact they had a generator just where the tanks were for electric light; he could have...very civilized. But the rest of it was completely desert island. Then I found another man walking around, and this was Ernesto, and his story is very interesting.

Can you just say again his name, sorry.

Ernesto, ERNESTO, Ernesto, and I forget now his family name. He was a biologist and travelled a lot. He told me that he had climbed to the top of Roraima, which you may not know, was the flat-top mountain near where I went, where Conan Doyle got the idea of the lost world, of prehistoric monsters on the top. And with some friends, they had a difficult climb, but they got to the top, but they didn't find anything interesting, just a funny kind of mouse or something like that. Now, he was visiting a little pill-box out in the sea a little bit further north. Where I was, I was outside, just outside the hurricane belt, but nearer the islands of the...the big islands going round, then you were in it. And there was a Venezuelan property...oh you can see it here [looking at map], that arrow marks the dots. Now the Caribbean has hurricanes from time to time, but not round there. And he was on this pill-box on columns, and it was Venezuelan property; it didn't even have a name, it had a number. And there were 12 naval men with him, and suddenly on the radio they heard that Hurricane David was approaching very fast. So he rang the headquarters of the navy people in Caracas saying they must send a boat out to collect them, and they refused, they said no, we're not going to risk it. And then the hurricane got nearer, and he rang again, he said look, you can send a helicopter or anything, get us off, we're going to be swamped. They were only ten feet above sea level or something like that, a concrete pill-box on legs.

Yes, extremely precarious.

And they said no, we're not going to do that, you'll have to stick it out. So, he took charge, and he filled in the gaps of the little slit windows they had for observation

with bits of broken furniture and everything else they could find, and a little eyehole here and there to look out. And eventually they were engulfed with the force of this wind. He said, with wind recording things they had on the top of it, 180 miles an hour winds. And looking through great lumps of coral bounding along, blown in the wind; waves crashing right over the top of them and everything else. Terrifying. Well, they survived, it wasn't destroyed. And he was picked up, and the 12 men were, and they were taken to Caracas, and they were told not to say anything. He said, 'Well I'm sorry, I have to talk about this', and they said, 'No you're not, you mustn't say a word'. Of course they were guilty of not picking them up. Well, they insisted he had a job of going to this little 'Dos Mosquitos' island where I was, to keep him out of the way, for two years.

Two years, banished!

It says so in my notes I think. Yes, two years. 'He is to remain there for two years, or so'. Solitary confinement he was supposed to be, and he would then forget all about it. But he didn't, he told me all about it. And that's a little tiny horrible sketch.

You are looking now at a sort of diary you made at the time.

Yes. I wrote it in my little book, with pelicans diving into the sea and at my nose, and lizards crawling all over, and at night a fresh breeze, and a bright white moon. And the sand was white, and you could read by this light, it was dazzling. And terrible scrub; there were a few palm trees, nothing...but what looked like grass; when you walked through it you found it wasn't, it had burrs that clung to everything, and you could spend hours picking them out, they were very painful. So, we had fish a lot, Rafael caught fish, and I had hardly any of the food I took, but I did have some salad, and one day we had two lobster, big ones, cooked, for the three of us, it was fantastic. Quite the most beautiful flesh I have ever had. And we had the lettuce I took. And really, that was all. I was just reading and looking and bathing, and looking at the pelicans diving into the sea and one thing and another. And eventually then, I was picked up by Margot and her plane, and off we went. And it was a funny little thing to do, but I thought I would be quite alone, and I wasn't, which in a way spoilt it, but

in a way made it, and Ernesto was a good man, and I hope he's all right now. Well really that's all. There were the conch shells by the million, you know, and ghost crabs digging holes in the sand all the time, and very very simple primitive life. So that was it, that was the end of my Caracas visit, and this time finally.

And this diary, does it cover both that particular visit, or what, is it...does it go back a long time or...?

No, it goes back to all kinds of things. It goes back to Egypt, look, my trip to Egypt, it goes back to Jordan.

Right. So you always keep a sort of journal when you go abroad?

Yes, I haven't done lately. I mean there were great things I saw, and Assam I once...I told you I had to see the Queen round the exhibition in Jordan, and other things like that. But then it came to an end and I haven't bothered since. So really that concludes it.

End of F2404 Side A

Side B is blank

F2405 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London on the 15th of October 1991. Tape Six.

The events that occur in the early Sixties are many, and it's rather congested. Various things happen on a certain date, and they extend for a long time. For example, the next project that I am going to talk about is called 'The Reeve's Tale'; it's one of Geoffrey Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales'. That started in 1963. It's still going on, it still hasn't been finished. So there's a time event. But I talk about the thing when it was started.

Yes, at its inception.

At its inception, and get it done with, although it might overlap with other things. Now, in 1963 I was approached by an Italian publisher, the 'Edizione del Cinquale' of Petrasanta, Italy, suggesting they publish my drawings in relation to poetry. And he came here bringing a big leather-bound book, a real coffee-table book, inside which of course there were pages of lovely white paper and big letters, poetry in it, and then drawings, I think in that case Fontana, one or two lines on each page. And he went away, I said I was very interested. Then I wrote to him and I said I'm sorry that I don't really follow with great care which is happening in poetry at the time. I don't read a lot of contemporary poetry; I read some when I come across it, but what I have always read and with the greatest enjoyment is Geoffrey Chaucer. He said, 'Ideal'. I am absolutely right. And he contacted colleagues in Paris, and they said that they thought that the idea of my charcoal drawings in relation to Chaucer would be a good combination, and so he said perhaps I would start.

And had they seen your work before? I mean had they seen your drawings circulated in some sort of exhibition?

I think they must have done, yes.

Yes, so they knew it.

Yes, I think they had seen probably the Venice Biennale in '58.

Oh indeed, of course, yes.

And other things. I showed drawings always in those days. I mean like those on the wall over there, that's '59, those are.

Right. Did you show some drawings in Venice?

I can't remember, I think probably, I don't know, maybe not. But they were shown in touring exhibitions, because they were good for touring. And he would probably...no, he wouldn't have approached me without knowing something about it. So, I started doing the drawings, and I will in fact interrupt what I am going to say about them because suddenly this director, a fairly young man, of this firm, was killed in a car smash, and the firm folded up.

So that was before...you had just started the drawings?

I had only just started it. And this didn't stop me; it was very sad, but I went on, from time to time. This went on for years. Now, the thing was, what Chaucer would I do? And my favourite Chaucer of all is 'Troilius and Cressida', written I think about the middle of Chaucer's life, and it's very long, far too long for me to attempt to do drawings in relation to. Very sad, but beautiful to read. And I have been playing the recordings I have of experts reading middle English Chaucer, and 'Troilus and Criseyde', but it's a bit muffled, and with apologies I'm going to read one paragraph, to show what it is I like about the 'Troilius and Cressida'. "Than seyde he thus, 'O paleys desolat,
O hous, of houses whylom best y-hight,
O paleys empty and disconsolat,
O thou lanterne, of which queynt is the light,
O paleys, whylom day, that now art night,

Wel oughtestow to falle, and I to dye,
Sin she is went that wont was us to gye!"
Now that is typical. Every paragraph has this final line, which sort of winds it up with some magnificence, every time. For example, a fraction further on, he's looking at where... You see this tragedy, Cressida, Criseyde, let him down, and he's looking round the city:
"And at that corner, in the yonder hous,
Herde I myn alderlevest lady dere
So wommanly, with voys melodious,
Singen so wel, so goodly, and so clere,
That in my soule yet me thinketh I here
The blisful soun; and, in that yonder place,
My lady first me took un-to hir grace."
And there again it winds up, and I love that, and I often read it, and read it aloud to myself. Now, the story I chose was 'The Reeve's Tale', and here I have lost the page. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Instead of the 'Troilius and Cressida', which I really love...

And which you took Pandarus from.

From which the character Pandarus came, the intermediary between those two characters, I chose instead 'The Reeve's Tale', mainly because it's incredibly short; in this book you see it's only two or three pages. And it's very funny in a mediaeval slapstick music-hall sort of way. It rollicks on, it goes on like anything. For example, at the beginning:
"At Trumpington, nat fer fro Cantebrigge,
Ther goth a brook and over that a brigge,
Up-on the whiche brook ther stant a melle;
And this is verray soth that I yow telle.
A Miller was ther dwelling many a day;
As eny pecok he was proud and gay."
Well, that is a different style from the Troilius, and it's a very saucy piece. But another point that was very important for me, the action takes place in the bedroom of

a mill. The characters are all there, they have nothing on, so that I don't have to attempt, and nor would ever attempt period costume, which I loathe doing. Instead they could be my home ground, that is nude figures, like those on the wall over there. So here was a story that I could encompass quite easily. There is something else too. It's a quite dotty, silly story really, but so often with let's say opera, the libretto is trivial as well. For example, Mozart, 'Cosi fan Tutte', is I think rather a stupid story; now they are trying to make out that it has undercurrents of seriousness. But the music transcends the libretto, and sometimes it is...if everything is too good it's very hard for the mind to select. Let's say, I mentioned before Bach's 'Die Kunst der Fuge', 'the Art of Fugue', which was written for four parts. I have read, by a musicologist, that the human mind cannot follow four equal parts with equal interest in his mind; the mind tends to select one line, or two at the most, and the rest form a background. And so if one has something like opera, the music is all-important and the libretto is less important. With Mussorgsky and 'Boris Godunov' of course there is a very savage story, Boris and the assassinations, but even there the music is all-important, and the libretto very. So, with 'The Reeve's Tale' being rather silly, it doesn't matter, my drawings are rather silly anyhow, so they go I think well together. Now that is the subject. Now I then went on drawing them, and first of all I was visiting churches or cathedrals of the same date as Chaucer, to look at stained glass windows, and I made some drawings based on the heavy black lines of the leads which hold the glass. And I did about five or six of those. They happened to be with horses, which would be very good for 'The Reeve's Tale' in general, of them all going off from London and going down to Canterbury. But I decided that this was again following too much illustration. I didn't want to do illustration; I wanted to make drawings in relation to Chaucer, not depicting so much the incidents in it. Although I do in this, in the drawings I have made, they do follow various things in it. But they're not sort of accurate. For example I don't mention the cradle, I don't draw the cradle, which is crucial to the story. I had better explain the story very very briefly, that it is about two clerks who leave Cambridge to have their corn ground, and they take a bushel of corn with them on one horse. And they knew Simpkin the miller at Trumpington. They call on him, and he in fact is not a very good man, and he encourages their horse to run away, and the horse is a stallion, and he smells the wild mares on the Fens, and runs after, as fast as he may go to join them. They have have to stay the night. And

so this idiotic. Every time there is something that makes the action happen, they've got to stay the night, they've got to sleep in the same room. This story is based on Boccaccio. Now, the characters are the miller and his wife, the two clerks, and then John and Aleyn, a baby in the cradle, six months old, and the daughter of the house who is the star of the story really, "swete Malin", of "buttokes brode and brestes rounde and hye", and she has fair hair and all the things that the mediaeval person might relish, as would anyone. And she is stockily built, and very sturdy. And she has a bed to herself, and the miller's wife goes out to have what Chaucer calls 'have a pisse'. And in the meantime, John plays a trick on everyone. He moves the cradle, which is vitally important for in the dark finding where they are in the room. So he moves it to the foot of his bed, instead of the foot of the miller and his wife. So when the miller's wife comes back she says, 'Oh, mon Dieu', my God or something like that, 'I nearly went to the wrong bed'. She found the cradle and she jumped in, of course, with John. And she had a very merry night of it. Aleyn meanwhile had jumped into bed with - I mean this just crazy thing - had jumped into bed with sweet Malin. And the night goes on. Then Aleyn gets up in the morning, and this is the crux of the whole story, he gets into bed, thinking it was his own bed, with John, gets into bed next to the Miller, and he shakes the Miller who is snoring away, he says, 'Wake up, wake up you fool, and hear this wonderful tale'. For "I have thryes, in this shorte night, Swyved the milleres doghter bolt-upright". And so the Miller wakes up in a rage, and there is pandemonium, and they have to escape. Not before sweet Malin however comes out with a cake she cooked the night before, which she said, 'I want to give you this'. She is fond of him after that night, and said 'It's made of the corn that my father stole from you yesterday', and off they go. Well that's 'The Miller's Tale'. And it isn't a story I read myself for pleasure, although I did when I first read it because the story is amusing. But it's not one that one goes on reading, whereas 'Troilius and Cressida' one can read over and over again. Now, the next thing that happened was, I...I am trying to think where I had got to.

You had finished doing the earlier kind of drawings.

Yes, and then I went to work in Berlin. I did odd bits then from time to time. I was working on this intermittently, and I was invited to Berlin in '68 and stayed there for a

year and a half working. I was only referring to this, because we're coming to it properly in a minute, only to say that while there I was approached by a marvellous art publisher, Propilean Verlag, who made the historic 'Der Zwanzigste...' 'The Art of 20th Century, 1926', a big fat book, and they produced art books ever since. And they said they had just done a book on Manzu, the Italian sculptor.

Who you knew.

Who I knew, and they would like to do one of my drawings. I showed them the Chaucer drawings, and they said yes, this is fine, we'll do it. Now...

Can I just ask you, by that stage you had reverted to doing the drawings more like your own drawings, is that right?

Ah, thank you, yes, that's a good point. I had abandoned the idea of the influence of the stained glass lead lines in the windows, and let myself go in my natural drawing.

Which was charcoal and the wash.

Which was always charcoal and occasionally wash.

Yes, and slightly more sort of comical...

And childlike...

Your more typical style. You weren't trying to do a pastiche.

Yes yes. Yes, I think one could call it humorous I'm thinking....

Yes, exactly.

And so they said yes, we do. Now, this is rather a curious incident. When I was in Berlin - really an unfortunate time to come on this but it's essential at this point - there the student revolts starting. I came...

You're talking about '68 now.

Yes. There were demonstrations every weekend. I joined the students, and I knew some of them, and I was on their side, and then it went to Paris that year...

Did it not start in Paris? No.

I don't know, either they started...maybe it did start in Paris.

In May '68.

Yes, it may be a matter of months between the two. And there it was very serious, and only de Gaulle's power stopped a total collapse of the whole organisation in Paris. It then went to America in 1970 where I also went and had a few months.

When you were in Boston was that?

Yes, and throughout the States, all the universities closed down, most of them. And it was this, together with other things that led to LBJ, Johnson, stopping the Vietnam war. So, now, I had been indoctrinated by my young teacher, who I asked to have instead of a Herr Professor teaching me German lessons. Excellent young woman and very attractive.

Can I just ask you, sorry, you are talking about Berlin now. Why were you there, who invited you?

Ah yes.

You won't talk about that at the moment?

Well I'd rather leave this particular part, if I may...

OK, go on, sorry.

I'm only referring to this insofar as it concerns the...

'The Reeve's Tale', yes.

Publishing house. Now, my teacher, Sami, who taught me politics for the first time in my life, because in Berlin at that time you couldn't miss politics, you had to take sides, and be involved. And I, when I went to this very smart firm and lovely offices, I said one thing I do want, I want the price to be low, and I want a large edition. And they said well, unfortunatley we want the very opposite; we want a small edition sold at the highest possible price. We like the drawings, but that's what we want. So, I met them when I came back. It went on for months, I met the managing director here, and in the end it was no good, they thought I was mad...

So you agreed to differ and that was the end of that.

Yes, and it fell through. But it was in a way, you could say I had a good cause. I was wanting to sell things that people could afford to buy, who were young. So that was that. Then in New York that next year, in '70, I had an old friend, Bob Manning, who I had met a lot in London; in the Fifties he was the editor of 'Time Life' magazine'. He went back to the States, he became under secretary...yes, he became first of all Sunday editor of the 'Herald Tribune', then he became an under Secretary of State with either the end of Kennedy or the beginning of Johnson. And then he withdrew from all that hectic life and became editor of a very sound magazine called 'The Atlantic Monthly' in Boston, where he remained until it was sold, and then he became a publisher and so on. Now he knew everybody, and he had political people meeting him from Johnson's era, and also I met John Updike once or twice and people like that. And one day he had Lionel Trilling, who was the famous American man of

letters, and his wife. And he was interested in my drawings, and he introduced me to a firm in Berlin, a publishing firm, and they said we like them very much.

What another one in Berlin?

In New York, sorry, in New York. But, they said, we can't do it at the low price you want; we suggest that you approach a European firm, they might be able to do it less expensively. So that fell through. Then George Rainbird in London took an interest. He even liked the low price idea. And we got as far as making mock-ups...[BREAK IN RECORDING] George Rainbird was an English publisher, a London publisher of some repute, a very good one. And then, just...this sort of sequence of endless disasters with these drawings. The head man, manager, who was seeing me, was suddenly given the sack. He was taking the books over to those book fairs they had in Germany and all the rest of it, and he was sacked. I hope it wasn't because of his programme with me! But anyhow, that fell through. Next, Jonathan Cape took an interest. I mean it was just endless. Tom Maschler was very keen, and I was still obstinate about a low price, and Maschler said the only way he could get round this was to make two separate editions, which was crazy of course, one cheap one for me, and one expensive one for them to make some money out of. He even got as far as writing to Auden, who was still alive and living in Switzerland, if he would undertake an adaption from middle to modern English for the drawings, and Auden replied that he couldn't see that he could improve on versions by Neville Coghill, who was the famous...most famously concerned with Chaucer. So anyhow, that two-edition idea was too much for Jonathan Cape. It folded up, it just wouldn't work. And that was due to my stubborn attitude.

And so what date was that around? Early Seventies?

Yes, I suppose so. And then, I had two Japanese galleries, and one was interested. They had the photographs and they liked them, but they said Chaucer was so little known in Japan that it would be a serious disadvantage to have a solid book of drawings without people knowing what it was about. Finally there was a small but

very interesting gallery in London called the Taranman Gallery. Did you know him at all?

I didn't, no.

Christopher Hewett? The gallery was not bigger than half the size of this room, tiny, at the end of the Fulham Road just where it joins Knightsbridge. What he in fact wanted to do with me was, he wanted to publish, which would have been excellent, a facsimile book of my sketch-books, because, like you Tamsyn I always use French students' books, with those little crosses all over them, a sort of grill, what do you call it?

Spiral-bound.

Gibert or Goubert[sic] is the name of the...I love those books, I've got a stack of them downstairs. And he would do that, and we even looked at different spirals[??], because they needed to be stronger than the one he had and everything else. And it would be printed by a friend of his, a very interesting man who printed all the English Blake editions, William Blake, in a technique you may know. I always forget the name, it's a watery colour technique, with a funny name. And up some stairs, very romantic, at the top of a house in Paris. And he said, 'Well look, I like these sketch-book drawings...'

Who was this in Paris? This was...?

The printer, who...

Hewett had found.

Hewett knew and was going to have to print the edition of my sketch-books. And then he said, 'They're rather linear a lot of the drawings, and it's rather a waste of my technique, which is broader'. So when he came here I showed him the Chaucer

drawings, and he said, 'My God, this is what I would like to illustrate', much to poor Hewett's embarrassment. He said, 'I like them so much I'll do them free of charge'.

My goodness, that's an offer you couldn't refuse.

So I thought well this is terrific, but not so good for my relationship with Hewett. Well, we had hardly said this, than he got some kind of lightening cancer and died within three months.

Oh no!

That was the next tragedy. There were three deaths in this thing, and one sacking. And not long after, Hewett himself committed suicide.

Oh I see, oh right.

And that, just after I had an exhibition with him. I didn't have a show because the gallery was very small for sculpture

I think I remember it, yes.

But in the end I did, and he printed a marvellous catalogue, with drawings on the front and back. In fact his catalogues were his main thing; he did...he was a very interesting man. I mean he started by going into the Sahara with an old Land Rover and living with the tour aids and bringing back rugs, which he showed first in that gallery and then he moved on to art. So that was that. That really was my final effort.

Right, until...

Until, looking at the Epstein catalogues for the Whitechapel Epstein exhibition, which I saw in Leeds. I went to the gallery, I took my friend John McEwen round on that trip round Yorkshire, going to the Flamborough Head and York Minster and places like that.

Now this was the comparatively recent Epstein exhibition?

This was very recent, yes. And I met then Terry Friedman the director, who gave me lots of catalogues. One of the catalogues was one that I liked very much, and it was the drawings for Epstein's carving in Hyde Park called 'Rima', a memorial to Hudson, the Argentinian writer, and all the rest of it, I don't know what it was, but he wrote lovely travels in Argentina. I was so impressed with this book...

They produced a sort of catalogue...

Yes especially, away from the sculpture, it was quite separate, with drawings, all the drawings he had done, beautifully done.

Very good reproductions.

Yes. So I decided to...I thought well this may be the way out. I was born in Leeds, I have contact with the art gallery, and it might be a possibility. I knew that the Henry Moore Foundation had its study centre there, Henry Moore's enormous amount of money he spent on that gallery, building a new part to it. And so in short I contacted Terry Friedman and he said, 'Yes, we'll do it'. And so he had two visits here; he brought the printer, this will be done by a marvellous machine called a scanner, which you put a drawing in and let's say ten minutes later out comes a plate ready for printing, just as you want, but with incredible detail, unlike anything that I have seen before, and very quick too. And this would be used there. Now, this went on, I finished of course all the drawings.

You were doing them...had you finished them quite some time back, or you were still doing some more were you?

I think I had finished them before I met Terry Friedman and discussed this; I'm pretty certain I did.

Yes, I mean had you not finished them by the time of the Taranman, French publishers...

Maybe not, but I think just about, yes. Anyhow, they were certainly finished before I was involved with the Leeds Art Gallery. And everything was then arranged, we'd done it all; the costing, the size, the edition. They had found a distributor, which is all-important, for Europe. They would go to...I was going to have it in three languages; it would be printed in Chaucer's middle English because one can read it, with difficulty. There's no need to have a modern English transcription, but it would be in Spanish, French and Italian. And all this was arranged, and a sum of money was generously allowed by the Moore Foundation to cover production costs. This in fact would be a loan, and paid back from sales when I had done it. And I had actually a very good contact; through my long contact with Venezuela I had the name of a man in Caracas who had distribution right through, of art publications and things, through Latin America, through the 12 Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America. And he was very keen, and would handle the whole thing. And so there, it was all tied up. But so far Terry Friedman has not yet said, 'Let's start'. He said well it would be for my 75th birthday.

That was this year, this July, yes.

I've an awful lot to do - it's this year, July, and then he said no, I haven't been able to do it, I've been doing other things, I've been doing the David Smith catalogue, but I hope it will be done this autumn. Well it's now October and he hasn't done it yet, but I am waiting until the end of this month, until I take it up again.

End of F2405 Side A

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Then there followed in the few years after that, two exhibitions with Paul Rosenberg. There had been two at Bertha Schaefer New York before, then two with Paul Rosenberg, and two with the Marlborough Fine Art, London.

Can we just see if we can just recap the dates on that. [BREAK IN RECORDING] So in Bertha Schaefer, New York, you had '54 and '56, and then Paul Rosenberg in New York in '58 and '62.

Yes, there were two with Gimpel, there were two with Bertha Schaefer.

And then at Marlborough you had a one-man show in 1962 and '65. Right.

There is a piece I made which was, if one can say so fairly successful, that is, following the jungle visit in Caracas in Venezuela in 1963, I made a piece that had a relationship with that. Very rarely does one make, in my case anyhow, make things that have to do with specific places one has been to; they really come up from inside. I have done drawings let's say of The Burren in County Clare in Ireland, but not sculpture so much. I did mention that in the forest, in the equatorial rain forest, it isn't all that congested at ground level; the congestion is in the canopy above, with these enormous trees with great big buttresses holding them up. But if there is a clearing, then there are dense thickets so thick that you can't put your hand in, it's quite extraordinary. And there were a few of these where...Kanarakuni, where our base was. And from this I made the bronze. I did first of all two maquettes and then a large piece, which was really just a blank wall, absolutely smooth, out of which at the top were four arms sticking up, and lower down four legs, just growing out of this plate. And a large piece followed that.

So what date, so that was 1965?

That was '65.

And that was using bronze again?

That was using bronze, and until this time I was always using bronze, or brass, with the Pandarus series, and aluminium as well. Now by this time, I had found that there was a tide turning against me. I had been very lucky in the 1950s. I had sales and exhibitions all over the place, and I had sales in England, and exhibitions. But due to the British Council probably, due to the British Council exhibitions abroad, I was better known abroad, and was better received abroad than I was here. About this time the English habit was to follow American ideas on art, and perhaps still does. But the idea began to crystallize with people that I was wrong on two counts. I was wrong for being figurative, that is there was a figure basis to my work. This was a phase of abstract art in England. There were various kinds, minimal art, there was all kinds of art, but it was not figurative art, and people had read that it was now something else. And so they thought oh right, I'm stuck in the mud with something that had been done in the Renaissance and much earlier, for millions of years. The same thing which...

What, you mean using bronze you mean?

No, with figures, which is of course nonsense, because figurative art goes on, although it can be... I myself left, departed from obvious figurations; sometimes you could hardly tell. But the source of it was that. And what I tended to do was take...I didn't like the idea of having a figure with two arms, five fingers on each hand and five toes and a head with two eyes and two ears and all the rest of it, and I found I was taking a part of the figure, let's say arms. Maybe subconsciously my name, Armitage might be due to those; it certainly didn't enter my head then. And this I combined with very geometric shapes, so that I had enlarged plastic element of the curved surfaces of the arm and body, in combination with severe geometric shapes. And this has in fact gone on till this day, to a certain degree. Now the other thing that people attacked me for was using bronze casting. This I think they felt was a very ancient technique; it is what, four-and-a half thousand years old. And we had the Bronze Age of course before the Iron Age. And this irritated people. It's very strange that in painting people accept that the technique is much the same; oil painting is still used, and of course acrylic, but whereas oil painting has no corporeal reality, it's just marks

on a surface, sculpture has a three-dimensional reality, it has substance. And it has to do with materials, and people, especially Americans, expected one to have new materials, and of course obviously welding, steel. Now I was never attracted to steel; I did in fact forge one or two things, small things in iron. But...

When was that?

Oh, when I first went to Corsham I went to a technical school in Bath and hammered out two things there, but I didn't do it for long. Now, noticing the first steel man, Gonzalez, and all the other steel sculptors, welded sculptors ever since, they tend to use...[BREAK IN RECORDING] I can't remember, it was always Gonzalez to me.

They tended to use plate metal?

Yes, their raw material was plate and rod. And these assembled gave it a jerky, slightly cruel quality. And the medium one uses in sculpture does affect the appearance of the work naturally. Cesar, the Paris sculptor, did get a plastic quality occasionally by using small bits of metal, welded to make a whole figure. In the whole figure there would be hundreds of small segments, joined together by welding, which he would then in places smooth over. And they were very good, and they had a plastic quality, but an extremely laborious way of doing it. So, I found having also very early on, before the Second World War, done bronze casting with Galizia at the Central School, when I had a course in it, and liked it very much, it was an excellent medium for doing plastic sensual surfaces. And I have still gone on doing that, although I have used more plastic work later. Now these were the two things which was rather serious for me. It worried me that I couldn't be allowed to like certain things; I had to do what other people were doing, or what other people thought should be done.

And were there any particular critics who were...?

I can't remember. But this is the...it may be my idea, because I did feel worried myself about bronze sometimes; not with being figurative, that I will never deviate

from, but the bronze thing worried me because it was a kind of medium that some people thought, this is what sculpture should be. The Marlborough at first liked bronze; they could have a cast in the gallery, and from that take orders for further casts, it was a convenience. Philippe de Rothschild, with the Mouton commission, he actually said, 'I want it to be in bronze, it must be in bronze'. He felt that that was what sculpture was, or what was suitable for the chateau. And because of this it rather put me off doing work in a medium that people thought, this is how it should be done. In fact I started making designs on cardboard, drawing on dozens and dozens of these things, which, when I did resign from the Marlborough I think they were only too glad for me to go, because they would really have liked...in fact they asked me at one point, couldn't I go on doing the sort of work that I did in the 1950s, and then they said, 'Of course, we're joking really', but they really meant it I know. And so this was a problem which I did...in fact when I went later to Berlin, where my main foundry Noack works and lives, I did very little bronze casting and doing mostly resin at the time. I got over that and came back to bronze later, or did both. Now, in 1965 also there started another extended project, and this I called 'The Legend of Skadar', 1965. I always work with Radio 3 on, because of the classical music that one hears all day long, interspersed with other things. And there was suddenly a terrible singing. It was so terrible that I had to stop working and listen to it. And it was in fact a recording by Alan Lomax, who went all over the world making recordings of people singing in different fields.

Who made that recording of Venezuelan music, didn't he?

That's right. And in the mountains of Yugoslavia he found a blind singer, who was going round the villages singing myths, ancient myths, for which after six hours non-stop he would get bread and wine enough to see him through that day. And Alan Lomax made a recording of this, which was one of the most horrific things I had ever heard. There was another one, to do with sailing ships which I haven't time to talk about here. But this had such...I found...he did then give a description of what it was. The blind beggar made it possibly worse than it was, although my God it was bad enough. And the story was, in ancient times they were building a fort, and the walls kept falling down, and it was pulled down by an evil spirit, and they found that the

only way to get over this in the end, after two years, was to make a human sacrifice. This story is in fact widespread throughout southern Europe. A young archaeological friend of mine, the daughter of a friend of mine studied archaeology in Athens, and found the same story existed there. And...where had I got to in the story? [BREAK IN RECORDING] And so, they had to cast lots, which is not likely that they would cast lots in pre-historic times, but one of their wives was in fact bricked up alive in the wall, a most horrific end. But after all if you read the Bible there are similar hideous things happening in the Middle East in those days. But, she had just had a baby. Oh the blind man made her the chief's wife, just you know, to make it topical and that with the people he was singing to, which isn't in fact in the historical myth. But the child had just been born, and so they in fact bricked her up with an aperture in the wall, so that the child could feed at her breasts while she remained alive. But of course she died very soon. Well that hideous story affected me terribly. I had heard the singing, which was hair-raising, and it was a kind of nightmare. I knew a lot of Venezuelans...a lot of Yugoslavs. In the Venice Biennale '58 I met the Yugoslav Ambassador in England.

That's right, you talked about that.

I mentioned that. And I met many Venezuelans[sic] coming to this country. And I asked their wives, I said well what do you think of this terrible story, and they said well, it is a ghastly nightmare, but it does have one element that has an element of compassion: at least the child was saved, if nothing else. Now a very strange thing happened. I did oh, about ten models, all small, about two or three feet high, but it took a little while until I got it out of my system. And I did find something that was interesting, that I saw a photograph of a megalith in France, a stone column about human height or more, which would be shaped, about 2,000 B.C., 4,000 years old, at the top of which there were two breast shapes.

Where was this, in Brittany or somewhere?

I don't know where it was. It was a book, a topical magazine, maybe it was 'Illustrated London News' or something like that. And I wish I had taken a photocopy

of it, but I remembered it, and in my mind I thought, perhaps with this...this thing on...perhaps on one of the trade routes, many people had seen, and perhaps people themselves have built a myth round the stone, why should there be breasts on this, something like that. However, the real myth came to light in recent years. Only about two years ago, three years ago I had a letter from a gentleman in Tokyo, a Mr Harris, who was reviewing books, and he reviewed a book on Serbian myths, Yugoslavia, one of which was what he calls 'The Building of Skadar'; I called it 'The Legend'. Incidentally the Yugoslav Ambassador said there was, is a place, or was a place called Skadar on the River Ljubljana existed. Now, this man came to London, he married a Japanese wife who is a pianist, and we met two or three times, he is very nice. Anyhow, he sent me the part quoted of 'The Building of Skadar', which is the story of the pieces I made. Slightly different from the Alan Lomax, and if I may I'd like to read it. The story briefly is that...I'll go over this very quickly. There were three brothers, and then they were building this fort, and every night a female mountain spirit threw down what they had built during the day. And here the story is similar, the spirit eventually, after three years, said, 'The only way that I will let the wall remain, if you brick up alive one of your wives', or something like that, in the wall, which they did, the same kind of thing. Well they had an awful problem finding which wife it should be, but one, Gojko's wife, was selected and she had to go through with it.

Gojko's wife? Whose wife?

Gojko was one of the three men, GOJKO. She had recently given birth, and she becomes the sacrifice. At first she thinks it's a joke as the stones rise to her knees, and she laughs. But when the stones rise to her waist, she shrieks in fury, and begs to be spared. In desperation she says her mother will provide a slave girl to sacrifice in her stead. Now because of the style, I'm going to read the two paragraphs of this, because it has a strange repetition in it which I have never come across before. And it goes, 'But when the slender bride has seen that no prayer she prays will do her good, then she begs Rade the master builder, "Brother in God, Rade, master builder, leave me only a window at my breasts, and push my wide breast through it when Jovo (that is her son) comes. When my little one comes, when he comes let him suck my breasts"'.

There is that strange repetition again. 'Rade accepted it in brotherhood. He left a window at her breasts. She pushed her white breasts out at the window, so when Jovo should come, the little one come, when he came, let him suck her breasts. And so they built her into the town, and carried out the child in the cradle, and she gave her milk for seven days, and after seven days her voice had gone. And still the child fed at the breast, and she gave it her milk through a year'.

My goodness!

'And so it was, and so it has remained. Look, even now the white milk running down, like a great miracle and medicine for any woman who can give no milk'. And so, it turned into a sacrifice that was a miracle, and was of help to women, which does a slight thing to soften the ghastly story. And I bothered to read that because of that. I felt guilty having done it, because...Alan Bowness was angry with me for making the pieces, and I tried to find out where...

Why was he angry?

Because he said...he was angry with me for taking an interest in such a thing. 'A more terrible legend of human cruelty and stupidity can hardly be imagined'. Quite so.

That's what he said, that's what Alan Bowness said?

That's what he said. But my old friend Roland Penrose had a slightly different attitude. He said that barbaric horror becomes transformed when we see that the myth suggests animitic belief that all matter contains some form of life, let's say like the two breasts carved on the stone 4,000 years ago, which I had seen a picture of. Now, it's interesting that a friend of mine at the Royal College of Art...my God, it has gone from my mind, who...[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Your friend.

Bryan Kneale had seen the pieces, so that he could never see light switches again in the same way! Switching them on and off, because it reminded him of the little sculptures that I had done of the legend of Skadar. Well that is...

So were they all done virtually the same year?

Well, I think that they go...they may extend over a year, or two; probably let's say two years.

But they started in '65?

Well I can easily tell in a moment; in the list of works here it will give it. Pandarus, Pandarus Legend of Skadar, Legend of...yes, they start in '65. They are all in '65. I must have done one after the other, right through that year. Right well that finishes that part, and I think we can come now to the end. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Now, a couple of years after there came by surprise an invitation to live and work in Berlin. This was called the DAAD, the Deutsche Akademischer Austauschdienst, that is the German Academic Exchange. Because Berlin was an island in the middle of East Germany; there was still not the wall, you could travel in and out, as I did when I first started going there, it was still an island. And first of all the Ford Foundation put in huge sums of money to attract people to go to the city. Because it was divided into sectors. There was the Russian sector of course, that was in East Germany; there was French and English in the West sector. But there was the fear that Berlin would be starved, and so the Ford Foundation put money into it, in order to make it a culture city. They got architects, musicians, artists, to visit, to visit there on a kind of fellowship. They finished pretty quickly, and then the Germans themselves went on with the same thing, and it was that that I had received my invitation from the DAAD as it was called.

So when you first visited Germany to Noack...

Yes, I knew it already.

The Berlin wall...

Was not built yet. That was built...

Because that was '61.

That was built...I remember Noack driving me around before the wall [sounds like war].

Before the wall.

Before the wall [strongly pronouncing 'll'].

Sorry, it's the wall, yes yes.

And then the wall was built, and then you couldn't.

You couldn't cross, yes.

You had to go through Checkpoint Charlie and all the rest of it, and the nightmare it was. But that was early on, when you could go through it. [Now, am I still on?]

Yes.

I'm trying to think. Now, the point was, I thought a lot about it. I had contact with Berlin because of visits to Noack; I could speak a little German, but very little, and the idea attracted me. But the other thing was, I had mentioned the fact that I felt that things were going against me in popularity, that I had had a good time in the 1950s, and that now it was getting tougher. And I thought that I might even put myself in exile and go and live abroad for a bit, as an idea of overcoming this problem. There was the other thing that I realized more and more, that art in England...I had seen, through my travels abroad, art in England was not very generously received. We have marvellous things here. The National Gallery is one of the best in the world; we have

the Arts Council, part of the British Council; galleries of all kinds. We had good artists. But the general attitude to art is one that is not natural, as it is say in France say or in Latin America, especially sculpture. And I wondered with sculpture whether this has to do with some memory of the 17th century rebellion in England with Cromwell, and the execution of Charles I and the destruction by the model army, the iconoclasm of works in churches. All over the place, a great deal of art was destroyed. And this was a puritan attitude. I'm not saying they did it, but because they were for pure faith rather than worshipping icons and figures and statues, this sort of thing, which one can understand very much, and why some of them escaped to America, it did result in vast quantities of work being finished. And maybe in the north especially where there is still a residual effect of the puritanic attitutde, it could be that this has something to do with it. I remember when I was in my Leeds Gregory Fellowship, a Yorkshireman walked in and he saw what I was doing, he said, 'Ah, what's this? Well we send people to hospital like that!' Talking, looking at a figure and so son. Then I said, 'Well, these two pieces have been sold to the Hirshorn Museum in Washington. 'Ah, you sell them do you?' Meaning with a Yorkshire attitude, that was different; if you can sell them, maybe I will overlook the badness of the work, or something like that! Now, the attitude in England to art was noticed by Virginia Woolf, let's say 50, 60 years ago, in her biography of Roger Fry. She says, [reading] 'Often in later life, Roger Fry was to deplore the extraordinary indifference of the English to the visual arts, and their determination to harness all art to model problems. Among the undergraduates of his day, even the more thoughtful, the most speculative, this indifference seems to have been universal. The English, it seemed to him, always attack an original idea, then debase it, and when they have rendered it harmless, proceed to swallow it whole'. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

But when you said you felt the tide was turning against you, were you aware of anyone else coming into favour, any of your...other people, other sculptors for example?

Oh all other people like myself. Yes. I think...the thing that people began to almost detest was the 1950s. It became a period in time, unto this day, labelled with the

1950s, as let's say certain writers and poets were labelled with the Spanish Civil War. It is a thing that you get stuck with.

Sort of labelled.

And people thought, we want to get away from this, we don't want any more. Even though time had past, we don't want to do it. That was linked with figurative bronze casting I think as well. Does that...?

Yes, I just wondered whether you were aware of any particular...?

Oh yes, of course there were then younger people. Caro had come to the fore very much, and very much since then indeed. The odd thing is, my colleague Chadwick started with welding, and he did it the other way round, but then turned to bronze casting later in life, which is a weird mixture of the pattern as it existed.

End of F2405 Side B

F2406 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, 28th October 1991. Tape Seven.

And today Kenneth you were going to talk a bit about your...all about your Berlin, your time in Berlin. You were asked by the DAAD, the German Academic Exchange in '66 weren't you, but you didn't actually go there till a bit later. Were there several things...why did you delay that?

I had...there were delays. I liked the idea, because I knew Berlin through visits to the bronze foundry, Noack, he showed me. And in those early days there was no wall, and when the wall was built, that was why they did this, to make, as I have explained before, to make it a cultural and artistic centre. It was wonderful to have people from all over the world concentrated in this place with a wall round you. But there were still doubts in my mind, but I felt I was free. Because I have already mentioned, I felt there was a resistance against my work, for two reasons, being figurative and using bronze casting. I mean the figurative thing is just nonsense. There has been figurative art since almost the beginning of humanity, for half a million years. And...well, no, 20,000 years, or 30,000 years. The Lascaux caves are 10 to 15,000 years old. And that didn't worry so much, but the bronze casting had a little bit of sense in it, in that it was for me a very important material. I do agree that stainless steel is the more splendid metal, because it is immensely hard, and resistant to the weather, but it's cold; you can't patinate it so easily, if at all. And there is this cold shiny metal, which wouldn't suit my work at all.

No, absolutely not, no.

And so the bronze was ideal for me; it was a bit softer to work, and it was a warmer metal, and it would take patinations of different colours, and so that was really why I used it to this day. The other thing I didn't like about casting which people normally do is, they make let's say a model out of plaster, or wood, or anything, hand it over to a foundry, and then it is re-produced by the foundry exactly as to what they did. But

this I was against because a great deal of work had been done by other hands, and I wanted to be involved as far as possible in the process itself. In fact a lot of the trees I did I finished entirely myself. They cut off the rudders, which are part of the mechanism of feeding the thing with metal, with the mould, they cut that off flush with the surface, but I finished them, because it was very fiddly and only I could do that.

At what stage did you finish them? I mean...

At the end. The bronze cast was made, it came out of the mould, they sawed off the...there are bars which feed bronze into the mould, into the cavities. Those are cut off, and I was given then this...and this I would finish myself. Well they would clean it up a bit too, take off off the...

And how did you finish it? I mean what did you do?

Well with the normal tools. Abrasives, long bands of emery paper going round it, and so on.

What, emery paper has an effect on bronze does it?

Well yes. There are finishing bands that you can use. For example, if you imagine a tree with all its twigs, I wrapped this...it would be about an inch wide and continuous, at various degrees of roughness. And this I would wrap round, and rub it like that, and this would make it rounder and rounder and rounder all the time. And so I did a great deal of work with that.

That was the Richmond trees series later on, in the Seventies.

Which I will come to later. And so then I also started using parts that were welded together. I would do something, I would then have parts, which I am going to talk about now in a minute when I got to Berlin, which were what we say, fabricated out

of sheet. The thing with 'Two Arms' was on a kind of table; the two arms cast in the normal way...

And then welded on to the surface.

Yes, the table part was welded out of sheet metal. In fact it wasn't bronze, you couldn't get sheet, but it was brass, and as they were patinated black it would look just the same.

Yes. And you had also used aluminium a slight bit hadn't you.

Yes.

But that didn't really suit you either did it, because it didn't really weather well.

It's filthy to work, you get black all over your face, and also it has to be treated because it weathers badly, and you can't really give it electric...what do you call it, an electric bath, that is galvanizing the surface, because the casting is porous. LM5 is the aluminium used for casting, and you can't see the pores but it is porous, and this means that it's not... You can galvanize, or whatever the word, anodize is the word, sheet aluminium, it's on buildings. So that is all right, but casting you can't do. And so you have then to spray it. And I did the big arms; I sprayed it with hard German paint, or a firm did it for me. Well this isn't ideal, to have a painted surface. Now this is one of the...these are some of the reasons why I was...I had problems with bronze casting, which is ridiculous, to be in the city where was my main bronze foundry and not use him as much as I might have done, but I did use him quite a bit with some big things. But then I...I don't like resin at all, the smell of the stuff, and it is...

But you do use it now quite a lot.

Yes, I use it now, for lightness of weight. That is, the big reliefs I made, to get them into a small exhibition would take about, you know, five or six men to move it round the room, and the roofs wouldn't stand the weight. So I had it made in resin for

showing. But for any permanent display really it would have to be in metal. And so there were problems...and this I overcame in my mind, and in the end I think it was late '67, I set off in my...well in fact I had then a long Citroen car, a Safari, stuffed with models. I took ideas to carry out, because you can't go to a foreign city and sit down...

Blankly, for a few months, yes, that's a waste of time, yes.

You can't to it: well I can't, some people can. I mean if you're a landscape painter you could, but with sculpture, which is one thing leading to the other... So I took maquettes , and...

Rather like you did when you went to Venezuela, you had an idea in your mind.

That's right, yes.

But you also...you wanted to leave England for another...a few other reasons.

Yes, there were two or three other reasons. One is I had had a marvellous three years relationship with a girl called Jossy, who just before I left married David Dimbleby. And it wasn't that I was consumed over this, because it was my fault; I didn't want to get married.

But you were already still married, but not living...

I was already married. But I would have married her had I been free, but I couldn't, I was married to a woman I had great respect for, who I had married when I first went to the Slade.

Joan.

Jo. It was a wartime marriage. Then there was the war, in the first four months I thought well I'm going to be killed, because I was thinking back to the First World

War, which I had heard about, and I thought well, I've had it, I might as well get married anyhow, which is not the right way of doing it! And so we were married, and then of course there were six years without any real married life.

Because you only saw her about two or three months. You were only man and wife, living together...

At one point I did marry...she was living out, and I saw her for a few months then, living as man and wife in a rented house. But most of the time I was in other places and all the rest - it wasn't a real marriage anyhow - until I came out. And so, I came out of the Army, thrilled to get on with life, and then I went to teach at Corsham, and there were these beautiful intelligent girls, and it was almost inevitable that I should be involved with one pretty quickly. And Jo all this time kept on in a flat I had found in London.

Was she still in Recliffe Square then?

Yes. And...did I mention all the people that stayed?

Yes you did, you did.

And I missed a lot of it through that, from Rosemary who I got involved with down there. And anyhow...

So you drifted apart from your wife...

Drifted apart a great deal.

Yes, and barely saw her.

More and more, rarely saw her. And I had let's say what you might call 'nice girls', like Jossy, and then I thought well, they all want to get married. And I thought I can't hold a girl for more than three years, that's the maximum; she would want to get

married, and why didn't I want to get married? Well I don't know. Maybe because of my mad mother dinning this into me when I when I was a child, or that...

Dinning what into you?

The fact that she thought it was a sin to have children or sex or anything like that, which I didn't believe of course, because children are very shrewd.

No, so you reacted against what she said.

And I kept it a secret. I never told a soul that I had a Christian Science mother dinning this into me, and I had to pray every day, and all that kind of thing. And so this led to I think a more restless sexual desire than a normal person would have who had a normal upbringing. I may be wrong, but it may be that. So I found that I...then I would go with 'bad' girls so to speak; there were no bad girls, but they were girls who were sleeping around. But they wanted to get married just as much as the nice ones, and it was a nightmare.

Yes, so you are really explaining...because I think you mentioned earlier on about having a reputation of being a philanderer, so is this what...

And very rightly, I am ashamed of it, because in my heart I don't believe in it. And I do think...and what was that woman whose husband ran the 'Ambassador' magazine? Oh God...you wouldn't know her.

I'm afraid I don't know. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
What was her name again?

Elspeth Juda. She was a real power, and her husband had a really plushy magazine called the 'Ambassador' magazine, which was very lavish, to do with trade, but they always had some art, and I featured a lot in that. In fact, I went to Calder Hall, the first atomic power station, which then became what's it called, Seascale or...you know the one I mean.

Yes, I do, yes.

And I had to write an article called 'The Artist Reacts'. And to their horror I wasn't so excited, because the only evidence of the power there, with all the men in white coats, was in a room full of dials, with little needles trembling. There you got a feeling of the immense power of the reactor, let's say, which had its huge thick steel covering, and then about six or ten feet of concrete all round which couldn't be opened for 50 years. And then the power coming...the great pipes were like those of a big liner. And I was quite happy outside to see a puddle with a bit of newspaper in the wet next to it, and just normal life. And so in a way I wasn't all that...[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Sorry Kenneth, why are you talking about this woman Elspeth? I'm not quite clear.

Yes, it's quite true. I'm really not making an excuse for all the girlfriends I had, because in my heart I believe in, I really do, in one man and one woman for life. This is something deep inside, and I knew I was wrong, but the circumstances of...did I mention my mad mother?

Well, way back in the other tapes. You haven't...

Yes, of being told...

And just now you did, yes. She was a Christian Scientist and...

And all that kind of thing, did in fact...did I mention on the tape Gurdjieff and Uspensky?

No.

They were two sort of philospher gurus at the beginning of the century, the first was Gurdjieff, a Russian, and the next I think his disciple called Uspensky, who

influenced a lot of people. And they had something I don't want to talk about now, but I will when we come to Ireland, about cows' breath, and how Katherine Mansfield was sent to a farm, and she didn't improve. But anyhow, I knew very well two people called Juda. He ran the 'Ambassador'...

Yes, you've just mentioned that, yes.

And his wife was called Elspeth, and she said (I don't say it, she said), in spite of the many girlfriends I have had, I do retain an innocence. Well I liked the idea, whether it's true or not. Now that really... There is then the question of my wife, and I will like to say this, that after oh, 40 years of living apart and seeing very little, I went to see her and she wasn't well. And in fact she had had...she's older than I am, she had had a very minor stroke. And I had lost Jossy, and there was in fact another important girlfriend, Susan Hampshire. It only lasted a year and a half, because she more than anyone wanted to get married; every day she was saying when are we going to marry. And so I was free, and...why am I talking about her?

You're talking about Joan and how...

Oh yes, Jo. Now she wasn't well, and so I thought now, they've all gone, all the lovely girls have gone, and yet Jo is there and she's not well, and I do respect her enormously, and like her. I will now, for the rest of my life, be very nice to her. It sounds like a kind of...no, I'm not condescending, I really mean that. And so I immediately did a lot, I helped a bit when she got better, and every year I take her for a nice holiday, and I see her certainly every month, and have a nice meal: I had one this weekend with her. And we're great friends, and it's very nice at my age to have someone I knew well 50 years ago.

Yes. Now this, you've been seeing her over the last what, six...

Six or seven years, yes.

That regularly.

Since the end of Susan.

I see, yes. And so, this is a roundabout way to explain...it's not excusing my... But the circumstances were not entirely my fault. The mad mother, and being married, and one thing and another, and also being susceptible, very susceptible to female beauty, as most artists are. However in the end all is well. And the other girls got married. In fact, to prove that I didn't do them any harm, three of the girlfriends I had in the past have come back to me, after their husbands died, or have separated, and said, in different ways, could we not start again where we left off. And this is nice to know, and charming of the women concerned, but I had to explain that in life, over the years we change, and you can't go back; at least I don't think so.

Yes, it's quite difficult.

Not very easily. And so...well that's enough of that, isn't it?

Right, yes.

So where did we get to? I get to Berlin.

You get to Berlin in '67.

Yes. I filled my car with models that I had wanted to do. One was a big 'Folded Arms', made in plaster, and that I had the idea of putting it on a building, on a wall, so that there was a big blank wall, and there were two heavy massive rounded arms coming out, as though the building behind was the body of the person, their little folded arms sticking out in front. But of course I couldn't get...I didn't even try to get an architect to do it.

And you would have envisaged doing this in Berlin, or anywhere?

This I had made...

On a building I mean.

No, I made before...well I may have made it when I knew I might go; I hadn't quite decided, but I made it... After all, I had a year here before I went to Berlin.

Yes, because they were trying to find you...

Yes.

Because the purpose...when you went out to Berlin, the purpose was for you to...what, do your own work, or teach people, or what?

No, these invitations in the German Academic Exchange were to attract the best people they could - forgive me for saying that. But they would have, for example I met Dallapiccola, a very well-known Italian composer; he was also there under the same scheme.

Yes, and we've already mentioned William Scott was out there.

There were poets and painters; William Scott there, went before me, and they managed to get a very nice American sculptor called George Rickey, who was there at the same time, and he became a great friend and I often see him. I have stayed in his home in America, and he is a constructivist.

Right, and were you working with him? No, he just happened to be there at the same time.

Oh no, that's quite separate.

Under the same scheme.

Under the same scheme. They asked Motherwell, but Motherwell wouldn't go, he said no, Berlin's too much like a prison, because of the wall. But George went because George had lived in Paris as a young man, he was used to Europe, and he loved music, so Berlin was a great centre for music, so he was ideal, and they liked him, and so... I am seeing him in two weeks' time, he'll be in London. That was very nice. So...now these are the reasons for going, and the conditions that applied. I had no teaching to do at all, and just get on with work, and it was ideal, because you could get everything you wanted in the city.

What, material-wise?

Materials. Everything was laid on. I had a marvellous studio, and I had a flat ten minutes' walk away with a sitting-room, furnished of course, a little bedroom and a little kitchen, and a garage to put my car. I had a lovely little walk to the studio; my flat was clean, and then I could make a mess in the studio, and only two minutes, a minute's walk away there was a restaurant with traditional German food, which is superb. Oxtail soup, and Rot Khol and dumplings, in Schweinebraten und so weiter.

Right. And so you rather enjoyed all that sort of cafe life, and...social...?

Yes, well...yes I got to know pretty quickly really through...I had a German dealer, until I gave up this; I think I mentioned that I joined the Marlborough, and I was obliged to give up all my connections, and one was Springer, a dealer in Berlin, and I had been to see him before, and he showed me round Berlin and he took me to a bar called the Paris Bar, in Campestrasse, which now, in an exhibition at the Artcurial Gallery in Paris, they have invited many German artists. I would have liked to have gone, and will still go perhaps. And they had the brilliant idea of having a photograph of the Paris Bar, where everyone goes, and it's like a brasserie, have a drink there and...

What rather like a sort of French brasserie?

Yes, and you sit at the table, drink or eat, and the artists go there a lot because it's almost opposite the Hochschule, the art school.

Does it exist now?

Oh yes, and there, in the catalogue...

The Artcurial catalogue you're talking about.

Yes. They had rather wittily, a good photograph of...empty, no people in it, of the bar, with their names where...

Everyone had sat.

The modern contemporary artists sit, whether they sit there or not. Baselitz, Lupertz and so on. It's just names and where they...

Yes, a very good idea.

And this is a marvellous idea for the cover of the magazine. And so, this...I think I ought to mention that since this is not only about work but about life, that I have spent a lot of time in bars. I did mention I think in London Finches and the Queen's Elm.

Indeed, yes.

And the French, which was more literary, and a little bit of Muriel's Bar, which was really a club. But I didn't mention the Paris bars did I?

No you didn't. You didn't really mention the French, what the French pub in Soho you're talking about?

The French pub was in Dean Street, and it was a small pub, but it was one where I don't think artists went, but writers went. And I sometimes would go there. But I

lived, I was three nights a week at Finches or the Queen's Elm. But there is a difference between English bars and French bars. The English bars did have seats, but you didn't sit down, you stood at the bar, and they were always packed, rather hot, swilling down beer, and an Anglo-Saxon kind of beer house kind of thing. And the Paris bars were very different, and these were first of all the excellent Deux Magots, which you have been to probably yourself, Tamsyn.

Passed it, I've never sat in it.

In the boulevard Saint-Germain, just opposite the Eglise, the Romanesque church, with tables outside. And most people who know anything about culture or art, when they're in Paris always have a drink at the Deux Magots. And it's an ideal place for meeting people, seats outside. C,sar, the friend, a Paris sculptor, he would always pass by once a week for business, to show himself, and hoping to meet some American collector. And that was the main one. There was immediately next door, Caf, Flore, small, more private, where Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir had a little table, and did a lot of their writing there, especially Simone de Beauvoir. How they managed to write in a bar I don't know, with people milling in and out. And there were others. Then there was the famous Coup“le, a brasserie a mile south in boulevard Montparnasse. Excellent for food and artists; you would meet...you would see Albert Camus talking to a beautiful girl at some table, or you would see Giacometti late at night having a meal. Now that kind of thing one doesn't have so much in London; one has rather pubs. And that makes Paris a very special place for...the first I do when I get to Paris is to go to the...just to have a Ricard at the Deux Magots, and have a meal at the local restaurant, and so on.

So you used to go to those bars yourself did you, when you visited?

Yes, and so it was natural for me to go in Berlin to the Paris Bar. So, now that is a little bit of Berlin. I worked like mad. It was wonderful to have a bedroom out of the house in another place, and food next door, traditional German food, and the whole place was ideal. I had no phone in the studio (of course I did in the flat) so this is a

wonderful thing; I worked from morning till night. And also I had Noack's help; he helped me with the timber, the addresses, and...

Oh yes, that must be very useful.

And plaster, I would have half a ton of plaster delivered. All this he had the names, he knew where to get it, and everything else. And so it was excellent, excellent for working. So, the first thing I made was the folded arms on a screen, cast in aluminium and welded on to an aluminium screen, and because it was aluminium, painted, sprayed. And this was shown in Japan; in Germany it was shown around.

And what was the correct title of that?

'Screen (With Folded Arms)', for identification, that one. Very massive arms. And that is still downstairs. There were little models which I sold, but the big one I never sold.

So that was 1967 to '68.

'57 to '58...no, that's wrong. Yes, I made a mistake in my notes here. '67 to '68. That was two metres high and nearly two metres wide...deep. Now, I had no work to do with that, because I had made the model of the arms in London, and I took them in my car.

And they were plaster models?

Yes, and that was cast, and that was...

Was that cast by Noack?

Yes.

He did aluminium as well as bronze casting?

Oh anything, and brass. But the big thing I started then was a 10-foot job...no, 12 foot long arm, a huge arm, mounted...growing out of a big fat plate, which was 10 foot high and resting on a circular column at the front. Now, this on my many visits to the British Museum, in the Egyptian Room, my eye suddenly caught this fragment of a colossal statue, an arm, a part of the forearm, resting on two blocks. And this fitted in entirely with my idea of work that I was doing, figurative work combined with geometric shapes. And I mentioned already that I didn't want to do all the fingers and toes and things like that. And so I took part of the body, the arm, and this I enlarged, or had separately combined with severe geometrical shapes, there the column, there the rectangle...

This piece you're talking about is called 'Arm'?

Yes.

1967 to '68. But this wasn't bronze was it?

No. I'll tell you what happened. I wanted to have it in Corten steel. Now Corten steel was a steel that was really only invented about 20 or 30 years ago, and it was a new formula. And its great attraction to people then was, it formed a skin when out in the weather, sealing the surface, so then it wouldn't rust any more. Now this was tried out in Arizona, in America, very dry. In fact it didn't work. I followed up, I was very interested in it. It would have been the first casting in Corten steel every made, if I had done this. It was cheaper than normal steel. But I looked at the examples there were. There was in Doncaster I think a parking plot, you know, with a vertical building, you drive up ramps, and it had a Corten steel frame. And there it rusted and it dripped down, the concrete looked awful. There was a bridge in York University I went to see; that was all right, it hadn't got the stain mark. There was another building somewhere in a home; Basil Spence, he had used Corten steel: all covered with rust. And I abandoned the idea, in spite of the...you see I couldn't get U.S. Steel to give me permission to cast in that; it was a secret formula, and British Steel wouldn't do it. But Sheffield University said, 'We have the formula, and we will make

you some little castings, and we'll have them out to weather to see how castings go'. Maybe they're still there to this day. But having seen, on the buildings, that it is not foolproof against rust I abandoned the idea. And that was why it was cast in resin as a temporary measure. And I was going to have it paint-sprayed in camouflage colours.....

End of F2406 Side A

F2406 Side B

You were talking about the camouflage colours you were going to have the 'Arm' painted in.

Yes. But we have had now since the end of the Second World War so much fighting all over the world, we're all used to seeing camouflage on combat jackets and all the rest of it, I thought no, it's too literary to have that. And so in fact, having got it, it's still downstairs, it's been shown in various places, and I painted it, sprayed it, with different colours.

Did you do that yourself, or did you have it done?

No, I did it on a maquette. I was very friendly with a resin firm, and excellent firm in Midhurst.

Oh right, the one you still use?

Yes. And they had someone who helped me spray the big thing, I mixed the colours, and it looked very good. And that was sent to Expo 88, in its new colours.

And what's that firm called? Lawrence, what's it called?

Edward Lawrence, yes, Midhurst. And they were doing...

They did that giant arm for Saddam...

Yes, for Iraq.

Yes, exactly.

Yes, they did colossal things. He was a very clever man. In conjuction with a bronze foundry, let's say Morris Singer, he would enlarge from a tiny thing to a colossal great

size, and that would be handed over to the foundry who would then cast it. And so he knows everything about resin. One of the most extraordinary things was, he has done a whole room from Buchenwald, or the concentration camps for a museum in New York, painted. Nothing you have seen so gloomy and terrifying as these walls. And so he is very...now he did that.

That was later on.

That was later.

I mean when did you first start using them, the firm near Midhurst?

Well I can't remember, I forget.

Anyway that was later on.

Yes.

But the 'Arm' that you were talking about, that you made in...

I've had here all along.

Yes, it was a one-off was it?

One-off, yes.

Yes, and that was in what you call resin, and some people call...

Most people call fibreglass.

Yes, because in your Arts Council exhibition catalogue that toured in 19...whenever it is...

It will say polyester, polyester resin and fibreglass. Well that's the correct title, but I just call it in a slang way resin.

Yes I see, yes. Sorry, that catalogue I was talking about was 1972 to '73.

And it is of course reinforced with glass fibre.

That gives it rigidity.

Yes, rigidity. So now that was the '(Big) Arm', which is still downstairs, and one day maybe it will be cast in something else. Then I did another arm work.

Can I just ask you something. You were using resin there.

Yes.

Was that slightly because you were reacting against bronze, or is that a positive reaction against bronze, or was it because...?

No, it was in fact...I used the '(Big Arm' in resin because I felt against using Corten steel, and this was...I didn't want...for some reason or other I didn't want it in bronze. Maybe I thought if I got it back, I still would have it in...I hadn't quite decided against Corten. And then I finished in Berlin, I had come back, and it was moved here, and it was then I packed it in as an idea. I told you about the little bits they had, the formula.

Yes you did, yes.

And there it's still to this day, but I like it painted in colour now. But I hadn't finished with arms. And then I did a thing with two arms. If you imagine a huge figure, and two arms at the sides, rather in a kind of boomerang shape seen from the side, and then no body in between, these two arms held in space. You imagine that, on a table

top, with a link or tie between the bottom of the arms and the table top, and the table top had very sound, thick square legs.

Yes. But was the table top on its side or as a table?

Oh standing upright. That kind of thing you see. But maybe there isn't...there should be a picture in that book somewhere; I'm sure there is somewhere. It's better to see it. [BREAK IN RECORDING] .....the casting. There you see a collar or link between the castings. This had to be done with very powerful bolts into the table part, which was fabricated out of roll[ph] plate. And there was the combination of organic plastic shapes with the geometry of the lower thing. And that, well later it went to Lympstone, that is the commandants' court in the Lympstone commando...the Royal Marines training centre. It was moved from there to another site which was better.

Yes, but that was a little bit later.

That was later.

So you had started doing this piece, 'Both Arms'...

In Berlin. Cast by Noack...

Off your own bat. And then, later on you received that commission from the Royal...

No, first of all that cast was bought by Japan. It was sent, together with the '(Big) Arm' and the 'Folded Arms' to Japan, and they liked that one, and they said we're going to buy it, for their new museum called Hakone, a marvellous place in the mountains, 40 miles south of Tokyo. And then it was sent back, they said no, we can't buy it, the exchange in New York was too bad. Then the exchange got better they said we want it back again, so they had it after all. So it had three rides in a Jumbo jet, and it was nine foot high, it was quite a big job to go. It must have travelled on its side to get it in the hold.

And was that the first time a Japanese museum had bought something of yours?

I don't know. They may have bought something small, but that was the biggest outside one. Oh yes, they had work in another place, but smaller things. But that went to this marvellous museum, where I had an exhibition later. This was owned by a Mr Shikanai, who owned Channel 8, Tokyo, television. Now, that was 'Both Arms'; that was two-and-a-half metres high, two metres long and oh, nearly a metre wide.

And so have we got a date for that 'Both Arms'?

Yes, '69.

Right. And did you make that...did you finish that in Berlin? Yes, you did, yes.

Yes. Yes, I modelled the arms in the studio, and it was cast, though it may not have been quite finished when I left. I would have gone back; I remember going back to see it, because it had to be fitted in with this other work. After all I did the whole '(Big) Arm' first, that took me months to do, but I may have seen it, I can't quite remember. There was another thing called 'Big Doll' I made. That was resin and wood underneath that thing.

Yes. That was 1968.

Yes. And that is still downstairs, but the maquette for it, a little one, was taken up by, do you know Joe Studholme, who owns 'Editions Alecto'?

Yes, I know exactly who you mean, I don't know him.

And he fancied a little one, and he made a multiple of that in Italian resin, and had it beautifully packaged, and it went all over the place. It went to America, it went to Artcurial, where before I knew I was going to be involved with them I saw it there. And...

What, he lent his one, or he got...?

No, it was sold. It was sold at a low price; it was only what, about nine inches high, ten inches high.

Right. Was that the first time you had started drawing on the face? There are some eyes aren't there, visible on this. Is that the first time.

Quite right, that was the first one on a big one.

And how did you achieve that then? Did you literally paint on it at the end? What happened?

No. No, this was very tricky. I knew what the shapes were going to be. And you see the resin (it's cast in a mould, in a plaster mould), it is brushed in. Now therefore, I did it with black resin paint mixed; I painted the eye and ears on the surface of the mould, which was insulated so that it would come off, and then a resin was put over that. The reason for that being that the thing is flush; those eyes are not like stuck on, they are absolutely level with the surface of the head.

So they were the first things that you did then into the mould?

Yes. I painted it directly into the mould, and then the white resin went on top of that, and so it was all one homogenous, all one thing.

I see. Because that is really rather different isn't it, from anything you had done before.

Yes it was.

I mean you've still got the geometric table, but...

Yes. Now this was part of the change that, together with using the plastic rounded shapes and geometry I also started doing drawings, trying to do drawings with sculpture, which I never really succeeded with. What I tended, well I did in those two instances there, having a back plate with a screen-printed image, and a figure in front with a bit of paint on, say the hair or something like that, and the whole thing then bolted together.

Yes, that was slightly later.

It was a bit later, the Seventies wasn't it. I abandoned that idea. The latest was a big screen downstairs. It's not a screen, it's a relief.

Yes, with a figure in profile.

Called 'Return to Eden', about four figures, all pointing to the end figure which is a girl with a face. And that is a face, was a screen print, and that was printed on the resin. That was the last resin job I did. So then there was...that table I did in Berlin.

Is that slightly related to the bed ones that you did?

A bed...

1968.

It doesn't look much like a bed, but it's got two bed ends anyhow!

Yes. Because I don't think you've mentioned that work you did, the bed, earlier on.

There was a big model and you had a photograph of it a moment ago. There is the bed. That in fact is Jossy, and she gave me the idea. She was angry one night and turned over, and she didn't notice that half of her was exposed to public view so to speak, and the bedclothes were on top. I thought my God, that's a marvellous idea. So that was the maquette, and I did a big one which is downstairs of that.

So that one is '65, isn't it, so it says here, the small model, bronze, 1965, yes. And the 'Bed Version III'...

That was a bit later.

Yes, '68, that was aluminium.

Yes, and that's '68, the arm model, maquette. Now those I think are most of the...there were one, two, three big jobs in that time, and some small ones. [BREAK IN RECORDING] It was very exciting being in Berlin at that time, for two or three reasons which I hadn't anticipated of course, because I knew nothing about it. First of all, they started building their national gallery right on the edge, against the wall. And this was designed by Mies van der Rohe, and a huge great black building, with one enormous room inside. They started that when I was there, and it was finished just as I left. And I was lucky to meet Mies. There were Mies van der Rohe, Marino Marini, just before he died, and Henry Moore there, and I met them all three, it was very nice. But that building was dominating in Berlin, and the first Director was a man in Berlin called Werner Haftmann, who was a very clever man; he was the director of...opened exhibitions, and wrote a massive book which I have here, a present from the Marlborough, published by Lund Humphries, a book on modern art. He was a great authority on modern art. Now, the second thing I want to mention was, I didn't want to...I told you about not wanting a teacher in German.

Yes, you mentioned that before, yes. You didn't want a Herr Professor, you wanted someone young, and...

I had Sami, and I mentioned the 1,000 free lessons, did I?

No you didn't.

Well, I went to this place where I was allowed a thousand free lessons in German, which was an enormous number. It was here, oh, that John McEwen who made the

first tapes was confused, because I talked about Nietzsche when I was at the Slade, I talked about his book, 'Thus Spake Zarathustra', which I called, 'Also Sprach Zarathustra', which is easier to say in German, and John corrected me, he said, 'You didn't know German in those days'. Well I didn't bother, it wasn't important; I did know a little, because I had done German at school. One did French, but then one chose whether one wanted to do Latin or German, and I picked on German. So I had...may I say I was never any good at foreign languages. I can get by with normal conversation in French, but when I speak French to a Frenchman he immediately tries to speak English if he possibly can. So that will give you an idea how bad it is. Now, Sami was an excellent person, but she was a tremendous radical enthusiast. And this was the time, beginning of the enormous student demonstrations in Berlin and in Paris. In Berlin every Sunday there were great demonstrations, and sometimes with police and water cannon dispersing them. And I used to go to these because the students I felt were...their protests were right. And of course in Paris it was very serious; they combined with the workers, and they very nearly toppled the government, and...

Yes exactly.

...and only de Gaulle managed to stop that. Have you got something you're worried about?

No, no.

Sami then, towards the end I began to see less of her because she got involved with a young man in the free university who was even more radical than she was, and just as I left they were picked up one day by the police with her Volkswagon full of Molotov cocktails on the way to blow up America House. It wasn't the embassy, it was America House, the cultural centre. Well I don't know what happened to the young man who I met (I had a meal with them one night together), but she was sent to a male prison in solitary confinement for a year, and then to a normal prison, a women's prison, and from there she wrote to me, writing about the experiences she had had of solitary confinement. A very resilient girl. She seemed to have found it interesting. I

met her briefly, she had a shop off Kurf□rstndamm in Berlin. That was the end of Sami. But she was splendid. She taught me all about politics. She lent me the books, told me what to get. And it was very difficult to be in Berlin at that time without taking sides, and naturally one was on the side of the students because they were for a more...for reform. And I met briefly Rudi Dutschke, and quite a lot of the students who were the leaders at the time. Now...

Can we just have what your teacher's surname was? What was she called?

I greatly regret to say I forgot.

It doesn't matter, I'll find it later.

It'll be in my books somewhere. She was always Sami to me. Then, living near, working near, there was a famous French musicologist who was really dealing with music, ethnic music from different parts of the world, and he had an assistant who came to see me quite a bit, because they were only five or ten minutes away and he knew I was in Berlin because I was a foreign sculptor working in Berlin, he had heard of me, and he used to come for a talk. He spoke perfect English and he was very aristocratic indeed. He was a prince, Rudolf, Prinz zur Lippe. And I felt in a way that I was instrumental in his then great interest in radical political thinking. He wrote books on the whole thing later, and became a writer which I couldn't begin to understand in German; even his cousin couldn't understand it! He once stayed there for a week. Now, he had a dinner one night and there was a girl there who was very beautiful indeed, with tobacco coloured eyes, a very rich kind of brown colour, and I thought she was marvellous, and she was married to an actor, and I saw both of them a lot.

And what were they called?

Bantzer. She...this girl was married to the actor, was called BANTZER; at the moment I can't remember his Christian name.

But the girl is the person you're talking about, what was she called?

The girl was married to...her maiden name was von Haeften, and one day she said would I like to go to Plutzensee. Well first of all I saw the snowdrops in front of her father's photograph in the room, and I thought well that's very touching. It was...girls don't usually put snowdrops in front of their father's photograph in a room, it meant something more. And I found out what it was. So we went to Plutzensee; yes, sure there was a big lake, but next to it was a huge prison. We went in, there was a shrine, and then into a huge room where there was a big grey cross with hooks. And the door was opened, and she said, 'My father must have seen that tree', and then she told me all about it. She had kept it secret until then. Her father was called von Haeften, he was a diplomat, and he was in the small group of people in the von Stauffenberg bomb plot to assassinate Hitler, which all the world knows was not a success. The heavy wooden table saved Hitler's life, he only hurt his arm. There was a terrible round-up and massacre, something like a thousand or two thousand people were killed because of that. But Dodo, because of her aristocratic background, and she was three at the time, somehow she wasn't killed, and her mother was saved too. She was sent to an institution, her mother was. But that was the rather terrible story, to see this room where they were all killed by thin piano wire, hanged, and filmed, so that Hitler could gloat on it that night, or the next day. And this was the terror that happened in Berlin. Her uncle Werner von Haeften was also...he was lucky, he was shot against a wall.

He was involved in this plot too?

Yes, he was also involved. But he hadn't to go through the file, which was a nightmare. Now through her I met other people who, families of the people who were in the plot. The von Trotts and von Moltkers, these are famous names, people know about them. And I stayed in one of the von Trotts brother, he was killed but the brother had a mill, sawing up pine trees, and he was a very nice man, I saw him. And so Dodo introduced me to people who were...well they were all privileged people.

Mm, so you met a lot of...

I had a cross...a marvellous cross section of German life. I had the radical youth from Sami, and then I had people who had let's say estates and things, and were great names on the other side. But interestingly enough, Rudolph, the prince, then later when I met him later, he said well, it was terrible that they were killed, but he felt that had they killed Hitler, their replacement of Hitler might not have resulted in a very go-ahead Germany, because they were all rather right-wing, conventional people. So, who knows. But that was Dodo, and eventually I was absolutely...well it was very difficult, she was married, and I could never take a woman away from her husband, and I remember I said that we must stop this, we must stop meeting. Then she went to America, and in fact...she couldn't have any interesting...she couldn't have a child with her first husband. When they separated and they both married someone else, immediately they both had children.

How extraordinary.

And it's as though somehow nature, if it isn't exactly quite right, can make a stand. And so...Dodo married a marvellous man who I am very friendly with, Arnold Steinhardt, who was a great violinist in the Guanieri String Quartet. And I often see him, I have stayed with them, and the Guanieri String Quartet. And when he plays in London I go and hear him play. Now there was that, and there was George Rickey, the American, the constructivist sculptor who I used to see a lot of. And then I was asked to teach in the 'Hochschule'. I wasn't meant there to teach, but because of the student revolts, the students wouldn't go to do their work, they were out talking politics in the bars, and going on demonstrations. And they felt that if I, as a known name in the city, if I went in to do some teaching it might have the effect of encouraging the students back to do some work. And although I didn't particularly want to teach I did do it for one semester, which is half a year, going one day a week. Which was really very interesting, because I liked them, and it did have an effect.

Did they come back?

Yes, they came back, because they saw that I was on their side, and somehow I tried to make it clear to them that this was the one time in their life when they could work, and that they should keep on working, whatever their politics were. And I brought a gang of them, about eight or nine, to London (at their expense of course, paid by the Hochschule), and they were fascinated to go around. I took them to the Royal College. And little things; they noticed that the doors weren't shut in the different rooms, whereas in the Hochschule each professor had a huge studio for himself, that's why he had got the job, to get the studio, and then a smaller studio for his half dozen students to work in. But they didn't mix with the other professors, the other professors in the other rooms, because there was no communication between them, except a big corridor with big doors that were all shut. And I took them to...oh, what was north London, an art school that was very radical?

Hornsey?

Hornsey. They talked there to the staff and the people there. I took them all over the place, and they had a great time. Now, I met a woman called Wibke von Bonin, who was the Director of Films for Cologne television. Each area in Berlin, the lender had its own television, or as in Germany, Deutsche Rundfunk which is the German broadcasting. And she made films, organised films, she asked if she could make a film on my work. I said no no, let's not do it on my work, let's do it on my visit to Berlin. Because I was fascinated with Berlin. The architecture, everything was absolutely gripping. And so we did make a film.

And the title of that film?

The film was called 'Armitage in Berlin'. It wasn't terribly good. It was shown on television here and there and so on. I have a copy here. I don't know why...it was made by a professional film maker for television, and we did various things, where I went. I mean I took them in to see the students. That was the biggest strain because I didn't know how these tough students...

Would react to television cameras.

How they would react to this film crew coming in. But they were very good, and they talked and they filmed. And that was really one of the best parts of the film. I took him to the Noack foundry of course, I took him to the studio, what I was working on, I took him to the wall, I took him to see my favourite walk by the Wannsee, where the swans were always by one's side, and other things like that.

And you went...did you go over to the East?

Yes, I took him to East Berlin, or his team, and I went because Sami had introduced me to a famous singer in East Berlin called Wolf Biermann, who was a great communist but he attacked the East German government in his songs. They had in Berlin and in Paris something that we don't have in London, that is political cabaret.

Yes.

You may have heard of it, it's a cabaret but it is really politically based. And for that, they didn't like what he sang, and he was under house arrest; he couldn't leave Berlin - he couldn't leave his house really, or very little. But people could go and see him; I could go and see him, but I couldn't take my film people there.

Right. And what was his name again, the singer?

Biermann, BIERMANN. A great communist father, and all the rest of it. And I'm going to play his record in a minute. I bought a record of his, and it brings back the whole feeling, when I do. So, Dodo came with me, and she took photographs, snaps, from her camera, stills; and that, the stills could go into the film. But we were wondering round the city; we could go for example...we couldn't interview him because he was in solitary confinement, but we filmed the well-known...let's say Karl Marx Platz, we could film it, it was open to the public and everything else. And the sound girl suddenly said, 'We had better stop, there's a police car has been round us twice'. So we quickly folded our cameras and the sound, went off to have a meal, and were going to get out. They went to their gate through the wall, but when I got to

mine I was stopped by the frontier police. So they took me in to the back room, the officer said take off your coat, empty your pockets. They knew me; they had seen my car coming in anyhow, it's a very conspicuous grey long Safari. And this is about what we were doing, what were we doing in the...taking films. So I told them we were making a film, that I was a sculptor. He said who...he found my diary on the table, and went through it page by page. And he said, 'I see you have been several times to East Berlin. What are you doing?' So, I quickly thought, well I am a sculptor, I am seeing the sculptures of East Berlin, especially, and I mentioned the name of a sculptor who was a very devout communist, as it were to make it better. And...oh it's true, I was meeting them. And then another one came in. For two hours I was ensconced with them. Now, I had no diplomatic protection in East Berlin, because we had no diplomatic.....

End of F2406 Side B

F2407 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 28th of October 1991. Tape Eight.

And so you were just talking on the previous tape about when you were at Checkpoint Charlie and you were kept there for two hours, and you didn't have any diplomatic protection in the East, obviously.

Yes, and if they had wanted they could imprison me, forever if they wanted to. And so I had to be very careful what I said. And it got a bit tiring after two hours of questioning, without my coat on and my things all over the floor. However, in the end they said, 'You can go'. So, I scuttled off as quickly as I could.

And rather careful after that I should think.

And as a matter of fact it was a warning, and I never went back. It was near the end of my Berlin visit.

I'm surprised that the German television crew didn't clear it before they went.

Clear what?

Clear permission, get permission to go and film.

You couldn't. There was no diplomatic...East Germany...well you see East Berlin was in East Germany.

Yes I know.

West Berlin was in the middle of East Germany. And so, they couldn't dictate any terms, they couldn't ask. They could have done. But anyhow, [are we still working?] My German friends had been gone long ago, two hours before. I got through

Checkpoint Charlie, and then I met up with them, and they had already informed the police that I had been detained at the customs, and were glad to see me. And I was glad to get out. So, that was the end of that Berlin part of the film, but it wasn't quite the end of Berlin. I wanted to say I made from Berlin, journeys all over the place. I went to L□beck, where there is a marvellous brick Romanesque cathedral, and it was there that Buxtehude, who taught Bach, played. And I went to an island called Sult off Hamburg, which was beautiful with daz white sand. This is again with Dodo and her husband. I went to Hamburg, and we sat at the Baroque organ where Bach played, and a friend of mine was playing on the organ, and I made a few silly noises. But just to touch the pedals that Bach had touched himself was a thrill in a childish sort of way. In Berlin Noack, who was then a young man, he had just taken over from his father; he was third generation in the firm, his grandfather started the firm.

Yes, you mentioned him before.

And he was a very young man and he took me to the Big Apple and the Little Apple, these were nightclubs that we often went to, and things like that. He eventually, he did very well out of Henry Moore, made his life really, and he made many many huge casts, and he had taken already to sailing the yacht, and yacht racing. I mentioned it. Did I mention that he won the Admirals Cup?

Yes you did.

So that's all that. When I go and see him we go and have a meal in various places. There are always new restaurants in Berlin. I stayed with him. The last time we went, and it was...in the woods, the wild boar come to the road to pick up bits of food people give to them in cars. It's extraordinary to see this great wild boar with a sow, and the little ones, and the little ones still have stripes on them, which is strange, to see what looks like a pig, but isn't a pig. And when I was there also - I'm finished now Berlin...[oh, I'm going to blow my nose]...I was approached by a lady who was from Poland on her way back to Poland from England, where she had been making notes and things about my dear friend Peter Potworowski, who was the painter, who you may know.

Indeed, yes. Was she...she wasn't Irena Modernska was she?

Yes I think so. No, that...

No, that was later on.

That was...isn't that Peter's wife? No, well this is Irena Modernska, the lady from the museum.

Yes, they did a huge catalogue of his work, yes.

Yes, well she was making notes, and she wanted to come and see me on her way back because I was very friendly with Peter, so she stayed, and then I...

And was this in Berlin?

Yes. And she had broken her journey, it was very nice of her. And so I talked a lot about Peter, what I knew of him. And then we were having a meal, and I had already booked her a meal at the hotel room, and I suddenly found she was weeping. So I said, 'What's the matter, why are you weeping?' And she said, 'I don't like to say it. I haven't a penny'. Because she hadn't got enough allowance from Warsaw, from the authorities, to pay for her to break her journey in Berlin. So of course, with the greatest pleasure I paid for her hotel in Berlin. But it was rather touching to find this museum director so upset that she couldn't afford to pay for her hotel bill. Well that's somehow typical of Berlin life.

And did she come after Potworowski had died?

It must have been.

Yes it was, of course it was, yes.

She must have done, otherwise she would be talking to Potworowski. Oh I don't know, I think...

Yes, he died I think about '63 or something.

Yes, he might have died a little bit earlier, I don't know. Well an amusing little momentary thing. Oh the great building in Berlin was the Academie der Kunste, and this was built by an architect called Duttman, who was very good, and this was a place where they had exhibitions and very well designed, a sort of garden on the roof and drinks and everything else, with international membership. Also at the Hochschule, the art school, which was gigantic with big rooms, the Director said would I come to his 'Herrenabend'.

Like a sort of stag night is that, kind of thing?

Yes, that's right. But these were not...a stag night really signifies to our mind students in a university having a great drink, although there were no girls, but these were more elderly people drinking schnapps together, and not a woman in sight. His wife was making the meal outside in the distance, and brought the meal in, and one never saw a lady for hours on end, which I don't like, I like a woman, or two, or three or more, to be in the room at the same time. Now, I mentioned already, Rudolf Lippe, the prince, his cousin was called Rixe von Oenhausen, who was in London only about a month ago, having a course at Sotheby's or Christie's, I forget which. And she came to see me. And so I teased her about this 'Herrenabend', which is an idea I didn't really like. I mean a group of students having a really good beery night together is one thing, but to have a lot of old men all together is something I don't really fit in with, but in Germany they do. And so well she said, 'That's nothing. Here I am in London and I've been many times, and what I don't like is, when ladies retire after dinner in London they retire up to a small bedroom, because of the smallness of the house, and sometimes the beds aren't even made, and with the uncomfortable chairs in the bedroom you have to wait till the men drink their port and cigars downstairs'. And she was joking of course, but it was rather interesting that people bothered to do that in a small house, in London. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Grafin Rixe, Countess, she was asked to English Society if you like to call it. And that was why...oh no, God help us!...no no, they don't, but she was asked to various places where she was...and it was rather funny. Now, I think that's the end of Berlin. I came home.

Wait, I think there is one thing that happened to you in Berlin, when you were in Berlin, that you have forgotten about, very modestly, which was the CBE.

Oh yes. Oh my goodness! Suddenly there came a telegram and then a letter, would I accept the CBE. And it was rather a shock, because I was as it were in exile, and here after all someone did think about me. But even so it was a very strange feeling to be in Berlin, in a republic, where... I did mention it to one or two; I kept it secret really, but some of my closest friends, and they said well, 'What British Empire?' teasing me, and that sort of thing. However, so I had to...I think...or whether I was here on a visit; yes, I was here on a visit and I had to go and be invested with the CBE by the Queen, and then I shot off back to Berlin again. Just before I had finished entirely. So that was...

That was '69.

Yes. That was the end of Berlin. And it was really, although I was doubtful, it was a wonderful thing to have done. Because of the conditions in Berlin, the student demonstrations and one thing and another, meeting all these people, meeting the von Trotts, and it was absolutely packed with all kinds of material. And so I came back and worked for a few weeks, when I suddenly had an invitation to go to Boston University.

But before we go on to Boston, can I just ask you, I mean did you come away from Berlin with any ideas that you wanted to work on? Did you get any ideas from there to bring back?

As I had taken ideas there?

Yes.

No I don't think so. I was really carrying out ideas there, I wasn't...

Without too many interruptions.

Yes, yes. I was isolated, I was working away, and for ideas really one needs to be free, looser, making doodles and thinking things up like that. And I had enough to do, realizing the work, and so...and the trees hadn't started yet. I think that I might as well go straight on to Boston. I wanted really...

Or, do you want to play that record you...

Yes, thank you. I want to play a record of Wolf Biermann, the man I went to see in Berlin who was under house arrest. [plays recording of song]

So that song was called 'Noch'. Do you know what he was talking about in it?

Well he is really talking about, the land is quiet, waiting, waiting for the change. Still, it's still quiet. That really is all it's about. And it was really for this that he was confined to his room really more or less. But it's rather hideous in a way, but it really brings it back, the feeling of Berlin, and the passions and the political force that goes on. Joan Baez I told you, she went to see him, she was so excited by his guitar playing. There are other quieter songs on that, but I put that one on because it was the most savage.

Indeed, yes.

Now, at home a little while, and then I had an invitation to go to Boston, to Boston University.

What, was that to be an Artist-in-Residence?

Yes. And they really wanted me again for a year, and I said oh, it's impossible to do that, I've just been away for a year and a half in Berlin. But I had an idea in myself that I would be going to pick up fantastic new techniques and so on, but it wasn't that kind of university at all. I said I'll come for one semester, half a year. And so once again I packed my bags. This time I didn't take any ideas for work. And I had to book up because in that part of...you see Boston and Cambridge are together, they are two cities all squashed together, and there are many students there. There's Boston University, there's Harvard, and MIT, and Brandeis is not far away. And great congestion of students, and the girls' college there, I've forgotten the name of it. So I had to book up a room before I went, there was no...one couldn't get a room. So I had...there was a professor at Boston University who was away on a sabbatical, and I could have his flat, and so I booked it up, and that would be my, as it were...I had to pay for it for the period that I was there. So there was no getting out of it. When I got there however, I found the university very strange. It wasn't at all what I thought, with full of modern techniques and things that I knew very little about that I would learn about. They were in revolt against that, which is rather interesting. They wanted to go back to the Renaissance, before modern technology. It was very hard teaching students who wanted to go back to ancient techniques, things like that. Actually the students were marvellous. I had a little group of about five or six, or seven, that's all, and we were great friends, they were splendid. And it wasn't all that bad, I got to like it, and I loved being at Harvard, and Harvard Square, with the marvellous bookshops for the university, and the restaurants. And the students took me out, and we got to know each other very well. Picnics down by the sea. And one girl always...I had a little desk where I kept my papers and she would sit on a corner and talk for ten minutes. She was very pretty. And the minute I left she...she used to do...what is that gliding, you hang from a plane and you go sailing all over the place called?

Hang-gliding..

Hang-gliding, she used to do that. And a student wrote to me the moment I got back that she had been killed, she had been dropped, and it was terrible. And so this girl said could I write to her parents, who were broken-hearted, because they knew I had

taught them all. So I had this difficult letter, of writing a consoling letter to the parents. Which I was able to say nice things about the girl, how she was good at working, and talked, and all the rest of it. But that was only part of the thing of being in Boston at the time, because the student unrest that I had had in Berlin was also invading the USA. And towards the end of my visit there was the infamous Kent shooting, when the students demonstrated and the police opened fire, and one or two were killed. And for that reason, most universities, right through the States, closed down in protest. And so once again there was the heat of politics, and Vietnam was still going on you see. And it was quite extraordinary to go...for example I would walk in a little park in Boston near where my friends I will talk about in a moment were on a Sunday. And there were people sitting all over the place, on the ground, talking and talking, and the things they were talking about, these were the normal American citizens, were quite extraordinary. Left, Right, young, old, black, white, old, young; these huge contrasts. They weren't talking about gossip. And this...in the bars as well, everyone everywhere was talking. And this was terribly exciting; I felt that life would never be the same again. But in fact it did go back to normal. But anyhow, the result of all this student revolt added to the national feeling against the war in Vietnam, and L B Johnson was President at the time, and as you know, the Americans pulled out. Now I had a friend in Boston, which was very nice to have. I had met him in London in the Fifties when he was Editor of the 'Time Life' magazine.

Yes, I think you mentioned him.

Yes, Bob Manning. And I told you that he then took...he was the editor of the Sunday edition of the 'Herald Tribune', he was one of Kennedy's under Secretaries of State, and eventually he had a nice job then being editor of the prestigious 'Atlantic Monthly', a literary magazine, and I used to see them a lot. And they had marvellous friends, political friends from LBJ days, and people like John Updike, twice I had a meal with him, and it was another contact with the people there. I'm trying to think, there was something else about that. [BREAK IN RECORDING] It was very funny, at the university the Bursar, who was a very respectable person in the university, with a smart suit and clean shoes and white collar and tie, also wore a big necklace of amber beads outside. And this was to show his allegiance to the university, and also

to the students as well. He had a foot in both camps. But also, Philip Guston, the great American painter who died later, had been teaching there, and he got an honorary doctorate when I was there, and he made a little talk and I met him and it was nice.

Had you not met him before in your previous trip?

Yes, I had, with Pollock and the others, a long time before. And he then was very famous, and very good. Anyhow, it was another time of meeting. I did very little work; I did some prints and that was all. But it wasn't long, it was just one semester.

You did prints on your own account, but you taught the students sculpture.

No. I taught sculpture.

Yes.

But I did the prints on my own account.

Yes.

But it was very difficult, because I hadn't any...I didn't take any equipment to work with. But they were all very nice, I did enjoy it. And then of course the professor whose flat I was living in had endless books, libraries, and I read and I read and I read as much as I could of the books he had. [Is that finishing now?]

No, I was just checking.

So that finished the Boston...

But the prints you did then, what were they?

Well there were some wacking great funny black and white prints on resin which I did, downstairs. They were really a joke, nothing very much.

And were they ever shown anywhere?

No.

And did you have any show out there at the time?

No. Nothing at all.

And you had nothing when you came back, about your time there, or did you? No.

I don't know where...I haven't got my notes to hand.

No, but you didn't do any work there, so you wouldn't have had much to show for it, no.

No, I didn't have anything. Here we are.

Were you still with...you hadn't left the Marlborough at this stage, or had you? No.

Not yet, but this was when I did. I got back, I had been to Boston in '70. By 1972 I had so much left the kind of work I had done before. I was trying out drawing with sculpture and experiment with bits of paper and so on, and I thought well this is no good, and I resigned from the Marlborough. I think they were very glad I left them, because I wasn't doing what they would like me to do. And it was very interesting, that was 1972, and I was in New York for an exhibition, probably at Paul Rosenberg, and I went to the Marlborough Gallery. Did I mention the quarrel with the Marlborough?

Yes.

That they wanted to have me in New York, and not Rosenberg.

Indeed, yes.

But this must have been my last show with Rosenberg, and I went into the gallery and there I met Lee Krasner, I told you...

Yes, you mentioned that, on the day that Pollock died.

And I mentioned the fact that she said Pollock died. Now, this was another reason why... I had already resigned from the Marlborough, and so then Kirkman also resigned, Henry Moore resigned; there was a big exodus from the Marlborough. Now, as to what happened then, I think that I would like to mention my friends the McEwens, because I found it very nice at what I thought very childishly a difficult time, just before I went to Berlin when I thought I was without friends. One is very touchy about reaction of people to one's work. I really don't mind, because one has to take no notice of what people say, either favourable or unfavourable; it has to mean nothing to one at all. But it is...if you are living in a country it does have an effect on one if one feels that nobody has any interest in you at all, which of course wasn't true, it was just how I felt. But I did have some friends that were a comfort, and I had met, I think I mentioned at the time of going to Cliveden...

Yes, that's where you met Rory and his wife.

Who was sitting at my table and he became then one of my closest friends until he died only a few years ago. And I used to go to his home in Scotland with the McEwens. And they had an extended family. I was used to being the only son as it were of my family, with a mother who was in a mental home at the end and all the rest of it, and here was a family of many people, and very nice people, and lovely country, and I enjoyed very much going there. And Rory's daughter became my god-daughter, Christabel, and I had lovely visits. And I met Jossy through one of them.

Through Gumeye, yes, you mentioned that, yes.

I mentioned that. And that kind of thing. So this is just a momentary thing to say, that there were periods when I... Also I liked it because they were not up to their necks in art, they were...one could talk about it, but they weren't...Rory was, but the others weren't. And this was a great change. It was nice food and nice country and nice people, so that was all very good. But when Rory died I found it too much to really continue. It sounds awful to say this, but well he was the main friend; though I have seen Romana once or twice, I haven't been back to Scotland.

But you're good friends with John.

With John. That was...when I was in Berlin, Romana, Rory's wife suggested that Johnny should come and live in this house, because I had had problems with the previous lodger, and Johnny was ideal. He stayed here a year.

What, here? Oh really.

Yes, in this house. He had just left Cambridge. And so he had a fairly nice home. He had it at a peppercorn rent, and you know, really paying for the heating and lighting, that's all, and his telephone bill. And when I came over for the odd weekend it was nice to meet him. So that's how I got to know him very well. I must say that Berlin was terrific, but I did get a mysterious malaise. After about two or three months in the city, one didn't...one felt odd. And then all it needed would be say to go by car to Hanover, outside in West Germany, and it would all fall off one's shoulders, and one would feel fine. And it was something to do with the claustrophobic nature of Berlin, and that's the only ill-effect that I found. I must say I wouldn't have liked to live there forever. But now the wall has gone, and it's marvellous to feel that they are all one people, and they are called Germany, Deutschland, and not East and West Germany. Because I rang Noack to make sure this morning! And that really finishes that business. So I think we can end there for the time being.

<u>End of F2407 Side A</u>

F2407 Side B

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, 6th of November 1991. Tape Eight, Side B.

So, last time you were talking about when you returned from your year...not year actually, whatever it was, semester at Boston, Artist-in-Residence at Boston University.

Yes. And within two years I resigned from the Marlborough Gallery, with which I had been...I had been with them for 12 years. They looked after me, and I think I mentioned this before, but it was quite a strain. I had no money, I sold my car, I had a lodger in my bedroom.

This was after you had resigned you had no money?

Yes, to try and survive. And I slept down here on the sofa. And so there was some unpleasantness, but, I was happy. I was happy to be free. I don't want to run down the Marlborough so much; they were very helpful at first. They were bold, they sent my work all over the place, more than any other gallery could have done. But my problem was, I could not supply them with a large sculpture exhibition every three years. I needed time to waste on experiment. Anyhow, I suddenly resigned. And this accounted for the financial difficulties I had, but I didn't mind that, I was happy, and then things recovered, and then I was all right. Now the big thing was at that time, and I want to speak carefully about this. Now Frank Lloyd who was the owner of the Marlborough, got into trouble with 'adopting', shall I say, a large number of Mark Rothko's paintings after he had committed suicide, and he had no right to them. And the daughter got a good lawyer, and there was a trial, a public trial, and she won, and Lloyd shot out of the USA and would have been subpoenaed had he gone back. Eventually he made a generous gift for students, and was pardoned presumably.

Right. And so did Lloyd...was he really based at the Marlborough in New York then towards the end, rather than here?

Yes, he always had the London one, but there was also the one in New York.

Yes. Did he spend more time in New York?

I don't know which he spent more time in, but after the trial he came out of the country because he would have been imprisoned. And I felt that some Americans may have thought that there but for the grace of God go I; they were only glad not to be involved in that themselves. Then there was an exodus from the Marlborough. Henry Moore left, James Kirkman, who had handled my work at the Marlborough left, and Lucian Freud left. Kirkman took up Lucian Freud as the artist he was going to look after thereafter. Chadwick of course remained. I had already left, and I haven't been in the gallery since then. And that was the end of the longest association I have had at close quarters with a gallery. I have not had a full-time exclusive gallery in London. I have abroad, because you don't...one can't tell what the ins and outs of foreign business is, so you... I mean the two galleries in Japan, the two in...in Caracas and one in Paris, they I stay with loyally, because it would be foolish to leave them. So, now to go back to work. This was a time when, as a result of the experiments with bits of paper I had done, I got obsessed with folding screens; always have been, all my life. But these were real screens, folding screens, they were...

Made out of what?

Well first there were two mock-ups that are downstairs made of timber frame, and...I don't know what I had, some hardboard and then photographic images, black and white, stuck on. The photographs are over there, which I can show you later. But nothing came of those. You see this work was not recognised at the time. Now it's different. I had a letter about three months ago from the Director of the Mus,e des Arts D,coratifs, which is part of the Louvre, asking if I had modern sculpture as it were, based on or related to domestic objects such as tables, chairs, and screens. And I had, and I sent him a whole lot of photographs, and he said marvellous! What he will do I don't know; he may have an exhibition when he has approached other people, or a book or something like that. So this was not wasted. But then there was

a commission I had at Nottingham University for a piece of sculpture for their new library. And I thought no, I'll make a big screen. They were rather surprised. It was an Arts Council grant I think of about œ2,000, which meant the sculpture could only have been about two foot high, or less.

If it had been in bronze.

If it had been in bronze or aluminium. I worked out what I would do, but no, I was obsessed with the screen. I thought in a big room, a big screen could be...where people were writing they could fold it, put it away, bring it out and divide up the space. And this was well made. I spent every penny of the œ2,000 on the cost of making it.

And did you literally make the screen yourself?

Oh I had it made, and this had to be done meticulously with equipment. It was a five-panel huge screen, six foot...no, seven foot high and nine foot long. And it had continuous nickel-plated hinges, all smart. And it was surfaced, and an enlarged drawing printed by silk-screen on both sides, the same image repeated in reverse on both sides.

They were figures was it again, figures?

Figures, yes, striding along. And they were a bit worried, they said well the students might make graffiti marks on it. I said, 'Good! Let's encourage that!' Make it more interesting. But I don't think they did.

And what was it called then, has it got a title?

I can't remember.

And it was a one-off?

Well I think you could say it would be called 'The Nottingham Screen'. This is just a means of identification. And it was a one-off thing, and I enjoyed...at least I had realized something with the drawings I had done on bits of paper. Now that was an attempt to combine drawing with sculpture. And the screen is an extraordinary thing. It's very economical in its shape; it's self-supporting because of its plan, ziz-zag, and yet there's no body. Immediately...

Sorry to interrupt you, but what year was that, the commission for Nottingham University?

That would be 1973. And then in 1972, just before, I made a small piece of sculpture called 'Bernadette Going to Wales'.

Oh yes, I think I've seen that reproduced.

It's very small; I don't think it's illustrated in any of those [referring to books in room]. She was a friend of mine who I saw a great deal of. She was a brilliant book illustrator, and she then packed it in in London and went to live in a tiny cottage under Snowdon. And I went to see her two or three times, and it was lovely.

That's it. [Looking at reproduction in catalogue]

Yes. So it was made of a slab of plate aluminium on which I had painted the rest of us. Those are us. There is she, because it's raining in Wales, going in the opposite direction. And I sold quite a few of those. I never made it big.

This one is 11 1/2 inches in length, tiny, tiny.

Well it's tiny, and it was the only one I made. Tiny. And there is a cast downstairs which you can see. And she then had a problem with her life which I am not going to go into now, because it doesn't concern anyone else. She married someone, she had a child, and eventually she left and came back. But it was a wonderful cottage with Welsh flags on the floor, and a fire range for cooking and all that kind of thing. Now,

that combined once again a figure with a geometric shape. Also, the next thing I did in 1975 was called 'How Many Miles to Babylon?' This title after Walter de la Mare's haunting poem that you probably know, 'How many miles to Babylon? Three score miles and ten. Can I get there by candlelight? Yes, and back again', which has a strange kind of haunting quality, not much reflected in the piece, which is a very sturdy thing on four legs; more of association with Babylon itself.

And what's that made out of then?

Bronze, black, and there's a cast being made now; Noack has still got one he can do and that is being cast at the moment. And that again had sturdy table legs, and was another thing with plastic rounded figures and geometric shapes. At that time an old friend suddenly died prematurely, which was a shock, a student of mine called Hubert Dalwood. When I first went to Corsham, or Bath, and then moved to Corsham, the first intake, I suppose that was '47, 1947, included Dalwood, and he was bright from the very first day. He knew what he wanted to do, he wasn't interested in doing drawings from plants and all the things, music, and he just stuck to sculpture, and was a very good person to have, and he made a success of it when he left. He had to me an agreeable manner. He had a kind of jokey abrasiveness, which was a strange kind of mixture. But I saw him off and on, and one thing that endeared me to him was that he was always loyal to me, which is a good thing in life.

Absolutely, yes.

Some people aren't, and he was. And so it was...he did in fact extremely well, and one doesn't know what he might have done had he lived longer. So he died, something wrong with his kidneys or something.

Yes. In '76 or so.

Something like that, yes. And that was sad, because there were other good students but he was the one who was most successful. And his work one still sees around at auctions and things like that. Now, then there followed a series of figures which are

different from the others, they don't combine geometry, and I call them oddly, 'July Figures', one, two, three, four versions.

And they are bronze again aren't they?

Yes. And I'll tell you why...that was...they occurred from 1977 to '82. And they were all standing, and they had a feature in common, that is the forearms were sticking out. Now the reason for this, in those years we had enormous heatwaves in the summer, it was quite extraordinary. My waxes that I'm always working with downstairs drooped. Although that room is not in direct sunlight, only when I got them quickly to the foundry where they have a walk-in fridge, were they rigid. Driving in the country, strange things. On the tops of hills you would see cows standing to get the air. And the funniest thing was, I drove past a farm which had a duck pond outside in front, and there was a huge bull sitting on his hind quarters, like a dog with his front legs straight, pulling his behind. Well to see this great animal doing this was extraordinary in that year. This gives you an idea of the heat there was. And so that is why the arms stuck out. There is one I was working on recently at the foundry...

Sorry, why did they stick out?

Well, I was walking round holding my arm; I didn't want to be folding my arms and they were like that. I don't know why, I just did it. And then I saw I was doing it and so I made sculptures like that, Narcissus sculpture.

And they had a slight sort of Egyptian feel to them didn't they, on one?

Well they did a bit, yes.

Their heads.

Yes. Because they were very much right, left and centre. They faced the front, there was a front back and sides. Then there was another series, '77 to '78, which I called 'Design for a Wilderness'. And this, the origin of this came from going to... John

McEwen's sister, Lady Hesketh, lived in and owned an extraordinary house, Easton Neston in Northamptonshire, and outside there was a wonderful high, almost black yew hedge, and behind that a place called The Wilderness. And in my mind I visualized a large bronze, slab-like, with a figure at the outside edge, marching forward so to speak. Not unlike the Bernadette, but more dramatic, and to do with...there's a strange kind of bestial sculpture for gardens, and this...that's more...I don't know...I can't describe it...the king's beasts and things like that, that kind of thing. I never mentioned it to Kisty[ph] that I had never done anything like that. But that's how it started, and I did several maquettes of it. Now then there was...oh just before, the Arts...

You were back in bronze for that again were you?

Yes. No, one was in aluminium. There had been just before an Arts Council touring exhibition to ten English cities, which really was a flop, no one knew what to make of the work, and I didn't sell one thing. I imagined...

But do you normally in Arts Council touring shows, sell work?

Well it went to ten museums, and you would think that they would...

They would have bought something, yes.

Somewhere along the line.

A museum at least, yes.

And I mention only because it was an excellent catalogue.

By Alan Bowness?

No, he wrote the introduction, but that I thought was...the blacks in that you can't get now, it's absolutely incredible.

Well produced you mean?

A well produced Arts Council production. And it was worth doing for that alone. Now we come to a long period of happiness for me. And this is equal in importance with the 1950s when I made 'People in a Wind', I was so excited by Ireland, to go back. Well it happened three times, with the trees as well later. I had made no visits to Ireland since my childhood, in fact I was nervous.

But you had been when you were a young man surely hadn't you?

As a student.

As a student you went, yes.

That was immediately before the war. And after that I didn't go, I got involved...I was six-and-a-half years in the Army, then I was terribly busy here working, and messing about doing things, and travelling, and I never got back there. And I thought I wouldn't like to go because surely it would all be changed; I had such a feeling about the place. But I found it was much the same. There was only one skyscraper in Dublin, the population was still low, only three million in the whole of southern Ireland. And the roads were empty of cars, to drive along without all the traffic was exciting. But I wanted to do one thing, and that was, in the book I mentioned early on by a man called Praegar, who excited me very much, it was all about Ireland, he referred to to The Burren, an area of limestone exposed by the Ice Age, which is unlike anything one has ever seen. And I made an effort to get there, and I did go several times. I made in all about six visits in...

Really.

First I made one...well, one alone and then one with my wife I took, and two more visits alone; once I took Susan Hampshire, who was a girlfriend later, and then last of all one with my friend Alastair and Zandria, his lady. And there it was very sad.

Lackan, which I made a routine visit just to see it, which had always been empty, then I found it had been razed to the ground.

Oh no!

It was terribly sad.

Oh God yes.

And anyhow, one gets over these things. All life ends, I mean there has to be change. But for The Burren, I stayed first of all at a place called Lisdoonvarna, which was right in The Burren nearly, and then at a place, a hotel called The Falls Hotel at Ennistimon, which was owned by the MacNamara family originally, and the MacNamara daughter married Dylan Thomas.

Oh yes of course, yes.

And Augustus John would have stayed there before it was a hotel, in this house, and it was a marvellous house built on a Norman motte, built next to a river, and that was why it was called The Falls Hotel. And from there I would drive out and make etchings and drawings of The Burren, and was immensely happy to do so. Susan Hampshire, I get so bouncy when I get to Dublin, Susan confessed she was worried about enduring the rest of the visit if I was going to carry on like that! Anyhow, Alastair, we went later, then he being very occupied with archaeology we went to New Grange, this amazing walk-in barrow tomb north of Dublin, and many other things we saw, and they loved that. And there is a hotel I always stay in in Dublin, and we had a marvellous time. Now, the thing is, I was always fascinated with James Joyce, especially his first book 'Ulysses', which is all about Dublin as everybody knows, and I knew Dublin, and there were things in that I... I read it first when I was at the Slade. Jo came back with two books from Paris with some friends in a Swedish diplomatic bag. One was James Joyce's 'Ulysses' which was banished in those days, and even more banished was 'Lady Chatterley's Lover', which of course now are

public, all over the place, ever since that poem by that man, 'Sex began in 1963'. Philip Larkin.

Oh yes.

I had somehow got to know southern Ireland's leading architect, Michael Scott, and I went to see him on one of my visits. And I had just come back from my routine tour past Lackan, my mother's home, and I noticed that the big house, the Edgeworths' house, which Edgeworthstown was called after the Edgeworths, had a hospital built on to the back. And I mentioned this to Michael, and he told me a long story about... Well you see, he, being a modern architect he had no opportunity to do anything in southern Ireland except airports and what was the other, hospitals. And here was a hospital he had missed, so he was furious at having missed that! And he lived...he had built himself a round house, a Corbusier-type house in Dalkey, about two miles south of Dublin, next to an inlet in the rocky coast called the Forty-Foot Hole, which I remember swimming in when I was a child, where people do to this day. And on the other side, towering up above, was the Martello tower. That was the tower that Joyce camped out in with Stephen Danulus[ph] and his other friend for a while, which I didn't recognise of course when I was a child. Now Michael had bought that house, he bought the tower, and made it into a Joyce museum. And I would like to play for one moment a fragment of James Joyce reading from 'Anna Livia Plurabella'. [Plays extract - poor quality sound] I apologise for the terrible scruffy sound there. It was made from a recording which I have, a tape recording which I can't play it's so bad. It's a very old recording which I bought at the end of the war - or even during the war - having heard...even then there were 'Desert Island Discs', and who was that famous journalist who also appeared? I've just read...lived in Park Lane, I've forgotten his name. You would know his name well. And I bought a book about him but I couldn't read it, I took it back to the library. Anyhow, why am I saying this? Apropos of...

The recording by James Joyce.

Yes. So this tape I borrowed from the archive, just to give the sound of Joyce's voice reading from 'Anna Livia Plurabella', which is a difficult book to read, because it's

almost his own personal language. Now, I want to get back to Michael Scott. So talking about the Edgeworths' house, he said oh yes, well he said he as a young man knew the bailiff, or agent for the house. All these great houses had people running it for him, and it was a man called O'Farrell. And he, Michael, was very much a gay young dog, he was dashing around doing musicals and all kinds of things. And he fell in love with a girl who was O'Farrell's daughter. And he was asked for the weekend somewhere in County Longford, and he was astonished he said to go to this house, and they were all wearing black tie, which you don't expect in a big house, even though it's big, in the middle of the bogs and wilderness all round about. So they just finished - he told me this, it's worth repeating because it's typical of an Irish kind of situation - they had just finished their dinner and they were standing, maybe in another room. And there was a scuffling noise outside, and then a man burst in with a revolver shouting, 'Which is O'Farrell?' And O'Farrell said, 'I'm O'Farrell', so he shot at him, but hit the son by mistake, who collapsed, in fact died after. And they said to Michael, who was the youngest man there, apart from the son, and the greatest stranger, would he nip down at once to the lodge and warn the Garda. He said he was never so frightened in his life. He had to run down this quite long drive to the lodge with bushes, and the gunman might be lurking behind at any moment, but of course the gunman had run away. And so they warned the police, and they came, they rounded up a man who they thought was the gunman, and Michael was asked to go to an identity parade. And it speaks well for his courage; the family, the O'Farrells, wanted revenge, but he said no, although he had seen the man, he could not be certain that that was the man, and he wouldn't say that he was, because it meant the death penalty. And they were angry with him for doing that, and of course it was the end of his relationship with the O'Farrells, and I believe he said with the girl as well. But that is a typical incident. It was always the agents who were the most belligerent, exploiting the poor people and all the rest of it. Well the landlords were often mostly in England.

Yes, absolutely.

Edgware in London is called after Edgeworth. He had 20 children, two or three wives, one of which he had fascinates me...

Maria.

Maria. I love her journals. I was going to read part of it, it's too out of the way really, I won't. Now, I think that is the end of the Irish bit.

Have you ever had an exhibition in Dublin of your work?

No. No, they've never been...they don't have exhibitions of anybody I don't think.

Well, now...

Now they do.

Now with their 'Cultural Year', and they've got new spaces and new galleries it might be...

I must say, when I went with Alastair and Zandria it was amazing, I took them all over the place. It had changed. This was the end of the very successful farming period they had; some of the farmers were immensely rich. And opposite Lackan there was a poor farm. No, there the daughter was riding with her ponytail, going round in circles, and they had a party, with a whole lot of horses and that kind of thing. And there were even...in Longford town there were sauna baths. Something unbelievable in southern Ireland. And so there was a lot of money. It was mis-used and I don't think they are all that wealthy now, but it was for a while. Anyhow it was good that they did have some money, because they needed it. And now I think we come to the next big phase in my life, which concerns the Richmond oaks, the oaks in Richmond Park.

Yes, exactly.

End of F2407 Side B

F2408 Side A

Kenneth Armitage interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 6th of November 1991. Tape Nine.

Right. Now begins a phase which is very important for me, particularly because it made me happy. I mentioned that this will be the oak trees of Richmond Park. And all my life I have been to Richmond, well, since I have been in London, not as a student of course, school was at Leeds. But it is so near, and I want to...[can you stop there] [BREAK IN RECORDING] Many visits, with friends, myself and so on. And the extraordinary thing about seeing things is that we're very conservative with our eyes. I had noticed of course that there were trees all over the park, but they didn't really mean anything to me until one day in 1975, in the spring, I suddenly saw them. And it was a bright spring day with blue sky and little white clouds, and everywhere I looked it was a revelation, the trees were alive. There was a slight breeze and they were moving slightly.

Had they got their leaves on by this stage? Yes.

Yes, they had got their leaves, most certainly they had. And they looked like huge animals all over the place, moving slightly. And from then on I was hooked absolutely, and I went usually about three times a week, sometimes early in the morning, as early as I could get there before the gates were open. There was a little wicket-gate I found, you could park outside and go through the wicket-gate, and no one inside. You would see foxes sometimes, deer of course, and I had the place to myself. And I took sketch-books and eventually etchings on the spot. And it made me very happy to be there. Once inside the gates I could throw off all the petty worries of the outside world, and it was so enjoyable. And then there was another, in fact the last of the great Battersea Park sculpture exhibitions, which there were all told five or six of them from just after the war. We were the first to have these exhibitions in England. And Battersea Park was suitable because it had a self-contained area with a fence, and a green grassy area in the middle, and it could be shut off so that people could pay to get in and that kind of thing. And the last one, the sculptor Bernard

Meadows and I had to organise it, and we invited American sculptors to take part. And we were very nice, I don't think other people would have done this, we let them have the best places, because they were our guests.

Yes, that was very nice.

At least we didn't...we considered them first of all, and we all had good places; there was no effort in that.

So when was that exhibition?

No I haven't got the date. I was looking and I hadn't time to look for it.

Could it be '77, according to this Artcurial thing?

It could be, yes.

'Took part in the exhibition of contemporary British sculpture in Battersea Park, London'.

Yes. There is the catalogue upstairs somewhere, but I didn't get it. It was about then, that would be fine, about two years after I first started on the oaks...drawing the oaks. And what I had suddenly the idea that I would make an oak tree to go with God's trees in the park, but of course it would be terribly expensive, and also I was nervous to take it on without doing a lot of preparatory work. And so I abandoned that and did something else, a more conventional, for me, fitting in with the rest of the work I had done, 'A Fleeing Figure', that was a screen thing with wings coming out and a figure at the front with his arms stretched out. And that made that.

What, was that your only piece then in the end in that show?

Oh yes, well you only had one each. And meanwhile I got on with making models which were maquettes. All told I must have done about 20 or more of them, little

trees up to about 18 inches to two feet, but mostly about a foot high, a bit more, trying things out, seeing what I could do. And eventually I started using acid for a green patina where the leaves are. And it went on like that until in fact I was commissioned to do a piece of sculpture for the new British Embassy in Brasilia. But before I talk about that I'd like to read what I included in a Japanese catalogue, and if I may I'll read it because it gives an idea of the importance of my visits. I said, 'Richmond Park lies to the west of central London, an ancient royal hunting park of some six square miles, with rough undulating grassland and numerous oak trees, some of very great age'. I would like to introduce here the other thing, the age is enormous. An oak tree can live for 800 years, so some of the old...the oldest oaks there could have been acorns at the time of King John, with its enormous span of time. I got books out on the oak trees, their extraordinary growth rate, right-angular growth and everything else. Now, I'll read again. 'Having often been there throughout my life, it was not until four years ago an obsession with the oaks began, and since then I have made weekly visits, often at daybreak, at which early time the red and fallow deer regarded with unperturbed interest a sultry visitor'. At that time they don't bother about you, they don't run away or anything. And even foxes crossed my path. 'Out of so many trees, some became special favourites, but all are eloquent, their trunks and branches usually lopped, sometimes lopped, pollarded, adding even greater character. Partly natural and partly due to pollarding, the branch peculiarities are well known. Branches of massive girth, growing out horizontally, and in places even turning down because of their weight, in spite of normal growth direction upwards. Or branches of considerable length showing no appreciable tapering'. It's very strange the growth of the oak. The little branches shoot out at right-angles, so it's always zig-zagging and not curvaceous. 'Or the jerky, right-angled twists and turns, as though convulsed by electric shock, and deeply fissured bark textures accentuating like intermittent traffic markings on a motorway, marking every bend. I like best the late summer and autumn, when presumably due to drying and shrinking the leaves separate into heavy, definable clusters. Otherwise certain winter days, with a white low-lying mist and each black tree standing free in space, isolated, awsome, still, with limbs in frozen gestures'. Well that was the Japanese catalogue.

Yes, I think we'll just say what that is, that exhibition...

That was my touring exhibition in Japan in...

1978.

Yes, that's right.

1978, Gallery Kasahara. That was...it toured in fact throughout Japan didn't it.

Gallery...the Fuji Television Gallery, Tokyo, Kasahara, and...

Gallery Humanit,...

In Nagoya, that's right. [Are we switched on yet?]

Yes.

So that, I was asked to do this commission, and...

When were you asked to do that commission for Brasilia?

I can't remember.

Oh, that's 1985. I don't know when you were asked, but...

Well about then, yes. Yes I think 1985 was the time when I did make the tree, the big tree. And I sent some maquettes in. This was the National Art Collection.

The Government Art Collection.

The Government Art Collection, run by Dr Wendy Baron, and they selected to my great delight the first tree maquette I had made. And so then would I make an enlargement from it, and Noack here, my foundry in Berlin was enormously helpful, I

couldn't have done without him. I stayed with him, and he would let me use any of his men I wanted. He gave me...he set aside a little workshop with a big turntable where I could set it up, and I made it by making a vast...it was not big though, tree size, it was only ten feet high, bush height if you like, but the cost to do a full-size tree would have been impossibly expensive, half a million or more. And I made it by modelling direct with plaster over a steel skeleton, and then areas of expanded polystyrene built out in blocks to fill in the space, and then about three inches of plaster with scrim on the top of that. It was terrible work, because I had to climb up and down a ladder with bowls and buckets of plaster, and Noack took pity on me and he then built a platform to one side, which I could keep my plaster and things like that, and I could in fact from there reach the top. He helped me for a little bit one day, and he said, 'No it's too much like hard work', and he packed it in pretty quickly! I was working from 8.30 until 5.30 every day, Saturdays and Sundays, absolutely flat out. And I was staying with Noack; I had...it was wonderful, no letters, no telephone calls, entirely work. And I would have then a few Scotches when I got back to him to recover.

And a nice hot bath I should say.

And that kind of thing. In fact a sculptor later said he didn't know how ever I could do it in the time, in six weeks.

I was going to say, my goodness, six weeks!

An incredibly short time, I think. But that was just by sheer application and doing it. But no...not a minute to spare, morning till night, and working through the weekends. But I did have the help of the men, and I did have Noack's help, and that was wonderful. And then he made an excellent cast of it, and it was sent off to Brasilia, and this required a lot of organising. It was too high to go into a Jumbo jet vertically, the doors of the hold were too small, and so it had to be mounted on its side, and it had to go...there was no runway long enough for a Jumbo jet in Berlin, it had to go I think to Stuttgart or somewhere else by truck, unloaded then into the plane. It went to Rio, and there I met it (I went separately by plane to Rio), and then again by truck,

five hours' journey to Brasilia, and I went by plane which was let's say an hour, and hour and a half. And I met them there. It had to be precise because they had a mobile crane laid on with six men; the foundations had been made ready, with pockets to receive the, what we call the rag bolts, bolts underneath going into concrete to secure it to the ground. And it went absolutely like clockwork. And it looked...I must say, the setting was wonderful. It was on a little kind of...well a big apron, overlooking a pond with a big fountain behind, perfect.

And is it on...it's in front of the embassy is it? It's in the sort of embassy compound is it, or...?

It's in the embassy enclave, yes.

And who...sorry, can I just ask you, do you know the architect of the...?

Yes I did, but I've forgotten their names now. There were one or two, and it was...they used traditional features in that the ancient capital was not Rio, it was...oh my God, up the coast...what was it called the other place in... Anyhow, the ancient city, they had tiles on the outside to reflect the heat, and they did a lot of this, they had a lot of tiles on the building. And it was very lively, a good place. And really, I stayed with the Ambassador, and it was very nice, to have lovely meals and work only a few days I was there, but it was set up well. But unfortunately I have to say that it was also disastrous as well. After two or three months there came messages through the PSA, through Wendy Baron, that blotches had appeared on this perfect immaculate surface, and I couldn't think what it was, and no one could think what it was. I worked it out in the end.

Climate?

Yes. And I had had no briefing about the climate. I knew it was hot, but...

Humid as well was it?

Torrential rain. It was first of all torrential rain, either in the mornings or... But enormous heat, you had to wear a hat, and at night very cold, you had to wear a jersey. So there was a constant change of temperature through the day and the night, which... Now when I was setting the thing up, a man approached me, said he was an engineer, and he said, 'Have you made provision for the extraordinary temperature changes there are?' I said no, I didn't know about it. 'Well' he said, 'you're going to be in trouble'. So immediately, with the very nice man who looked after the technical problems of the embassy, he had a workshop, and he found me a length of copper tube, only a small diameter, about a centimetre. I put this underneath the tree, which was completely continuous space inside, no bulk-heads or anything like that, let out underground, and it came up about oh, six feet away, or five feet away, up to just over ground level. And that should have been enough to let high pressure. But perhaps I didn't blow the pipe to see, maybe it was blocked. But anyhow, what I realized in the end was that it was due to the constant change of temperature. And all cast metals are slightly porous, that is with gravity casting, not with pressure casting, where it's poured in, aluminium particularly, but even bronze. If you heat a plate of bronze with a flame, eventually water comes to the surface, it exhumes the moisture that it has absorbed. And in places with a big casting, oh, there were about seven pieces in that welded together, some places are more porous than others, which you can't see with the eye, they are little tiny holes. And so, with the constant change of pressure, when it was cold the air would be sucked in through these holes; when it was very hot during the day they would be blown out. So these were like tiny funnels letting the air in and out, and that discoloured the surface. And well, I had letters from the chairman of the committee who...

Of the Government Art Collection committee?

Yes. And most of them were letters, but he did write...he denied having said this, but I have somewhere a couple of letters that he wrote in his own handwriting to save time, in which he said, 'The cast is bad'. Well, I knew it wasn't that. And so my plan was this, that the tree would be taken down, it would be shipped back to Noack, cut open in front of witnesses. If there was a fault found, Noack would have to pay for either a new tree or certainly the repair and the cost sent down. If however it was

found to be faultless, I or he would take legal action against the government department for...what do you call it, damage of goods; when you refer to goods, saying they're not good. Well the chairman flatly denied that he had ever said that, but he did put it in writing. So that was a way out, because I would not, I would not let him have to have that cost. He did pay for his number one to go out and repatinate it one time, and that I felt was enough. But it went wrong again. Well, we did make another cast, just in case, because they said there they will never let go. It was pending. We reorganised that cast with large holes under what we call a seat, a lower part down, which you could in fact sit on, maybe six holes with a diameter of about two inches, so there is masses of room for air to go in and out. And we didn't use acid patina, we used the hardest German car paint, which has been found to withstand heat. So then this cast would withstand any kind of climate. But before that was made, we did make a second cast; I had been asked by the Fuji Television Gallery in Japan to send a cast to a little park in Yokohoma; interesting, a women's forum which had a park, and they felt it would do nicely. So we made that cast, and everything was organised efficiently, it was set up.

So, have you only done two casts of this tree or was there a third one?

Three.

Yes I thought so. The third one was the one that went to Gateshead was it? No.

No, the third one was the one that I had painted and made with holes. And that went to Gateshead, that's right. So that was the one we were going to replace, if necessary, to the one in Brasilia, which would take any amount of climate damage.

And when did the other one go to Japan then?

Oh my God I haven't got a note of that.

No it doesn't matter, don't worry.

I would say probably...oh, maybe eight years ago, something like that. Now, a miracle happened. Wendy Baron wrote saying the Ambassador had been replaced, he had done his tour of duty and another one had taken... And he, the new Ambassador liked the blotches! He said he liked the autumn tints just appearing! So...(laughing)...this was wonderful.

That's very diplomatic, yes.

Yes. Whether he meant it or not, it was a way out. Because it would have been an enormous cost; to uproot it, ship it out, re-cast it, send it back, would be an unbelievable costing. So that was... I was hauled before the committee. It was all finally my responsibility, and I talked to them for about half an hour about it.

Who was on this committee, can you remember the chairman's name?

No, the chairman...yes, I've forgotten his name, but Wendy Baron was the operating person. Nicholas Serota came from the Tate and a whole lot of other people, about 16 people. And I explained the whole thing, and I accepted full responsibility, and I wouldn't let Noack be blamed for it, because I knew... Noack is not Herr Noack, he is Meister Noack, he is an authority on what he does. And anyhow, that ended it, and so it was going to be sold in Berlin to a big hotel, but that fell through, this new cast, and eventually I was asked to send it to Newcastle, to send something to Newcastle, and so it was moved over for the Newcastle...what was that called?

The Gateshead Garden Festival I think it was called.

The Gateshead Garden Festival, which I thought it was suitable to go into that.

Indeed, yes.

And it went there, and then it was still not sold, so James Kirkman very kindly took it to his country house, where it was beautifully sited on a concrete apron overlooking the fields round about, and it's been there ever since. And then I very nearly sold it to

a consortium on the west coast of America, sending photographs and everything else, and suddenly we were hit by the recession, and then all sales collapsed. And I had good sales lined up, but very little since then, so I am hoping that things will recover. So that is the story of the big tree. And it was sad that that happened to the... Oh they also got bronze foundry people in Brazil to check it over and see what they said, and they said exactly what I said, that it was the change in temperature, with the expansion and contraction of the heat inside, that kind of thing. My trees were shown all over the place. They were shown in Japan, in that catalogue there, a lot of drawings in that catalogue.

The catalogue you are referring to is the one that you read out your extract from, 1978.

Yes. They were sent to Caracas, where they were called 'Los Robles'. I've fogotten now, I've got so many bits of paper I can't find what I wanted to say. They were shown in London, at Gimpel Fils.

Gimpel Fils?

Yes.

Really? Oh. Oh yes.

I've forgotten when that was.

And were they shown in the Taranman Gallery? No.

No, no. I was going to say something else about...

Oh yes it says...

About Taranman. This was in a little gallery near Knightsbridge...[BREAK IN RECORDING]

So that the Gimpel Fils, your one-man show there was 1980.

Yes.

Sorry, and you were going to talk...

The Taranman was much later. His great thing, he made the most beautiful catalogues, and I was almost the very last. I kept putting it off because it wasn't any good for sculpture, it was so tiny. And eventually I said yes, so we had a few things, notably...well I think he had 'July Figures'. And then some little figures which I made as a result of a visit to Jordan, and I'd like to come on to that in a moment. Jordan, Baghdad and Egypt I made visits in the last six or seven years. But to finish with Taranman. During one of my alone visits to The Burren, staying at a nice little farm place not far away, when I got back they said, nervously, 'Oh there's been someone ringing for you from London', and they wanted to inform the police. And I think they thought that I had run away from London, hiding from something. And it was Taranman, and this was during my exhibition with him, and my Caracas dealer had called in, and he wanted to buy the whole show outright.

My goodness!

The sculpture and the drawings, the lot! Which sent Taranman into a dither. So he was trying to contact me, in Ireland, and I was up every day, walking miles away from anywhere, on the top of The Burren. And he had the idea that he would get the Garda to try and find me. That was why there was the confusion. But of course they didn't find me. Now Taranman didn't co-operate, which was a mistake really. In return for buying this show outright, Senor Freites of the gallery said would he give him a reduction on his third commission, but Taranman said no.

When you say Taranman you're talking about Christopher Hewett are you?

Yes, Christopher Hewett is the owner of the gallery. And so that fell through. However, soon after I had a letter from a gallery in Paris - this is how clever dealers are. And there was a strange dealer, very small, who wrote saying, 'I have a client from South America who is interested in the following works'. All the ones that were in the Taranman Gallery! And he charged only a nominal figure, something like ten per cent or five per cent. And so, I sold them. I knew who it was, I guessed. I didn't tell it to them though. It was Freites who had worked his way round the back.

Very good, yes.

And so I did sell them, at my price, and Freites got them for less. Then alas, Taranman died, he committed suicide. Not because of me but...one doesn't know why. So that was the end of that. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

You had a commission earlier on, a quite important commission earlier on didn't you, from the Royal Marines.

Yes.

But I don't think you've...you've mentioned en passant 'Both Arms' that you made in Berlin, but perhaps you can talk a bit about that.

I will. Did I mention the fact that the 'Both Arms' first cast went to Japan?

Yes you did.

To the sculpture park there.

Yes you did.

So, now, about '74 or 5 I was approached by the Department of the Environment PSA to make a large piece of sculpture for the new commando training centre, Royal Marines Lympstone, Devon, and it would be a gift from the PSA to the Marines. And

I was a bit nervous about this, because I didn't want...I had been six and a half years in the Army, I didn't want to make something with buttons and boots and rifles and all the rest of it. But there was a very good senior architect, and I showed him photographs, he said, 'You've done it! Here is a piece that's ideal for it. It's called 'Both Arms', which illustrates the dual role of the Marines, Army and Navy, and it has the strengh and the power and all this sort of thing. I think you should submit that design'. And I did, and they accepted it, and so a second cast was made, slightly modified dimensions of the base, oh, about four or five centimetres, nothing. And that went to Devon, to the Commandant's Court, in the centre of this complex of barracks and things, which of course are never seen by the public, which worried me rather. And it stayed there for a number of years. I did meet later a student at the Royal College of Art who had been a trainee there, and he said, 'Well, I was so influenced by that piece of sculpture I wanted to take up sculpture', and he was studying bronze casting there at the Royal College of Art. However, this went on for a long time until they decided that my piece would have to be moved, incidentally to a better site, more open with a road going by it and grass. This was at Poole, the Combined Operations Centre, with all kinds of people from all over the world in the Army and Navy going to it, and it would be seen a lot, and it would be given a good position. That is a sop to me, that it was taken out of the other place, but only too glad it was. The other place was taken up by a younger sculptor who had.....

End of F2408 Side A

F2408 Side B

Now there is Japan, which was an important period for me, being fascinated with Japan, reading its history, and its amazing technology and architecture, and many books written about it which I read. I made certainly three visits, if not four, but the visit I shall refer to now is the one I made in 1978, when I had a touring exhibition. There were two galleries I was involved with. You were going to say something?

I was just saying, is that not that year.

Yes.

Yes, that you have already referred to with your Richmond oaks

That should be '78 that is. The two galleries I was most involved with, the Tokyo gallery, Fuji Television, which was very important. That was part of Fuji Television owned by Mr Shikanai, who is an enormously powerfully rich man, and a gallery in Osaka, which was excellent, Gallery Kasahara.

And these were both commercial galleries were they?

Yes. And it was also the Galerie Humanit, in Nagoya. So there were three cities it would tour. And I stayed at Tokyo and Osaka for the two more important galleries. I think that...there are several things that happened in that time. I made two visits. Well first of all, from Osaka I made a visit to some giant steel works. What I wanted to do was to see Japanese working, because one had heard so much about the immense hard work the Japanese did. And thinking it over I didn't particularly want to see the electronics industry, which didn't appeal to me so much as the vast steel works that existed. This was arranged through the British Council, and it concerns one of the very big steel works, Nippon Kokan Keihin, which had an enormous production of steel. Their main factory produces, or did then, 18 million tons of steel a year. The one I went to, which was the most modern and most extraordinary, was at Ohgishima, which was a man-made island off the coast. The whole of the coast was

built up right down Tokyo Bay to the south, and they decided to build offshore quite a large island, with a channel several hundred yards wide, with a communicating tunnel underneath taking buses, trucks and cars leading up to this amazing place. They could have then incoming ships with raw materials, processed, and ships would take off with finished roll plate, whatever was made on the other side. Highly efficient. NKK also did construction work and shipbuilding as well. I noticed there a lot of buildings were green painted, and these were buildings that had special care because of pollution of the atmosphere. The steel production released lots of sulphurous gases, so they were very conscious of that because of the disaster they had had elsewhere in Japan just before. So everything was highly modern and very, extraordinarily efficient. The amazing thing was, I didn't see any men working.

Oh! Was it all robots or something?

Oh no, it was all computerized machine. And I went to the control centre which is here [looking at plan]. I'm showing Tamsyn the charts I have. That is the big computer centre there with dials. Everything was organised mechanically. Only once or twice I caught sight of a face looking a dial, but nothing else. I had lunch with the chairman, or rather the director or manager of this vast set-up in the main office area, where he had his own restaurant, because he had every week visitors coming from all over the world to see this amazing place. I had with me the assistant from my Osaka gallery, Kasuo Amano, and a Japanese director from the British Council. In the British Council in different countries they have an Englishman and then they have someone else who is a local person, so the British Council Japanese could act as interpreter. On the other side of the lunch table there was this amazing man controlling the whole place, and he had two men on his side. And he was extraordinary. I know the steel workshops in Sheffield, and enjoyed my visits there and had lunch with the men, with the management, and we had as it were chicken and chips and peas and all the rest of it. But here it was immensely elegant. Here was this place with a lake outside and carp swimming in it, and the director was so shy he wouldn't look up for a long time. And we spoke with an interpreter, and we had a wonderful European lunch in my favour, with waiters with white gloves. And it was quite extraordinary. And so I kept asking him questions, and I said well, I suppose

there will be more islands like this in the future, he said no, we've reached the peak of production, and the cost is so high it's doubtful that there will ever be any more islands of this nature. In fact, I had seen on my tour round, which I will come to in a minute, creeks and bays all round the coast with new boats moored, unused. They had over-produced, they had over-produced in steel as well, production. And so this was really an astonishing visit, to see the blast furnaces all of the most modern kind, and this enormous production of steel, 12 million tons a year coming out of it automatically. And we left, and as we did all the secretaries were brought out; they were all young and beautiful I noticed. It had started to rain, so they had umbrellas. And the British Council is semi diplomatic, it has in fact a blue diplomatic number-plate on the cars, and as we drove off, at a given signal all the secretaries bowed with their umbrellas. It's funny to refer to that, but it struck me very much, as this high tech place, and yet there was a traditional...the normal traditional courtesy for the employees, the symbolic courtesy. And the manager said come again, bring your wife, these sort of funny things they say. So, that was one great thing I was very happy to do while there. I also went to see Sumo wrestling, but it wasn't the fighting season; they have a season when they fight and a season when they train, but I was taken to a training establishment which was even more interesting. I took with me a Japanese lady I had met, which was necessary for language. And the school consisted of about ten younger men, all practising. There was the master who had a long symbolic stick of office, and a visiting star who took them all on, one after the other, throwing them out of the ring. This was great. They cooked our lunch; we had lunch of some kind of very nice light stew. And conversation; I was sitting next to the star, and they are famous for being reticent, they don't like talking. But fortunately I had this Japanese lady who could make some kind of...she was experienced in meeting people, make some conversation with her. And so, that was fine. On a later visit to Japan then I saw...it was the season for the Sumo fighting and I saw...I was taken by Kasahara, or Yamamoto I forget which, to see a proper fight, in an enormous stadium with people, it's highly popular in Japan. In fact it's wonderful to go round the country, let's say on the plains, you suddenly find this tall figure with his hair done in a special way. Because even if he is finished fighting, he is revered as a star. I went to something that was very thrilling for me, the 'Noh' theatre, traditional theatre, very ancient stylized theatre with an orchestra, singing, and people highly...with formal

clothes and masks and so on. Various traditional plays they do, which I heard...saw one in Tokyo and I saw one in Kyoto, the ancient capital. And this was so moving I can't...I liked it very much. In fact I would like now to play a record, well just a glimpse of it if I may. [Plays extract from 3 records] They were three different recordings just then. The first was on the koto, a string instrument which is a stringed instrument which is probably derived from the classical court music, very pure, it sounded rather like raindrops. The second was a Noh theatre type of the extraordinary singing they can do, and the third was folk music from the island of Sado I visited, which I would like to talk about now. Through the gallery I borrowed Kasuo Amano, who was Kasahara's main assistant, for maybe four or five days, to make a tour through Japan. Of course I couldn't drive myself because I couldn't read the signs. And in the course of this we went through tremendous contrasts. We went up a mountain where there was snow, and it was rather like a sports area, probably skiing I don't know. Down then in the lush valleys with paddy fields, rice fields, up the coast. The coast was extraordinary; the whole of the Japanese coast is thickly surrounded by layers of fish nets. There's not a fish could escape anywhere. It's out in depth, it goes about a hundred or two hundred yards out, netting. And we took a ferry, took the car, to Sado. This is an island facing China in the Japanese sea, which historically is interesting. It still retains some of the life that it always had. It had very ancient gold mines which we visited and things of that kind. The coast was extraordinary, volcanic, with vertical columns going down into the sea like giants. In fact, I was asked to write by a newspaper, the 'Yomiuri' newspaper in Osaka, an article about my visit on this tour, and I described these great vertical towers going down into the sea, being like giants. I don't know what there is much to say about Sado, but we went to a theatre performance of...like a musical, with local people dressed in traditional costume and singing. And the third record I have just played was a Sado recording of people singing a typical folk song of that area. Now all this was really very exciting. We stayed in ryokan, that is real Japanese style hotels. In one of them on Sado, Kasuo said, 'Look, in Kyoto the capital the geisha girls are terribly expensive, but here they won't be so expensive, and why don't you have three in your room to entertain you for an hour'. So I said sure, let's do that. And so I was given a seat of honour, specially raised so to speak, and he said there would be three girls, one old, one middle aged, and one young. Well in came three elderly

ladies...(laughs)...and it was rather nice, sort of folky geisha. And they enjoyed themselves more than anybody. They kept ringing for more bottles of saki to be brought up, and they played these idiotic games, paper games and one thing and another, and giggling and laughing. It was terribly funny. They were very pleased that the French Ambassador had been there only a few weeks before as a previous guest. And...that was amusing. Well that really was the end of that visit.

And so you went three times to Japan you were saying, so do you remember which visit that took place on, all that took place?

Well it wasn't the last one. Oh I mentioned the 'Yomiuri' newspaper, I can't find what I wrote, I've looked in my file but I can't find it.

No I don't think you did mention it.

I was asked then to write an article about my visit to Sado.

Oh sorry, yes, you did mention it, yes, the newspaper, right.

In which incidentally we saw eagles flying over us as we went through a mountain area in Sado. The whole thing was magical.

End of F2408 Side B

F2409 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 12th of November 1991. Tape Ten.

These tapes go bowling along, and it seems, it seems that everything is all right, and mostly it is. But there have been three or four incidents which were very unpleasant, as in life there are also unpleasant things. And it seems only right that I should spend a few minutes including a description of two or three of these things.

These be the incidents rather than things that have happened on the tapes, that you're referring to?

They are not happening on the tape, they are incidents in my work and life, and so on. The earliest is in 1983, it lasted for a year or so, at a place called Sutton Manor, which was Sutton Scotney near Winchester, and owned by a man called Alex Herbage, who was an economist of some repute. And this place had belonged formerly to Arthur Rank, the film magnate who died, Herbage bought it and had made it into quite an extraordinary place. He had huge greenhouses for organic medicine research; he had Highland cattle with their enormous horns, wandering about the grassland; he had 60 telephone machines, which is rather a lot, and so on. And a little restaurant for visitors, everything you could think of.

So it was open to the public?

I don't know, maybe the restaurant was for the staff, but I think you could get in to see it. Yes, I'm sure you could, because he had a collection of sculpture. And in a way I see now, this was almost a ploy. He was using it for his better half, and the other half he did on those telephones to various firms that he was involved with all over the world. Now, there was a huge opening.

How did you meet this man, sorry?

Through his art director called Miss Onions [pronounced O'Neeons], onions.

I know, mm.

And a very nice young lady, who said that they wanted to buy a fairly large piece. In the end they selected one, I was glad, of the 'Pandarus' versions, No. 2, which was the first real one. The No. 1 was aluminium and very rough, No. 2 was a bronze with one enormous great big funnel. And this was bought, and half of it was paid for outright, the other half would be paid for as soon as possible. That seemed all right to me. However,time passed, no other payment came. Then I thought I would ring Sutton Manor, and I found that Miss Onions had left, leaving people I didn't know, who didn't know anything about it. So, I wrote saying I would like to see the second half of the purchase money. No reply. So I then remembered that Miss Onions said her father had a gallery in north London, so I found out and rang him and he said oh yes, he said, there's serious trouble there, she left, on purpose. And one way and the other I smelt a rat. So I got on to my solicitor, asking him if he would get my cheque for me. So he wrote, and a cheque came, but it bounced. He wrote again, the cheque bounced again. The third time he wrote and said, 'Unless the cheque you send is a valid one, we will apply...' (I've forgotten the legal term, when bailiffs are sent in to seize goods to the value of what is missing), he said I'm going to apply this order. I wish I could remember. And so eventually a cheque came, authorized by...from another source altogether, and this was cleared. Only about ten days later, by chance I saw on television that the gates to Sutton Manor were padlocked, the whole place was closed. And within another week it was all out in the press, how he was guilty of swindling on a huge scale. He had many investors and he had defrauded them of $57-million.

Oh dear!

And his art collection was auctioned by Sotheby's, and that was valued at 3 million, to try and pay off some of his debts. I forget now whether he was under bail or not. Incidentally he was a very sick man; he was of enormous girth, and he had some glandular disease. And I know one sculptor who didn't act quickly enough. And of

course at the Sotheby's auction the value would be far less. When you get a great many sculptures from one source they tend to rip through it at fairly low prices compared to what it should be. So, it was sad that that was not a valid thing, because it was a wonderful setting. He had a good eye with Miss Onions, some good sculpture; he had all these features of organic medicine. One thing and another it could have been a wonderful set-up, but greed and all that destroyed it all. So that was the end of that one. But I didn't lose on that at all. The next, slightly earlier in the mid 1970s, was a gentleman called Juan del Vayo called here with a most beautiful wife. Described his background, how his father had been Ambassador at the time of the republic, before General Franco. He had grown up with Bu¤uel, the film maker as a family friend.

Was he Spanish this man?

Yes, Spanish, the Spanish Ambassador. And altogether was very interesting. He begged all the time, as so many people have done, for a piece from the 1950s. Originally I kept back nine of these; I've only got about four or five left now, I parted with them occasionally. In the end I thought well, he's from...his present address is Caracas and I like the people of Venezuela, all right, he can have one. And he can have three drawings, again which he bought. He then pulled out a a little book with green forms. So I said, 'What are those by the way?' He said oh they're the same as cheques in Venezuela, which I thought, that's odd. He took away my work under his arm and vanished. I went to my bank next morning and they said we've never seen this before, or heard of it. I had friends in Venezuela, I asked them to contact a firm of solicitors which they did, they found out where he lived in Caracas, but they said, 'The value of this is too small for us to authorise a break-in to seize goods'. I mean if it were a hundred thousand, or even fifty thousand we'd do it, but it's too small for that. Then a remarkable thing happened. Another person who was a victim was a painter called Robyn Denny, related to Norman Reid, the ex Tate Director who also wrote letters on our behalf. And we were always, Robyn and I were comparing notes as to what we had done, and we didn't get anywhere. Until suddenly Robyn noticed that in either 'Art News' or 'Monthly', he saw an advertisement, unbelievably. 'Del Vayo buys art'. Presumably you rang the magazine. And sure enough, someone did

ring the magazine. Now Robyn got on to the person running it, and also got on to the police, so that they knew when del Vayo was going to call on this artist, and they caught him redhanded, leaving with the work under his arm just as he was stepping into a taxi. So he was arrested there and then, and taken to Chelsea Police Station where he was questioned and found guilty. They found that he had a house in Hamburg stuffed with art of all kinds. And I asked the police there what he said at the inquiry, and they said he liked art very much; he loved art but he couldn't afford to pay for it, so he stole it! (laughs) Well, all right, you could imagine someone doing that who had had a different kind of background, but for let's say a gentleman so to speak, whose father was an ambassador, this was very strange, strange behaviour. Anyhow, they went through the work and I got my bronze back and the three drawings, so in both of those cases there was no loss, although they left a bitter taste. A small affair in the 1950s was a man with a strange name, a dealer named Luca Scacci-Gracci, who in fact had a very good eye. He put on an excellent little exhibition in Galleria Blu of Moore, Sutherland, myself and Chadwick, with drawings and paintings and small sculptures.

Sorry, where was that gallery?

In Milan. Galleria Blu, BLU in Milan. It still exists. And this I would say is in the mid Fifties, or the late Fifties. He borrowed...I was even more naive then that I am now, and he said, 'I like that little plaster thing there, can I borrow it and I promise you, I'll give you a receipt if you want, that I will have six casts made. I'll give you one and I'll give you the money for the rest when next I come'. So I said all right, you can do that. That was 'Children Playing', the little piece downstairs, that everybody likes; I could have sold that a hundred times. So, he turned up, I did get the money. He lived for a little while in London. He kept a boa constrictor in his room, and I found touching it, this was only a baby so speak, it was only about nine feet long, but it was warm to the touch. I thought snakes were cold.

Yes, I touched one once, yes, great surprise.

And it was quite warm, it was not unpleasant in any way. Well...

So he didn't swindle you did he?

Well, he did, because I then had people inquiring about a work they had bought from him. They sent me a photograph, and this happens all the time, that dealers who have bought things at auctions, or from other dealers, have photographs, they send them to me to authorise on the back...

Yes, authenticate, yes.

With a signature saying, 'This is my work, KA', and so on. Well, when it happened once or twice I got suspicious; when it happened four or five times I knew that something was wrong. Round about the fifth time it stopped.

What happened four or five times?

The requests for a signature, to say that this work was...

What, because it wasn't signed 'KA' on the cast, or what?

It must have been that they had got them from him long after he had done the work with me. Maybe they were suspicious themselves. All told, he may have had about 12 casts instead of six.

Oh I see, from the same...?

Yes, when he was only entitled to six. And for those extra six of course I wasn't paid at all, he put the whole lot, the money in his pocket. I told this to James Kirkman, my old friend, who said he did the same with Henry Moore, so I wasn't alone in that. So that was a loss. The other loss was in a way more serious, and that concerns a famous foundry in France, which I used a lot in the 1960s. And Artcurial, my gallery, which I will mention in a minute, rang me that a good collector in Spain had died and his widow needed the money and she wanted to sell a cast of mine called 'Girl Without a

Face', about five-and-a-half feet high, six feet high, rather like a letterbox in a way, with arms sticking out. And they said we like it, we want it very much, we've been on to Sotheby's who say the collector was a very good one, and everything was above board, and they were going to buy it, would I authorise the photograph they sent me, as normal. Well I was dubious about this, and I had all the details of the sale of this piece from when I was at the Marlborough, and I found that I had details covering every sale.

How many were there then in the edition?

There were six, not seven. And on the cast that Artcurial, Cyril Cohen wanted, it had '06'. And, as Artcurial then said, he wasn't going to say it at first, 'I didn't know that zero was a valid number in France'.

You didn't know that?

I didn't know it until only five years ago, and this was in the Sixties.

Yes, so you might have had several things whirling about with nought then?

Yes. So that...well I know of two. There was that one, was an absolute pirate cast, so of course I said I'm not going to sign a pirate cast.

But was it done in good faith then, if the foundries in Paris always did nought to six or something?

Oh that's.....[BREAK IN RECORDING] It was sneaked abroad by...

You weren't paid by your gallery? [BREAK IN RECORDING]

.....in the foundry...

Which you understood to be an edition of six, but in fact he had smuggled in an extra one.

Yes. He had done it before with my permission, 'A Sprawling Woman', which is nine feet long. He wrote and said I've got a new garden, I'd like this piece, would you consider giving me a cast of it. So I said all right, yes, you can have that. I wouldn't do it now, without clear authorisation and so on. Well of course now knowing about the other one, he just flogged it. I don't suppose it ever went into his garden.

'A Sprawling Woman' he had got?

Yes. And he then died soon after of a heart attack, perhaps for good reason.

Sorry, what happened with the cast then, the nought out of six, the...?

Well that would have gone off, she would have sold it to someone else.

But you never authenticated it?

I didn't authenticate it with Artcurial, and they will not take on a piece, unless they did secretly without my knowing, but they always said, we do not handle any work bought in this way unless the artist certifies it. And I said I wouldn't. So either it's there or it's gone somewhere else.

So in the future, now, say if you had a new cast made in Paris, would you say, if you thought it was an edition of six, would you ask them to do one to six, or would you agree and do it nought to five?

I state what the edition is; it's always stamped on the work, so there is no doubt about it and anyone can see. The point was about the 'Girl Without a Face' one, it was stamped with something I didn't know, clear proof that it was an illegal sale.

Yes, but now, if you had an edition of six made in France, would you agree to it starting at nought and going to five, or would you ask them to do it one to six?

No, the edition would include everything. That is, let's say one to six, plus either zero six or one/one, whatever is the name for the artist's casts, ',preuve des artistes' I think is the name. And it's all very clearly stated. So anyhow, here are just a few of the unpleasant things. But when you think that I've seen so many hundreds of people in the last half century, collectors, dealers, galleries and so on, this proportion of four people is negligible in terms of the rest. [BREAK IN RECORDING]
Now for two or three examples of work, before we come to a rush of visits later. First of all, in my bedroom I have had since the end of the Second World War a kind of farmhouse wood armchair which I love very much, and I made many drawings of it in the Fifties. In 1983 I made some sculptures, one big one, which isn't at all like the chair, but the three small ones were like it. The three small ones were made direct in wax, the big one was made in a rather complicated way. If you imagine the chair instead as being a kind of throne with the back curved and then going into a seat, that would be five or five-and-a-half feet high, quite big, that part I modelled in plaster, and that would be cast by the sand process, which is especially useful when the surfaces are smooth. The head, which is attached to the top, and the two forearms and hands, and the two lower halves of the legs and feet, they I modelled in clay on the original set-up; plaster moulds were made from these clay things, and then, from the moulds I made wax casts, which would be just under a quarter of an inch thick, brushed into the mould, and they would be cast by the waste wax process in the normal traditional way of bronze casting, and then all the pieces welded together. By doing this, by modelling the detailed parts, I was able to get detail that I could never have done standing up next to the thing. With the clay I could model it just as I wanted, and so it was in various...it even had fingernails, which I've never done in my life, and things like that. On the other hand the rest of it was all smooth.

And what was this called, this...?

'Chair', rather helpfully called 'Chair'. And the first cast was sold to the town hall in Brisbane, Australia, where they say it's on the marble steps going in. And then - I'll

come to that later again - I'm not in the process of having a second cast made of it. Now those were the chairs. Then, visiting the Arts Council, which is in Piccadilly, if it's still there, overlooking Green Park, on the top of the bus I noticed that the trees in Green Park have enormous boles. Where the trunk goes down to the ground it breaks out into big lumps. I don't know what kind of tree they are, but I was intrigued with this, and I made two models. This is a very small point to mention, but they are really the last of the tree sculptures I made, although these were not oak trees.

And what did you call those Green Park trees?

'Green Park'. I think that's all, '85. Then in '85 I had a retrospective at...an unusual exhibition in Paris called 'Artcurial'.

An unusual gallery.

An unusual gallery. It has practically everything. It has tapestries, carpets, multiples, exhibitions of painting and sculpture, jewellery, the lot.

All under one roof?

All under one roof, in Avenue Matignon, off the Champs-Elys,es, very swish address. It's sponsored by L'Or,al, and I'd known it for some time, and was pleased to...well first of all it was Bryan Robertson who put in an exhibition of English art, a mixed exhibition there, and I got to know them, and then they asked me if I would give them this exhibition. And I enjoyed it because, it's lovely to go to Paris anyhow, but to go to Paris with an exhibition there is extra good because you see your poster at every corner of every road so to speak.

Yes, you mentioned that a little bit before, when you were talking about Venice and how exciting it was when you were in Venice.

How disgusting! Well I'm sorry about that, it must have stuck in my mind as something I could say. So now...

But they produced a very good catalogue didn't they?

They produced a nice catalogue, yes. And it's pretty thorough, it's got all kinds of stuff in it.

It was a retrospective wasn't it.

Yes. Let's say a mini retrospective; they didn't have by any means all the things, but they had a wide selection going through all my work.

And I think we just might say exactly what that was called and the date. Hang on. [BREAK IN RECORDING] So I'm just going to give the details of that exhibition. It was called 'Kenneth Armitage, Sculptures et Dessins, 1948-1984', and it was May to July 1985 at Artcurial, Paris. Right.

Good. Now, am I still going?

You are.

Now for some visits. These will be lumped together in two groups. I had over let's say about five years, or six years, three visits to the Middle East, and then, with my new friend Alastair Service, visits to places of great archaeological interest, let's say Carnac, where the rows of stones are, then Ireland, where I took him to see New Grange, the walk-in grave, which is famous in Europe, one of the biggest in Europe, and other things there, and finally to Orkney for the Skara Brae village, 5,000 years old.

Yes, which you mentioned, I mean you've mentioned all of those briefly before.

Yes. So these visits can be lumped together. First of all Jordan. Incidentally I had always had in my heart a longing to go to the Middle East. Those of us who have been brought up in England, and especially Ireland with a lot of rain, have a kind of

hankering after the dry desert. And I was approached through the British Council, who had heard from Jordan that there they had now got a national gallery. It was a fairly big suburban house with nice big rooms...

So not purpose-built as a gallery?

Oh no. No, it was a residence. But they had no art to put in it. And so meeting...the British Ambassador told them that he knew for certain that the British Council had a collection of sculpture from over the years, which he was sure the British Council would lend. So that's why they got in touch with the British Council, and then they said, 'We would also like one of the artists to come, not to talk or anything, but just to be on hand at the opening in case there were any questions by people'. And to cut a long story short, I was the artist selected, to my great delight.

And what sort of date was this?

The date was 1981. And it meant that I had a visit to Jordan at their expense, with everything I needed, and it was an excellent visit. So, one day I got to Amman, the capital, taken to this excellent hotel, and then to the national gallery for the opening, which was to be attended by Queen Noor, who incidentally was American and had studied in an art school and was interested in art, in Western art. Also the King was in Moscow at the time, so presumably she had more time than usual. So she turned up at the gallery with an escort of six armed guards on motorbikes roaring along, and she was, as everybody knows, very beautiful and charming, and took a great interest in it. I felt a slight unease because the collection was all bronze, mainly from the 1950s, so that it had a kind of slight antique look, whereas she had been more recently from New York, with all kinds of different materials and modern art of a different kind. I'm not running down the collection that the British Council had, which had excellent pieces, but it was a different kind of art. However, she was very polite, she didn't say anything and she took a great interest in it. I then was introduced to the man in charge of the Ministry of Tourism, who said 'I am allowing you a car and driver for you to go where you want, and you will also have the best tourist guide we have', for which we could make visits, as we did, to Jarash, which is a great Roman

remains, temples, and a huge theatre, and things of that kind. We went to other places, for example driving due west, we went to the mountains of Morwab, standing on a rise; there you could look over the Jordan valley, you could see it below and you could just see Jericho in the distance. This the guide said is where Moses stood after the 40 years in the wilderness, and he saw the promised land.

How marvellous.

And there was something wonderful about that view, the same view that Moses had seen. But the thing for me was the trip, it was a day trip, to go to Petra. 'Rose red city, half as old as time', found only, oh, 150 years ago. It was guarded really by the Bedouin, no one went there before. And we had this long drive, first of all on the ancient royal highway, then we turned off west and we then we came to a range of mountains. At the edge of the mountains, just at the entrance to a gorge, we had to leave the car and get on horses. And we went down this narrow chasm, extremely narrow, too narrow or a very very tight fit for a car, but the walls each side ran to about 200 feet high. And then, on this funny old nag we got down to an opening, and facing us in the sun was this rose-red classic facade.

End of F2409 Side A

F2409 Side B

Going down this chasm I noticed there was a shallow channel cut along at about four feet high for water supply, made by the ancient Nabotians, who were excellent with irrigation, and they supplied fresh water down into the valley below. And so there was this enormous building in pink stone with columns and a triangular pediment, and it turned to the right and there were many more. I don't know to the left whether there was so much. There was a bit more space there, and dozens of tombs with chambers carved back into the rock face, and the whole thing quite extraordinary and terribly exciting. I suppose the architecture was what you would call colonial classic; not quite so pure as let's say the Parthenon, or Rome, but very strictly classical, and no doubt they had architects from Rome, or even from Greece to design the things. And this was so exciting that I did a rare thing, I made three small figures when I came back, with nothing more than a girl sitting on a bench or a chair with her arms out sideways, and her eyes painted in the Egyptian manner, that is dark eyebrows over the top of the eyes. One of these I gave to my Japanese gallery for his tenth anniversary of the opening of his gallery, I went for that and gave it to him. The other two went to an exhibition at Christopher Hewett's Taranman Gallery in my exhibition before he died.

Yes. And what were they called, those figures?

'Rose-red city', or something like that, I forget now, but very clearly to do with Petra. And they must have been sold, because I don't have them here. So that was Jordan. The next visit was '85; that was a private visit to Egypt. All my life I had wanted to go to Egypt, and it was excellent. This really was...I was involved in this because of my old friend - well young, but a long-term...Jossy Dimbleby, her great friend was Mrs Bamber Gascoigne. She had been born in Baghdad and could speak Arabic. There were two other men and two other women, there were seven of us in all, and this Mrs Bamber arranged through the Egyptian tourist board our exact itinerary, what we should do, and it was excellent. They went all first to Alexandria, but I was involved with some work and I couldn't join them in that part; I joined them when they returned to Cairo. I think we almost left the same night as I arrived during the

day by air, and we went by train south to Aswan. We didn't go via the traditional boat business on the Nile, which is always full of tourists, we went on a marvellous new German train, through the night, which glided along almost silently, rocking through the night with the Nile by one's side, and the dark sky with the moon and so on. And with excellent facilities; each compartment had a wonderful washing and toilet room next to it. And so that was very pleasant indeed. We stayed at the best hotel in Aswan, I've forgotten the name of it, and we hired a felucca, one of those triangular sail boats which went up and down the Nile. But there we got a plane south again to Abu Simbel, where we stayed the night at a very scruffy little tiny hotel. But we first of all saw the sculptures, and I think these are probably the most spectacular sculptures I have ever seen. I don't know what height they would be; they were certainly 30 or 40 feet high, two colossal carvings of Rameses. And the extraordinary thing thing is, due to the Aswan Dam they were dismantled and taken up higher, so to be clear of the floodwater. And the mountain or hill behind as well, and so what appears to be a hill is in fact absolutely hollow; you can go inside, and it's like the Albert Hall or bigger. And the two whacking great carvings outside, with immense dignity, far more than what you can see in the photographs. I suppose I made lots of sketch-book notes of these, but that night at the little restaurant I was so dazed by seeing this sculpture that normally I was yacking away with everyone, and that night I was absolutely silent, and Jossy said, 'Why aren't you talking, you know, meal time is a time for conversation'. So I had to explain that I was engulfed with having seen the carvings. So that that really...we went back to Cairo and saw the museum and things there. We saw everything, the Sphinx and Karnak and all the things. We hired a minibus to get back to Cairo. And another thing that absolutely was most beautiful, well there were two of them, two figures from Tutankhamun's tomb. I don't know what they were made of, wood or plaster, but anyhow, gold leaf all of them, absolutely beautiful figures. I suppose they were life-size. And that was the end of that visit. Then the last of the Middle East was a visit to Baghdad. This was an invitation to attend the Baghdad international festival of art, 1986. I thought I would go especially because I knew, I had found out, that...of course Iraq was still at war with Iran; no tourists were allowed at all, and so one had very much the sights to oneself, or the group that one was with, wherever one went, and this made it special. We got to know at once the British Council, and we borrowed the British Council

Land Rover. There were three of us, Tom Phillips, an artist, David Elliott who is the Director of the Museum of Modern Art at Oxford, an archaeologist, part of the British Council team, and a driver. And we drove to Babylon. And this was wonderful because there were no other people there at all. We wandered around the ruins, saw everything under the blue sky, and I shall never forget that trip. There were other trips made by the other people attending the festival, with buses. For example we went to, where was it, Samarra, a very high minaret with a spiral bank going round it; you can go up to the top, which in itself is a staggering thing. On the way there we stopped at a castle next to the east bank of the Tigris, let's say about three or four hundred yards from it, on a slight rise, and this was a four-square block, that kind of thing, exactly like that [pointing to illustration in book]. It may be it, but I think that's in Jordan. Very high, about 200 feet high it seemed. No, it wouldn't as much as that, 100 feet high, with a gate on the south side going in to the lower region where the army had their barracks, and where the horses were stabled. The whole thing could be shut off from raids of Bedouin tribes and so on. And then the offices on the second floor and at the top we walked on it, but it would have had gardens and fountains and musicians playing for the caliph to visit. Now he, the caliph, the king, fell in love with a young girl of the desert, a Bedouin type girl who couldn't live in a city, so he said OK, I'll come and live with you in the desert. And so this place either had been built just before or he had it built, and it was called familiarly by the people in Baghdad as 'The Castle of the Lovers'. And he lived with this girl until she died, which she did quite young, but one imagines the couriers and the horses riding with banners, backwards and forwards from this place to Baghdad. When she died the caliph went to live again in Baghdad. I think those were the main points of the features that I was most impressed with, but most of all of course was Babylon. So there was the Middle East I saw quite a lot of. I found it very impressive with my driver and the car I had when I was in Jordan, that he would get out at the allotted time, regardless of anyone, with his prayer mat, and say his prayers. And this is a wonderful thing, that someone will do that, as they all do in fact. The power of Islam. So now, the visits with Alastair. I think I've already mentioned how I met Alastair, due to the architect at this house, and how he stayed and we became...I mean for an hour, two or three hours, and he stayed and he became my closest friend, and has been so ever since. And his great thing for me was, as well as being an architectural writer

or historian of Edwardian and Victorian architecture, his main passion was the megalithic sites of Europe, and he wrote an excellent little book on most of the...all the important sites of Europe. And he lives in Avebury, by the great stones. Our first visit together with his lady, Zandria, was to Karnak, where we drove down from whatever port we landed at in the car, and we saw the great lines of stones which are most extraordinary. And what was good about Alastair was, he knew a couple of the more famous archaeologists who had studied and made plans of the whole thing, and he had heard of and read all the books about the place. What I didn't mention was our visit to the biggest megalith of all, a few miles out of Karnak town, I forget in what direction, where there is a fallen one called 'Ergrah', ERGRAH, over...it was reputed to be over 60 feet high, which is enormous for a single carving. It was shaped in a kind of oval shape, and smooth: not polished but smooth, so that it had...and it was in four pieces. There was in a ship's log in 1650 reference to a sighting of it at that time, and then a drawing in the 18th century showing it on the ground. So in between those two dates it had collapsed, due to either lightening or more likely Alastair said, due to earth tremors, because there was a rumour of earth tremors within that period. But I'm still puzzled at how they got it up, because it must have been hundreds of tons. I mean even the Stonehenge bigger ones are 90 tons, and we know how they got them up and how the Egyptians got their large blocks up, pulled up ramps, but this must have needed an enormous ramp to get it up to the fulcrum in which it could be turned down and dropped into its foundations. It is thought, Alastair thought that it was used as a siting for the lines of megaliths, because it all had to do with the moon and sitings of moon worship or sun worship, as it was done in those days. So that was absolutely marvellous to see. The last trip was to Orkney, only last year, where we hired a car and went to the... You see Orkney, although it's extreme north in the British Isles, has many megalithic sites. The climate was milder in those days and the weather better, so there could be astronomical sightings, perhaps, or whether it was used for the sightings of the moon, phases of the moon more clearly than we have now in the south in our present weather. There were stone circles and a large walk-in burial ground, Maes Howe, which is famous, and also, most extraordinary, a village, a 5,000 year old little...not a village, a hamlet of about ten small houses, which had been smothered in a gale by sand and not uncovered until 1850, so it's very well preserved.

It doesn't have a roof, but it has still walls, niches, tables in stone and everything else, which is very exciting to see.

And is that called something?

Yes, that's called...what the hell is it called?

Something beginning with S is it? It's not that...?

Skara Brae.

Yes, I think you mentioned it...

SKARA BRAE. I mentioned it, I'm sorry, I mentioned it before. Well that was that. And so then, well I think probably we'll finish with Alastair while I'm talking about him. He gave me a party on my 75th birthday, which was this summer. Very secret; I wasn't to know anything about it. And what annoyed me, I had to book it up weeks ahead, which I hate doing because I never know when I might have to go abroad, for my foundry in Berlin or the gallery in Paris. Anyhow I did, and I noticed when I stayed with them on the Saturday night that they had two great salmon that they were making into a huge salad, and they had rows of bottles of champagne. And then we set off next morning, I still didn't know what it was, and we drove off in both cars to the Avon...Kennet Canal, where there was moored an Edwardian launch, now electrically driven with a blue awning for its passengers, and 12 of my friends seated there, including my god-daughter Christabel, including Betjeman, what are the Betjemans called?

Lycett-Green?

Lycett-Green, his wife, Candida. And a few others. And off we sailed, hurling along with swans, and we had our picnic with all the salmon and champagne. It was absolutely delightful. And that now is the end of Alastair for the time being, and we come to 1988, when I was asked to send work to the Expo 88 exhibition at Brisbane,

Queensland Australia. Five large...of my largest works. And of course I didn't go for that: I say of course because I don't know that they would pay for everyone to go, because it had vast numbers of people contributing, not for the art but for everything, and so their general policy was, you had to find your own way there if you wanted to go. They sold two, one was to a large shopping mall in what is called the Gold Coast, the very posh area near Brisbane, and the other one was to the town hall, which I have already mentioned.

Yes, so what was the one that was...what did you actually exhibit there, and what was the one...?

It was one of the 'Pandarus', I've forgotten now which one it was. Can't think. Oh I think it was one with two funnels, because I have a second cast which is downstairs, I've forgotten which number it is. So that was a nice thing to do, and I would have loved to have gone, but I couldn't. [BREAK IN RECORDING] I sent the big resin 'Arm' that I had made with Noack in Berlin, and I had it painted, sprayed, in areas of colour. Originally when I made it I thought of having it camouflage colours, like on the jackets of commandos and so on, but no, I thought there's too much of that now, we see it all over the place, every night on television, and so I made a colour scheme of it and this was sprayed down at my friend's, Edward Lawrence. And that, one or two of the 'Pandarus' series, or three, and one, 'A Wall', a great big slab with about five funnel shapes sticking out. I'm sorry, I'm not quite...I should have made a list, but anyhow there were five of them.

But some of those 'Pandarus' series were one-offs weren't they?

Yes.

But this obviously was...

Yes, but the one that I sold there was the one in which I did have two casts, so that was one of them. The others I still have, like white elephants down in my yard. The next big thing, also '88, was the Seoul Olympics, the 24th Olympiad. And I had made

something called 'Garden-Game', a name, I don't know why I gave it that name. Because one could imagine it lodged in a hedge at the end of a garden. And it's in seven pieces, three, four, five, six...one two three four five...in six pieces; seven pieces, yes, seven pieces. It was made in resin, again by Edward Lawrence. It is very much a relief, and so the back is really not to be seen. And this I sent detailed instructions to the people in Seoul, that the back would be filled with concrete, that is, it will be placed in its upright position, propped up, and then behind it what we call 'shuttering', to contain poured-in concrete a distance of let's say about 12 inches from the front to the back, so that the back of it would be cast concrete, fitting on to the back of the relief. And all that would be mounted on a concrete apron. Now obviously that can't be dismantled, so obviously I made them a present of it, and it is part of their national treasures they call them. It had the most colossal catalogue I have ever seen in my life, you can hardly lift it. Now that was the...of course I didn't go for that either.

And what was that called, that whole...it was to coincide with the Seoul Olympics.

Yes, the 24th Olympiad, Seoul Olympics. There were Olympic Games there. I then made another large piece - and now we're coming very nearly to the end - a group of figures, again a relief. I was really using the Edward Lawrence firm a lot, thinking that perhaps I would have works in exhibitions which could be portable. Casts in these things would be enormously heavy to move around, if the floors would stand them, but in resin they were relatively very light. And this was called 'Return to Eden', as the name implies figures sneaking back, and about a group of four figures on the left facing one on the right which has a front view of the face which was screen-printed on the thing. That is still downstairs, and another cast of 'Garden-Game' is downstairs, neither of which have been shown anywhere. The last work was cast early this year, '91, 'L Shaped Screen'. This was...in fact I had a maquette of the Sixties; it fits in with the work I had been doing all along in that time, in that decade, of works with rounded organic shapes combined with geometric shapes. And this was once again a screen, having used many screens right from the 1950s, and this people I noticed like. I kept that one cast and I decided to make a bigger one, but this time it would be made in aluminium, because to have slabs with a section L-shape with one-

inch thick plate in bronze would be enormously heavy and I made it in aluminium. And the model parts were made here, cast in aluminium and welded on. And that, just as I had finished it and its sale was assumed to be in Japan, then everywhere we were hit by the recession, and that work is still covered up, well covered up in the foundry. And I have hardly sold anything in the ten or eleven months since that date. So that really is the end of the 'natural' part. I want to read next what I have written out as a conclusion. [Can we stop for a moment there?] [BREAK IN RECORDING] Having brought us up to the present day, I must say that not at all all the works have been included, but only those that can be talked about, or which were part of a series. There are many works which were one-off, which one could not really say very much about. There were two 'Standing Figures' about six feet high, and there is really nothing I can say about them except, look at them, there they are. Now, I have to say it's not all that pleasant going over facts of so long ago in great detail, as I've been doing, because after all for all of us the present is important and for me what is left of the future. However, I felt it was good to make the record. I'll come on to that in a minute. Next year will be a Spanish year, that is, first of all to attend in the far south, I think it's in Alicante, a passion-play in Elche, dating from 1266, and played every day[sic]. They have one or two professional singers, but most of the singers are local people. And a friend of mine sent me a tape of this, and each Christmas, I love it so much, and it's so profound in feeling, I play it once a year at Christmas time, and if I may I would like to play a few bars of it now. [Plays extract of record] I think I have referred to Salvador Dali's memoirs once before about Nietzsche. He was the only person ever who, other than myself, appeared to have noticed with Neitzsche 'Also Sprach Zarathustra', that in the third or fourth page it said, 'God is dead', and this filled Dali with relish, and he does...well it did give me comfort in those days. Now, he also is the only person who refers to the mystery at Elche, and that was very nice.

Dali?

Dali. But he is really referring to the mechanics of it, that is, there's a huge pomegranate shape, and the angels, these singers are hoisted up through the roof up to the top of the cathedral where they are singing, rather than the music which he doesn't refer to. [Now we can stop there]

End of F2409 Side B

F2410 Side A

Kenneth Armitage interviewed by Tamsyn Woolcoombe at his studio in London, 12th of November 1991. Tape Eleven.

Talking about the intended visit to Spain next year, I mentioned the performance at Elche, then I would like to return north to Madrid for the Prado, which I haven't seen for 40 years, when from Corsham Peter Potworowski and I made a visit to Spain, not long after things were opened: you couldn't travel in Spain before that. And we travelled around a bit, and of course we went to the Prado, and I remember very much the Goya etchings, and I would love to see those again. At the same time, I would like to see my...I call her my adopted grandaughter, Immaculada Coloma Santonja, who lives at Alcoy with her parents, and I would like to see them all, I have a standing invitation to go there one day, and it would be nice to do that. And then to finish off with a visit to San Sebastian in the north to see my friend Chillida and his wife, and then home. And that will be let's say a three-week visit in Spain, I look forward to that.
Now, these tapes were all made obviously off the cuff, using headings listing the many events. But this conclusion will instead be written down; I'm really trying to read it now. It might be wondered why I have spent so much time preparing and using or reading the tapes, and delivering them, and the reasons were these. That what was written about one long ago is often repeated as gospel by later writers. Writers seem to respect enormously what was said 30 years ago; they don't criticize then what was said, they accept it. But mistakes were made 30 years ago and it means that the same mistakes go on ad infinitum. And so, for this reason alone I thought, if I talked about these things, at least it would set the record straight, and also I would be able to add some more information as well. The other point is more peculiar in a way, that several times in my life I have found that an odd casual occurrence or idea, quite unimportant at the time, can if accepted take on much greater significance later. For example, I mentioned the officer in the mess at Deepcut camp who casually passed me 'The Times' advertising the art school teaching job at Bath, to which I went and I eventually went to teach at Bath, and that really became almost a way of life; it was a very important accident to have happened. Or the photographer in London who took

photographs of my work, who led me to a visit to Cliveden, where I met the McEwens who became life-long friends in Rory's case, and Bronwen Astor and all the rest. Just an odd thing happening can be...of course this happens all the time, but it seems to have happened in my case a lot. And it can happen with work. A little thing that appears to be not important can lead to much greater things if one takes it up. So that, if anyone asks me to give an item of advice I would say, to heed the faint whisper, a hunch that can cut right across intended or conscious activities. I wanted to say that the art industry now I think of it is enormous; the National Gallery, the Tate Gallery, the South Bank gallery - the Hayward, Whitechapel, the numerous civic galleries right through the country stuffed with paintings and very little sculpture. The auction houses, Sotheby's, Christie's, Bonhams, Phillips; the hundreds of commercial galleries dealing with current art production. The art writers, critics, etecetera, the magazines, the paint, frame and paper manufacturers; the bronze foundries; the hundred or so art schools giving employment. Underneath this activity involving an annual turnover of millions, are many tiny dots. These, the artists, are mainly anonymous, but a few reach star status, mostly for excellence of work but not always so. Individual artists are of course vastly important, but can be lost in the mass of activity we call art. This is all like a benevolent goddess, fading or emerging with circumstance, but always there, indestructible, and continuing for all time. This strange activity occurs only in the human species and nowhere else in life. One might refer to the Australian bowerbird, that builds a kind of ramshackle little wig-wam for his lady, and collects mainly blue things to put in front of the door to entice his mate, and it seems to work. But I hardly call that art - at least one doesn't know the mind of the bowerbird but I don't think it is.

Now, in my numerous visits to the British Museum, which I regard as a museum of life and I have been all my life, I see of course regularly what is obvious, the sculpture halls with Egyptian, Cycladic and archaic Greek sculpture. But also I visit a tiny room on a mezzanine floor, near the top of the main staircase to the first floor, containing a handful of Stone Age artefacts, items of pre history. There is a whole skeleton a few thousands years old that might, by a billion to one chance be one's own direct forebear. Or the small rather wonderful chalk drums, only a few inches high, cylindrical, beautifully carved in relief, found in a girl's barrow made 4,000 years ago, and for which no known purpose is known; they appear to be unique. But what I find

most interesting is a fragment of reindeer antler, only eight inches long or so, on which is engraved the head and antlers of a reindeer, so clear, direct and fresh it might have been made today by a student at the Royal College of Art. Estimated age, an unbelievable 12,000 B.C., thus relating in date to the Lascaux caves, which I was privileged to see before they were closed to the public, which contain the fabulous cave paintings. It gave me a thrill, shaking hands so to speak with another artist, unbelievably of 14,000 years ago, in spite of differences of race, language, modes of life etectera. It is an example of the possible role of art, a form of direct communication quite independent of other human activities. Finally I must thank Tamsyn Woollcombe, sitting here in front of me, for accepting the sudden invitation to operate these tapes, and who has done it so well, tactfully prompting me where needed, and also making copious notes. It is difficult now to think I would have done this without her help. So, should it be thought that I have been taking myself too seriously, I would like to round it all off on a much lighter note, by including a nonsense poem by Stevie Smith, a writer who interested one just after the Second World War. I had read her poems again recently after 40 years, and also I sometimes think all my life that I have only been singing a song. Also my friend Alastair's lady, Zandria, has the same family name, Pauncefort, which is an unusual one as far as I know, also referred to in the poem, so I copied it out to send to her, and for that reason found it lying on this desk, and I am using it now. It's called 'The Songster'. 'Miss Pauncefort sang at the top of her voice, singing tirry-lilly down the lane, and nobody knew what she sang about. Sing tirry-lirry lirry all the same'. The second and fourth lines she has in brackets, making them a kind of quotation. Now this nonsense is not all that nonsense, because most artists are, albeit more seriously, doing what Miss Pauncefort did, just singing down the lane.

Thank you very much indeed, thank you.

End of F2410 Side A

Side B is blank

F2411 Side A

Kenneth Armitage, interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe at his studio in London, on the 10th of December 1991. Tape Twelve. This tape is made in retrospect, as a correction tape, i.e. it covers works that Kenneth Armitage forgot to mention in the previous eleven tapes that I have made with him.

It seems I ought to say, almost an apology, that it is very difficult going over 50 years of work without forgetting something. Unbelievably I really didn't mention the drawings I have done to the extent that they should have been, because I have been drawing all the time. There are also certain works I forgot to mention. There are...I made a quick count of the models I have made, were 370 about. And listing the number of works I have referred to, it's only about 40, out of 370 is not bad, in terms of economy. But one of the first things I made on going to teach at the Bath Art School immediately after the war, when we moved to Corsham Court, was a thing I called 'Moon Figure', which had some resemblance to a moon. The head has a crescent shape, it was flattish, it was done in white or semi-pink plaster, and it really stemmed from a carving I did at Bath, in the basement of the Bath Art School, of a figure from the waste down, in a kind of Assyrian way, with arms across the chest; it's all a very kind of compact kind of thing. What happened to that I don't know, it's lost.

Was that in stone, Bath stone?

Yes, it was Bath stone because very near there was the office of the Bath and Portland Stone firm and I got a lump delivered there. Now the 'Moon Figure' was done in plaster, it was modelled, although it had got very much a carving look about it. It looks also as though I had been influenced by Cycladic sculpture, although I had never thought when I was doing it that I was doing that, but it has got a certain connection with it, which might be, it might not be. But that was 'Moon Figure', that was 1948. The next year I made two figures which I called 'Linked Figures', and that was 1949, and this was before I did 'People in a Wind', and the flattish, screen-like figures. 'Linked Figures' was definitely merged together; instead of having two bodies they were all one, with arms and legs stuck on on the outside. And so in a

sense that was a very important breaking point with the work in the past. After that, I don't know how it changed, I started making screen-like things. First of all 'Moon Figure' and 'Linked Figures' had no connection with what I was doing in the war, but by the time I came to 1950, the aircraft identification that I had been involved with for six years in the Army began to come out. Plus the fact that I had in the workshop, the studio, I had some screens made. And these, without thinking, had an influence on me.

Yes, I think you have mentioned those in one of the earlier tapes.

I mentioned that. And one of the early ones, I mentioned also 'A Family Going for a Walk' and 'People in a Wind' and so on, but then I made a piece called 'Children Playing', which was very small, which the Italian dealer Luca Scacci-Gracci took to be cast in Italy and was rather naughty in having more casts made than he should have done.

Also mentioned in previous tapes.

But it so happened that that little piece, 1953, was the most desired piece I have ever made; maybe a hundred or more I could have sold. This is not any point, some works people don't like, other works people like and so on. Similarly, in fact the year before, a piece called 'Friends Walking'. This was made by threading the armature, as we call it, through wire netting, putting it on the ground and pouring plaster all over it, and trying to control the plaster into a kind of semi, nearly rectangular shape, with the three little heads sticking out of the top, and the legs sticking out of the bottom, several little legs, and figures squashed on the front. Extremely loose, about the most loose piece I have ever made. That was 'Friends Walking'.

Yes, and that was the first time you had made a piece like that, dribbling plaster from...

Yes, and also the last thing, a one-off.

Right. And it's very sort of thin isn't it.

Yes, like a pancake, exactly like a pancake. And usually, if you think of a three-dimensional cross with the directions in space, I condensed at that time one of the dimensions to almost minimum, and this was one in which even 'Children Playing' had a bit more. No it didn't, no that was flat too. But the others had had rudimentary dimensions as well as the main front and back and so on. Now...

You know you were talking about the drawings that you have always done throughout your life.

Yes.

I mean presumably you did drawings for all your pieces did you, before, or not?

Yes. Yes, I have pages of drawings of 'People in a Wind' and 'Family Going for a Walk'; they're lying around in piles of drawings that I have had. And this has been an extremely difficult thing to decide, that while drawing was very important for me, it's impossible within the limits of the possible time in this tape to include anything like the amount of work that has been done. Somehow we will have select about six drawings only out of several hundred, which is not a fair example but it's the best one can do. There were then some works which I have difficulty in talking about. 'Standing Figure' was almost a striding figure with one arm sticking out, and there's really not...that was 1956-7.

Was that tall, quite a tall, a life-size figure?

No no, it was about three-and-a-half feet high. And there were...then jumping a bit to '61 there were two figures, standing figures, just over life-size, 'Standing Man' and 'Standing Figure', depending very much on the shapes made as I was modelling it. A lot of the works I do are thought out in my mind, exactly what I want to do, and these were more like a landscape painter who sits in front of a landscape and surrenders

himself to what he sees (this is I imagine what he does) instead of having a clear programme in my mind, one's mind.

Yes, because those two works, 'Standing Man' and 'Standing Figure' are not like anything you have really done before or after.

No. No, they're quite on their own.

I mean they're comparatively figurative in a way.

They are very figurative in their own way. One has an enormously thick leg and a thin leg, things like that introduced to it. Then I did a series of figures which I called 'Sibyls', which have a strange link with what I feel sibyls look like. It's hard to define why, but the title seems to me appropriate. And they had a feature which I used in the 'Mouton Sun' for the Rothschild commission, that is a shelf, a ledge, sticking out, which came from the bracket fungus I had seen on the trees at Corsham, and enormous navels. Why I made enormous navels I don't know; this is all long ago, and I'm going over these things very quickly. But then, by the end of the Sixties I was making many little wood shapes and drawing on them, trying to combine the drawings that I was always doing with the sculpture, making screens or folded shapes like that, as Picasso had done also. But I did finish two works which were called 'Single Figure with Drawing', and the other was called 'Two figures with Drawing'.

And they weren't bronze, they were...

They were cast in aluminium because I wanted them to be light in weight, because I wanted to have a white surface, and they were enamelled.

A white surface?

Yes. I was going to put black drawings on them, as opposed to having...so that it was like paper. This is a weird mix-up of drawing and sculpture. And so there is the standing figure with...it has got black hair, but behind, the only way I could do it was

to have a plate, and I had a silk-screen image from a drawing printed on that, the same with that one. And for some reason then I didn't go on with this.

Right. Were they one-offs those two pieces?

No. They were both about...that one was four, and this one was I think...oh, probably about the same, four or five.

So what are the dates...can we just say the dates?

Yes, '72, that was the year I left the Marlborough Gallery.

Right. 'Two Figures with Drawing' 1972, and 'Single Figure with Drawing'...

1972. '72-'76. Well the edition went on.

Oh I see yes, but initiated in 1972.

That's the first one. Initiated then, yes. Now, the whole point of this is to show that this was an attempt to do something that I suppose I really failed at. What I should have done, I should have made a large cast and plastered paint all over them. But this I was reluctant to do because if one has a large cast out of doors the paint would weather more than the metal, and would probably in ten years disappear, or be reduced to nothing. And the tendency has been in my work to make the surface closer and closer, until the cast made by Noack, at which he is so terribly good, as he had done with Henry Moore, was have a very fine polished surface, which is the best preservative; there are no little holes to hold water, and slightly damage the surface. Now those are the attempts at combining drawing, which really is the point of my using this correction tape. A lot of this, and with the paper models was a kind of play, as opposed to laboriously working with plaster. Sculpture takes up space, and is heavy, and by its very corporeal reality occupies the mind as opposed to drawings on paper which can be stacked away in drawers and not be seen, with no physical presence. And so this is an attempt at a combination of the two. But a lot of them,

they were lying on the floor, I was walking on them, and had an element of play. And with this, I would like to refer to a book I read last year which I found fascinating, by an American called Richard Coe, published in 1984 by Yale University, and he was really trying to analyse the child's mind, which I certainly wasn't doing as I was working. He called the book 'When the Grass was Taller'. But what interested me was, he felt there were two categories of human thinking or understanding. There was part of the mind involved with what he calls a 'real' dimension, with useful consequences, practical, material, and of benefit to the performer, let's say like business or building or anything like that. The other one was a 'play' dimension, which was wholly gratuitous, generating no direct consequence, throwing off a kind of feeling. And these two things are combined, we all do both kinds of things. In fact he refers to two, I take it they are thinkers or philosophers. There's one called Johan Huizinga, who thought they were equally important in our minds, and a Frenchman called Roger Caillois, CAILLOIS, however one pronounces that, who thought the play element was the more important of the two. And he said that the play dimension is the foundation for all culture, all art, all religion, and what we call the aesthetic. And he said that the fun or playing resists all analysis, all logical interpretation, and can't be reduced to any other category. This I found fascinating, and worth mentioning. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

You were talking about drawings. I just wanted to check up with you. Did you ever have an exhibition purely of drawings, other than the one at the Freddy Mayor Gallery?

No. No, I don't think so. Always they was combined with sculpture, and the British Council who were so marvellous in sending one's work abroad always included drawings, but they were always a kind of accessory. And in my case the drawing was equally important, I was always, always drawing.

You were drawing...were you drawing things as drawings in their own right, sometimes?

Both. There were a lot of doodles, in fact very often the ideas I had were started by having drawings that were meaningless really to other people, were just notes, scribbled notes. Then there were drawings which, rather grandly you would call drawing for drawing's sake, for the pleasure of sitting down and doing a drawing, and not thinking about... Those drawings on the wall over there were of that kind.

Were drawings for drawing's sake?

It didn't relate to the work, it didn't relate to the sculpture.

No exactly. And that one, I remember you did one called 'Seated Figure with Hand on Knee' or...I think that was its title. That was again just a drawing for its own sake wasn't it, it wasn't...

I don't know which that would be.

Oh it was something we had in that Corsham exhibition, and 'Two Seated Figures' and things like that.

But that was a drawing and not a sculpture.

Yes.

Oh yes. Well, there are dozens. And this is why I am going to try and select with your help Tamsyn just half a dozen drawings out of hundreds, just to give an idea of the range.

What, you're talking about photographs, selecting, that we hope to include?

Yes.

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END OF INTERVIEW

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INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Ref.No.: C466/08 Playback Nos: F2396-F2411 incl.

Collection title: Artists' Lives

Interviewee's surname: ARMITAGE Title: Mr

Interviewee's forenames: William Kenneth
(known as Kenneth)

Date of birth: 18th July 1916 Sex: M

Date(s) of recording: 08.06.91; 16.06.91;
01.10.91; 08.10.91; 15.10.91;
28.10.91; 06.11.91; 12.11.91;
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Location of interview: The artist's studio/home

Name of interviewer: John McEwen and Tamsyn Woollcombe

Type of recorder: Marantz

Total no. of tapes: 16

Speed:

Type of tape: C60

Noise reduction:

Mono or stereo: StereoOriginal or copy: Original

Additional material: Photographs of works

Copyright/Clearance: Full clearance given

F2396 Side A

Interview at Kenneth Armitage's studio, 8.6.91. Interviewer John McEwen.

KA knows little about father's family but a lot about mother's family. Mother's name Quin, she was born in Longford, county in southern Ireland. KA's great-great-grandfather changed from being a Catholic to a Protestant which KA was disgusted about as a young man - details. Great grandfather was William Henry Quin, became a naval captain, built family house, Lackan ('the house on the hill'), two Irish miles from Edgeworthstown. WHQ had curious job in Navy towards end of his life intercepting slave owners acting illegally after abolition - details. WHQ buried at St. Helena after accident; family story is that Napoleon had been taken out of his tomb at St. Helena and body sent to Paris and that WHQ was put in his empty tomb on St. Helena. KA went to early film in Dublin about St. Helena and uncle told him his great-grandfather was in the tomb and that tree planted nearby was planted in honour of his death. KA's grandfather also went into Navy, also called William Henry, sent to Nelson's flagship - KA slightly muddled about great-grandfather and grandfather. Memories of grandfather in his nineties talking about flogging on board ship. Grandfather left Navy and went to live on land left to him by his father, but first designed and had built bridge over river at Ballymahon. Grandfather took to gambling, had nine children, one of which was KA's mother. KA used to see great-grandfather's ceremonial sword at Lackan as a child and had been promised it would eventually come to him, but this never happened. Grandfather gambled on the land, lost, got down to 60 acre smallholding and then lost house. KA's mother told him how furniture taken out on wagons and children loaded and were just off under eye of bailiffs when relation rode up with money to pay debt and they were able to move back in. Mother never criticised her father for gambling. Irish attitude to gambling.

KA's mother had impoverished childhood. She was the sixth child and had to look after the younger ones. She hardly went to school, badly educated, difficulty reading. She was sent to Bradford as an under-nurse to a family, great contrast to the area where she had grown up. Met KA's father in Bradford around 1900? KA's sister 15 years older than him. KA's father a strange man, had lost parents when he was about

12, had two slightly older sisters and had to earn a living to help support them. Father wanted to take up music and schoolteacher advised it, and he came to notice of organist at York Minster who offered him free lessons if he could get to York - but father couldn't afford it. Got junior jobs to begin with and eventually moved to Leeds and joined an oil firm. Father intelligent but reticent, good at languages and chess and mathematics and loved music. KA one of three children. Father less dynamic than mother, who was a bit crazy, so parents opposite. KA's wife says he takes after father, but has robust physique of mother in later life. Mother liked people who made things, would always talk to builders and seemed to have a link with builders.

Father's job in oil refinery at Leeds at time of beginning of motoring but refinery petered out in face of competition from big firms and stopped about 25 years ago. Father worked there as cashier until towards end of his life when he became a director, probably an honorary title. KA had two sisters, one 15 years older, other Nora died of TB when he was four. KA remembers her with an inhaler and invalid chair - details. Nora was about 15 when she died, was talented; KA has still life by her which he admires. Nora born around 1906. Mother passionately fond of Nora. Eldest sister didn't turn out well, Doreen, born around 1900 or earlier. Because mother's affection centred on invalid Nora and on KA as boy, Doreen felt left out and became bitter person. Doreen said parents wouldn't let her marry man she wanted and encouraged her to marry wrong person. Doreen died about ten years ago in Leeds.

About three months ago unknown man called Regan rang KA saying doing research into sculpture on underground buildings and that he had discovered someone called Joseph Armitage who didn't consider himself an artist but a successful master mason - details of his work. Regan thought KA must be son of Joseph Armitage. JA had links with Harrogate and there were Josephs in KA's father's family and KA agreed to see Regan but unable to make clear family connection.

KA's childhood. First went to school in field in Leeds, The Tin School because made of corrugated iron - description. There from age 5-10, KA enjoyed it. Headmistress said KA showed marked artistic and inventive abilities in connection with handiwork. KA remembers thinking he was good at it - made things at home, can't remember if

used Plasticine. KA loved Meccano, made things all the time. Remembers sitting in father's Austin 7, looking at the mudguard describing arc as car turned to right and knew that invisible wheels underneath were also turning. Soon realized wheel on near side turning more than on other side - soon after found out about how this was achieved - details. KA tried to make Meccano model to demonstrate this. Had passion for toy boats, fascinated by shape of hull, didn't know anything about water dynamics. Family started visiting Filey and Flamborough Head and KA saw the famous Yorkshire boat, the Coble - details.

KA had bad two years at next school.

F2396 Side B

Next school in City - description. Later went to fee paying secondary school which he liked much more and which had, to his great delight, an art department. Art teacher, Mr Walker, took tremendous interest in KA. KA would experiment with sculpture after school with Mr Walker who eventually advised him to go for scholarship to art school. KA got scholarship at 17 but mother said must get a job. Remembers day at 16 when decided to be an artist. Mr Walker persuaded mother to let KA go to art school on scholarship. Details of day KA decided to be an artist. Clipping from father's diary saying teacher said KA most promising art student school ever had. KA doesn't remember anyone else having any talent at art in whole school. Father remained aloof and didn't encourage KA at anything. KA enjoyed rugby at school. Not good at anything else; liked Milton's similies but not rest of the poetry.

When KA was schoolboy met Peter Storey, similar age who outdid him at making things. Storey built handle-bars of his bike straight which KA admired, made a throwing stick - details. KA remembers seeing Zulu shield at school. Storey made large model aeroplane in backyard, made in laths. KA remembers noticing without knowing why that the wings had sections and a curved top. Later found that this one method of obtaining lift - details. Lost touch with Storey as they grew up. Storey had older brother and younger sister. Storey asked KA if he had ever seen what was between a girl's legs and suggested they go to his sister's bedroom - details. KA said,

'It's like a boat'. In retrospect KA thinks girl must have meant them to see. KA relates this to text from a book read last year, women as goddesses. Details of image of female derived from carvings on Romanesque churches. Early 19th century print of terrified devil with hooves running from girl holding up skirt to show genitals.

KA cycled a lot with Peter Storey. School holidays from earliest years spent at family home in Ireland - KA learnt to walk there. KA born July 18th 1916 at the time of first Rising. Uncle would meet them in pony and trap and later in tin Lizzie. KA remembers being driven about Dublin and seeing burnt building probably famous gutted post office. Remembers trenches and felled trees, work of Sinn Feiners, obstacle to the Black and Tans, much hated by everybody. B&Ts visited KA's uncle and he said he wouldn't employ any of them if his house was harmed. KA adored Lackan, happiest time of his life. Took Susan Hampshire to Ireland, she loved house and wanted to buy it. KA's wife thought they might live there eventually. Description of landscape in Ireland and KA's time there as a child, awareness of archaeological aspects, uncle would talk to him about this. White stones showing in green grass - limestone in Yorkshire also important to KA. When KA got to Ireland forgot everything and turned native, wore no shoes etc. Befriended men who worked for uncle - details. In those days young man couldn't marry until father died because nowhere for him to live. KA used to dance to accordian beside turf fire. Later friend when KA was a teenager, Paddy, had job of pointing walls for uncle, great drinker like uncle (cured by strong-willed aunt) - details of watching sun set with Paddy etc.

Uncle Willie who owned farm had no child and KA thinks he wanted to adopt him since own father had little money and uncle well off and liked KA. Uncle would talk at KA's bedside for quarter of an hour every night, conversation rather than stories - example. Uncle became gentleman commercial traveller because didn't have enough land, KA loved going with him. Occasion when KA wearing first long trousers - details of woman trying to beg from him and then cursing him. Uncle would take KA round the farm. Uncle gave KA a calf which died. Uncle tried to get KA interested in farming and taught him how to judge quality of land and taught him about Ireland. Further details about places visited in Ireland. Ireland may have spawned many of KA's interests - loves land more than people.

F2397 Side A

Uncle had friends who lived in Kingstown where ferry came in, later renamed. Had house overlooking harbour and uncle used top flat when visiting Dublin. KA would sleep there, lightship out at sea, The Kish - description. Uncle took him to old Abbey Theatre where saw 'Playboy of Western World', and to best restaurant in Dublin, Jammet's. Jammet's grandson married Liz Frink and had a son with her. Uncle took him to Trinity College. Uncle more of a father than own father. KA fond of father but they didn't talk, whereas uncle took tremendous interest in whatever KA did. Uncle talked about KA's drawings, tiny portraits. Discussion about portrait done of uncle under paraffin light. Frightened to go back to Ireland in case it had changed, but went back eight or nine years ago. Uncle died just after WWII and house sold and aunt came to live in Bristol. Family house now flattened - details of visiting when it was empty. House was big link with past for KA. Description of house. Susan Hampshire's visit to the Irish house and why it as impossible for them to live there. As child went there with mother rather than father who hated the cats at the house. More details about father. Mother went mad in the end and father had horrible time. KA reads to convey atmosphere in Ireland, sets this in context of Irish Government offering tax incentives to encourage people to move to Ireland. KA thinks 'something comes over you' once you go to Ireland. J P Donleavy, who wrote 'The Ginger Man' went to live in Ireland. KA reads from Lytton Strachey on Queen Elizabeth I and Essex. Essex sent to Ireland to suppress uprising - details. KA thinks of himself as more of an Irishman than a Yorkshireman. Was however much concerned with Yorkshire landscape in early life.

KA reads from 'Five British Sculptors Work and Talk: Moore, Butler, Hepworth, Chadwick and Armitage', taped conversations of sculptors and photographs. KA reads his own quote about Yorkshire. Influence of land in Yorkshire on sculptors. Time lag in sculpture, idea, assembling materials, stages which don't appear to have any connection with final work. KA connects this with dogged Yorkshire character.

Leeds Art School: KA got scholarship, did drawing for first year then went to small sculpture class, only about six people. KA shy and didn't like being with clique of six and so asked to take painting for the year. Doesn't think he was all that good - did one good painting which still has - description and reasons why KA likes it. Got another scholarship at the end of second year. Student, Sid Hobbs, the others all thought marvellous. Almost all applied to go to Royal College and KA horrified not to get in. KA thought Hobbs more talented than himself, KA next in line. KA got involved for first time with a girl while at Leeds, this may have been important in his work. Girl not interested in art but was at art school. KA 19, she 17 - details. Teacher tried to persuade KA to give up girl. Details of affair.

While KA at Leeds found 2 books, one gave him tremendous excitement - Friedrich Nietzsche's 'Also sprach Zarathustra'. A few years after sister died mother took to Christian Science - details. KA taught that doctors couldn't cure him, only God, and if ill as a child must have sinned. Mother used to say it was a sin to have children and wished she hadn't had any. Father was passive and didn't raise objections to mother's religion. Mother led father 'a bit of a dance', and at one point he said he wanted to cut his throat. Irish habit of paying people to pray for her rather than consult doctors. KA tried to leave Christian Science but mother blackmailed him to stay. When read Nietzsche made break with Christian Science. KA reads from 'Also Sprach Zarathustra', extract which helped him escape mother's religious mania. KA violently anti-religious person for a long time but this faded.

Second book which came across at Leeds by Dr Robert Lloyd Praeger. A gentleman botanist, biologist, etc - details. Led to KA going to County Clare after the war. Eventually met author when KA at Slade. Description of illustration in book.

F2397 Side B

Description of drawing continued ('The Way That I Went', published by Methuen in 1937) and reason why KA fascinated by it. Clonfinlough stone (near Clonmacnoise in Ireland) - Abbe Breuil made connections between stone and Spain. KA has been to see stone three times within last eight years. Reasons why KA attracted to illustration of stone whilst at Leeds.

Interview 16.06.1991

Influences on KA's sensibility while at Leeds Art School. Henry Moore had been a previous student. Leeds not an attractive city but has extraordinary city square with large bronze equestrian statue surrounded by nymphs. KA used to look at nymphs as a boy of 16 because they were naked girls. Mother had been in Ireland in earliest years, longed for country life and father eventually moved to extreme north of Leeds where there were fields. Marvellous park with lakes, woods, follies nearby - KA visited all his life in Leeds, remembers skating on lake etc. Took Pauline skating - girl KA involved with at art school, first real contact with a woman. Country round about Leeds was marvellous - details. Visit with John Heath Stubbs to crag at three in the morning in the 1950s whilst both were on Gregory Fellowships.

KA got second scholarship to enable him to go to Slade. Whilst KA still at Leeds Philip Henley was new Director of Leeds City Art Gallery and also had marvellous building, an Elizabethan mansion near to Leeds. Exhibition at Leeds College of Art which PH judged and KA awarded two prizes. Continued to meet Henley occasionally until after the war. [BREAK IN RECORDING]]

KA on sculpture at St. James's Underground station. KA on Gerrard - artist now 92 and still fit. KA very fond of Gerrard [taught by him at Slade]. Gerrard once rang KA while KA had bad drinking phase and was on pills from doctor. KA had terrible hangover and Gerrard rang to say he was leaving the school that day and would KA go and say a few words. Gerrard was very interested in carving and therefore KA did carving. KA had received a prize for carving whilst at Leeds. Details of way of

carving since WWI in contrast with Edwardian methods. Epstein, Gaudier-Brzeska carved direct. KA has lost carvings he did under Gerrard - was carving in stone, liked Hopton Wood. During two years (when KA at Slade) visited Dorset coast to see quarries near to Portland Bill - description. KA went to British Museum every week, visiting Egyptian Room - details. Trip to Egypt with Mrs David Dimbleby, Jossie, girlfriend of KA for three years before she met David - details. Impact of Abu Simbel. KA doesn't think huge sculpture is necessarily important and that small piece can be as important. In Egypt combination of carving and feeling of power made KA speechless - details.

At British Museum one day saw extraordinary figure. In 1930s men's clothes very formal - details - and man was wearing mediaeval clothes, sandals, long blonde hair, intelligent, aristocratic face; this had amazing effect on KA. Man was Count Potocki, King of Poland who was later to come to KA's house several times after the war. KA's wife, Jo, knows widow of Arthur Waley; widow came from New Zealand, as did Potocki and Douglas Glass. Details of Potocki. Great surrealist exhibition. Two Epstein exhibitions at Leicester Galleries. Leicester Galleries had a turnstile and would charge to enter and Epstein attracted so many people that he asked for a percentage of gate money. Epstein was showing portraits in bronze - description. Carvings worried people and two stunning carvings to KA were 'Adam' and 'Jacob and the Angel' - details. Hatred of Epstein from certain quarters - foreign name and approach to work. Epstein's carving to commemorate W H Hudson in Hyde Park was loathed so much it was tarred and feathered. Weekend meeting of fans used to go through press reports on Epstein. Epstein lived almost next door to Churchill, had many commissions. KA on sculpture at gate opposite Knightsbridge - Epstein didn't mind being vulgar, different from Henry Moore, who KA thinks powerful and polite, a bit straight laced, thought Schiele was pornographic. KA thinks Schiele erotic but not pornographic. Problem of portraying women in art without being labelled pornographic. KA's thoughts about why Adam and Eve sculptures weren't pornographic - thinks pornography occurs with glamorized seductiveness to lure men into erotic thoughts. Thinks Schiele draws too well to be pornographic. Royal Academy had difficulty in getting sponsorship for Schiele because of pornographic fears.

When KA went to Slade didn't paint, spent whole time doing sculpture. During first year at Slade met Jo, future wife - details. Jo was sharing a studio with a friend.

F2398 Side A

KA able to work at her studio as well as at the Slade. Jo Moore. They married about 18 months later. Jo had been to Paris before came to Slade and through Swedish diplomatic bag had brought back a copy of 'Lady Chatterley's Lover' and James Joyce's 'Ulysses', both banned in Britain at the time. Ulysses had tremendous impact on KA, partly because he was Irish, details. Also during years at Slade met Stanley Spencer once or twice, he would come for strawberry teas. KA did course on bronze casting at Central School in basement, taught by Galizia, and had things cast in bronze by him after the war. Hitler's voice on radio disturbing, even worse was sound of his supporters.

Wrote to Dr. Praeger saying was going to Ireland and would love to meet. Because of involvement with carving wanted to go to marble quarries in Connemara, thought it might be possible to have marble shipped to England. Stayed with uncle, borrowed bike and visited marble quarry. Details of journey. First visit of many. Met Praeger in Connemara. Description of landscape. Discussion with Praeger. Details of stay. Watching woman using sickle. Castle seen on journey back, Edgeworthstown, Maria Edgeworth connection - KA later visited Castle with Susan Hampshire. Area in London named Edgware named after same family - details of family. KA fascinated by Maria Edgeworth's diaries - details of her travels. KA reads from Maria Edgeworth's diary.

KA offered third scholarship abroad but political situation too dangerous in this period so KA back to Leeds for bad month. Stayed with parents, needed a job, three million unemployed, no teaching work, only available job was selling Hoovers which KA rejected.

Slade. KA now well read. KA was reading all the time as a young man, eg 'Madam Bovary', but wouldn't say he was literary minded. First year was year of drawing, from cast and then from real models - KA on shock of being in room with naked woman. Also found it extraordinary to be in a class with girls as fellow students. Segregation at, for example, the Royal Academy of male and female students for drawing from models. KA can't remember if male and female students together at Slade. Models were fairly young women. In sculpture department had model for life modelling, mixed sex students. Henry Moore already a 'figure' for KA. Henry Moore would make day visits for #9 which seemed a great deal to KA. KA says Moore not a great influence on him, Epstein more well known. Henry Moore had close following by people who knew him, Unit One Group, Herbert Read, later Kenneth Clark. KA only later realized Barbara Hepworth, Read and Henry Moore all from Yorkshire but didn't know any of them at the time. Stanley Spencer was only established artist KA in contact with at the time. KA has letters he sent to Leeds art teacher throughout Slade period, the war, through period at Notting Hill Gate, time at Corsham. Did a portrait of teacher's daughter, Angela, when went to Slade. Wrote letter to art teacher about impressions of Stanley Spencer and impact of meeting someone famous in those days.

When KA taught at the Royal College in 1960s, Bernard Meadows gave him day a week for several years; found students had no respect for Henry Moore, Richard Long was causing excitement as someone nearer students' age. When KA young gulf between London and provinces greater. No artists in Royal Academy that KA respected when young, already an area he didn't even think about; this worse when Munnings became President and abused great painters. KA swore would never have anything to do with Academy. Sculpture was KA's main interest and sculpture in RA never strong despite Caro, briefly, and Paolozzi. KA's own work not all that avant garde and still is not. KA not so aware of Picasso, one book of his work at Leeds. Heard more about him at the Slade. No paintings by Picasso in London and not until end of war when saw stunning exhibitions of Picasso, possibly at V&A.

F2398 Side B

Other people finding humour in KA's work. Slade Professor asked why he wanted Slade diploma. Royal College of Art qualifications geared for student's future, whereas Slade a tradition of drawing and painting which had come from Paris and started in London to produce artists - distinction between Slade and Royal College. Slade Professor in KA's time Randolph Schwabe. Fellow artists at Slade including Patrick Heron, Brian Winter in painting department. Painters and sculptors tended not to mix very much. Paul Filer was also in same period at Slade. KA spent time with own friends in sculpture school, none of whom did particularly well afterwards.

Outbreak of war. KA finished time at Slade and had returned to parents before war broke out but had left belongings at studio because thought would go back. KA was penniless and mother refused to give him money to get back. KA living on 30 shillings a week while at Slade - details. Jo was an ex-Slade student, seven years older than KA and already doing a teaching job at children's school while KA at Slade. Jo sent KA cheque to help him get back to London to sort out his belongings. KA's mother furious that Jo had done this, rivalry. KA and Jo got married without telling KA's mother. Mother wanted him to provide an income and if he married would have someone else to support. Jo had very small private income, father was Registrar to Archbishop of Canterbury.

KA had been brought up with people talking about WWI and expected he wouldn't survive the war. Returned to Leeds, expecting to be called up eventually, and so day after war declared volunteered, partly so as not to be a burden on his parents. Went into artillery - sent to camp near Aldershot.

Address of studio - Varndell Street, off road that continues Tottenham Court Road. Description of studio. KA had been on day trips to London from Leeds before Slade, eg for big exhibition. Remembers going to Houses of Parliament, going to jazz etc. Loved London during Slade years, full of avenues he could follow and things to see - details.

Details of army life. Field Training Regiment - field artillery ,lite of guns at the time. Horse-drawn artillery. KA was commissioned. Details of training regiment and

promotion - sent to officer cadet training unit in Richmond, Yorkshire; six months wasted. Battery commander's report on KA 'eccentric, untidy and should be curbed'. Final report was much better. Jo came up to be married in Richmond - details. Man in next bed to KA a poet who knew about surrealism; KA later had brief affair with poet's wife; vowed afterwards would never have anything to do with a married woman again and didn't. KA posted to unit in Davenport, inland from Plymouth Sound - details. Had married Jo because thought he would be killed - details. Knew Jo was a marvellous person. KA posted back to camp he had been seven months before via 'Barmy Bill' Buckland - details. KA mixed up with general's son. Being posted back resulted in 'amazing things' for KA. KA made Military Transport Officer and was sent off for course on aircraft identification and did well because had been involved with shape as an art student. Went back to camp and was promoted. Wrote to art teacher, Foxy, in Leeds - KA quotes from letter. Details of work at the camp and being made Captain. Story of wife of major being dropped to join resistance in France, links with resistance. Never met de Gaulle.

F2399 Side A

Wife of major named Olga. Meeting 'Tiger' Lion Smith. KA worried by criticism that he was not taking a more active role in war. Jo came to live near to where KA was based and he was able to sleep there for three or four months. Anecdote about knitting. First person who influenced KA was Mr Walker in Leeds who persuaded his mother to let him go to art school. 'Barmy' (soldier) second person to influence him. Later met Barmy again in a bus in Kensington High Street. Barmy had refused KA's request to take more active role in war and therefore may have saved his life.

When KA finished cadet training and made an officer was sent for gunnery practice at Salisbury Plain - impact of Stonehenge which KA had only seen in photographs before. When KA went to Corsham saw Avebury as well. At Corsham, after the war, KA's interest in primaeval art came out.

When KA was still in Army, towards end of war, went on weekend visit to family in Leeds. Mother unwell, had been sent to a Christian Science home and sent back

quickly by staff who said they couldn't cope with her because she was mad. Plan to send her to mental home in York. Father under great strain. Mother asked KA to stop her going to the retreat in York. Father had right to make decision, KA didn't know the background. KA told her she was going for temporary visit, as father had told him, and didn't make a stand against her going. When she got there confinement was too strange for her and she tried to cut her wrists. Mother taken off temporary list and put in ward with three other serious cases. KA and father went to visit her in 1946, shocking. KA did drawing of her ward. Dismal building with sad Christmas decorations. Mother rambling, nightdress torn. Mother became suddenly lucid and told him he wasn't his father's son. Mother in the past had referred to a very different life she might have had. KA wanted to ask more but couldn't because of father sitting next to him. Mother died a few months later. KA felt her problem was that she was fanatic by nature - details. Feels father's reticence may have been connected with idea that he might not have been KA's father. KA obsessed with art and not distracted by implication that he had a different father. Jo thinks KA looks like his father and he has interests in common with his father although physically unalike. KA feels it doesn't matter if the father he grew up with was his biological father.

After the war went almost immediately to teach at Bath Art School. KA's father had gentle Yorkshire accent but mother had non-accented voice, but on telephone could hear she was Irish. KA didn't have Yorkshire accent but may have had a broad 'a' in early life.

[End of interview by John McEwen]

F2400 Side A

First interview by Tamsyn Woollcombe, 1st October 1991.

KA refers to previous tapes which go up to end of WWII. Deepcut, north of Aldershot near Pirbright, near to Farnborough, home of the Royal Aeronautical Establishment, where aircraft designed and tested. British planes and foreign captured aircraft there - excellent for course to visit once a fortnight. One night KA heard and then saw Whittle's jet engine - first one - thrilling to see, bit like doodle-bug, once saw one flying off course. Saw wooden mock-up prototype for Brabazon, which was not put into production, and prototype of flying wing. Many designs tried out there.

War came to end, 6 1/2 years including training. Demobbed. At Deepcut, in the officers' mess, 3 months before end of war, a friend in officers' mess pointed out advertisement in 'The Times' for job at Bath Art School, 'Opportunities of Unusual Interest'. KA wrote and received reply from Clifford Ellis (Principal). [KA has letter and quotes from it]. Ellis wanted a wide range of people to apply; he was already supported by people who knew school which he wanted to reorganise. KA went for interview, possibly autumn 1946. Began the job when demobbed. On release from Army found flat in Redcliffe Square with wife, rent #1.50 per week. Recalls walking in lit up streets (no blackout). Short holiday at Appledore, saw end of Pluto pipeline. Had lodgings in Bath, took train back to London where taught at Bath Art School in Sydney Place. KA thinks Ellis was daring to take him on after 6 1/2 years in Army and a student before that. Not easy; tried to pick it up as he went along.

He and Ellis went to see Corsham Court, Corsham, village 9 miles east of Bath. Description of Corsham Court, with Capability Brown park, owned by Lord Methuen, a painter, who Ellis already knew as well as knowing the exceptional Director of Education in Bath. Corsham Court had been a convalescent home during the war. Methuen liked the idea of it becoming an art school and training college. Ellis felt it would be a social experiment, young students could be in an environment of a privileged way of life. Lots of space. Monks Park, a house for girls to live in; the

fewer boys lodged in town. After the war generous government funds available, school was short of nothing. [KA looks at photo of Corsham Court by Roger Mayne] KA had riding school by front gate as sculpture studio. William Scott was in charge of painting. Very good people on staff and wide range of subjects, eg music, drama, literature, sculpture etc. Ellis thought that previously people who had gone to art schools had fallen back on teaching without much interest. His school would be geared to teaching, with teaching practice etc and a handful of 'normal' full-time art students. KA felt restless with those students on teaching course, but some were very good artists [gives example]. KA looked down on teaching side. Busy learning sculpture, hard work when students all wanted to learn too. Lots of visitors, never felt deprived being in the country. Has had great luck in his life, eg man reading out advertisement in paper. When KA left Army he pulled down blind over 6 1/2 years, wanted to get on with art. Didn't realize those years had had a tremendous effect. Had looked at shapes of aircraft and tanks daily, constantly aware of shape, particularly with aircraft. These shapes appeared in his work at Corsham; no one knew where the shapes had come from, nor did he until later.

[looks at photo by Mayne of front of Corsham Court] Description of his room, dining-room and music room, which was especially important to him.

Peter Potworowski (Polish) very good painter and became close friend, more so than William Scott who KA had known before the war. Potworowski knew of hut available in Priory Street, Corsham, which KA took as a studio where he could do his own work. KA had folding screens made with thin legs to hide bits of furniture already in hut. When a student at Slade, KA had noticed that when people made big terracottas if there was an extended arm that they would make a bridge linking arm with body, or with two figures they made joinings like Siamese twins. This fascinated him. KA first went to Bath (apart from job) because of Bath stone, thought would be doing carving for the rest of his life. In fact, did do one in Bath (there for two terms) and one at Corsham. Does not know where they are. Started going on railway from Paddington weekly, whole line designed by Brunel, including Paddington Station and the Clifton Suspension Bridge which had great effect on him - suspended by chains, could see how functions worked. Got irritated by carving. KA interested in modern

architecture, read 'Architectural Review' or 'Journal' magazine, with photos by the firm Rogers (not Richard Rogers). Fascinated by Le Corbusier, this affected the way he worked. Made maquettes with armature. Gave up clay modelling. Modelled direct with plaster over wire netting. Description of models he made. Began joining figures together until two or three figures became one mass and arranging arms and legs as he wanted. Went less often to his flat in London. One day there, a windy day, he saw a woman holding two children, all three leaning against the wind. Thought it was an idea. Began making tiny maquettes, 3 figures with long necks with bunch of arms, clothes flapping out like washing on a line. 2 or 3 things involved with piece: first seeing the people in London, second the plant outside studio door [description of plant] as well as washing on a line. Had already started maquettes of 'People in a Wind', and maybe had set up larger versions (did two) when summer school was held at Corsham for the Architectural Association school (Ellis friend of Principal). KA volunteered to be part of the staff. Hard to know what to do with 4-6 students. They arranged his earlier maquettes into groups, and made a frieze of standing figures, modelled on steel rod frame direct with concrete. Later shown at the A.A. school, London. KA asked to teach there, very tempted but did not want to leave Corsham where he had opportunities for meeting lots of people. [KA asks for pause then blank tape until end of side A]

F2400 Side B

First went weekly to Bath, then weekly to Corsham, teaching four days a week (full-time). Had had no married life during 6 1/2 years in Army, except for short spell. Never really felt married although extremely fond of Jo. [Joan Moore]. Lots of girls at Corsham, KA fell in love with one. Moved more and more to Corsham but knew he would have to pull out one day. KA loved countryside and Corsham estate, virtually lived there. The girl's work deteriorated, her parents wanted him sacked. After talk with Ellis KA agreed to teach 2 days per week, and promised not to see her for a year.

Did not feel out of touch due to visitors. William Glock (musicologist, became Controller of Music at BBC) gave lectures in Music Room, accompanied himself on

grand piano, everyone was spellbound. KA thought this wonderful, attracted to music all his life. At night he played records in music school alone, including 'Die Kunste Fugue' by Bach. [KA plays record, extract from 7th Fugue - KA describes this piece where four parts are interwoven]. This has remained his favourite piece of music.

Various things influenced him unconsciously, eg the screens KA began, unaware of those he had already made [for his Priory Street studio] - still had models. Also flat membranes, result of looking at aircraft with their wings. 'Roly Poly' came from a tank. Made irregular oval shapes - featured later in Rothschild commission. This came from side elevation of tank; tracks always had irregular oval shape. Screens appeared as if they were flying. 'Family Going for a Walk' - slabs more than thin membranes but with economy in mass. Screen fascinated him all his life - folded it is rigid to stand up but has very little mass, very light structure, got involved in this. KA recalls hot air balloon launched in August night at Architectural Association school and firework display, where he noticed rockets opened out like the plant outside his studio door.

First exhibition (one man) at Freddie Mayor Gallery, in Brook Street, 1947 exhibition of approx. 20 drawings. Power cut on opening night, only 3 people came. Drawings, compositions - figures probably sold later or given away. KA went to see Gimpel Fils Gallery, newly arrived from Paris. Initially they did not think they could show his work. KA always grateful to Gimpels for getting Lilian Somerville, Director of Fine Arts Dept. at British Council, to see KA's work which she and her committee liked. KA explains the British Council was responsible for sending work as opposed to the Arts Council which did not exist until after the war.

KA refers back to earlier period. He had been 7 years at Corsham when offered Gregory Fellowship in Sculpture at Leeds (1953-55). This was good and bad as he knew Leeds well but was an opportunity to make break with Corsham; did not want to leave but thought he ought to. Found place to live in Leeds. First time artists were attached to an institution. Gregory Fellow in Poetry was John Heath-Stubbs, and the Gregory Fellow in Painting was Martin Froy and then Terry Frost. There was also a musician. Paid #500 a year. Peter Gregory ran printing firm Lund Humphries. KA

making break with Corsham but still visited. KA got Bernard Meadows to help teach - while still a Gregory Fellow they both built a bronze foundry and kiln for baking moulds at Beechfield (Corsham). Until then KA had had his casts made by Galizia who had taught KA when he did bronze casting course at Central School, while at the Slade. Galizia had good foundry in Battersea, also used Fiorini and Morris Singer. Gradually broke links with Corsham, KA resigned officially and so did William Scott. KA made visits of 2/3 days every few months - kept link until final break (1956).

Break coincides with finding place to work in London - old stables in Notting Hill Gate, 4 years, most active and creative time in life, worked very hard, loved it, lots of girlfriends. Gimpels got Lilian Somerville and committee including Sir Philip Hendy, John Rothenstein and Herbert Read to see his work. KA was last person to be selected for 1952 Venice Biennale - called 'Aspects of British Sculpture'. Hendy bought maquette of 'People in a Wind' on the spot, KA thrilled. 26th Venice Biennale was instant success; previously KA unknown, then became known figure, sold most things. Peggy Guggenheim and Madame Schiaparelli and Museum of Modern Art, New York and Rome all bought his work. 'People in a Wind' subsequently illustrated in books all over the world. Astonishing to be suddenly known within 2 months - beginning of professional life. Co-exhibitors at the Biennale were Reg Butler, Lynn Chadwick, Bernard Meadows and one other. KA knew both Butler and Chadwick. In 1950 KA met Chadwick at Boat Race party at Julian and Mary Trevelyan's house in Hammersmith. KA and Chadwick became instant friends, made trips abroad together. KA found him funny. Chadwick then worked in metal, made mobiles like Calder whom he tried to find in New York but Calder would not see him, as he did not like imitators. KA had problems with Chadwick later - he differed from KA and Reg Butler. Chadwick thought you could help yourself to anything. KA thinks everyone is influenced but does not know it. Chadwick ruthlessly picked out what he wanted. [KA talks about Chadwick taking ideas from Liz Frink, Reg Butler and himself]. Lynn Chadwick gave up working in metal (KA liked this work) and began bronze casting; now has own foundry. KA began to withdraw from friendship. Complications: people got KA's work confused with that of Chadwick, KA became confused himself. KA has never been short of ideas, soon moved on to other things; has done so ever since. Chadwick remained with work of that time. They had

different priorities. KA more on Butler's wavelength, but not so friendly with him. Butler started as architectural writer - knew a great deal about it - very clever. Conscientious objector during war, worked in a blacksmith's forge which gave him the idea to weld sculpture out of iron. Made his name with those, eg one near Kenwood House. Showed at Hanover Gallery with Eric Brausen.

After 1952 Venice Biennale KA had letter from Kurt Valentin who had New Gallery; he put Henry Moore and Marino Marini on international map. He wanted to do business with KA, 1952, but Gimpels said no, but if KA had gone to him life might have been different, but as he was shy and not able to cope with large numbers of people just as well that he didn't go, but Reg Butler did - Eric Brausen did not stand in his way. Butler showed with Matisse Gallery after Valentin died. KA later showed in New York. [blank to end of tape]

F2401 Side A

1st October 1991 continued

At Corsham, as well as Peter Potworowski, KA also particularly liked Peter Lanyon - stayed twice with him in Cornwall [description of walk on cliffs]. Also friends with James Tower (the potter) and his wife Maureen; enjoyed visiting them at their weavers cottage in Corsham, remained friends. James Tower died recently.

KA had Notting Hill Gate studio from 1955-59; worked constantly there on large work. The work KA did seemed to go in series, did a piece one might call 'King and Queen', like Henry Moore's title. It was two figures, slab joined together. Tate owns a cast, recently on display for KA's 75th birthday. Also did bigger piece of 3 figures, 9ft long, and 'Sprawling Woman' 9ft long. Worked constantly. Photographed by Roger Mayne, who lived near, in studio. The fashion photographer Lidbrooke lived near who enjoyed photographing sculpture. Lidbrooke invited KA to a party full of glamorous models; Ralph Brown also there. KA talked to a model, Bronwen Pugh; they became friends. Bronwen Pugh knew Lord Astor and knew painter Stephen Ward. Astor and Bronwen married at Cliveden. KA went to wedding, Nancy Astor

gave talk. KA met Rory and Romana McEwen, remained close friends with Rory until he died. Another example of one thing leading to another. KA had holidays with family, then Rory's brother 'Gumeye' took over for a year. Gumeye invited KA to Edinburgh Festival where he saw his first 'happening'. Took KA to Marchmont and Clomanel (family homes of the McEwens). Gumeye very friendly and popular with girls, through him KA met Josceline [n,e Gaskell, later Dimbleby] at her father's annual firework party. She became his girlfriend for 3 years, and remained friends ever since. All that happened because of the photographer inviting KA to a party where Bronwen Pugh was.

KA found the life at Cliveden contrasted with his life in his 'slum' (studio). The Astors entertained a lot, always 10-15 people at weekends. KA did not know what was going on. Bronwen arranged for KA to go when Christine Keeler and Profumo were not there. Great furore, the Profumo affair; virtual downfall of the Government. Profumo resigned, he had lied in the House. KA recalls that Philippe de Rothschild thought what a great fuss this was over a girl. End of the 'Cliveden set'. KA saw Bronwen and Astor, with his head in his hands, at their London house. Astor did not know what was going on: used to seeing people in bulk, Ward organised the whole thing. When Ward committed suicide George Melly wanted KA to join him to defend Ward but KA did not want to take sides. Bronwen told KA that they were 'cut' socially. Bill Astor died, she took up religion. Her style when she was a model was to be an intellectual. She and KA remain friends.

London seemed smaller then. KA knew Gaitskell and Tony Crosland, all really after 1958 Venice Biennale. At that time KA withdrew from Gimpels. Asked to go to Marlborough Gallery - fifth artist to join them. Gimpels furious. (1959)

1958 Venice Biennale (29th) KA had one-man show; also William Scott and William Hayter exhibited. Extraordinary experience - everyone flocked to the Venice Biennale then - very important. Chillida won first prize; the previous time Lynn Chadwick won first prize, had worked very hard, Herbert Read was his 'government representative' while KA had Philip Hendy. Chadwick got first prize, beating Giacometti which everyone regretted later. Special prize invented for KA - David

Bright Prize for best sculptor under 45; Bright bought a lot of KA's work. KA delighted that Chillida won prize, liked him very much (met him two years ago). After Biennale the exhibition travelled to European cities, KA also went. After tour KA had retrospective at Whitechapel (1959) and found house he now lives in. Gave up Notting Hill studio - another sculptor moved in as they had done with his studio in Corsham.

Extraordinary to be in a city where you have an exhibition, eg in Paris when he had show at Artcurial; see posters, feel you have right to be in a city, to be in Venice. Tapies got the David Bright prize (for painting) in 1958, but KA didn't meet him so much.

Approached by John Read (son of Herbert Read) to make a television film, 'The Artist Speaks', filmed touring Biennale show in Paris and in KA's Notting Hill studio. Read nervous of KA talking, KA not used to talking very much then. Film was a period piece, shots of work of the time, rag-and-bone man etc. [1959, KA has copy of film]

When asked to join Marlborough that year, good way to make break with Gimpel Fils (like making the break with Corsham). Had shows in America at Bertha Schaefer, first 1954; KA went to opening. Ilse Getz was assistant to Bertha Schaefer who knew everybody; she organised party where KS met the abstract expressionists. KA liked them enormously - Franz Kline, Rothko, de Kooning, Jackson Pollock, Philip Guston, as well as David Smith (not a painter). All generous, great drinkers. They suggested that KA should go to live in New York; they would find him a studio/loft. If he had been a young man in the Sixties or Seventies he would have gone like a shot, but sculpture is not so easy. Had other interests: history, loved England, the land, and Europe, therefore he didn't go. Something he might have done, like Kurt Valentin, but did not. Drink was the end of them. Franz Kline was the most friendly [description of party Franz Kline gave with Gimpels, where Kline got very drunk]. He died 10 years later. All died from drink.

KA met Jackson Pollock twice, one time Pollock was in plaster, had fallen down stairs. He had a fatal car accident. David Smith hit a tree in his car and was killed.

Rothko committed suicide - fascinating to meet then the world's most famous painter, commanding enormous prices. KA was in Marlborough Gallery, N.Y. when Rothko died. Lee Krasner (Pollock's widow) came in and told the news. Rothko cut his throat. KA couldn't imagine him doing this, more of a philosophical person, quiet, not noisy, not like the others. They said it was because he was a family man, but lived apart from wife and was not used to living alone. KA thinks more to it, thinks his work was a synthesis of all he had ever done, his paintings were solid blocks of colours. KA thinks it difficult to develop from this and Rothko might not have known what to do next. But worse than that, Rothko deeply involved in Marlborough who controlled him entirely. Rothko couldn't move or change work for fear of outcry from collectors - like there was with Guston. KA less interested in Guston's work in those early days than in Rothko and Pollock, but Guston changed magnificently - the collectors were furious. Guston wanted to do what is a sin and tell a story. [Description of work, funny paintings, KA thinks them terribly good]. Guston succeeded and made great prices. KA saw him when KA was Artist-in-Residence at Boston University. Whole gang was marvellous, not bitchy, not jealous of one another. [blank until end of side A]

F2401 Side B

KA talks about landscape he saw while teaching at Corsham, first saw Stonehenge during war. Lush countryside of normal farmland, green and grey stone, grey skies. Near Corsham incredible artefacts, eg Silbury Hill, on road from Bath to London, biggest man-made mound in Europe. Avebury with great stone circle - unfinished. He took students in bus to Stonehenge, slept there at summer solstice. Also Kennet long barrow and Windmill Hill with remains of Beakerford; rich in archaeological material - great feast. Later got to know Alastair Service, architectural historian who brought KA much nearer to it all. Service wrote book on Edwardian architecture which included work by James MacLaren, architect of KA's studio. Service wrote article about MacLaren's work citing KA's studio as good example. Got to meet him. Service lived in Avebury, knew all the experts. KA went to Carnac and Ireland with Service. Area wonderful to be in - part of the reason he stayed so long at Corsham.

KA mentions a few things he made in Notting Hill studio before 1958 Venice Biennale: series of four reclining figures; showed 2 or 3 in Venice, and 1 or 2 standing figures, and the large works 'Triarchy' and 'Diarchy' [description of these pieces] whose titles were suggested by Gerald Forty of the British Council. Diarchy ruled by 2 and Triarchy ruled by 3. KA not so interested in ruling aspect like Moore's 'King and Queen', which he never liked very much, which he saw at the foundry. KA liked Moore's other work better. 'Triarchy' and 'Diarchy' both shown at Venice Biennale and 'The Seasons' (1956). [Description of this piece looking like bagpipes]. Like 'People in a Wind' it was an immediate best-seller.

Approached by director of museum in Krefeld, Germany, who wanted to invite sculptors with an international reputation to submit work for a war memorial. KA submitted model and won prize - very chuffed as he beat Marino Marini. Nothing came of it as great outcry in press that Englishman had won the competition. KA was pleased with model but it would have been difficult to do. He saw it last year (when on holiday with Alastair Service and Zandria); it was bought by Margaret Gardiner of the Pier Arts Centre, Stromness, Orkney, next to harbour. KA mentions that works by Ben Nicholson and Alfred Wallis are in the collection. KA loved Orkney. Service wanted to find material for a Stone Age novel he was writing.

When KA joined Marlborough Gallery and had trouble with Gimpels but thought he had been there long enough, it was like stepping out of frying pan and into fire. Marlborough were very bold and good. Lynn Chadwick followed KA there and he fitted in well and stayed. KA was there 12 years. When KA joined, Henry Moore was the only other sculptor for a few years. KA felt they sold Moore's work, with higher prices, rather than his own. KA didn't like being owned. At Gimpels he was in good position as he had two galleries in Canada, one in New York and had work with a Paris dealer - Claude Bernard - although did not have a show. One of his reasons for 'surrendering' was that Marlborough could cope with administration. KA did own contract and was allowed to keep on with Paul Rosenberg in New York, but when Marlborough opened up there they wanted to destroy the agreement. This got very bitter, caused Rosenberg to offer to hand KA over to them, but in fact KA never showed with Marlborough in New York. Had two big shows with them in London

which he found binding. Eventually he started doing work he knew they wouldn't like, experimented with bent cardboard like Picasso, drawing and making screens. When he did resign he knew they would not mind. He left there happy but did not know where next penny would come from.

[short pause] When KA lived in Redcliffe Square with his wife, Ainslie Ellis (who had been at Catterick with KA in the Army) and Hugh Gordon-Porteous had rooms in the flat. Gordon-Porteous had many contacts, possibly was the ghost writer for Wyndham Lewis, who KA met; also met Orwell and Lawrence and Gerald Durrell. Missed a lot being at Corsham - gallivanting. Met Count Pototski again, description of Pototski wearing a swastika and coming to the house. Pototski had printed list of KA's drawings at the Mayor exhibition in 1947. [KA quotes full title of Pototski, 'Vladislav 5th, King of Poland...' KA met Tambimuttu several times, poet and publisher of 'Editions Londres', 'Poetry Editions, London', illustrated with reproductions of work by Moore, Sutherland etc.

[short pause] A propos abstract expressionists KA wonders why they drank so much. Thinks it was making a stand for artists - bravura. They were impressed by visit of Dylan Thomas to New York. Pollock had copy of 'Under Milk Wood' (Thomas died there of drink). KA thinks Thomas's behaviour set challenge for them. They drank far more than the pop artists who KA did not know. Description of party given by Eleanor Ward where KA was asked to escort de Kooning out (drunk) and police arriving. KA has nothing against drinking - more extreme in USA and NY. [pause] At time of New York exhibitions with Rosenberg, late Fifties, early Sixties, KA visited Perls Gallery where Alexander Calder was exhibiting. Calder himself was in gallery. KA saw the mobiles and stabiles, and was very impressed by his welding. Calder told him that he made models out of plywood or cardboard and got professional welders to make the pieces. Calder very nice, invited KA to visit him at home but couldn't fit it in - restricted by ticket. Always wished he had been able to go. [blank for rest of side B]

F2402 Side A

2nd interview, 8th October 1991.

KA refers to previously mentioned Architectural Association summer school, 1950. [Looks at photos taken by AA student of piece students made] Students arranged his models in positions - they knew nothing about sculpture so this was a way of realizing a piece. [KA looks at photos of 'People in a Wind'] Students used KA's earlier models (had already started bigger version of 'People in a Wind'). KA recalls very happy time.

Refers to fireworks at summer school and recent fireworks display, at Expo 88, Australia, where fall-out left burn spots on sculpture. His 'Tree' was recently shown at Newcastle (the National Garden Festival, Gateshead), where there was to be another fireworks display. Noack suggested that a flower bed should be planted to protect the work but people still climbed over it, so it got scratched.

[1953] 2 exhibitions in Paris, Salon de Mai & Salon d'Automne, Palais de New York, Paris. KA invited to exhibit, sent 2 works to Salon de Mai (has catalogue). KA went to show, saw huge crowd moving round rooms: Picasso was there, attracted people like a magnet. [KA refers to new book by John Richardson on Picasso.]

From 1950s to '60s KA had known Renato Guttuso, social realist painter and a socialist and communist; Guttuso was to stay with the collector Douglas Cooper at his chateau near Avignon where Picasso was also expected to stay. Guttuso suggested KA went for weekend too. KA disliked Cooper's unpleasant manner. Cooper loathed English art except he liked Sutherland and his work. Cooper also hated Henry Moore. KA thought his stay would be difficult if Picasso was not there so declined to go. However was introduced to Picasso at Salon de Mai exhibition. Brief description of meeting and of Picasso - noticed how small he was. KA wonders how it affects people. William Scott small but had great authority.

KA mentions English artists he knew. Peter Potworowski very nice to him. KA liked Bill [William] Brooker - good painter. His paintings did not appeal to him but he was an ebullient person, knew him for this reason. Mentions staying with Lanyon [see

previous tape]. KA knew Scott well but he was not a close friend. Roger Hilton became close friend - Hilton took stables next to KA's Notting Hill Gate studio. In early days Hilton a quiet man but became more and more aggressive, always fighting [description of incident when an MP's husband had heart attack and died].

Went to pubs a lot - one was Finches with landlord Sean Treacy, who cashed cheques for customers. [Description of KA's friend Terence Weil, cellist, cashing cheques and subsequent showdown with bank manager at Christmas] Treacy moved to Queen's Elm pub, Fulham Road; there until he died 7 or 8 years ago. Went there 3 nights a week; KA and Hilton drove from Notting Hill, met all sorts of people there, eg Caspar John. They knew everybody. Lynn Chadwick great friend until it became impossible, their priorities were different.

KA admired Reg Butler (editor of the 'Architectural Review'). Very clever with nice wife plus girlfriend whom Butler met at Slade, Rosemary Young, who had deep influence on Butler, not with work but in attitude. KA believes Butler was a puritan at heart - knew all about architecture and engineering, thought he would 'do' nudes, eg 'Girl Taking off her Vest'. He became more and more figurative. [KA talks about Butler's 'Unknown Political Prisoner' and describes tiny figures Butler called 'Watchers' which grew and grew in size] Butler forgot about welding and became more figurative to a great degree. Butler was technically brilliant, casts he had made were impeccably finished, as KA's were, but KA did not finish them off in the same way. Description of how Butler worked on his sculpture - the nudes had real hair, ceramic eyes, whole piece painted. KA thought them very erotic and luscious but their positions grotesque due to Butler's use of mannequins. KA thinks either Butler liked it like that or that he had not shed his basic puritanism. KA always used the pattern made by this beautiful triangle on a woman, advertising her nudity. Refers to Japanese Ukiyo-e prints.

KA asked by Provost of Bodleian Library, Oxford, to write monograph on Butler; would gladly have done this but did not have time to make visits to widow - KA knew Butler from end of war. KA regrets not having done this, but regrets not having met Picasso more.

KA refers to aspects of certain works from '50s. Mid '50s made 'Figure with Square Head', height 18 inches, dumpy, fat figure - seated figure owned by Tate with square head; did tiny model before (c.1952/53) which he cast himself. Square head also used later on Rothschild commission. Reason for this (square head) is, as far as he knows KA has never been influenced by contemporary work - Walter Strachan wrote that he thought KA did it on purpose to differ from Moore; KA furious: one does work because it comes from inside. In this case KA found Sydney Nolan's paintings of Ned Kelly - with black square on his head - haunting. KA did this 3 times, Chadwick did hundreds of square heads. Titles are difficult; natural to call a piece by what is most striking about it. Painters have a more difficult time talking about various qualities of paint.

'Figure Lying on its Side' (1957). Did 4 versions. For the first time KA was aware of relating sculpture to the ground - in exhibitions and homes seem to have no bearing on the ground and gravity, except 'People in a Wind' did - off vertical. KA was always very conscious of vertical and horizontal, often had 3D cross in mind. Description of 'Figure Lying on its Side' - pronounced lines made by limbs reduced almost to sticks. This was very rarely referred to because people don't understand what one is getting at unless they are told to do so.

KA worked very well in studio at Notting Hill Gate. Talks about 'Sprawling Woman'. Description of piece with arched back and pronounced horizontal line. KA describes Hilton at KA's Whitechapel retrospective, 'making love' to this piece - characteristic of Hilton's sense of humour.

1958 Venice Biennale [KA has catalogue]. Only 6 years after the 1952 Venice Biennale which was so important to him. Important occasion, met a lot of people, toured to Paris, Zurich, Rotterdam, Brussels [KA lists these] and visited each. Scott, Hayter and KA were all exhibiting.

Met Yugoslav Ambassador to England and got to know him well. Attended receptions at their embassy in London where met Gaitskell who invited KA to go on

holiday to Yugoslavia; did not go. KA enjoyed these receptions where intellectuals were invited, eg the Red Dean, Auden. KA got to know 3 subsequent ambassadors. Yugoslavs often visited KA in London and he went to Yugoslavia. [blank to end of tape side A]

F2402 Side B

KA explains he first met the Yugoslav Ambassador at opening of 1958 Biennale when this toured to Paris. Roland Penrose was British Council representative, gave parties where KA met Giacometti and Man Ray several times. Seemed to meet people easily, eg Tony Crosland. Both he and KA interested in same girl; often went for drinks in pubs. Once had drinks at Crosland's flat in The Boltons with Gaitskell and either Robert Colquhoun or Robert MacBryde, played jazz records. Met Denis Healey while Gregory Fellow in Leeds (1953-55); Healey's constituency was in Leeds; Healey had a room in Gillinson's house (businessman). KA met him later on too; KA thought him extremely clever but had an aggressive 'I know best' attitude. At Easton Neston (home of Kisty, Lady Hesketh, sister of Rory McEwen) KA met Edward Heath; they found nothing to say to one another. Jenny Lee, Labour Minister for the Arts invited KA to Commons with other painters, artists and writers. Met Auden for the first time. Later, KA went to meeting there about prisoners detained under Franco's regime, sent paints etc. Wilson looked in on meeting. 'Girl Without a Face' last piece KA made in '50s [KA has maquette]. John Read's film, 'The Artist Speaks' filmed KA making the larger version. Another element - this piece has no head or face, empty space under hat. Each Saturday KA read 'Picture Post' supported by Teddy Hulton who KA got to know; excellent photographs, one showed a row of fashion models with big hats, their faces partly in shadow. KA made drawings with strong shadows where face would have been - this idea developed. A few casts made of big version by Andre Susse in Paris.

The shadow idea continued with next piece, 'Mouton Sun'. Just before KA left Notting Hill studio Stephen Spender (poet) contacted KA on behalf of Philippe de Rothschild who had seen his work in Museum of Modern Art, New York - 'Diarchy' - and wanted to commission a piece for his vineyard at Mouton. KA found

commissions difficult - having to compromise. This was a spectacular commission to do with production of wine, vineyards and France so he agreed.

Made half dozen maquettes, made several visits. Description of first-class travel and marvellous three-day visit. Best food, description of wines and area. KA did not seek out great houses, it happened by accident; unusual experience coming from his 'slum' in Notting Hill. The piece for the commission would be 9ft long and 7ft high, and gilded. KA wanted to make it out of aluminium because it would be heavy and cantilevered out. Rothschild wanted it in bronze. KA thought private commission would be easy but Philippe and Pauline very strong characters, their word was law and KA couldn't bully them - he once suggested they get Picasso to do it, Philippe said if they had wanted Picasso they would have asked him.

Piece was to be in bronze and not aluminium like KA had wanted, and to be gilded. KA applied tints of grey paint to give a varied effect. [Description of technical problems - when Morris Singer cast the work it was twice the weight they thought which meant it could not be put in original location as walls not strong enough] This is what KA had previously thought and had asked if resident architect could probe walls.

The bronze then was put in the stables alongside the oxen - the last in Europe which Rothschild used to walk along the vines, collecting grapes in panniers. It was finally put on a new building, 'Le Club', which housed the Rothschild treasures. It was in fact placed incorrectly, to the shape of the building rather than as KA had meant it to go. The piece had 2 features - it was supposed to be an irregular sun - this came from KA's tank identification - if seen from the side at a distance one goes by the dark shadow at the side where the tracks are. [Description of how tracks work on bogies] There is always an irregular shape - this became the oval shape in the piece.

KA mounted horizontal projecting ledges on this. This came from bracket fungus he had seen at Corsham growing in a horizontal cluster. He had made sketches of this as thought he might be able to use it one day. Used these on the sun, the idea was that the facade faced south and when sun rose and set the sun cast shadows on it - like a

sundial. Attempt to be part of the world - ground with horizontal lines and shadows with the sun. Spender took photographs which he sent to KA. Rothschild was a great salesman, womanizer and racing car driver but had 'Deux Chevaux' on his estate. KA once borrowed one to make trip to Atlantic coast. KA invited to make wine labels like Braque and Chagall had done; however Rothschild died before project realized - KA still has designs. Rothschild commission project lasted from 1959-63. Made maquettes in Notting Hill Gate then moved to present studio. Description of visit to London by Philippe and Pauline when KA took them to Soho, visited Muriel's Bar. Description of travelling on plane and visit to circus with them.

Right at end of 1950s KA moved from Gimpel Fils to Marlborough. Designed his own contract. At same time left studio in Notting Hill 'slum' which he loved; his neighbours never talked to him for a bit there. After a year, one day a woman said, 'Hi Ken' and he felt accepted. Moved to present house.

At the Marlborough, two partners - Lloyd main genius and Fischer who was a warmer man. Fischer knew Berlin well where the famous foundry of Noack was; he encouraged KA to go there. 'Triarchy' was first thing he had cast there. Marlborough very keen as Deutschmark was 12 to the pound in those days, therefore getting bronze casts very cheaply. Marlborough paid for casting and cost deducted from KA's profit when sold, good way of having a lot of casts made.

KA thought Marlborough very bold but had to leave in the end; did not like idea of having an exhibition every 3 years - wanted to have one when ready. Henry Moore joined Marlborough same year as KA and used Noack; casting Moore's work enabled Noack to buy a racing yacht. KA always stayed with Noack in Berlin, excellent bronze caster; his grandfather made the Quadriga on the Brandenburg Gates.

F2403 Side A

8th October 1991.

Brandenburg Gates had Quadriga on top which was damaged; Noack and his father mended them. Made in a curious way - hammered copper, large zinc moulds were made and copper sheeting hammered in - therefore light. KA compares it to the arch by Hyde Park surmounted by a statue in bronze. Germans had zinc mines in one of their colonies. At the palace at Charlottenburg there are big casts cast in zinc. KA mentions yacht Noack bought thanks to huge casts for Henry Moore. [short pause] Began series of work that took 2 years, very different from everything else except for the use of shadow; like 'Girl Without a Face' they also had confined shadow.

Fullard the sculptor lived near KA in Notting Hill; they used to meet for beer. Talked about bronze casts. Fullard said that they always looked like a skin - everything on the surface while the inside was hollow. KA agreed with this - he had not thought about this and thought it did not matter as long as the idea came across. He thought more about it and from c.1963 made tall body-like shape like a tower with pierced funnels. The idea of the funnel was that one could see the thickness of the metal and it also made confined shadows; also it had to do with communication (less conscious of this) the funnels were like trumpets. The series never really popular except musicians saw them as brass trumpets. Some of these were made in bronze but most in brass. KA was going through a phase of not wanting to make model in plaster (as is normally done in bronze casting), of handing it over to a foundry and coming back as a replica in bronze. KA wanted to be more involved at every stage, so that it was his work, and what they did was technical pouring of metal and making mould. Great deal of the human element involved in casting; KA could tell which foundry had done different works. KA lists the foundries he used, as well as others in Italy. Noack's bronzes were wonderfully finished and the French ones were more textural; differences were slight because of hands being laid on. Italian bronzes were warmer - like Marini. KA wanted to be involved to a maximum. Made a tower model in clay which had not done for a long time. Finger marks were visible 'like the chest of President Lumumba' a critic said. [see 'Pandarus Version 12', 1965 bronze and

'Pandarus Version 8', 1963, brass] KA made waxes - wanted them manageable size. Made 5 1/2 ft high tower. Detailed description of how KA made the Pandarus piece. The pieces had a deliberate ridge not an invisible join - feature of design at angles - pieces brazed. Funnels made separately, same method - holes placed through and brazed together. Whole thing assembled from sections, made waxes himself - he was as involved as he could be with that piece. Fiorini did most of Pandarus and Galizia did that. [KA points to catalogue] He did 2 normal castings like that. The title Pandarus came from Chaucer's 'Troelius and Cressida' ('Troilus and Criseyde), which KA loves reading aloud; finds it very moving. [KA reads extract] Pandarus is a character in the tragedy - a go-between. Good title for series. Used brass; wanted to change and get away from bronze: detested chocolate bronzes made by the Victorians. KA liked bronze, which is a noble metal, but wanted to use yellow metal. Made small models. [KA explains he is talking about pieces of work that he can say things about, as no photos. Some photographs now supplied by KA to accompany the tapes.]

Because he was so involved with casting and time was short, only one cast was made - a one-off. One attraction of Marlborough Gallery was that one cast could be shown in the gallery then more made. Manzu was the only sculptor that made them unique. In '50s could have 2 casts made and have them shown in simultaneous exhibitions - did once in London and New York. KA's visit to Venezuela in 1963 coincides with the start of the 'Pandarus' series. The year before KA received invitation from the British Council to go to Venezuela - his work had been an instant success in touring British Council show the previous year. Museo de Bellas Artes (Caracas) had bought 3 pieces. KA dithered so much that Gerald Forty said they would ask Paolozzi to go if KA did not, which made KA decide to go. Miguel Aroyo, Director of the museum came to London. British Council paid KA's fare and his host, a rich sponsor, looked after KA and paid for his expenses. It was felt sculptors had no contact with sculptors from other countries, but painters could look after themselves. They wanted KA to go for a year but he only wanted to spend 4-6 months at the most. He did not want to talk or lecture, instead he worked with 7 or 8 sculptors together (under the same roof) in workshop on edge of Caracas which was found. Hans Neumann was his sponsor. KA lived in hotel. Hans and Ambassador gave party. KA went on the condition that he made expedition to the source of the Orinoco - armchair decision but difficult to

carry out. KA had always had great interest in anthropology. Mentions his father's book, 'The Living Races of Mankind', made early this century - each rare photographs; he also read Levi Strauss 'World on the Wane' about his visit to Matto Grosso where he made studies of the Indians. KA wanted to meet the Indians. Barbara Brantli was devoted to Indians but some people hunted them for sport. She vetted KA to see if he was suitable. Description of Neumann's family history. Barbara Brantli's contact was Father Daniel de Barandarian, in the equatorial rain forest; he was a legend and lived with the Indians deep south, 30 miles from Brazilian border, giving medicines in return. Grass hut and altar, a 'little brother of Jesus' with Basque and Jewish parentage, had interest in archaeology and anthropology. Barbara was a great friend of his [description of how she first met him]. She was married to the architect Tubito.

KA became great friends with one of the sculptors he worked with who became his guide; more European than the others, Jewish background. KA had income from Hans Neumann, and lacked nothing. Very hot, worked from 8.00am to 12.00, worked very well. KA liked to work alone as much as possible, especially when thinking; sometimes has an assistant. But worked very well there. He made second or third of 'Pandarus' models - definite shape and formula - knew exactly what he was going to do [looks at photo] no problem. The other sculptors were doing their own work, and one, Harry Abend, is a friend until this day. Museum of Modern Art, June & July 1964, had exhibition of all their work. MOMA bought one cast, Hans also wanted cast too, who, instead of paying he gave money as a foundation for students. The series were one-offs (in England) except these 2, both brass. First cast sold to MOMA, 2nd to Hans Neumann in Caracas. Students did bronze. KA did brass - delighted with Armitage Foundation - few months. KA had Sunday lunch with Hans and his first wife. KA asked him why he was such a successful businessman - he said he had an ice cold mind when working but when meeting KA human side comes out. He was a great benefactor and supporter of hospitals etc. In 1966 first time democratic elections were held 'only' 20 people were killed - heard machine-gun fire and guns going off. [blank to end of side A]

F2403 Side B

KA talks of election and bombs exploding. Jimenez (former dictator) is in prison in USA. This was the first time a responsible party got in.

Had to go by plane to see Indians, Father Daniel had radio transmitter so they were in contact before their visit which was an unofficial trip. The pilot, Harry Gibson, had previously explored the area and discovered a great waterfall and extraordinary holes in the forest. Got ready for trip (describes provisions they took), but the trip was postponed as Indians got malaria. On the trip itself the men had gone hunting and only the old men, women and young children were left so KA missed the warriors. KA also made trip to the Andes with Abend and his wife and visited New York for Christmas - short break. KA says he talks about visit at great length as it was one of the most magical visits in whole life; made 2 or 3 visits later. Talks about trip to Kanarakuni. [short pause] They set off with provisions, flew over Humboldt Mountains behind Caracas and to ancient capital Ciudad Bolivar on Orinoco - 3 1/2 hour journey in plane - crossed the Llanos. Venezuela divided into three belts: civilized Maracaibo bay - oil, sea; Orinoco basin - great heat - cattle which is heart and soul of Venezuela; and southern band of equatorial rain forest. Landed in Ciudad Bolivar to refuel. Hans Neumann took film of journey (copy of which KA still has). They set off again, crossed the Llanos. Iron second biggest export and oil the first.

Niarchos, who KA had met previously, suggested that he could have gone on cargo ship, but KA's trip was already arranged. The last sign of civilization was the Rockefeller estate, half million hectares with 80,000 head of cattle, then over desert, then the equatorial rain forests began. The original plan was to stay for two weeks. Passed the second tallest waterfall, discovered 3 years before by Harry Gibson. Landed in tiny clearing and met by Father Daniel and Indians. Neumann and KA shared hut. Queue of women in the morning for medicines and in afternoon explored; they even got lost with Daniel. Forest not dense underneath, can easily walk through undergrowth, trees have enormous buttresses - they cannot grow deep roots - thin buttresses 3-4 feet wide. Went to see house of the Makiri-Tari, most sophisticated of the tribes, Caribs who Columbus found, who build round huts. Chief had recently died; when a chief dies they then move to find another place. Chief must have second

sight. Description of hut layout - on the walls outside were big drawings, including pictures of horses and wagons and conquistadores which they could never have actually seen themselves. They arrived by canoe, drifted along river, canopies of trees overhead, thousands of butterflies, saw no animals but saw frog and snake.

Another time went to the Shiri-Shana, a sub-tribe who had not changed for 20,000 years. No pottery, no musical instruments, they fished by hands and were short of men. The two tribes depended on each other and would swap things. Daniel would start shouting to warn head man, who watched them carefully. Women attractive - only had band round waist and bunch of beads which tinkled when they walked, and wore blossom behind ears. Ate freshwater crabs. Very ancient way of life compared to sophisticated Makiri-Tari who were strong and warrior-like.

[KA plays recording of Alan Lomax, American music collector - made around 40 years ago.] In this case Lomax went to a tribe, who had enormous bark horns - 'piaroa' - 40 miles to west of Kanarakuni, haunting sound. KA describes background of recording. 'Columbia World Library of Folk and Primitive Music, collected and edited by Alan Lomax, Vol. X, Venezuela'.

They were to have spent 2 weeks there but a message came that 5 men had been killed in Neumann's factory, had to go back. Hans had paid for half plane so KA had to go back too (thought might go back on other visit). Radioed for other plane. Both felt sadness leaving something unchanged to go back to civilized world. Description of flight and car journey.

KA met Daniel again before left. In jungle, he assumed enormous importance - total control over KA etc, but in Caracas looked spiv-like, lost his grandeur. KA describes being bitten there.

Indians gave him arrows with warheads and barbs - one had deadly poison - and brought other things. KA returned to Caracas later, saw Harry Abend. The newspaper said, 'Armitage is here, we do not forget'. Later had exhibition at the Mendoza Foundation, who had a gallery (Sala Mensoza, Caracas). Exhibits included

trees - bronzes, etchings and drawings - which was a success. Held at time of Falklands, therefore no chance of getting money, but got cheque after war finished, 1982. KA had a lavish time on that trip. Harry was a tremendous help. [KA plays a record of music from the Llanos (central band of Venezuela), 'Motivos Llaneros'.] KA describes recording.

F2404 Side A

8th October 1991.

KA mentions 1982 Caracas visit. Noticed before arriving at Venezuelan coast group of atolls - Los Roques - white sand and blue sea. Thought it would be nice to go there. Margot who ran the Mendoza Foundation gallery had a plane [description of plane]. She took KA to a tiny island - desert island but more civilized than that, but with no tourists. The island was owned by people studying marine life - terrapins and crabs etc with a man (Rafael) looking after the tanks. 2 or 3 huts with 2 or 3 rooms, 12 yards from the beach.

Short plane trip, landed on a cinder path, was to be there for 4 days. Had whisky, food, books, sketch books. KA thought he would be alone but he found another man, Ernesto, a biologist who had travelled a lot. He told KA story of visiting pill-box, nearer the hurricane belt [KA points at map] than his island. The pill-box was Venezuelan property, Ernesto was there with 12 naval men. Description of Hurricane David when Ernesto and his colleagues asked to be rescued by the navy who refused to do so. Also description of storm, as told to KA by Ernesto. The pill-box was not damaged and they were all picked up and were told not to say anything about it. They insisted that Ernesto had job on the island to get him out of the way. [KA looks at diary he kept at the time which included a sketch], he wrote it with pelicans diving into the sea and lizards crawling all over. At night fresh breeze and he could read by light of the moon and the white sand - dazzling, terrible scrub, grass with burrs. Rafael caught fish, once they had two lobsters. KA read a lot and swam. Picked up. Originally thought he would be alone. Simple primitive life. [Refers to keeping journal]

F2404 Side B is blank

F2405 Side A

Third Interview, 15th October 1991.

Various things happen in the early 1960s - rather congested, things happen on a certain date and extend for a long time, eg his project, Chaucer's 'The Reeve's Tale', which began in 1963 but is still going on. [KA explains that he talks about projects at their inception, although they may overlap with other things.] In 1963 he was approached by an Italian publisher, Edizione del Cinquale at Petrasanta, who suggested they publish KA's drawings in relation to poetry. KA shown sample with drawings by Fontana.

KA wrote explaining that he did not follow contemporary poetry but always read Chaucer. The publisher thought KA's charcoal drawings in relation to Chaucer a good idea. the publisher had possibly seen his drawings at the Venice Biennale or at something else; KA always showed drawings then, in touring exhibitions [points to 1959 drawings on wall]. KA began the drawings but the director was killed in a car crash but he continued with the drawings over the years. His favourite Chaucer was 'Troilius and Cressida', but too long to attempt, beautiful to read. [KA has recordings by experts reading Chaucer in middle English but reads paragraph out loud, 'Then said he thus...' and describes how the verses end, also talks about the tragedy, quotes more. He often reads it - Pandarus title came from this.] KA chose 'The Reeve's Tale' because it is short, funny in a mediaeval way [quotes aloud] - saucy. As the action takes place inside in a bedroom KA did not need to attempt mediaeval costume, instead could draw nude figures. Silly story which KA compares to 'Cosi fan tutti', where the music transcends the libretto and refers back to 'Die Kunste Fugue', written for 4 parts. Mussorgsky and Boris Godunov is a savage story but even there music is much more important. KA thinks Reeve's story is rather silly, but it does not matter, thinks his drawings go well. Continued to draw, visited churches and cathedrals same date as Chaucer to look at stained glass; made drawings based on the heavy black

lines of leads. Did approx. 5 or 6 with horses but decided this was following illustration too much; what he wanted to do was make drawings in relation to Chaucer - not necessarily depict incidents in it. His drawings are not accurate, eg misses out cradle, although crucial to story. [KA gives outline of story of 'The Reeve's Tale' and lists characters.] KA does not read it for pleasure like he does 'Troilius and Cressida'. Did drawings intermittently.

When invited to Berlin in 1968 he was approached by art publisher Propilean Verlag who made 'The Art of 20th Century 1926', who had just done a book on Manzu (Italian sculptor). KA abandoned idea of influence of stained glass and leaded lines and did his more natural drawings - he always used charcoal and occasionally wash - childlike and humorous drawings. When KA was in Berlin there were student revolts [also mentions uprisings in Paris and later in 1970 in USA when the universities closed down, eventually leading to President Johnson ending war with Vietnam]. KA had a young woman to teach him German who taught him politics for the first time - one couldn't avoid politics, had to take sides and be involved.

KA wanted the price of 'The Reeve's Tale' to be low with a large edition but the publishers wanted a small edition with the price high. This went on for months but was not possible. Later in 1970 an old friend, Bob Manning in New York, editor of 'Time Life' magazine, later editor of 'Sunday Herald Tribune' and under Secretary of State under Johnson or Kennedy. He knew everyone including John Updike, Lionel Trilling. Manning introduced him to firm in New York who could not do the project and suggested a European firm. George Rainbird in London took an interest and liked the low price idea, but the head man was given the sack. Jonathan Cape took interest and Tom Maschler very keen. KA still obstinate re the price; the solution was to make 2 editions - a cheap and an expensive one. Auden was invited to adapt it from middle English but he did not think he could improve on Neville Cardus's [Coghill's] translation. The two editions would not work.

Then a Japanese gallery became interested but Chaucer not well known in Japan so no good. The Taranman Gallery's owner, Christopher Hewett, wanted to publish a facsimile book of sketch-book - KA always uses French sketch-books. This was to be

printed by a friend of Hewett's who published William Blake editions. A printer in Paris had a special technique and instead of printing the sketch-book he suggested that he would like to do the Chaucer drawings - free of charge. This man got cancer and died and Hewett committed suicide. This was just after KA had had an exhibition for which Hewett had produced an excellent catalogue.

When KA visited the Whitechapel Epstein show, while it was at Leeds while on a tour around Yorkshire, with John McEwen, he met Terry Friedman who gave him catalogues including the catalogue for Epstein's 'Rima' (in Hyde Park). KA very impressed by this catalogue and thought as he was born in Leeds and had contact with Leeds Art Gallery that it might be a possible way out. The Henry Moore Foundation Study Centre was there too. KA contacted Terry Friedman who said yes to producing 'Reeve's Tale' book. Printing to be done by scanner. Drawings certainly finished before he saw Friedman. Everything arranged - costs, edition size, a distributor for Europe, to be printed in 3 languages, Spanish, French and Italian, and some money allocated by the Henry Moore foundation to cover costs of printing which would be a loan. He also had name of a distributor from Caracas. This project has not yet materialized at time of tape. [blank until end of side A]

F2405 Side B

KA mentions exhibitions held - 2 at Bertha Schaefer, New York, 1954 and 1956, 2 exhibitions with Rosenberg in New York, 1958 and 1962, and Marlborough 1962 and 1965.

Made a successful piece, following jungle visit in Venezuela in 1963. Rarely made things to do with specific places. Has done drawings, eg Burren in County Clare but not sculpture. Forest dense at canopy but in clearings dense thickets at Kanarakuni. Did 2 maquettes and large piece - blank wall - absolutely smooth with 4 arms sticking up and lower down, 4 legs growing out of this plate. 'The Forest'. Large piece followed in 1965, bronze; always worked in bronze and brass, and did some aluminium as well.

KA felt tide turning against him. Had been very lucky in the 1950s, had exhibitions in England, but due to British Council his work was better known and received abroad than here. English habit was to follow American ideas on art; idea began to crystalize in people that he was wrong on two counts: for being figurative - phase of abstract art in England - thought him stuck-in-the-mud, departed from obvious figuration but source was that. He took certain parts of figure, ie arms (maybe something to do with being called Armitage?) combined with the very geometric shapes, so had enlarged plastic element of curved surfaces of arm or body, combined with severe geometric shapes - this has gone on until this day.

KA also attacked for using bronze casting, this they felt was an ancient technique, 4,500 years old, this irritated people. In painting people accept the technique is still the same - oil painting has no corporeal reality - marks on surface, compared with sculpture which has a 3-dimensional reality. Substance had to do with materials. People, especially Americans, expected one to use new materials, eg welding steel. KA never attracted to steel but did forge one or two things in iron at Corsham, went to a technical school in Bath for short time. Noticed first steel man, Gonzales, and the steel and welded sculptors since tended to use plate and rod as their raw materials which gave it a jerky, slightly cruel quality. Cesar (Paris sculptor) got plastic quality occasionally using small bits of soft metal, welded to make a whole figure - joined together by welding - smoothed all over, had plastic quality but a laborious way of doing it. KA, having done bronze casting with Galizia at Central School, liked it and found it an excellent medium for doing plastic sensual surfaces and continued to use it, although used more plastic work later. These 2 things worried him: couldn't be allowed to like certain things, had to do what other people thought should be done. Maybe it was his idea but he did sometimes feel worried about bronze sometimes, but he would never deviate from not being figurative. But the bronze thing worried him, certain people thought it was a medium that sculpture should be [made in]. Marlborough at first liked bronze which was convenient. Philippe de Rothschild thought it suitable for chateau, this put KA off - people thinking this is how it should be done. Started making designs on cardboard. When KA resigned from Marlborough glad that he went. They once asked him if he could continue making bronzes like he did in the 1950s, although it was partly a joke but KA thinks they

meant it. In fact when he went to Berlin where the Noack foundry was he did very little bronze casting; did resin then got over that and came back to bronze later or did both.

In 1965 started another extended project, 'Legend of Skadar'. KA was working in his studio when he heard terrible singing on the radio (Radio 3), a recording by Alan Lomax who made recordings over world. He had found a blind singer in Yugoslavia singing ancient myths in order to eat - this was one of the most horrific things KA had ever heard. On the programme the story of the legend of Skadar was told [description of story], widespread throughout south Europe, also same story in Athens as well. [Short break in tape] [KA continues story]. KA affected by story. He knew a lot of Yugoslavs and KA asked them about the story - they said at least one element of compassion was that the child was saved. KA did 10 models (all small) and 2 about 2-3 feet high; took a while to get it out of his system. Found something interesting - saw a photo of megalith in a magazine in France shaped at top of it with 2 breast shapes - perhaps people had seen this and built a myth round stone. KA found the real myth a few years ago from Mr Harris in Tokyo [KA has letter] who reviewed book of Serbian myths, called 'The Building of Skadar' (Skadar did exist on the River Ljubljana. KA met Harris later, he sent him an extract from'The Building of Skadar'. Story, slightly different from Lomax's version, is a similar story. [KA describes story then reads extract.]

KA felt guilty having done it. Alan Bowness was angry with him for making pieces [quotes 'a more terrible legend' and quotes what Roland Penrose thought]. His friend at the RCA, Bryan Kneale said he could never see light switches in the same way again. Skadar started in 1965 and lasted all that year.

A couple of years afterwards he had an invitation to live and work in Berlin, DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst), German Academic Exchange. Berlin still an island but no wall. Ford Foundation put in money to attract people to go there, to make it a cultural city; Germans took the scheme over. KA thought a lot about invitation. Had contact because of visits to Noack, could speak a little German, and felt things were turning against him. Had good time in '50s and things were getting

tougher - thought to put himself in exile, thought would go and live abroad to overcome this problem. Also he realized art in England was not generously received. We had marvellous things here, eg National Gallery, Arts Council, British Council, good artists, but general attitude to art, KA thinks, is not as natural as in France or Latin America, especially attitude to sculpture. He wonders if this is to do with 17th century rebellion in England, Cromwell and execution of Charles I, and destruction by the model army of works in churches. Puritan attitude, they were for pure faith rather than worshipping figures and statues. Can understand why some of them escaped to America. [KA gives example of the puritanical attitude he found in Leeds, while KA on his Gregory Fellowship when a man looked at 2 pieces he had made.]

The attitude to art noticed by Virginia Woolf in her biography of Roger Fry. KA reads extract of Fry who deplored the indifference of the British to the visual arts. 'The English...always attack an original idea then debase it and when they have rendered it harmless proceed to swallow it whole'. People began to detest 1950s, labelled with '50s, like poets labelled with the Spanish Civil War. People wanted to get away from it, linked with figurative and bronze casting as well.

Caro had come very much to the fore, Chadwick had started with welding, turned to bronze casting later in life. [blank to end of tape]

F2406 Side A

Fourth Interview, 28th October 1991.

KA asked by the German Academic Exchange (DAAD) to Berlin. He liked the idea of going there, already knew it through his visits to Noack. In early days no wall. After the wall built they wanted it to become a cultural and artistic centre, people concentrated there within wall. KA still had doubts in his mind but felt he was free; felt resistance against his work because it was figurative - which he thinks is nonsense but also because he was using bronze casting, this worried him. He thought it an important material but agrees that stainless steel is the more splendid metal with hard resistance to weather, but cold and not easily patinated therefore not suitable for his work. He thought bronze was ideal - softer to work with, a warmer metal which takes patination - uses it to this day., The thing KA didn't like about casting was making a model and handing it over to others to reproduce it; he wanted to be involved in the process itself as far as possible [cites example of 'Trees' he did later on - description of how the bars which were used to feed the bronze into the mould were cut off and how he used abrasives to rub down the 'twigs']. He also started using parts that were welded together 'fabricated' out of sheet - his 'Two Arms' ['Both Arms' correct title] had the arms cast in the normal way but the table was sheet metal (brass) which was patinated black and looked just the same. Aluminium is filthy to work with, weathers badly and has to be treated. Cannot galvanize the surface because the casting is porous - LM5 is the aluminium used for casting. You can anodize sheet aluminium - this can be seen on buildings but you cannot do casting with it. The big arms were therefore sprayed with hard German paint. These are some of the reasons why he had problems with bronze casting. Ridiculous to be in city where his main foundry was and not use him but he did. KA does not like using resin but he used it for lightness of weight so it is easy to show in exhibitions, but for permanent display a work would have to be in metal - he overcame this in his mind.

In late 1967 he set off to Berlin in his car which was full of models - he took ideas to carry out when he was there so not to waste time. Another reason he had for leaving was that he had finished a three-year relationship with Jossy who had just married

David Dimbleby before KA left for Berlin. Although KA was not consumed by this, he would have married her if he had been free but he was already married to Joan. [KA explains his marriage was a wartime marriage, hardly saw each other in six years then when he came out and started teaching at Corsham it was inevitable he should become involved with a girl.] KA had 'nice girls' but thought it unfair to hold them for more than 3 years. Had mad mother (Christian Scientist) who thought it a sin to have children and sex; KA kept silent about his mother. He thinks her beliefs led to his more restless sexual desire. He also found that the 'bad girls' he knew who slept around also wanted to get married. KA was friends with Elspeth Juda and her husband who ran 'Ambassador' magazine. KA wrote an article on Calder Hall Atomic Power Station called 'The Artist Reacts' [description of his visit there]. Elspeth said that KA retained an innocence - he liked that idea.

KA went to see his wife after a gap of 40 years - she had not been well. He had no ties (his last girlfriend had been Susan Hampshire). He decided to help his wife. He had great respect for her and liked her, decided to be nice to her. He now is great friends, and has seen her regularly for the last 6 or 7 years. KA explains that circumstances were not all his fault - his mad mother, his marriage and being susceptible to female beauty.

Some of his ex-girlfriends who got married came back to him later on and asked if they could start again, but KA thinks one cannot go back.

In Berlin did 'Folded Arms' made in plaster; he had idea of putting it on the wall of a building, the blank wall would be the body, but he couldn't get an architect. The idea of the German Academic Exchange was to attract the best people in their field - one was an Italian composer, Della Picola, and the constructivist George Rickey was there, who became great friend of KA. Motherwell was also asked to go but declined. KA had no teaching to do there and could just get on with his work; all materials were laid on. He had a furnished flat as well as a separate studio. [Description of local restaurant] The dealer Springer (who KA had before he joined the Marlborough) showed him round and introduced him to people. Went to the Paris Bar [KA refers to

current show Paris Bar organised by Artcurial, Paris, then KA discusses the cafes in Paris, Deux Magots, Coupole, etc - great contrast to the pub life in London].

KA worked very hard in Berlin and Noack supplied him with addresses of suppliers of timber and plaster. First thing he made was 'Screen (with folded arms)', 1967/68 cast in aluminium and welded on to aluminium screen and sprayed - shown in Japan. Little models were sold but never sold the big one (height 2 metres, depth 2 metres). KA had made the plaster arms in London. He then started a 12 foot long arm, mounted on back plate 10 foot, resting on circular column. In the British Museum he had seen the fragment of a statue - the arm resting on 2 blocks, which fitted in with KA's idea of doing figurative work combining with geometric shapes. This work was called 'Arm', 1967/68. KA had wanted it to be in Corten steel - a new kind of steel that formed a skin, thereby sealing the surface. KA looked at samples in England on buildings but found them not to have weathered well. Sheffield University had the secret formula and offered to make samples but KA decided against using Corten steel. The piece was made in resin as a temporary measure and he originally wanted it to be sprayed in camouflage colours. [End of side A]

F2406 Side B

Changed his mind about using camouflage colours. He used the firm Edward Lawrence, Midhurst, who worked with a bronze foundry. [Description of some of the work this firm has done.] KA calls the material resin but polyester resin or fibreglass is what it is; fibre gives it rigidity. '(Big) Arm' - KA did not want to do this piece in bronze but had not quite decided against Corten. Two Arms ['Both Arms']. Description of this piece with two arms in space on a table top with no body in between and thin square legs using again plastic and geometric shapes.

Started 'Both Arms' 1969 bought by Japan for Hakone museum, 2 1/2 x 2 metres long x 1 metre wide - the arms were modelled in studio and finished in Berlin.

'Big Doll', 1968, the maquette was bought by Joe Studholme, of Editions Alecto, who made multiples of it in Italian resin, packaged very well and sold to various places

including Artcurial. This was first time KA had done drawing on the face [description of how this was done - black resin paint-brushed on surface of the mould, thereby resulting in drawing being flush with surface of the work]. Part of the change - of plastic shapes with geometry. He also began trying to do drawings with sculpture, eg had a back-plate and screen-printed image with figure in front with hair depicted in paint - the whole thing bolted together - later in the 1970s. He later abandoned that idea. The last relief he did was 'Return to Eden' (which he still has in his studio). He also mentions 'Bed Version III', 1968 - the idea came to him from seeing Jossy angry in bed. In Berlin did 3 big works and some small ones. Exciting to be in Berlin. Their national gallery was being built, designed by Mies van der Rohe, finished at end of his visit. KA met van der Rohe, Marino Marini and Moore at opening. The first Director was Werner Haftmann, author of huge Lund Humphries book on modern art. KA was allowed 1,000 German lessons, his teacher was Sami. KA refers to earlier tapes with John McEwen re Nietzsche's 'Also Sprach Zarathustra'. KA had learnt German at school and speaks a little French. His teacher Sami was a great radical enthusiast - beginning of student demonstrations in Berlin; KA went to these too. KA describes Paris student revolts. KA saw less of Sami who got involved with young man; they were picked up by the police on the way to blow up America House with Molotov cocktails. She was imprisoned and later wrote to KA about it. She taught KA about politics - it was impossible to be there without taking sides; KA on students' side. He met Rudi Dutschke. He also met Rudolf Prinz zur Lippe, and KA stimulated his interest in radical politics; he later wrote several books. Through Rudolf KA met Dodo Bantzer (n,e von Haeften). KA noticed snowdrops by a photo of her father; she invited him to go to Plutzensee, where there was a prison, saw a beam with hooks. Dodo told KA about her father's involvement with the Hitler bomb plot; he had been hung there. KA also met other people whose families were involved in the plot, eg von Trotts. Later Rudolf told KA he thought it would not have resulted in a very go-ahead Germany if the plot had succeeded. KA thought that he and Dodo should not go on meeting, difficult - she was married. She later married again to the violinist Arnold Steinhardt. Saw Rickey too.

KA asked to teach in the Hochschule - one day a week for one semester as a way of getting the students back to work, which they did. KA told them it was the only time

in their life they could work. Took party of them to London, visited Royal College and Hornsey; students noticed that all the teachers and students mixed together - not like at the Hochschule.

Met Wibke von Bonin, director of films for Cologne TV, who wanted to make a film of KA's work. KA suggested making film of his trip: film called 'Armitage in Berlin' - description of different locations used. KA had met Wolf Biermann, political cabaret singer who attacked the East German Government, under house arrest, but allowed visitors; not included in film. While they were in the East they attracted suspicion and when KA got to the check point to go back to the West he was interrogated for 2 hours. Description of interrogation. [End of side A]

F2407 Side A

Fourth Interview, 28th October 1991.

KA recaps interrogation on previous tape. They released him, it was a warning and he never went back to the East. KA made trips from Berlin - to Lubeck with the Romanesque cathedral and an island called Sult off Hamburg, and to Hamburg where he played the organ where Bach had played - a thrill to touch the pedals.

Noack, then a young man, third generation in the firm took KA to nightclubs. Noack did well out of Henry Moore. He had a yacht [already mentioned in previous tapes]. On a recent trip Noack took KA to one of the new restaurants in woods, saw wild boar. While in Berlin KA approached by a lady, possibly Irena Modernska, preparing for an exhibition on Peter Potworowski, who had died recently. Description of her in tears, unable to afford to pay for her hotel.

The Academie der Kunste was built by Duttman - where exhibitions were held, was well designed, international membership.

The Director of the Hochschule invited KA to a 'Herrenabend', all drank schnapps, no women insight. KA describes story a a young cousin of Rudolf Lippe studying on a

course at Sotheby's or Christie's told him, about ladies retiring after dinner. [short pause in tape during this anecdote]

When still in Berlin KA received the CBE. Received telegram and letter - it was rather a shock as he felt 'in exile' - strange feeling in a republic. He kept it secret but told a few friends who said, 'What British Empire?' KA was on short visit to London when invested with CBE then returned to Berlin (1969). He thinks his time in Berlin was a wonderful thing to have done, although he was doubtful about it.

On his return he worked here for a few weeks and then received an invitation to go to Boston. In Berlin he did not come away with ideas - he was isolated, working hard; for ideas one has to be free - he had enough to do just working. [Plays extract of song by Wolf Biermann called 'Noch'. KA describes what song is about]

Invitation to go to Boston University as Artist-in-Residence for one year, but as he had been 1 1/2 years in Berlin he suggested going for one semester. KA thought he would pick up new techniques. He did not take any ideas for work. Found accommodation in professor's flat who was away for a sabbatical. KA found the university strange - not like he thought. The students were against new techniques and wanted to go back to the Renaissance - hard to teach that. He had a small group of 6 or 7 students. Got to like it, loved Harvard. He was taken on outings by his students. KA talks about girl who got killed in hang-gliding accident who had often chatted to him and how he was asked to write letter to her parents.

Student unrest - towards end of visit the Kent shooting occurred when most universities were closed down in protest. Vietnam still going on. Description of walk in the park, fascinated to hear everyone talking - extremes - found this exciting. He thought life would never be the same but it was. The result of the student revolt added to the national feeling against war in Vietnam.

KA had friend from '50s, Bob Manning [already referred to in another tape - editor of 'Time Life' magazine and worked with Kennedy]. KA saw Manning a lot when editor of the 'Atlantic Monthly'. Manning had political friends from LBJ days. KA met

John Updike, another contact with people there. KA recalls that the Bursar of the university wore a necklace of amber beads over his suit to show his allegiance to the university and students.

Philip Guston had taught there and received an honorary doctorate while KA was there, and he met him again, previously met him in New York.

KA did very little work there - did some prints for himself - didn't take equipment to work with. Taught and also read a great deal - good library in the professor's flat he was using. His prints were in black and white on resin and were a joke.

Returned from Boston (1970) and by 1972 he had left behind the sort of work he was doing before. He was now drawing with sculpture - experimenting with bits of paper. He resigned from the Marlborough - not doing what they wanted him to do. [KA mentions going to Marlborough Gallery, New York, and seeing Lee Krasner when Pollock died, already spoken about on another tape]. Kirkman and Moore resigned from Marlborough too.

Wants to mention the McEwens. KA found it nice at what he thought was a difficult time before he went to Berlin, when he thought he was without friends. One is very touchy about how people react to work - one has to take no notice of what people say, whether favourable or unfavourable, but it does have an effect on one if one feels no one is interested at all - this was not true but it was how he felt. He found the McEwens a great comfort. KA used to being the only son and enjoyed going there and is godfather to Rory's daughter Christabel. Liked the fact that they were not too deeply involved with art. However when Rory died he found it too much to continue to keep in touch. It was Romana who suggested that Johnny McEwen stayed in KA's house after he left Cambridge, and was a lodger while KA in Berlin. KA says Berlin was terrific but he did get a mysterious malaise after 2 or 3 months but recovered as soon as he made a short trip away. Marvellous now the wall has gone. [Blank tape until end of side A]

F2407 Side B

Fifth Interview, 6th November 1991.

[short break before conversation begins] On return from Boston, within two years KA resigned from Marlborough Gallery - quite a strain - no money, sold car, had lodger but happy to be free. The Marlborough Gallery had been very helpful at first and sent his work all over the place. But KA did not feel he could supply them with work every 3 years for a show, needed time to waste on experiments. When he resigned he had financial hardship but things recovered. Description of how Frank Lloyd, the owner of the Marlborough, 'adopted' some paintings by Rothko after Rothko's suicide which he had no right to. Court case followed which Rothko's daughter won. KA thinks some Americans thought 'there but for the grace of God go I'.

Exodus from Marlborough. Moore left and James Kirkman who took over Lucian Freud (who also left) but Chadwick remained. KA has not been in the gallery since. His longest association with a gallery ended. He has not had a full-time exclusive gallery since in GB, but abroad he has 2 in Caracas, 2 in Japan and a gallery in Paris - it would be foolish not to.

As a result of experimenting with bits of paper he got obsessed with folding screens - always had been all his life. These were real screens (he still has 2 mock-ups), timber framed, hardboard with photographic images in black and white stuck on. Nothing came of those - they were not recognised at the time. However KA has recently received a letter from the Director of the Mus,e des Arts D,coratifs, Paris, asking if he had sculpture relating to domestic objects - tables, chairs and screens, therefore may not be wasted.

He received a commission from Nottingham University for a sculpture for their new library, for which he made a screen. Had an Arts Council grant of #2,000 (if he made something in bronze or aluminium this would have only been about 2 ft). Obsessed with idea of screen which could divide the space. He spent all the money on the screen (had it made for him); huge screen, height 7 ft and 9 ft in length with

continuous nickel-plated hinges, surfaced with enlarged drawings of striding figures printed on both sides. The univresity was worried about graffiti but KA thought this a good idea. This 'Nottingham Screen' was a one-off and KA enjoyed realizing something he had done from drawings on bits of paper. It was an attempt to combine drawing with sculpture. The screen is an economical shape - zig-zag with no body. This was done in 1973.

'Bernadette Going to Wales', 1972 [correct title, not 'in Wales' as KA says]. Bernadette was a friend KA saw a great deal of (a book illustrator) who went to live in Wales who KA visited there. [KA looks at reproduction in catalogue] The piece was made of a slab of plate aluminium - he sold a few, height 11 1/2 inches [he has a cast]. The piece combines figurative with geometric shapes.

'How Many Miles to Babylon?', 1975. Title from Walter de la Mare's poem, bronze - black (bronze being made now by Noack), sturdy table legs, rounded figures and geometric shapes.

At that time (1976) Hubert Dalwood died prematurely, one of first intake of students at Corsham in 1947. Dalwood was bright, knew what he wanted to do and concentrated on sculpture. KA liked his jokey abrasiveness, always loyal to KA. Most successful, work still around at auctions. KA made a series of figures different to the others as they do not combine geometry and figure. 'July Figures' was from 1977 to 1982. [KA describes heatwaves of several summers in the country.]

It was so hot he was walking around with his arms sticking out in front, therefore he made sculpture with arms sticking straight out.

Another series was 'Design for a Wilderness'. Idea came from Easton Neston (home of Lady Hesketh, sister of the McEwens). There was a high dark yew hedge and behind that a place called 'The Wilderness'. KA visualized a slab-like bronze and figure at edge marching forward - similar to Bernadette but more dramatic; had something to do with bestial garden sculpture. KA did maquettes, one in bronze and one in aluminim.

Arts Council touring exhibition toured to ten cities. KA thought a flop as no one knew what to make of it. No museum bought any work. (Introduction by Alan Bowness) Reproductions very good in well-produced catalogue - worth doing for that alone.

Long period of happiness, equal in importance to 1950s when he made 'People in a wind'. So excited to return to Ireland - it also happened with the 'Trees' later. KA had not been back to Ireland since he was a student. He thought that it would be changed but found it much the same. [Refers to book by Praeger mentioned in earlier tape who referred to area in Ireland, the Burren.] This area was exposed by the Ice Age - unlike anything KA had ever seen. He made 6 visits there, alone, with his wife, with Susan Hampshire, and with Alastair Service and Zandria. On his visit with Alastair and Zandria he found Lackan (his family home) had been razed to the ground.

KA stayed at Lisdoonvarna, in the Burren, and at Falls Hotel, Ennistimon, originally owned by the MacNamara family whose daughter married Dylan Thomas. Augustus John also stayed there when a private house. Susan Hampshire noticed how bouncy KA got when he arrived in Dublin and wondered how she would cope. With Service KA went to New Grange - a walk-in barrow tomb, north of Dublin, stayed in Dublin and had marvellous time.

Always been fascinated by 'Ulysses' by James Joyce; he read this first when at Slade when Jo had brought it back from Paris with 'Lady Chatterley's Lover'. [KA mentions 'Sex began in 1963', by Philip Larkin.]

KA got to know Michael Scott, leading architect in southern Ireland. KA noticed the Edgeworths' house had been made into a hospital. Scott, who as a modern architect was confined to building hospitals and airports was furious to have missed designing it. Scott lived in round house he had built himself near Dublin next to the Forty Foot hole, where KA swam as a child, and near the Martello tower Joyce camped out in which Scott made into a Joyce museum. KA plays extract from 'Anna Livia Plurabella' read by Joyce. Michael Scott knew the bailiff to the Edgeworth family

[KA refers to a story Scott told about his visit to the O'Farrell family where the son was shot dead by a gunman who Scott later refused to identify in an identification parade.]

When KA went to Ireland with Alastair Service and Zandria it was at the end of a successful farming period and things had changed a bit - there were saunas in Longford and what had been a poor farm now had a girl with pony-tail riding a pony in the fields, parties etc.

Next subject is the Richmond Oaks. [blank until end of tape]

F2408 Side A

6th November 1991.

Very important phase for KA - particularly because it made him happy - the Oak Trees of Richmond Park. All his life, since he had been in London, he had been to Richmond Park - so near, made many visits alone or with friends. Extraordinary thing about seeing things - we are very conservative with our eyes. The trees in the park did not mean much until one day in 1975 he saw them suddenly, one bright spring day. A revelation - the trees were alive - slight breeze - they looked like huge animals moving slightly. From then on KA was hooked, he went three times per week, sometimes in the morning as early as possible - he saw foxes and deer and had the place to himself. He took sketch-books and eventually made etchings on the spot. Happy, felt he could throw off petty worries.

KA mentions the Battersea Park sculpture exhibitions (about 5 or 6). From just after the war we were the first people to have them in England. The park had a self-contained area, KA and Bernard Meadows organised it and invited American sculptors to take part (1977) two years after KA had begun drawing the oaks. KA thought he would make an oak tree, to go with God's trees, but very expensive and he was nervous of doing this without doing a lot of preparatory work, so he abandoned

that idea and did a more conventional work (for him), 'Fleeing Figure' - short description. Each exhibitor showed one piece.

Meanwhile he made 20 or more maqettes of trees - mostly about 1 foot high. Used acid for a green patina for where leaves were. Went on until he was commissioned to do a piece for the new British Embassy in Brasilia. [KA reads extract about Richmond Park from his 1978 Japanese touring exhibition which gives an idea of the importance of his visits, and also talks about the great age of the oak trees.] The Japanese tour was to Fuji Television gallery, Tokyo, Gallery Kasahara, Osaka, and Gal,rie Humanit,, Nagoya.

Re commission for Brasilia, 1985, KA sent maquettes to the Government Art Collection, run by Dr. Wendy Baron. They selected (to his great delight) the first tree maquette he had done. KA made an enlargement from it - Noack enormously helpful. It was 10ft high - if it had been full tree size it would have been too expensive. KA modelled direct with plaster over a steel skeleton - then areas of expanded polystyrene to fill in space and 3 inches of plaster with scrim on top. Terrible work; had to climb up and down ladder. Noack helped for short while, thought it too much like hard work, then had a platform built. Six weeks entirely of work, work. Worked from 8.30am to 5.30pm and Saturdays and Sundays. Had help from Noack's men. Noack made an excellent cast which was sent to Brazil. Description of the journey to Brazil and arrival in Brasilia. It all went like clockwork. Setting was wonderful - a big apron, overlooking a pond with a fountain behind in the embassy compound. The embassy was built using traditional features, eg tiles to reflect heat. KA stayed with the Ambassador for a few days. Unfortunately it was also disastrous as well. 2 or 3 months later messages came via Wendy Baron to say blotches had appeared on the surface. KA had had no briefing re the climate - torrential rain and enormous heat by day and cold at night. When setting it up an engineer had asked KA if he had made provision for the extraordinary temperature changes; KA had not, so a copper tube was installed which would help let air out. This should have been enough but the problem was due to the constant change in temperature. Detailed description of how the piece, consisting of 7 pieces bolted together, came to be discoloured. KA received letters from the Chairman of the Government Art Collection including one hand-

written one which said the cast was bad (he denied having said this). KA knew this was not that. So it was planned for the tree to be shipped back to Noack where it would be cut open in front of witnesses, if there was a fault then he would pay for it but if faultless KA or Noack would take legal action. Noack in fact did pay for his 'number one' to go to have the piece re-patinated, but it went wrong again. They made a second cast - in case - with 6 holes 2 inches in diameter, which allowed lots of room - they did not use an acid patina but used hardest German car paint. Before that, via Fuji Television gallery, second cast sold to a women's forum who had a park at Yokohoma. KA explains there were 3 casts in total,

Wendy Baron wrote that the new Ambassador liked the blotches - like autumn tints. Would have been a great cost. KA went in front of the committee of 16 and he accepted full responsibility and would not let Noack be blamed, who was not Herr Noack but Meister Noack - a great authority on what he does.

Now the new cast (sent to the Gateshead Garden Festival) is in James Kirkman's garden in the country, beautiful sight. Nearly sold to a consortium on the west coast of America but KA suddenly hit by the recession and all his sales collapsed. Bronze foundry people in Brazil confirmed KA's view that it was the changes in the climate that caused the problem. The 'Trees' were shown in Japan [see 1978 catalogue] and Caracas and at Gimpel Fils, London [1980].

Later KA eventually was persuaded to have a show at the Taranman Gallery, who made beautiful catalogues - tiny gallery. KA showed 'July Figures' and little figures made as a result of a visit he made to Jordan [see next tape]. Description of Taranman [Christopher Hewett] trying to trace KA when on a visit to the Burren when KA's Caracas dealer - Signor Freites - wanted to buy the whole show]. The dealer wanted a reduction and Hewett refused so it fell through. Then KA had a letter from his Paris dealer who said he had a South American client who was interested in several pieces (it was the same man). The Paris dealer only charged the South American a nominal figure and KA sold them at his price. Hewett committed suicide - not because of KA.

'Both Arms' - the first cast went to a Japanese sculpture park, c.1974/75. KA was approached c.1974/75 by the DoE PSA to do a large piece for the Commando Training Centre, Royal Marines, Lympstone, Devon - a gift from the PSA to the Marines. KA was nervous about this (not wanting to do a buttons and boots etc). The senior architect was shown photos of some of KA's pieces, and suggested that KA submit the design for 'Both Arms' - idea of the dual role of Marines - Army and Navy - strength and power. Design submitted. The second cast was slightly modified; it went to Devon, in the Commandant's Court, where it was not seen by many people - this worried KA. He later met a student from the Royal College who said the piece influenced him to take up sculpture. The piece later moved to a better site at Poole, to the Combined Operations Centre where it could be seen. Another sculptor did something more suitable for the trainees. [end of side A]

F2408 Side B

Japan - an important period for KA, being fascinated by the Japanese, reading its history, amazing technology and architecture. KA made 3 or 4 visits there, but this one takes place in 1978 when touring exhibition (already referred to) took place. The 2 galleries KA was most involved with, Fuji Television gallery, Tokyo, owned by Mr Shikanai, and Gallery Kasahara in Osaka (both were commercial galleries), plus Gal,rie Humanit, in Nagoya. KA stayed in Tokyo and Osaka; from Osaka he visited a giant steel works. He wanted to see Japanese working - didn't want to see electronics industry which didn't appeal as much as the steel industry. This visit was arranged through the British Council to the Nippon Kokan Keihin at Ohgishima. This was a man-made island off the coast [description of the factory on the island with tunnel connecting to the mainland]. Highly efficient NKK did construction and shipping as well. KA took the assistant from the Osaka gallery, Kusuo Amano, and the Japanese director of the British Council. Description of lunch and conversation in elegant setting, compared to the Sheffield steel works where KA had been. Astonishing visit - to see blast furnaces of most modern kind - 12 million tons produced each year. Description of send-off by the secretaries who all bowed - which struck KA very much - 'high tech' place but still the tradition of normal courtesy.

KA saw Sumo wrestling - but it was not the fighting season but saw them training which was more interesting. He took a Japanese lady (necessary for language). Description of the school - staff included the visiting 'star'. Had lunch and KA sat next to the star, who was very reticent. On later visit he saw a proper fight in a stadium. Even when they have finished fighting they are revered.

Also went to the 'Noh' theatre - traditional theatre, very ancient, stylized theatre with orchestra, singing, and people in formal clothes and masks - they do various traditional plays. KA saw one in Tokyo and Kyoto which he found very moving.

[KA plays extracts from 3 records, and explains the recordings: first of koto, stringed instrument, second from the 'Noh' theatre and the third of folk music from the island of Sado he visited.]

Through the gallery KA borrowed Kasuo Amano, assistant of Kasahara, to make a tour. KA could not drive as he could not read the signs. Tremendous contrasts - went up a mountain where there was snow - sports area. Then down to lush valleys with paddy fields and rice fields. The whole coast was surrounded by layers of fish nets. They took the car on the ferry to Sado - island facing China - historically interesting - still retains some of the life it always had. They visited the ancient gold mines. Extraordinary coast - volcanic, with vertical columns going down to the sea which KA described in an article for 'Yomiuri' newspaper. Went to see a theatre performance like a musical. Local people in traditional costume singing. [see the third record played] All very exciting. Stayed in real Japanese style hotels. In one, Kasuo suggested that KA had 3 geisha girls to entertain him, description of the 3 elderly geisha ladies who came and played games, giggling and laughing. KA tries to recall which year it was, but already known - 1978- see above. [blank until end of tape]

F2409 Side A

KA refers to 3 or 4 incidents in his work that were unpleasant, so he thinks it right to describe them. In 1983 it lasted for a year - at Sutton Manor, Sutton Scotney,

Winchester, owned by Alex Herbage, an economist. The place had once belonged to Arthur Rank. Description of the house - Herbage had a sculpture collection - and general set-up. Herbage had a huge opening - KA met him through his art director, Miss Onions. They wanted to buy his large piece 'Pandarus' (version no.2) - his first real one - bronze with one enormous funnel (no.1 was aluminium and rough). This was half paid for outright with the second half to be paid for as soon as possible. After some time no payment was made. KA rang to find Miss Onions had left and no one knew about it. KA then tracked down her father who told him there was trouble. KA's solicitor wrote and eventually received a cheque - two bounced and the third cleared. 10 days later KA saw on television that Herbage was guilty of swindling on a large scale and had defrauded investors of 52 million dollars. His art collection, valued at 3 million, was sold by Sotheby's. He had a good eye and good pieces but greed destroyed it all. KA did not lose out.

In the mid '70s a man called Juan del Vayo called at KA's house, whose father was Spanish Ambassador, pre Franco, and had grown up with Bunuel. He begged for a piece from the 1950's - originally KA kept back about 9 of these - only 4 or 5 left now. Eventually KA agreed; he also sold him 3 drawings. Del Vayo produced book with green forms which he said was the same as cheques and took away the work. KA found that these were not in fact cheques and contacted solicitors in Caracas, but the total price lost was too small to authorise breaking in and seizing goods to the same value. Another victim was Robyn Denny (related to Norman Reid, former Tate director). Description of how Denny enabled the police to catch del Vayo via an advertisement placed in 'Art News' or 'Art Monthly'. KA thought it strange behaviour for a 'gentleman'. KA got bronze and drawings back.

In 1950s a dealer, Lucca Scacci-Gracci, who had a good eye, and had Galleria Blu (Milan) and exhibited Moore, Sutherland, KA and Chadwick - drawings and sculpture. He borrowed a plaster of 'Children Playing ' [1953] and agreed to have 6 casts made - to give KA one and pay for the rest. KA got his money. Description of boa constrictor. People later enquired about a work they bought from him - KA often is sent photographs to authorise the piece is by him. When this happened 4 or 5 times he knew something was wrong. Maybe Scacci-Gracci had had about 12 casts made

when he was only entitled to the 6. KA had not been paid for the extra 6. When KA told James Kirkman about this Kirkman said that Scacci-Gracci had done the same with Henry Moore.

The other loss was more serious, concerning a famous foundry in France - KA used them a lot in the 1960s. Artcurial (his Paris gallery) said that a good collector in Spain had died and his widow wanted to sell 'Girl Without a Face' - 5 or 6 feet high, like a letterbox with arms sticking out. Artcurial liked it and wanted to buy it and wanted KA to authorise it as normal. Sotheby's had confirmed the collector was good. KA was dubious - he had details from when he was at the Marlborough covering every sale, KA found that there were only 6 not 7 casts. On the cast Artcurial (Cyril Cohen) wanted, it had 0/6 stamped on it. KA did not know until 5 years ago that 0 was a valid number in France (this was in the 1960s). This was a pirate cast so he would not sign it [short blank in tape]. It was sneaked abroad. [short blank in tape] The foundry had done this once before with 'Sprawling Woman' when he (at the foundry) asked KA for an extra cast for his garden. KA would not do it now - he [the man at the foundry] flogged the piece. Died of a heart attack. KA never authenticated the cast of 'Girl Without a Face' for Artcurial, who will never handle any work bought in this way unless the artist certifies it. KA states what the edition is - always stamped on the work so no doubt about it, but 'Girl Without a Face' was stamped with something KA did not know - clear proof that it was an illegal sale. Now the edition would include everything, 1-6 plus 0/6 or 1/1 (whatever is the name for the artist's cast, or ',preuve des artistes'). These are a few of the unpleasant things but when he thinks he has seen so many people over the last half century it is not a very high proportion.

KA has a farmhouse wood armchair in his bedroom - since Second World War - he loves it very much - made many drawings of it in the 1950s. In 1983 he made some sculptures - one big one not at all like the chair - but 3 small ones were. 3 small ones were made direct in wax but the big one was made in a complicated way. Detailed description of how KA made it. Achieved great detail. The first cast of the 'Chair' was sold to Brisbane Town Hall; in process of having a second one cast.

When visiting the Arts Council in Piccadilly he noticed how the trees have enormous boles - where the trunk goes down to the ground it breaks into big lumps. He made two models (the last of the tree sculptures he made). 'Green Park', 1985.

Then in 1985 had a retrospective in an unusual gallery, Artcurial, which shows tapestries, carpets, multiples, exhibitions of paints, sculpture and jewellery, in Ave. Matignon, Paris. The gallery is sponsored by L'Oreal. KA had known it for some time and first through Bryan Robertson who put on a mixed exhibition of British art. KA was asked to exhibit there - he enjoyed being in Paris with the exhibition on, seeing his own poster on every corner. Artcurial produced a nice catalogue - mini retrospective - wide selection of work - 'Kenneth Armitage Sculpture et Dessins 1948-1984'.

KA talks about various visits - 3 to the Middle East and then visits to places of archaeological interest - Carnac then Ireland to see New Grange (walk-in grave) and finally to Orkney - Skara Brae.

Jordan. Always wanted to go to Middle East, had hankering for the desert. KA was approached by the British Council. Jordan had got a national gallery in a big suburban house but no art to put in it. The British Council lent it their collection of sculpture (the idea of the British Ambassador). They also wanted one of the artists to attend and KA was invited (1981). He visited Jordan at their expense - it was an excellent visit. In Amman for the opening by Queen Noor (who had studied at an art school in America) - description of her at the opening. KA was slightly uneasy that the collection was all bronze which gave it an 'antique' feel.

KA given car, driver and tourist guide. Made a visit to Jarash - great Roman remains and temple. Mountains of Morwab - looked out over Jordan valley - could just see Jericho - it was where Moses had stood and first seen the promised land.

Made day trip to Petra - 'Rose Red City, half as old as time', only discovered 150 years before. Description of trip there by car and horse. Saw Rose Red classic facade. [blank until end of side A]

F2409 Side B

KA noticed the irrigation channel 4 feet high - water supply to the ancient Nabotians. Description of architecture of buildings. Did rare thing on his return - made 3 sculptures of girl sitting on a chair or bench with arms out sideways and eyes painted in the Egyptian manner. One sold to Japanese gallery and the others exhibited in Taranman Gallery exhibition - all entitled 'Rose Red City' - all sold.

In 1985 made private visit to Egypt with Jossy Dimbleby and Mrs Bamber Gascoigne, who was born in Baghdad - she organised the trip - there were 7 of them. KA joined them in Cairo. [Description of train journey along Nile at night.] Stayed in Aswan then south to Abu Simbel where he saw the most spectacular sculptures he had ever seen - two colossal statues of Rameses. These had been moved due to the building of the Aswan Dam. KA made sketch-book notes. That night he was so dazed by what he had seen that he fell silent at dinner. In Cairo they saw the museum, Sphinx, also two very beautiful figures from Tutankhamun's tomb - gold leaf - life size.

Baghdad visit made when Iran and Iraq at war, therefore had sights to oneself - made it special. Got to know the British Council, borrowed their Land Rover. Tom Phillips, David Elliott, of the Museum of Modern Art in Oxford, an archaeologist from the British Council, and driver. Drove to Babylon; wandered around ruins, no one else there. Never forgot trip. Visited Samara with high minaret. On the way there stopped at castle on east bank of the Tigris. Description of castle/fort and story of caliph who fell in love with Bedouin girl. KA found it very impressive in Jordan, seeing the driver saying his prayers - the power of Islam.

Visits with Alastair Service who became his closest friend. As well as being an architectural historian on Victorian and Edwardian architecture his main passion was megalithic sites of Europe. Wrote book on the important sites. His first visit was to Carnac - saw lines of stones. Service knew a couple of the more famous archaeologists. Visited the biggest megalith of all - a fallen one - called Ergrah, over 60 feet high, near Carnac. Description of history of the megalith. The last trip he made with Service was to Orkney in 1990. Climate milder there - therefore

astronomical sightings and phases of moon could be seen more clearly. Description of some of the sites on Orkney, including Maeshowe. Service and Zandria gave party for KA's 75th birthday in the summer (1991). Description of party in barge on Kennet and Avon Canal. Guests included his god-daughter Christabel McEwen and Candida Lycett-Green.

In 1988 he was asked to send work for Expo 88 - exhibition in Brisbane - 5 of his largest works. KA did not attend. Sold 2 pieces - one to a shopping mall on the Gold Coast and another to the town hall (already described). 'Pandarus' with 2 funnels (had 2 casts of this). Sent big resin 'Arm' (made with Noack), had it sprayed with areas of colour (not his original idea of camouflage colours). 1 or 2 of 'Pandarus' figures and his 'Wall'.

Next big thing was in 1988 - the Seoul Olympics, 24th Olympiad. He had made 'Garden-Game' (does not know why he called it that). One could imagine it lodged in a hedge at the bottom of the garden. It was made in 7 pieces, made in resin (used the firm Edward Lawrence). The piece was very much a relief - the back not to be seen. Description of detailed instructions how the piece was to be installed. Obviously this could not be dismantled and KA gave it as a present. Colossal catalogue.

KA made another large piece - group of figures - again a relief. Used Edward Lawrence firm a lot, thinking that perhaps he would have works in exhibitions that would be portable. If cast the pieces would be enormously heavy but in resin they were relatively light. This was called 'Return to Eden', figures sneaking back; group of 4 figures on the left facing one on the right which has a front view of the face screen-printed on. Neither that nor his 'Garden-Game' have been shown anywhere.

Last piece made this year was an 'L Shaped Screen'. In fact he had maquette from the '60s - fits in with work he had been doing all along in that decade of works with rounded organic shapes combined with geometric shapes. Once again a screen (which he had noticed people liked). This time he made it in aluminium which is lighter. Modelled parts made here (in studio), cast in aluminium and welded on. The

sale of the piece was assumed to be to Japan then everywhere hit by the recession. Hardly sold anything since that date.

KA says he will end the 'natural' part of the tape and READ HIS CONCLUSION OUT. Not all the works are included, only those that can be talked about or were part of a series. Could not say much about one-offs, eg 2 'Standing Figures' about 6 foot high. KA finds it not that pleasant going over facts in great details - the present is important for him and what is left of the future, but he felt it good to make a record. Plans to visit Spain next year to attend the passion-play in Elche, Alicante, dating from 1266. [KA plays tape from this which he plays every Christmas] Refers to Dali's memoirs and to Nietzsche's 'Also Sprach Zarathustra'. [blank to end of side B]

F2410 Side A

12th November 1991.

KA continues to READ OUT HIS CONCLUSION. Mentions his intended visit to Spain where he will visit Goya etchings in the Prado, Madrid (last went there with Peter Potworowski while at Corsham). He also hopes to visit his 'adopted' grand-daughter, Immaculada Coloma Santonja in Alcoy, and Chillida, in San Sebastian. KA explains he has made these tapes to set the record straight, mistakes once written get repeated ad infinitum. Mentions the casual occurrence or ideas that have happened in his life and would advise people 'to heed the faint whisper'. Mentions the art 'industry' - with the artists as 'small dots'. Describes his visits to the British Museum which he regards as a 'museum of life' and describes some of his favourite objects there and their great age, including a fragment of reindeer antler the same age as the Lascaux caves which he saw before they closed. Thanks the interviewer. Finally quotes poem by Stevie Smith, 'The Songster'. KA says most artists are doing what Miss Pauncefort did in the poem - singing down the lane. [TW thanks KA] [blank for rest of both sides of tape]

F2410 Side B is blank

F2411 Side A

Seventh Interview, 10th December 1991.

['Correction' tape, made in retrospect, ie it covers works that KA forgot to mention in the other 11 tapes that TW has made with KA]

KA didn't really mention drawings, which he did all the time; also certain works he forgot. KA has counted making approx. 370 models, and has worked out that he has only referred to about 40 works.

'Moon Figure'. First thing he made when moved to Corsham Court. Description of the piece, in semi-pink plaster. Stemmed from carving he did in the basement of the Bath Art School, Assyrian influence. Had lump of Bath stone delivered there. This was modelled in plaster but had a carving look - looks as if it has been influenced by Cycladic sculpture - certain connection. 1948.

'Linked figures', 1949. This was before 'People in a Wind' and the flattish screen-like figures. 'Linked Figures' was merged together - not 2 bodies but all one; very important breaking point with work from past. They had no connection with the war. Talks again of screens he had made from 1950 and how this originated.

'Children Playing'. Very small, 1953. His most popular piece. [KA also mentions this piece on tape 10]

'Friends Walking', 1952. KA threaded armature through wire netting and poured plaster over it - rectangular shape - legs and heads sticking up at the top and bottom. Much the loosest thing he has made - like a pancake; instead of being like a 3D cross he condensed one of the dimensions. 'Children Playing' also flat.

KA has drawings for nearly all his sculpture. Pages of drawings for 'People in a Wind', and 'Family Going for a Walk' - very important but impossible to include anything like the amount he has done. [KA means including photographs he hopes to supply with tape]

Talks of works he has difficulty talking about, eg 'Standing Figure' and 1961 'Standing Man' and 'Standing Figure', depending on shapes he made as he modelled them. These are more like a landscape painter who surrenders to what he sees (what KA imagines) instead of having a clear programme of what he wants to do. Both pieces are very figurative.

'Sibyls' have feature used in 'Mouton Sun' - a shelf or ledge, from bracket fungus [already referred to]. They also have enormous navels - KA does not know why.

By end of '60s he made many little wood shapes with drawing - trying to combine sculpture with drawing. Made screens and folding shapes. He finished two works: 'Single Figure with Drawing' and 'Two figures with Drawing', both cast in aluminium. KA wanted a white surface and had them enamelled so he could have black drawings. Behind the sculpture was a plate with a silk-screened image from a drawing printed on it, but KA did not go on with these. There were 4 or 5 of each (1972), year he left the Marlborough Gallery. An attempt to do something that he failed with. He should have made large casts and plastered paint over them but it would not have weathered well. [Description of how smooth surface is achieved; a polished surface is the best preservative.] KA uses the correction tape to show how he did use drawing.

The paper models he made were a kind of play, as opposed to laboriously working with plaster. Sculpture takes up space - by its corporeal reality it occupies the mind as opposed to drawings which need not be seen (no physical presence).

KA refers to book by an American, Richard Coe, 1984, 'When the Grass was Taller' (Yale University) in which Coe tries to analyse a child's mind. Felt there were two categories of human thinking - part of the mind occupied with the 'real' dimension and the 'play' dimension. Coe writes about 2 philosophers - Johan Huizinga and Roger Caillois, and KA quotes from book. KA fascinated by the 'play' element and thought this was worth mentioning.

KA confirms that he usually exhibited drawings with sculpture (except the Freddie Mayor exhibition). The British Council always showed his drawings in touring exhibitions but they were always a kind of accessory. KA did a lot of doodles, ideas he had which were meaningless to other people. Also did drawing for drawing's sake, for the pleasure of doing a drawing. Refers to drawings in room, then mentions selecting photographs of drawings he hopes to include with the tapes. [blank for remainder of both sides of tape]

F2411 Side B is blank

END OF INTERVIEW