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ARTISTS' LIVES

Bernard Meadows

Interviewed by Tamsyn Woollcombe

C466/13

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**National Life Stories**

**Interview Summary Sheet**

**Title Page**

**Ref no:** C466/13/01-12

**Digitised from cassette originals**

**Collection title:** Artists' Lives

**Interviewee's surname:** Meadows

**Title:**

**Interviewee's forename:** Bernard

**Sex:** male

**Occupation:**

**Date and place of birth:** 19.02.1915

**Mother's occupation:**

**Father's occupation:**

**Dates of recording:** 3.11.1992, 10.11.1992, 17.11.1992, 20.11.1992, 26.11.1992, 15.12.1992

**Location of interview:** Interviewee's home

**Name of interviewer:** Tamsyn Woolcombe

**Type of recorder:** Marantz CP430

**Recording format:** D60 Cassette

**F numbers of playback cassettes:** F2999-F3010

**Total no. of digitised tracks:** 23

**Mono or stereo:** Stereo

**Additional material:** b/w photocopies of works

**Copyright/Clearance:** Interview is open. Copyright is held by the British Library Board.

**Interviewer's comments:**

F2999 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 3rd of November 1992. Tape 1.

So, today we might start by talking a bit about your childhood, and I don't know whether you remember your grandparents, you know, back a generation, or whether you know anything about them.

I know, or I knew, my paternal grandparents. My maternal grandparents died before I was born.

Right. And where did the paternal grandparents live?

In Norwich.

In Norwich as well?

Yes.

Where you were born?

Yes.

Right. And so, did both your parents, did they come from Norwich?

Yes.

They did as well, oh right.

It's a bit, it was a society where, people didn't move about much.

Absolutely, no. Right, and so it was in Norwich itself that you lived, was it?

Yes, well on the outskirts.

Right. So did you find...did you used to go out into the country all round there?

Yes. I used to paint.

As a small child as well?

No, not as a small child.

But did you always have an artistic bent?

It's the only thing I could do! (laughs)

And were you one of several children?

No, I just had a brother.

Right. And can you remember anything about your...the home that your parents lived in, that you grew up in?

It was just an ordinary lower working-class family home.

And did you have any particular toys that you used to play with?

Yes, I suppose at that time every boy had a Meccano set. I had rather a splendid one which I built up over the years.

Have you still got it?

No! (laughs) I grew out of it.

Yes. So you started quite early building constructions as it were.

Yes yes, being interested in practical things.

And can you remember, were there any books, illustrated books or anything like that that you used to read, or get read to you?

No, none.

Not many books in the house at all?

Very very few. A few which, for some reason, perhaps it was my mother who had them, but books like 'Tess of the D'Urbervilles', and...various books of...

Classic novels?

Pardon?

Sort of classic novels.

Sort of fringe type of classic novels, yes, yes. I didn't read them, but obviously...either somebody had...somebody in the family had at some time read them, or they were gifts.

Right. And so your mother obviously stayed at home and looked after you children.

Yes.

And your father, what did he do?

He worked for the Norwich Union.

Oh right.

And my grandfather worked with the Norwich Union! (laughing)

And do you still have some connections with that area?

I have connections with the Norwich Union, I still pay insurance premiums.

And do you go back to Norwich, and that area?

Oh yes, I've still got a cousin living there. I go back less and less, because there's little to go back for. At one time I was a governor of the School of Art, but I dropped that.

Right. And so, you went to school locally presumably?

In Norwich, yes.

What, you went to a sort of kindergarten first did you, primary school, whatever?

Primary school, yes, and then to the...it would now rank as a grammar school, but there was a grammar school in Norwich already, which was a sort of minor public school, which had a foundation of some sort.

But you went to something like I think you ... City of Norwich School? Is that right?

I went to the City of Norwich School, yes.

Yes, right. And so, when you were at your...going back to your primary school, can you remember bringing back works of art?

No.

Or handicraft?

No I don't. It wasn't that sort of school.

So when you got to the City of Norwich School, there was presumably an art mistress or art master?

Art master, yes.

And did you have an affinity with him? Did he see that you were...?

Yes, I got on quite well with him. He was quite a good watercolour painter, I suppose in the Arthur Rackham tradition.

And did he exhibit anywhere?

He exhibited in Norwich; there was quite a good, lively art club, an amateur art club called the Norwich Art Circle.

And did they get visiting lecturers in, or...

No no no.

Or was it an annual...

Before that time, that sort of time, yes.

So it was, what, they had annual exhibitions?

They had annual exhibitions.

And so were they probably the first pictures that you saw, paintings or...or ... can you remember?

I suppose so. Norwich has a tradition, I mean Norwich School...

Yes, absolutely, yes.

Cromer, and Cotman, and...

Yes, exactly.

A few other people. And they were on show in the Castle Museum, and the Castle Museum...do you know Norwich?

I've never been there I'm ashamed to say, no.

Norwich Castle was a Norman castle which had been refurbished in the Victorian era sometime, I forget when, and done over rather badly I think. The fabric was all straightened out and made pristine again, which spoilt the whole result.

But nevertheless it had quite a good collection?

Yes, it has a very good collection of Cromer and Cotman and other people, yes.

So did your schoolmaster take you there, or...?

No, no, no. It was before those days too.

Right. Sounds very bleak.



Things didn't happen as they happen now.

No, no. Right, so at your school, did you...art was the thing that you shone at was it?

As I say, it was the only thing I could do.

Yes, right. So had you always got in mind that you would probably go to art school and...?

It was a dream, yes. But in those days parents always made sure if they could that one went...did something safe.

Yes. I know that...I think it was Terry Frost who said that his parents...it was thought a sissy thing to do to go...well to be an artist anyway, I don't know about going to art school.

I don't think that that was the case, it was just the case that my father, working at the Norwich Union had a safe job, and he thought that was the be-all and end-all of all one's dreams ever could be.

Yes, I can see his point. And so, you were in Norwich, but did you make expeditions out into the countryside and to the sea and things, because that's quite near?

Yes, yes, yes.

And did you...what, with your brother, and your... Did you have cousins and things as well, or...?

I had cousins, yes.

And were you interested in...like, you know, inevitably pebbles and driftwood and can you remember collecting things like that?

Not really, no.

No, right. So, whose idea...did your art master encourage you about...who raised the question about attending art school?

I did I suppose. When I left school it was in the middle of the last big recession, 1931, and I got a job in an accountant's office.

Oh right, oh that was very good to get a job straight away.

And I was paid half a crown a week. What's that?

Two and six, which is...twelve and a half p.

Twelve and a half p. a week, yes.

Probably even less than that now.

And I worked at that for three years, doing the ordinary sort of round the house chores, and I got fed up with it, and I think the final straw was when the person who owned the business had my father along and told him I was no good! (laughs)

Oh no!

So, this was 1934, and finally I got round to persuading him to let me go to the Norwich School of Art full-time.

Right. And so, who...did you go in to study painting, or...?

Yes.

Was it general, or what?

No. At that time there were very few schools of art with sculpture departments, very few, and I mean even Henry Moore at Leeds, he had to set himself up a sculpture department, because there wasn't even one there, and that was a much bigger school than Norwich.

Yes. So, can you remember who...your teachers there, can you...?

Yes, I can remember. I can remember them as personalities. I can't say that they were going to set the world alight.

Can you remember...actually can I just go back. You were talking about your art master at the City of Norwich School. Can you remember his name?

Yes, it was Walter T. Watling.

Right, so now we're back to the Norwich School of Art. Can you remember any of their names?

Yes. A man named Horace Tutt, he was the...I suppose he was second-in-command. The man in charge, the headmaster of the school was somebody named...oh dear!

Oh don't worry, it'll come back to you later.

It'll come back. And he had been a student at the Royal College of Art.

What, the one in command?

The head, yes. And although he...the Royal College of Art at that time was nothing like it is now, at least he had some sort of connection with the outside world; the other people were local people.

Right, right.

And so almost inevitably the atmosphere was provincial.

And so you made friends there, did you?

I had one friend who, we decided together that we were coming up to London, and we both left Norwich at the same time, and shared a room here, just over in the next road down there!  
(laughs)

And what road was that then?

Eton Road.

And what was his name?

His name was Reynolds.

Reynolds?

Yes.

Christian name?

Bernard Reynolds. And he's still alive; I saw him about a year ago.

And, can you just describe what happened at the Norwich School of Art, your day, what sort of things you did?

It's very difficult to remember that far back.

Did they do the life drawing, or did you...?

We did life drawing, yes. And in the second year it was orientated towards painting.

And did you go out and paint en plein air?

I used to go out on my own at weekends and holidays and that sort of thing, and paint the local scenery.

And do you still have any of the work from that time?

Yes.

Has it been seen by anybody?

No, no. At least it hasn't been seen since 1934!

And have you got any sort of photographs and things of that time?

Not really, no.

People didn't really have cameras much did they, no.

Not much.

Right. So you can't...there's really nothing particularly special sticks out in your mind about that period at the Norwich School of Art?

Not until...a girl named Susan Lascelles, who was of the Lascelles family.

Is that sort of...how do you spell that, Lascelles, is that the...the funny way of spelling it.  
LASC...

LASCELLES, yes. Who was one of the relations, either distant or...of the royal family I believe; I forget which one, but anyhow... She came in to do a class in wood engraving on Saturday morning. She had been a student at the Royal College in the engraving department, and she had a friend who lived in north Norfolk, whose name was...

Was it a female friend?

A female friend, yes.

It wasn't Raikes was it?

Raikes, Susan[sic] Raikes. How do you know about her?

Well I just read a little bit in...I read her name in the biography of Moore by Roger...

Oh yes, yes, by Roger Berthoud.

Berthoud, that's it.

Yes. Yes, and it was Susan Raikes I think.

Or was it Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Raikes, that's right.

Sorry, I didn't mean...I just happened to...

No no, it is Elizabeth Raikes, yes.

So she was a friend of the Lascelles?

She was a friend of the Lascelles lady, and she came in on Saturday morning to give her friend support, to fill up the class! And there were three of us who were students at Norwich at that time who also joined this wood engraving class, and we sort of associated with this girl Raikes, because she was the nearest we had to a friend from the big city. But also because she had been a pupil of Henry Moore at the Royal College, and she said she would bring us up to London to see him and talk with him, which she did.

So you must have been...you sound as if it was very insular there, but you were nevertheless aware of people like Moore, and...

Well through her, yes.

Just through her.

Yes, I mean I wouldn't think that we had heard of him otherwise.

Right, right.

Except...yes I think it would have been through her. The next morning after we had been up here, I had a postcard from Henry Moore asking me if I would come and be his assistant.

Oh goodness, and so had he seen any of your work at all, or had just...?

No, just one; just one that I took with me. We each of us took a work to show him. And this was a great surprise.

Goodness.

So that was the outstanding thing about the time at Norwich.

Yes. Can I just go back, and I'll ask you more about this in a minute, but can I just go back to the engraving classes, the Lascelles person, whose Christian name I have now forgotten.

Her name was Susan Lascelles.

Susan Lascelles, sorry. Did she...had she been a contemporary of people like Ravilious and Binyon and people?

Yes, yes.

Right, so she was very much of that style, right.

Yes. I'm not certain, but probably Ravilious was teaching at the College at that time. I know he was later.

Yes, he did do that. And, so Elizabeth Raikes under Moore, she had studied sculpture under him?

Yes.

Yes, right. And can you...

Moore was at the College there; there was a sculpture department there at the time, but...he was befriended by Sir William Rothenstein, who was the Principal at the time, and given the job.

Very early on.

Very early on. And he came straight out of the Army, was a student at the Royal College, and he was taken on right away, but along with a number of other people who were taken on on the same sort of basis. It was a very young staff.

Yes, right. And so can you remember the piece that you took up to show Henry Moore?

Yes.

Can you describe it?

It was a copy actually of a flint.

Oh was it?

And, the funny thing is that later, many years later, I showed Henry Moore and photograph of this flint, or I think I showed him the flint, and his memory is so good, he remembered exactly; he said, 'You didn't change it much, did you?' laughing)

So what was it made out of then, your piece?

Wood.

Wood?

Yes, it was a wood carving.

Right. And so, at Norwich School of Art you had been doing carving in wood had you mainly, rather than modelling, or had you been doing both?

No, didn't do any modelling.

Right. And did you carve in stone there as well, or was it just wood?

I don't think so. No, I don't think so.

And can you remember what kind of wood it was?

I think it was probably a piece of beech or something like that.

And so, you came up for the night to meet Henry Moore with Elizabeth Raikes did you, and your friend, up to London?

Came up for the day.

For the day?

Yes.

Right. And your friend, was your friend...

Reynolds.

Reynolds, right.

And there was another chap you see.



Right, right. And so what, did you meet...where did you meet Moore? In Hampstead, or...?

In his studio which was just round the corner.

And what street was that in?

Parkhill Road.

Oh that's it, yes, right. And he was married to Hepworth at that...

No no no, he never was.

No he wasn't, I'm going absolutely mad, sorry.

No, he never was. But I believe, they say, it had been his idea.

Oh right, I said that by mistake, it just sort of came out without thinking.

No.

Right. And so, you got the postcard, to your surprise. So were you able to leave...had you left? You were still officially a student were you at Norwich School of Art?

Yes.

So what happened? Did you see through your...?

I first went to work with him during the Easter holiday, and at the end of that time, I think it was at the end of that time, I stayed on, and the headmaster, whose name was Hobbis...

Oh you've remembered.

Oh I've remembered.

Can we just spell that, could you spell it?

HOBBIS. And he was a little man about that high, like a hobbit. It was a very appropriate name for him. He complained to my father.

Another complaint!

Another complaint, and said that it was ridiculous me going on working with Henry Moore. He wasn't thought of...nobody thought anything of him. And I think my father didn't know what to do. He couldn't call me back. Because at that time, Henry Moore was just about beginning to be quite well-known.

So what year are we in at the moment then, '36 is it?

I worked with him from '36, Easter '36, off and on until I suppose the end of 1940.

Right. And so you...when did you apply then to go to the Royal College?

'38. Or '37 I think first of all, and I was turned down, and I found out that the person in charge of the Sculpture School hated Moore, and so I could see there was going to be no chance ever of getting into the Sculpture School so I became a painter.

Oh, so you went in as a painter?

Yes.

Right, right. So, who was the head of sculpture at the Royal College at that time then, who hated Moore?

I can't remember, and I think I had better not say.

Right, OK, that's fine. And so who took you in? Who was Professor of Painting at that point, that time?

At that time it was Gilbert Spencer, Stanley Spencer's brother.

Mm, right. And the Principal at that time was...?

A man named Jowett, Percy Jowett.

Percy Jowett, yes, right. And so, were you in the studios in Exhibition Road was it, by the V & A?

Yes.

And so, but meanwhile you were also assisting Henry Moore?

Yes.

And were you helping him in London, or...?

No, chiefly at a cottage that he had down near Canterbury.

Right. Was that a sort of bungalow, was that the bungalow...?

A bungalow, yes, yes.

Called Burcroft?

Burcroft, mm.

And so you lived down there with him and his wife?

Yes, yes.

And can you remember how you spent your days there?

Working hard! Never stopped! (laughs) I mean the...I think that Berthoud has got a brief description of conditions in his book, but they're quite right, I mean we really used to work from...

7 in the morning to 3 a.m. or something.

7 in the morning to 3 a.m., we worked on one exhibition; I mean we didn't work that much all the time, but for most of the time we worked seven days a week from 8 or soon after until it got dark usually, which in the summer was quite late.

Yes, goodness. And did he have a studio there? Where did you do the...?

Outside most of the time. But there was a studio; it was a garage, just a wooden garage, big enough for a smallish car. And many of the works at that time were done either in this little studio or it was done here, but I didn't work up here at all.

No. So he didn't ever transfer a bit that he had started there up here, he had separate work going on here did he?

Well I think the occasional small one, but not big ones, it wasn't practical.

No. So what were you working...what was he working in that you were helping him with? I mean was it stone, or was it...?

Stone, and wood, and at the end of the time, in '38, '39, '40, I did some metal casting in lead.

Can you describe that, that process?

It was what's known as cire-perdue, which is the lost wax process. And somehow a model had to be made in wax; it was either made my modelling directly in wax, or it was made my casting say from a clay model or a plaster model, and then making a mould on that, and then pouring in wax to make a wax copy of the original.

Right.

Is that clear?

Yes that's clear. And then where does the lead come in?

And then, having got the, either the wax original or the wax copy, a mould was put around that.

Which was in...

Which was in plaster, and powdered pottery. That mixture made it possible to be fired. Then the mould was fired, and the wax melted out, but it went past that because the water of crystallisation in the plaster also had to be...not burnt out, but got rid of. And so the plaster model ... I mean the plaster mould, the plaster returned to powder, but because it had this powdered pottery with it, it made a mixture which could be fired and it still retained a certain

amount of strength. And then you had a mould with a hole inside it, which was the same shape as the original model.

Right, right.

So you poured the lead in. And then...

What did you do to the lead? You had to get it molten, you had to...

Had to melt the lead, yes.

Yes, and then fire it...no, not...so you pour the lead into the shape...

Yes, into the mould.

Yes, into the mould, and then let it cool.

And when it was cold...

Break the...

Break the mould off.

Right, and finish with the intended object in lead.

Yes. And it was...all the works were highly polished. Now, lead will polish up like silver, which, it was an extremely...it had a very seductive quality, and we did a lot of those. The only thing is that after a time the shine was still there, but the whole lot changed into being dove grey, which was quite different, but still a very nice quality.

Yes, so it started off very deep grey, or did it...?

No, it started off silver.

Started off silver, sorry, and then...right, I see, yes. And did you polish them up, or...?

Yes, yes. I think half my troubles now are as a result of that. It's not a very good idea polishing lead.

No. And where did you do all this, down in...?

Down at Burcroft, yes.

Right, I see. And did you learn...had you done anything like that before, or did you learn as you went, learn from Henry Moore?

No I didn't learn anything from him about that, because he had done nothing of that sort before. I knew as much as he did about it, in fact I probably knew more, because I can remember on one occasion casting something in aluminium at Norwich School of Art, and nearly blew up the whole place. Because you can understand, if you pour very hot metal into a damp mould, then you make steam very quickly, and up it went. So I knew that side of it, and that mistake impressed on my mind what you had to do: you had to get the mould completely dry, and you had to even get the water of crystallisation out of the thing.

Right, so you had done quite...so you had done casting in aluminium at Norwich, and had you done casting in any other form?

No.

No, not bronze?

No, no. I mean aluminium needs a fair bit of heat to melt. The thing about lead is that it can be melted on a gas stove; in fact we melted all the lead things on a primus stove. But bronze, it needs to go up to somewhere like 1200 degrees, well you can't do that in the kitchen.

No, quite. And can you remember the names of those pieces, the lead pieces?

Yes.

What were they...?

Well mostly they were reclining figures.

And the large works that you worked on out of stone, they were also reclining figures were they?

No, this was a period when he was more interested in abstract works. I'll show you in the book which ones they were.

Yes, perhaps we might just, as we're talking about it now, might just name them, so I'll just.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

[LOOKING AT CATALOGUE RAISONNE] These are all the background of Burcroft. Now...I started round about here.

Do you know the titles off by heart?

Yes. [SIFTS THROUGH PAGES - BREAK IN RECORDING] That one. [BREAK IN RECORDING] It's obviously 'Torso'.

Absolutely. So what date was that one, 19...

That was '36. Actually that was...in here it's '35 but it wasn't, it was '36; I didn't work with him until '36 and I worked on that.

Right. What's that made out of?

That's alabaster, Cumberland alabaster. And, now these are from the same period, but they were not cast until 1939 or '40, so they're out of context there, but they were done at that time.

Right, shall we just say what they are then, what their titles are?

Well one is 'Standing Figure', and that's 'Mother and Child', and various stringed figures.

Right, and they are 19...

'38 that one, that's '38, that's '38, that's '39, that's '39.

Just try and get...I just want to try and get the titles.

He didn't give them titles much you see. I mean that obviously is 'Mother and Child', and that is 'Standing Figure', and these are stringed figures.

Stringed figures, yes. And what are they? I can't...sorry, I can't see from here what they...what's that?

That's lead.

That is lead, right. And those three are lead, those...?

Yes. And bigger pictures in here. [LEAFING THROUGH CATALOGUE RAISONNE]  
These are the lead ones.

Oh I see, right. I'm just looking at the size. Seven and a half inches.

Seven and a half inches long.

And that is, can you remember what that one's title is, or whatever?

That's 'Three Points'.

'Three Points'.

Most of the titles are fairly obvious.

Yes, it's just for the sake of this.

And that's 'Helmet Head', yes.

Is that lead as well?

That's lead as well, yes. The good thing about casting in lost wax is that you can make very complicated shapes quite easily. These are more stringed figures, yes.

And so when we had the tape off, I said did you take these pictures, these photographs, and you said that Henry Moore used to set them up and you used to...

No, only when he appears in the photograph.

Oh right, yes, so did you help him take photographs of his work?



No, only by moving things around, being a general dogsbody. No, he was quite a good photographer.

And you know when you said you were working for a particular exhibition very hard through the night, can you remember which exhibition that was?

I have an idea it was the one at the Leicester Galleries in 1938, I think it was, I don't know if it would give it [LOOKING AT CATALOGUE RAISONNE].

And do you remember people coming down to visit?

Yes.

Who can you remember coming down to Kent?

I'll just tell you when this exhibition was, I think; no I can't, it doesn't give it. [LOOKING AT CATALOGUE RAISONNE]

I might just...

Sorry.

I might just say what we're looking at here, OK? So it's Vol. I, it's Henry Moore Vol. I of the Lund Humphries catalogue raisonne.

Catalogue raisonne, yes.

Yes, which was edited by David Sylvester, called 'Sculpture and Drawings, 1921-1948', first edition, 1944. OK, sorry.

That edition is fairly different from that. I've got a copy of it upstairs, the first edition, but it was added to, and Herbert Read did the introductory essay.

Right, I see. And so, I think I might just turn this off

and start again on another side, because I don't want to interrupt you when you're talking about the next thing.

End of F2999 side A

F2999 side B

Right, so I was just asking you about, if you remembered any visitors coming to Burcroft.

Quite a number, yes. It was a day out for some of them, and a number of people lived near.

Who lived near then?

Kenneth Clark lived there.

Oh of course, yes, right.

And I don't think that he came down until about '38; I think Henry hadn't met him up till that time.

Right, and he was Director of the National Gallery then wasn't he, yes.

Yes, director of everything! (laughs)

Absolutely. But he was...did he own work by Moore?

Yes.

And he helped...he was a buyer for the Contemporary Art Society wasn't he, at that time?

No, he was in charge of the War Artists Advisory Committee.

Oh yes, yes.

That was the chief thing.

Yes, yes, yes.

I mean he was responsible I suppose more than anybody else in the shelter drawings being produced.

Absolutely. So he came down to visit, and...

People, a number of Surrealists; Henry was closely involved with the Surrealists. He was a great friend of Roland Penrose, and through him, with the others, he was in contact with the other Surrealists. And people like Hugh Sykes-Davies, who was...I don't think he was a professor of English literature at Cambridge, but he was certainly lecturing at Cambridge, and he was also writing Surrealist poetry. And this was a very valuable thing to be in on, because it was immediately a sort of window on what was going on in an important sort of way.

Mm. And so did his dealer...you say he was exhibiting at the Leicester Galleries.

Leicester Galleries, yes.

Did they come down?

No, no they were the sort of gallery that, where they sat in their proprietorial chair, in their gallery, and... I suppose that they probably did come to visit him sometimes up here.

Yes. And did he spend a lot of time down in Kent?

Yes.

Yes, so he had long periods when he worked down there, and then would come up.

Yes yes yes, and didn't see anybody. People did go down there to see him, but it was only for the day. And apart from that, we used to come up to London for two days a week during term time, when he was teaching at Chelsea School of Art.

Oh right.

And I enrolled as a student, a painting student at Chelsea.

Oh did you? Right.

At that time.

So what dates are we talking about?

We're talking...these dates overlap, between the College and Chelsea. Although the attendance at Chelsea was in '36 and '37; by '38 I had gone to the Royal College.

Yes. And is it right that you went...attended some of Henry Moore's modelling classes at Chelsea, I read somewhere, is that right?

Yes.

And down in...and Henry Moore taught at Chelsea until the outbreak of war, did he?

Yes. When the...Chelsea moved to Northampton I think.

Oh evacuated was it?

Evacuated to Northampton. And so the Chelsea job finished for Moore, because he didn't want to go up to Northampton. And anyhow, what he sold, and the shelter drawings, really supported him.

Yes, so he didn't have to teach any more.

So he didn't have to teach any more. And after the war I got his job at Chelsea! (laughs)

At Chelsea. Right, yes. And so when you were in Kent with him, you worked with him in lead, and you worked on some of the...some stone?

A lot of them, a lot of the stone ones. And all the stone ones that he worked on down there, and the wooden ones.

Yes, yes. And which was your favourite material to work with?

They all had attractive qualities. I mean I think that one didn't have...I wouldn't have said at any one time that I would prefer not to do any more stone, I would prefer to work in wood, or something like that. You worked for a time on stonework, and you got fed up with it after a time and thought it would be nice to work on some wooden ones.

Yes. And which was the most difficult material to work in, for you?

I didn't find any of them more difficult than the others. I think they were all fairly straightforward. Because it was...it was a sort of working process which was pretty basic. I mean there was no involved technology or anything like that; a stone carver was a stone

carver. And I found that one could pick up most of what you needed to know in about a week, there was no great mystery about spending half a lifetime learning. There were certain things which you learned pretty quickly you couldn't do. If you hit a piece of stone in the wrong way you would shatter it, and you didn't do it twice. And the same with wood, that if you use a chisel and use it in the wrong way of the grain, then you could snap it off; or for some of the big ones we worked with an axe, and you learned very quickly what you could do with an axe, and if you were careful you didn't cut yourself.

And so, if there was a large block of stone, when...did Moore attack it first, or draw, or...what was the process?

No, it was done in a sort of logical, scientific sort of way. A system of pointing. You established on the model, say on that one, a point, any arbitrary point, and you made a cross on the model, marking where it is. Then you make a three-dimensional measurement. You measure the height from the ground, you measure the length from one end or the other; that establishes the point in two dimensions. Then you measure inwards in that way. And there you've got the point established completely. Then if you needed to make an enlargement, say three-and-a-half times that size, you just multiplied the measurement up, and you measured it again on the model - on the enlargement. But that meant of course that you had to have some way of fixing where you were measuring from, and the easiest way to do that is to make a pencil rectangle, on the base, and then you have to make another rectangle on the surface on which the enlargement is being made, and those two rectangles coincide, I mean they're the same thing. The only other one that you still have is the vertical one, which you then measure up from the base and multiply from the ground up. It's a little difficult to explain.

No, but I think you have explained it rather well. So then there are marks, there are marks in pencil.

Yes.

And then you start, on the large piece I mean, once you've multiplied.

Yes, it's a little bit...I mean it sounds a little bit more simple than it is, in that once you start working you know that it's something which you do as you go along, you don't have a plan of campaign. And in the end you come to start to establish points on the enlargement which are definitely sort of on...are accurate. One always made the point about a quarter of an inch higher than it actually should be, because he didn't like the idea of having anybody else do the whole thing, because there was no interest left for him, and also although most of the models

that he used, as you can see from that one, are pretty accurate, and that could be enlarged up by a machine, but still he liked to have the feeling that there was something for him to do, and that if he wanted to change anything he could.

Yes, so he always used to do the last quarter of an inch as it were?

Yes, yes.

And did he work at all on the preliminary stages, or was that left to you, or did you sometimes do it together?

Well sometimes he worked on the preliminary stage, sometimes he worked all the way through, because... [LOOKING AT CATALOGUE RAISONNE] This is the Chermayeff figure, which is now in the Tate. That one. We worked on that side by side for five weeks, and finished it, and he was working with me right at the beginning.

Right, and that is in...

That's in green Hornton stone - well it's a mixture actually, green and brown.

And the model you've just been referring to on your mantelpiece is a stringed figure, or...

Yes, well it's a reclining figure with strings, yes.

Yes, and that's in terracotta.

Terracotta, mm.

And the proper sculpture was in what?

Bronze. But you see, that was a maquette for a large one, and it was intended for Lubetkin.

Oh yes, who designed the Regent's Park Penguin Pool, among other things.

Yes, but...among other things. He also designed Highpoint flats on Highgate Hill, and that was intended for a site inside the flats. I'm not certain whether it's in this edition or not. There's a page of maquettes, many of which were for this Highpoint flats. [LEAFING THROUGH CATALOGUE RAISONNE]

So I just incorrectly called that a model didn't I, and it's really a maquette, is it?

Well, it's the same thing. Depending on whether you're French or English! [BREAK IN RECORDING] That was the shape of the alcove in the flats, and...

Semi-circular, half-moon shape.

Yes. And although...this one was obviously in another drawing, but here, that's the Tate figure, and you see that was intended for the same thing. All these were intended for Lubetkin.

Right. I'll just say what you are looking at. This is again a reproduction of various sketches called 'Projects for Sculpture', belonging to Mrs Irina Moore it says there. Again in the first volume of the Lund Humphries book.

Yes. I was just trying to find this page of maquettes, and I have an idea it's in the first edition. [LEAFING THROUGH CATALOGUE RAISONNE] And the times I spent working with him goes up to this time, which is the 'Three Figures' in Battersea Park.

Right, 1947-'48.

Yes. I went back there for a short time after I left the Air Force, and...

Right, and that was back...coincided with your time teaching at Chelsea, did it?

Yes, yes.

And so did..for the Lubetkin flats, did that actually happen?

No. Both for the Lubetkin flats and the Chermayeff figure, which is...the one in the Tate, I think Chermayeff ran out of money, and so he...although it was put on the building, he never paid for it and consequently Henry got it back.

Right, and it eventually ended up at the Tate, didn't it.

Yes, after a war-time in New York.



Yes, because it was lent to an exhibition in New York?

Yes.

Right. And for which building was the Chermayeff?

His house at...

In Sussex?

In Halland, in Sussex, yes. [LOOKING AT CATALOGUE RAISONNE] Yes, that's the terrace of his house.

Oh is it? Yes. This is again in the Lund Humphries book.

Yes.

So, now we've talked about...do you want to say anything else about that period of your time with Henry Moore?

Not really, I mean nothing comes to mind.

Right, but as you said earlier, you've talked a bit about your sort of lifestyle there in the Roger Berthoud book didn't you; there's a very good description of you shooting rabbits, and...

Oh yes, yes. Chiefly pheasants!

That you consumed?

Yes, yes.

Yes, right. And so you got to know him and his wife very well then?

Yes. Oh yes, I mean I knew him over fifty years.

Yes I know, I know.

So you get to know people in that time.

Absolutely, but that was where you got...you got to know one another first, yes.

Yes.

So perhaps we can talk a bit about the Royal College, your first time, before the War.

Yes.

You arrived in the Painting School under Gilbert Spencer.

I arrived on the day of Munich.

Oh did you? So what date are we talking about now again?

'38.

'38, right, yes.

And a very great depression, because nobody ever thought that they were going to be there more than a few weeks.

Absolutely. So who was the first person you spoke to when you arrived?

Oh I don't know.

Can you remember who else was in your class, other painters, other students?

Nobody I can remember, nobody really who later made any sort of mark as a painter.

No, no. But what about Spencer, what was he like, Gilbert Spencer?

Oh he was a marvellous chap. Completely under the influence of his brother; I mean he was a sort of, I suppose he must have been younger, but a copy of his brother, and really his teaching was in terms of what he felt that his brother would have said under similar circumstances, which was not very satisfactory, but he was a very nice chap, and also an extraordinary sort of humility. I had a feeling that he's...you know, what's he doing, why should he be telling me, or the other people, because our ideas were as good as his. Which

again didn't...well you didn't get much sort of confidence that you were being helped along, except that to believe that what you were doing you were responsible for, and nobody was going to tell you any differently. This of course was offset by other members of staff, some of whom were terrors, absolute egotistical monsters.

Would you care to mention any of those?

(laughing) No. I suppose they're all dead now. But it did influence my way of thinking, in that...certainly thinking about teaching, certainly thinking about other people's work, and it's in a way a double-edged thing; the fact that you can see the other person's point of view, the other person's attitude, means that you are that much less committed to your own, and I think that's a very bad thing, and I think I suffered from that quite a lot.

With the other tutors?

No, on my own. Because if you can see clearly what the other chap's about, it means that you are to a certain extent in sympathy with him, and to that extent again you are less committed to your own. I mean I think that it's necessary for artists to be egotistical, and to have a certain feeling that this is the only way to do it.

Yes, to be sort of blinkered.

Yes, yes. And Gilbert Spencer didn't help that. He did help in that it really meant that you had a feeling that, well you were in charge of your own thing, and you could go ahead and...

So it did give you a sort of confidence in a way.

A certain sort of confidence, but at the same time you didn't get much sort of...you couldn't sharpen your wits against anybody who was putting up a reasonable alternative.

So how long did you remain in the painting schools?

I remained there until after the war. When I came back I had about, I suppose six months to do for my time for the College diploma in painting, and I sat that lot out. And after that, I seemed to somehow get the approval of the Principal, who was still Jowett, and I said that I wanted a fourth year, and so I got a fourth year and transferred right away to the Sculpture School.

Right. And presumably they were very receptive to ex-servicemen as well, quite apart from the fact that you had been Henry Moore's assistant and things. So, one gets the impression that after the War...

I don't think to that extent, I don't think to that extent. I think they...it has always at the College been a feeling that they were interested in getting the best people they could get for the good of the institution, and...yes, which is good, I mean that's as it should be.

Right. But going back a bit again, before the War...

Sorry, can I just say that, they were of course under an obligation to take the ex-service people back.

Yes, exactly.

Because we were half-way through our courses, and they had to give the opportunity of allowing us to finish it, to finish them.

Yes. Right. Sorry... Before the War though, you met your wife didn't you - well, who was going to be your wife?

Mm.

Where did you meet her?

Norwich School of Art.

Ah! And was she a fellow...did she go on with you? She didn't go to the Royal College?

No. No she wasn't a painter or anything like that. She just turned up in the evening classes. The funny thing is that there were evening classes in modelling, but there were no day classes in modelling. So that was how I first met her.

So you did do some modelling classes then at Norwich?

Not I didn't.

No you didn't.

No.

But your paths crossed...

I could have done.

Yes, but your paths crossed nevertheless. She was attending the modelling classes.

Yes.

Yes, right. And she came...what, did she come...was she a local girl as well?

Yes.

Yes, she was local, yes, right. So did you...you decided to get married anyway, or did you speed it up a bit because of the War?

Yes, I suppose we speeded it up towards...because of the War. She was evacuated down at Westerham.

Is that Kent?

Kent, yes.

Oh yes, so that was very near where...was that reasonably near you?

No. No, Westerham is north Kent.

Right, right. And her name is, her Christian name is?

Marjorie.

Right. And her maiden name?

Payne.

Right. Is that PAYNE?

Yes, PAYNE.

So where did you set up your first home then, together? Were you in London?

In Henry Moore's studio.

Down in Kent...no, up here?

Yes.

Oh I see.

And then...

In Parkhill...

In Parkhill Road. And we've always been in this area; it's easy for moving.

And so you were still at the Royal College, attending the Royal College then, when you were first married?

Yes. Yes, because she used to come along to the weekly hops.

Oh right, I see. And, so then, the outbreak of war came, and...

The College was evacuated to Ambleside.

Right, up in...yes.

Yes, Westmorland.

Yes, and so you didn't...you didn't go up there for a bit did you, or did you?

No I didn't. No, I visited there, because I was on embarkation leave at...oh...one of those seaside places on the west coast. It's north of Blackpool.

I'm not very good at my geography. I'll say the wrong thing!

Anyhow, it's fairly near Ambleside, I went there, and just on a visit. No, I couldn't have gone up there, it was terrible.

Terrible, in what way?

Well, I mean all the interesting people had left. It was a backwater, and nothing to do. They seemed to spend most of their time getting drunk, or the staff did.

Oh, shocking! Did they never in London?

No, because, I mean...well they may have done, but one was never in close contact with the staff in London; but there, I mean everybody was sitting on each other's doorsteps.

Yes, yes. So, you joined up in what, 1940 was it? Or 1939, or...?

I think it was the 4th of July, I think it was '41.

Right. And you joined which...

The Air Force.

The Air Force, right. So, where...?

On air-sea rescue.

So, where were you based when you first...?

Oh, well all the usual sort of places where new entries were battered into shape! The best part of the War really was, I was based in Dover for quite a long time, and that really was quite exciting.

It must have been.

Lots of things to do, and lots of people, and a nice big boat, with a very powerful engine. It was a bit like having a high-powered motorbike! (laughs)

What a small...I can't visualise it. What happens then in air-sea rescue? I mean you were in the...you didn't fly?

No no, I was on the sea.

Oh right, right. And what, a small boat? It was quite a small...?

Well, fairly small, they were mostly torpedo boats stripped down, the boats we had, and well, some of them were motor gun boats stripped down. I suppose they were about 70 feet long, biggish, I mean...

Yes, yes, not a little sort, nippy little...

Not a rowing boat. They had a crew of, round about fifteen.

And did you come into contact at all with any of the war artists during your...?

Well I knew a number of them through Henry Moore.

Did you ever meet Ravilious, and Bawden, and people like that?

Yes, yes. I of course met Bawden more, more recently, but Ravilious, he had a house near Bardfield.

In Essex.

In Essex, yes. And I remember going there with Moore.

Because Bawden also lived down there, didn't he.

Oh yes, yes. Yes, all that crew lived down there. I've just been to Saffron Walden, because there's a gallery there.

Yes, what's it called?

The Fry Gallery.

That's it. Is it quite new, or has it always been there?



Well, the building has always been there, or at least it has been owned by the Fry family for a long time, and they were...they gave it to Saffron Walden on some sort of arrangement, I mean a sort of peppercorn rent, and they've got a collection there of all the Bardfield lot.

Oh I see, yes.

And they applied to the Henry Moore Foundation for money, and I went over there to see what they were doing.

Right. And so, you spent a lot of your time in the War based in Dover. Where else? Did you go abroad at all?

Yes, I went to India and Ceylon, and the Cocos Islands, which is off the coast of Java, which again was very exciting.

Yes it must have been.

And the origin of the works which I did when I got back, which were concerned with sort of frightening crawlies, crabs and spiders and...

You first saw them when you were...I mean you were inspired as it were?

Mm?

You first saw those sort of crustaceany forms when you were on that island, the island?

Cocos.

Cocos. How do you spell that?

COCOS. Yes, I saw it a bit in India, I mean the sort of snakes thing, which horrified me, and the poisonous spiders and things of that sort. The fact that many of the places where we lived they were tatty huts made from woven palm fronds, and to see half-way up one of the palm frond walls a black widow spider, and you look away and you look back and it's gone, and you don't know where it's gone! And the sort of...that sort of set up of fear was the basis for a lot of the things that I did when I got back.

Yes. And at the time did you think, oh yes, I can do something with that, or just afterwards this...?

No, one was just aware of it, and realised how much one was involved in it. And also the way that the whole of life was like that; you know, the business world and everything like that, it was dog eat dog all the time, and that was the basis for it.

I see. So, that was the first...was that the first time you had ever been abroad, during the War? Had you ever been abroad before then?

I had been abroad at school, I suppose it was 1930, just before I left school, we went in a party to Belgium.

Oh right.

And so I went round all the galleries in Antwerp and Brussels, and all the places, and saw all the Flemish painters, which impressed me very much.

Oh right, oh well that was good, because before you made it sound as if your school didn't organise anything.

Yes, I had forgotten this one trip.

In fact that was quite go-ahead I suppose, wasn't it?

Pardon?

That was quite go-ahead I suppose in those days, to take a school outing, as it were?

Probably, probably. The art master had been a...he had been in the Army in Flanders, and I think that he always used to go back there when the War was finished, and he always went around to these galleries. I mean he knew of Van der Goes, and Matsys, and all the Flemish people, and had a great love for them, and I think that that proved sort of fairly infectious.

And so, in the War, India, whereabouts in India where you?

I was in Bombay, or just outside Bombay, up near the estuary. Bombay harbour is an enormous harbour, and there are all sorts of islands and we were...our base was on one of

those. And from there, sailed down the coast of India to Cochin, which is nearly to the bottom, it's...what is it, Tamil Nadu, or I believe it is, maybe Travancore (ph). And from there went to Ceylon, to just outside Colombo, and then to the Cocos Islands.

And when you were in India, I presume you didn't have a chance to see any carvings, any sculpture.

Oh yes I did.

You did?

Oh yes I did. And all sorts of other manifestations of Indian culture. I mean they had a marvellous annual event in Bombay, which was a festival of Indian music from all over India, and it lasted three weeks, and it went on...it went on through the night, until quite early in the morning.

End of F2999 side B

F3000 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 3rd of November 1992. Tape 2.

So we were just talking about the Bombay festival.

Yes. The festival of music. It was a really comprehensive survey of Indian music from all over, and there's such a difference between music from the north and music from way down where I finally ended up.

And were you interested in music anyway, before, generally?

Yes, all sorts, and this was interesting, because there was an extraordinary prejudice in England pre-war for any sort of cultural manifestation from anywhere else. And India was fairly well-known I suppose for its miniatures, there were quite a lot of Indian miniatures which had been brought back by the Raj on duty in India, but practically no music. In fact, I remember reading before the War a book by a terrible chap named...oh dear...

Don't worry, it will come back to you.

A pacifist chap.

An English...?

An English one, yes.

Who spent a lot of time in India, or no?

I believe he had spent a bit of time in India, or he had been there on a visit, but saying the most derogatory and stupid things about Indian music. I'll remember his name. Wrote books on pacifism.

He's not alive now? No.

No. He wasn't very much alive then!

So you managed...you had quite a lot of leave did you, there, so you could...?

I had practically no leave. But I was in charge of, certainly one of the bases. I wasn't in charge in Bombay, but I believe I was in Cochin but I can't remember. I certainly was in the Cocos Islands.

And what was your rank in the end then?

I was a flight lieutenant, and that did mean that I could...I wasn't tied up with the regulations quite as much. But none of the people were to that extent. The Air Force and the...or rather the marine part of the Air Force was pretty well free and easy. I mean when I was in Dover where we were living there was the Navy, which was marvellous because we didn't belong to anybody. We were certainly under the authority of the Navy, because they were in control of all the shipping in the Channel, but they didn't administer us, and we had no Air Force station anywhere near who were in charge over us either, so we did rather well, it was fine. I forget where we were.

We were in sort of Bombay or Cochin, and earlier you said that you did see some sculpture and...

Oh yes, you said I must have had a lot of leave, and I didn't have any leave, and it would have been nice to have travelled around and seen a lot of things. I've been to India several times since, and have travelled around and seen things, which I could have seen then. I mean then it would have been possible to go up to Kashmir, because a lot of the people did go up to Kashmir on leave, but it meant...it was too much of an effort. And I suppose one was a bit fed up with the ordinary servicemen's attitude to the Indians, and...

What, rather anti was it?

Yes, oh anti, but just not interested, just looking upon them as a bunch of wogs who... And I found that very embarrassing, because I had a number of friends who were Indians, and to be with them when some of these chaps behaved in such an appalling way... I mean I remember being in an officers' mess in Poona, and hearing some chap entertaining all his mates with how he treated Ghandi when he had to go along and arrest him. And so one didn't go around much, and also it was such a nice life, having a boat and...well having a number of boats, and being able to take them to sea when you wanted. There wasn't that much to do, I mean I did one or two long trips, but not very often.

So you could take the boats out when you weren't exactly doing an operation?

Yes, oh yes you had to, because the boats had to be kept in operational order, and also it was necessary for the crew to be trained.

Yes, absolutely. And so in the south you saw more of the temples, you saw...did you see...?

A few, but not that many. Cochin was the centre of the...a sort of Jewish minority, and it was extraordinary seeing these chaps who looked absolutely Jewish. They had completely Jewish features, but they were black.

Really?

Yes.

And they are quite black?

They are quite black, yes, quite black. And obviously they had been there for such a long time that gradually they had got blacker. And the way that people lived down there, I mean they had these enormous fishing nets on great balanced tripods, and they had circular throwing fishing nets and things like that. It was very, very interesting. Also, down at Cochin there was...it was on the route of the Jesuits. They came down the...I think they started up at Karachi or somewhere like that, and they went all the way down the coast and around and then over to Malaysia, and on to China. And about every two miles down the coast, the west coast of India, on the top of the cliffs there were Portuguese baroque churches.

Oh right. Yes I knew that Goa and round there, but I didn't realise...yes.

Yes, well Goa of course was the centre, and it's all the way down the coast. There's a beautiful one in Cochin, a beautiful church.

So from there you went to Malaysia. That must have been...

No I didn't go to Malaysia. The Jesuits went to Malaysia.

Yes, no, sorry! After India, where did you go?

Cocos Islands, which was off the coast of Java.

Right, oh that's it, right. And how long were you there, on the Cocos Islands?

About...oh, several months. Somewhere between six months and a year. I was there at the time of the mutiny, when the Air Force mutinied.

Our Air Force mutinied?

Yes. Because they wanted to get back home, they wanted to be demobilised.

And what date are we talking about?

I suppose '46.

Yes, I'm sure they wanted to get back. So was that rather unpleasant?

Well it wasn't really, because...I had to...I had to talk to them, I had to address the assembled company, and I just said to them, well, all right, so you're on strike, what are you going to do about it? You don't get any dinner, the toilets don't get cleaned, nothing happens. And what are you going to do, just...? And they saw the sense of that, and so they decided that they perhaps wouldn't go out on strike! (laughing) I mean it was quite amicable really, because they could see the sense of that, and also they were quite nice chaps, and we had all been living together for quite a time. We had an island to ourselves; this was a coral atoll, but the ring of the atoll was cut up into smaller islands all the way round. And there was a big airfield on the biggest island, which was the staging post for...what did they call them, but big aircraft?

I'll get it wrong no doubt. I'm not very au fait with names of aircraft actually.

A sort of service equivalent of a jumbo jet. Between Australia and Ceylon. And that was why we were there, in case any of the planes came down in the sea.

Right, yes. Did you have much action there?

Very little. We picked up a crew from the sea off the coast of India, near the Laccadive Islands, which is north of the Maldives. And that was pretty well all. It was very boring really. I occupied myself painting.

Oh you did.

Yes.

What, in watercolour, or did you manage to...?

No, oil.

And have you got any of those still?

Yes, yes.

And what, were they of landscape, or were they...?

Yes, they were landscapes.

In India as well as...?

Yes. I haven't got many, but there's one painting of this church in Cochin, and another of some old derelict Portuguese ships in the harbour at Cochin, and things like that.

And on the Cocos Islands you didn't do anything with the crabs etcetera, you didn't make any...?

We used to swim a lot, and I got stung by a Portuguese man-of-war, which wasn't very pleasant. It was dreadful; I mean I was...I wasn't in hospital, but I was in bed for a fortnight.

And were you writing home to your wife, and were your parents still alive?

Oh yes, they were still alive. Well, yes, they were, yes. No, I did write to my wife occasionally, not very often.

You got lots of letters back did you, I hope?

No, I didn't get many. A few.

And so when did you go home, when were you demobilised?

I suppose it was...I suppose it was '46.



And '46 was the year you went back to the Royal College, was it?

I suppose it was. Yes, I would have gone back there immediately I got back.

But also you were assistant to Henry Moore for a bit as well on your return.

Yes.

So that was '46.

Yes, but that was...I believe it was after I left the College.

Oh. Oh I see, right.

It's all a bit muddled. [LEAFING THROUGH CATALOGUE RAISONNE] This is down as '45, but that's the maquette which was '45. '47/'48 that was, and I carved that one.

Oh right. And this is 'Three Standing Figures'.

'Three Standing Figures', yes.

Again in the...

In Battersea Park.

Yes, in Battersea Park, right. So yes, so you went back to the Royal College and finished off your painting course.

Yes.

And then began sculpture.

Yes.

So, can you remember...who was the Professor of Sculpture then, when you joined?

Frank Dobson.

Right. And how did you find him, as a...?

A silly old chap.

A silly old chap?

Yes! (laughs) He really was a silly old chap. But as Henry Moore said, well, yes perhaps he is, but he had known a lot of people, and he had known what was going on in Paris; and most of the staff didn't know what was going on sort of south of the river!

Yes, because that was pre...that was still under...Jowett was still Principal wasn't he.

Yes.

For a short time, wasn't he?

Yes. Until the last term that I was there, when Darwin took over.

And that must have been quite a shock to the system was it, Darwin, or didn't you feel it?

He was a...I suppose it was a shock, but he was a marvellous chap, absolutely a marvellous chap. I mean he was a bully, but you felt that he had the welfare of the students at heart, and knew what was good for them, and he was going to make certain that what was good for them they were going to get.

So he made his presence...his presence was felt very much.

Oh very much there. I mean apart from anything else, he had a lot of friends. His background was, apart from the Darwin family, he had been at Eton and he had taught at Eton, and really knew his way around, and had collected at Eton and other places a lot of friends who were very very useful to him to get what he wanted from the Establishment. It was a time which really couldn't be better. I didn't have much contact with him as a student, but certainly when I went back it couldn't have been a better set-up.

So when you were under Dobson, where were your studios?

They were in Queen's Gate.

Queen's Gate?

Yes.

Is there where...are they still there?

Well the buildings are still there, yes, but the...

The Sculpture School isn't.

No, it has moved south of the river. The buildings belong to the Science Museum, and all the time I was there I was sort of...well not...it wasn't a case of having a running fight with them, but I never knew when we were going to be thrown out, because they had talked so much about enlarging the Science Museum, that they were short of space, but always it seemed they were short of money, so they couldn't do anything about it. And only just recently they must have got the go-ahead, or they saw the possibility, or Stevens, who was the Rector, thought the whole thing was an unsatisfactory arrangement, so decided to go around with the begging bowl and get money to get the Sculpture School premises in Battersea, which they have moved into now and it's a very good place, a marvellous place to work.

Right. So we were just talking about when you went back as...Professor of Sculpture.

As a student.

Sorry, but Stevens was Rector when you were on the staff there?

Yes, just. No, no he wasn't. He had made one attempt to get on the staff, but we side-tracked that! No, it was...Darwin was in charge when I went back as Professor; he appointed me, and I got on with him very very well indeed. Still a bully, but it was marvellous being at a meeting with him, and he...learning about him, the strange ways about him. Disagreeing with me violently, and then the next morning having him ring up and say, 'I was thinking about our confrontation last night, and I think you were right'. And I think that was exactly how it should be: if somebody believes that they have been wrong, and they had thought about it, to say so. But he made a tremendous clear-out of the College in...oh, I suppose '46. Yes, it must have been '46 I think when he went there. Got rid of a tremendous number of people, and was very unpopular.

But nevertheless Dobson was still there, was there. Was he in fact one of the people who Darwin appointed? No.

I don't know how Dobson was appointed. I mean I think that...I mean I'm sure that I wasn't there at the time he was appointed.

And so, can you remember any...when you were there, under Dobson, doing the sculpture, can you remember...did you make...you must have known some people there anyway I suppose, from your previous time, did you, who had come back?

Yes, yes. Quite a number of people, in fact I'm constantly confused about who I knew when.

Yes, I'm sure, because you were there so many different times.

I was there before the War, and I can never remember whether...who I knew before the War and who I knew after the War.

But can you pick out any names that stick out, that you were particularly friendly with, or fellow students?

Well I was fairly friendly with all of them, but...no, not especially. I knew...I suppose the one who made most of a mark was a chap named Fullard.

George Fullard?

George Fullard, yes. And he had been badly shot up in the Army in Italy, had half his insides blown out. A very strange character because of this, and when I got back he was...so I knew him. But of the others, an uninspiring lot.

An uninspiring lot. And what about the staff who made...did you come across anybody else other than Dobson that you can...?

I came across Skeaping, from whom I took over. He had been married to Barbara Hepworth, and I knew Barbara Hepworth quite well, although by the time I knew her she was married to...

Ben...

Ben Nicholson. So that was before the War, that she married Ben Nicholson, wasn't it?

Yes.

Yes, and then they went down to Cornwall.

They went on to Cornwall about '41 or '42. I think they had been down there before, I think they had established themselves down there, but the studio in Parkhill Road, not Henry Moore's studio but there's another row of studios in Parkhill Road called the Mall Studios, and she had, or she and Ben had two studios down there.

End of F3000 side A

F3000 side B

You were talking about Ben and Barbara's studios, and John Skeaping.

Yes, this was before...I believe Skeaping did live down there with Barbara, but afterwards of course Ben took it over.

Lived down where?

Down in the Mall Studios. Weren't we talking about Skeaping at the College?

We were talking about Skeaping at the College, yes.

You said, were there any other members of staff, yes. He's the only one that I can remember. There were one or two...there was one very old chap, or seemed to me very old, he had been there for a very long time, it seemed to me right from the time when Henry Moore was there as a student. But...Skeaping was a playboy.

Was he?

Yes, I mean he was...

You mean he wasn't very committed, or...?

Well he certainly wasn't committed in the same way that Henry Moore was. No, he was a good time charlie.

But he made an impression on you nevertheless?

Not really, no. No, he was very friendly, and he was perhaps more friendly because he knew that I knew Barbara, and also he knew...he knew Henry very well. [PAUSE FOR THOUGHT] I can't think what I did as a student in the Sculpture School, because there was never...I did a bit of life modelling, it had to be done, and I did a bit of composition; did a bit of life drawing, which had to be done over in the Painting School. I mean all the students at the time had to draw from life every day, and that took place in the Painting School. But apart from that, I can't think of any words of wisdom which came out from the staff! (laughs)

And were you...did you ever socialise with Skeaping and Dobson at all?

No, no. No never. The staff and the students were cut off from each other, as really I suppose they are now. I mean I don't think it's a very good idea for the staff and the students to socialise. Apart from the generation gap, I mean it's a bore; I think you see enough of them during the day time.

[END OF SESSION]

End of F3000 side B

F3001 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 10th of November 1992. Tape 3.

.....saying you wanted to clarify a few things about who was where when.

Yes, I said earlier on that I went into the Painting School at the Royal College because the Establishment there at the time were not in any way in favour of Henry Moore, and they knew that I had been working for him, so I knew I wouldn't be accepted in the Painting School...in the Sculpture School, so I decided that I would join the painters.

That's right, and you were saying who the Professor was. He was a Royal Academician.

It was Professor Richard Garbe, who was a Royal Academician, and reflected the attitude of the Royal Academy at that time.

And after the War it was, as you said before...

It was Dobson.

Frank Dobson.

Who was much more broad-minded.

OK, so, you mentioned last time about the life drawing classes that all sculpture students had to do.

Yes.

Had you always been yourself interested in drawing, and did you find it important in relation to your other work?

Well to the extent that drawing does concentrate your mind. The model's up there in front of you and you have to make an intelligent interpretation of it. Also I always really felt that drawing was much more...a much more teachable thing than trying to teach sculpture, or trying to learn from other people. The terms of reference were much more clearly laid down.



Because your drawings have always, they've been exhibited very much in their own right, haven't they, over the years.

Yes.

And you won that prize in Lugano for drawing.

Oh well that was quite a small prize really! (laughs)

Nevertheless, you won it ... international

Yes, yes.

And, leaping forward a couple of decades, did you, when you were Professor did you insist all your students did drawing, or was that out at that point?

No, it was...life drawing was out of favour at the time, and so...you see the Royal College was entirely a post-graduate college, it always has been, and so if you had a whole lot of students coming in who had never been taught life drawing at their previous school, you can't start at square one, otherwise you have to duplicate staff, you have to have people who are really concentrating on teaching drawing, whereas normally the students had got past that stage and they knew what the terms of reference were, and so they could just go ahead, and it was a matter of drawing and drawing and drawing until one's mind was absolutely to the point where you were drawing out of the ends of your fingers, you know. It was a natural sort of thing in the same way as talking.

And you said last time also that there were no great words of wisdom coming from the staff, and you didn't socialise with them. I suppose you were a married man weren't you, so what was your...?

After the War, yes.

Yes. And where were you living then? Had you moved out of the studio, Henry Moore's studio? Where was your base?

I've always lived in this area. Off and on, I mean...

It doesn't matter to much if you can't remember.

It's awfully difficult to sort it out.

Yes. And had you had any children by that stage? No, probably not.

1950 and 1952 I think the children were born.

And so, who were your friends then at that stage? Anybody...?

Nobody special, no. All the way along one has got to know various people, and after a time one has drifted out of sight of them, and...

And so, we haven't actually touched on your work yet at all. Can you remember the sort of things you were doing then, and what?

Well, you can understand that the influence of Henry Moore was very great. Like Picasso, he was working in a manner which was so personal that whatever one did it looked like a Henry Moore, and the same thing one would have applied to anybody working closely under the influence of Picasso.

Yes. So, you started...what date did you leave the Royal College? Was it '48?

I think '47. '47/'48, yes.

And there's something that you made in '48 that was exhibited at the open-air Battersea Park...

Yes.

Can you tell us about that?

It was a work which showed influence of Henry Moore, and yet it didn't look as though Henry Moore could have done it, or he wouldn't have done it. I could tell you in what ways he wouldn't have done it!

Do.

Can I take this off, can I.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

OK, so we were just talking about the 'Standing Figure'.

'Standing Figure', yes,

Which you think was 1949.

Which, yes, I'm sure it was about that time, and that was cast in concrete.

And its height?

It's about seven foot six.

Right, and you were going to say, tell us how Henry Moore couldn't have done that. I mean I wouldn't say that he had, but you volunteered that... Just explain.

Well, it's unlikely that he would have made legs like that, and short little legs. There are various things which I know that he wouldn't have done, and it is difficult to explain what they are, or define what they are.

And that, you were just saying, we're looking now at an album of photographs of your work, and you were explaining, the first, the piece you did prior to that concrete piece, that you had cast in iron.

Yes.

And that was smaller was it?

Oh yes, that was only about fifteen inches high.

So that, to a layman there's something about your later crab-like forms there isn't there.

Yes, they are also much closer to Henry Moore. But that probably came before that.

Right. So that one was in iron ...was that cast in iron as well, that...?

Pardon? No no, that was cast in bronze.

Right.

No, I didn't do many things in iron, because they had to be relatively simple. I had that cast in iron because I was...I still had parents who were living in Norwich, and there was an iron foundry in Norwich that I went along and had that cast, and at the same time had them cast the 'Three Points' of Henry Moore, which we looked at last week.

Yes. right. So, that one, which isn't related to the Battersea Park open-air sculpture, what was that one called?

That's 'Standing Figure'.

'Standing Figure'. And that was about the same date was it?

Yes. Yes, I would think perhaps it was a little bit before.

And was that one ever exhibited?

No.

No, and did you...

No, and it's lost.

Oh it's lost, what a shame. It always happens, doesn't it, with the very early ones. Right. So, was the 1951 Battersea open air exhibition the first exhibition that your work was shown in?

I have an idea that I exhibited in a mixed exhibition at the ICA, but I see that the work which I know that I exhibited there is in a list here as 1954, so it must have come afterwards.

Right. And the list you are looking at is the photocopy of the Gimpels...

Gimpels stock book really, yes. The stock record, or sales record.

Right. And do they have that, or is that in the Tate archive or somewhere?

Well, it was falling to pieces when I made this photocopy, so I don't know.

And you made it from them, I mean in their gallery, the photocopy?

No, I made it down at the Moore Foundation, because I mean...I borrowed the book.

Yes, you borrowed the book from Gimpels?

Yes.

Right, OK. So, where were you using as a studio in London? Were you...was it where you lived, or where?

I was using Henry Moore's studio in the Mall Studios.

Oh that's marvellous, right. And was he there as well, or...?

No no no.

He was in Hertfordshire was he by this stage?

Yes, he moved down there I think in 1942, 1 or 2.

Right, and so you had the whole place to yourself.

Yes.

That was quite a luxury.

That was marvellous, yes. The other students at the College were very jealous!

I bet! And were they jealous, and were the staff a bit jealous of your friendship with Moore, or...?

No no no. No at that time he was not...a number of them knew him, and had been students with him, but he hadn't got anything like the reputation that he had ten years later.

No. And you were also teaching at Chelsea at this stage?

Yes. When everybody came back after the War, Henry Moore no longer wanted to spend his time teaching, so I took over his job at Chelsea. I had known the Principal for some long time since, from the time in 1936 when I was a student there.

And...sorry.

No, I don't think I was going to say anything.

No I was just wondering who it was, the Principal at Chelsea at that time.

Harold Williamson, who, one of his claims to fame - he was a very civilised sort of chap; one of his chief...the thing that everybody knew about was that he designed the Smarties packet.

Oh did he? Oh good heavens.

He worked for J Walter Thompson, who were responsible for it. But there was much more to him than that.

Yes, yes. And can you remember anybody else who was on the staff at Chelsea?

Oh yes, yes. Raymond Coxon.

Oh yes!

And Gin Coxon. Do you know them?

Yes, I met them because...where I used to work, the Michael Parkin Gallery, had a show of theirs. I don't know, are they still alive?

Yes they are, yes, he's 96 I think. I go down there to see them every so often.

Oh good, because they left the London, Hammersmith...

They left Hammersmith, yes, and I think...well I won't say...

But Raymond Coxon had been at Leeds with Henry Moore?

Yes.

And they had gone down to the Royal College together and been contemporaries.

Yes, Coxon was a fair bit older than Henry Moore - well, I suppose three or four years.

And had Moore been Raymond Coxon's best man, or the other way round?

No, that's a long story! He was expecting to be, and was very upset because he wasn't.

Oh dear!

No, his best man was the man who was teaching stone carving at the Royal College; he was a sort of technician.

What was his name, or don't you know?

Barrie Hart. And he appears in some of the photographs of Henry early on.

And you enjoyed, you found you enjoyed teaching did you, at Chelsea?

Well it was a nice enough place. The pay was terrible; the pay I think was £6.15s a week. During term time: you didn't get paid in the holidays at all. And you had to go from the end of June until Christmas before you got any more money.

Oh dear!

Times were hard.

Yes. And so, you were working away...do you know how it came about that you were selected for the Battersea show?

No, except probably...at that time Henry Moore was on the committee, the organising committee.

Right. And it was the year of course of the Festival of Britain, wasn't it, that year.

Yes. Yes, that's why that has to be in '51, or '50.

Yes. I've never quite got it clear, were there two sculpture exhibitions? Were there some on the South Bank site, sort of near the Festival Hall and things like that, and some in Battersea Park, or was it just one?

No, there was one. The Festival organisers made provision for a certain number of commissions to be given out for people doing works in conjunction with buildings. I think probably they were commissioned by the architects of the buildings. And a number of works were selected by Hugh Casson who of course was one of the chief organisers of the festival, and so he went around borrowing works.

And that was the second of the Battersea Park exhibitions I believe; the first one was in '48 I think wasn't it? And then there were several more that you exhibited in later on.

Yes, also I was on the organising committee.

Later on?

Yes.

So, I think Kenneth Armitage said that you and he were on together once, when the Americans came over.

That's right, yes.

That was in the Sixties I think, wasn't it. And so, after that, did Gimpels see your work as early as that, or not?

Well I suppose they must have seen that, but also...well they must have done, because one of their clients bought it, so they must have known about it. The first contact that I had with the Gimpels really was when this one was shown at the ICA, this 'Crab'. And Gimpels, Peter Gimpel came along and saw what else I had got, and said he would like to show some of the things.

And can you remember what date that 'Crab' was?

Yes, that's '54.

Right, that was a bit later on.



Yes.

So, the year after the Battersea exhibition was the Venice Biennale.

Yes. I don't know if you want to go back. [LOOKING AT ALBUM] There's a cast of that which I showed you in the next room, there's a large version of it which is about, I suppose about five feet.

Right. And can you just say what you're talking about, the title?

That's 'Four Small Reliefs on a Cock Theme', and there's a large version in the Tate, one of an edition of six which was bought about that time, '52.

And can you remember the name of the person who bought your standing figure that you talked about, the concrete standing figure?

Yes, this one, the iron one, was bought by Peter Gregory, who was the managing director of...

Lund Humphries.

Lund Humphries, yes.

Who started the Fellowship up in...

That's right, yes. And that one was bought by.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Right.

I believe he was a stockbroker, and a fairly well-known collector.

Right, so you were working away, and then how did it come that you were selected for the Venice Biennale, can you remember what happened?

No! The British Council had been sending my work around. Well, first of all, which...

I'm sorry, I'm talking about the first one.

The first biennale?

1952.

1952, yes.

When you and others...

Yes, there were...I don't know, six or seven people who were in the group that were sent to the Biennale, and I suppose we each had three or four works.

I've got down what you had. I know that...did...Herbert Read, he was one of the people who selected. I mean how...he must...someone must have come to your studio, do you think?

I knew Herbert Read.

So, do you think he was the connection, or Lilian Somerville?

Well Lilian Somerville was the enthusiast, and she was the one who really did so much for British artists in connection with the Biennale, and sending their works round all over the world.

Absolutely, yes.

Marvellous woman. The selection wouldn't have come from her, it would have come from the committee who...I mean she would have added her voice to it, but she wasn't the prime mover, and I should think that probably in this case too that Henry Moore was asked who there was, and he made out a list.

And did you know any of the others before, any of the other sculptors that you exhibited with?

Well I was getting to know them. I mean people like Eduardo Paolozzi, and Turnbull, and Robert Adams, and Armitage. But Armitage was a little bit later. I really didn't meet Armitage until I went teaching down at Corsham.

Yes, right. And did you go out to Venice?

No. No, I didn't go out until the second. Well I went to Venice before that, but for showing at the Biennale, I didn't go till the second one.

Right. Yes I've got a note down of what you showed at the Venice Biennale, which was 'Plaster Relief, 1951'.

Yes.

Would that be the 'Cock'?

[LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM] No it wouldn't be those. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Because...it's not in the book because it was a plaster relief, and I didn't go on and make a cast of it, and really it was destroyed.

And was it of a cock, or a fish?

Yes.

And then you've got...there was a 'Cock' of 1951, and a 'Crab' of 1951/52, or two crabs of that date.

That one, that one, and that one.

And that is...is that bronze?

Yes, that's bronze. That's called 'Black Crab'.

'Black Crab', right. And also there were drawings.

Yes.

Did you all exhibit? Did all the sculptors exhibit drawings with their work I wonder?

Most of them, yes. I can't remember, I believe that that's the relief, and certainly that was cast.

I think there's a thing of that here.

That's not it that's an earlier edition. No that's the second.

That's the second one, right, no I just thought I had a reproduction of this one. Right, so that really must have got you launched, didn't it, especially abroad I suppose.

It got us all launched as a group, and we were identified with each other, fairly unreasonably because there wasn't much in common as far as work went, or what we were concerned with.

Mm. And the crab works, that goes back to the time when you were in the Cocos Islands, yes.

Yes.

And you were now coming away from the figure and doing birds as well.

Oh that's some time later. This really was the time when I was trying to get away from the influence of Henry Moore, although of course that could never happen completely, fortunately, but one didn't want to be so identified with him as to be thought of as being a sort of second-hand Moore.

Mm. And so, you were saying, the plaster relief was never cast.

No no, that's not the one I'm talking about. If that's the one which that refers to, then that was cast, and the whole edition of six of those.

And what date was that do you think then?

[LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM] This is, I'm afraid this can't be much help, because it wasn't cast until 1970.

Oh I see, ah.

So, I haven't got a date for when it was done.

And what did you...what is it sort of based on, this one?

It's based on a cockerel.

And so that exhibition toured, didn't it; the British Council toured it on after Venice.

Yes, they always did. They always did as much as possible. Lilian Somerville seemed to spend the opening ceremony of the Biennale sort of touting around for exhibitions. And there was the sort of circuit which included the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, and several of the German galleries. Occasionally one in Paris, but that was by no means a foregone conclusion, because the French were very chauvinistic.

And, did you...can you remember, were you commissioned...as a result of that exhibition, or not, whatever, did you get any commissions to do work?

No, never worked on commissions, no. Well, except one, one in Norwich, much later, when I knew the Colman family, who used to make mustard, and since, Timothy Colman has been Chairman of the Eastern Counties Newspapers, and I did a very large work for the front of his new building.

Right. Perhaps we might talk about that a bit later on.

Yes.

Because some of your work appeared in...was sited in Hertfordshire wasn't it, you know, the schools.

I did a...yes, I did one work for a school. I knew...what's his name?

Newsom?

I knew Newsom, yes, but I knew the architects. It must be in one of the other books.

[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Yes, so the architects were...

Yorke Rosenberg and Mardall, or...I don't know which order they...I can't remember which order they were in. And they were closely bound up with the general organisation of the Hertfordshire scheme of art for schools.

And you mentioned also Stewart Mason.

Stewart Mason was, I believe was Director of Education for Northamptonshire, and he was closely involved in, either this scheme or other schemes closely connected with it.

So the 'Cock' you did was for, you said...

London Colney School.

Right, and then there was another one, the 'Bird in a Pool'.

Yes, that's quite a bit later.

Right, OK. And that was at Crownwood Comprehensive School, Eltham.

Yes. At that time the GLC was running a scheme whereby a certain fraction of a percent of the building costs was set aside for commissioning painting and sculpture.

And, any other works that you did around that sort of time you want...?

Oh quite a lot.

Yes, but I mean that you want to mention in particular?

No, I don't think so.

The 'Fish Relief', that was different wasn't it, rather different to the other things.

Yes. That came about in a rather strange way. The large figure in Battersea Park was...the plaster original was lying about, and it had come off its base, and what it had left behind was a picture of a fish. So I cast it. I did a bit to it, but that's...

So where the...what part of the base...?

The square piece at the...

There, where the feet had come away?

Yes.

Right, and so...I think I've just past it...that's it is it? [LOOKING AT ALBUM]

That's it, yes.

Yes, right. And what date is that then, the 'Fish Relief'? I've got a note but I might be wrong.

[SIFTING THROUGH PAGES OF ALBUM] '55.

Right. And your work was also in the Middelheim open-air sculpture exhibition.

It still is.

Oh I see, it's permanently there?

Yes, they bought it.

What piece was that?

That was 'Pointing Figure with Child', and that's quite a bit later.

But that...the Middelheim open-air show was '53.

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Pointing Figure with Child was in fact later than we're talking about.

Yes, it went to Middelheim in...what does that say?

That says 1972 there. Oh sorry...no, '68 there.

No. There, what does that say?

1969 I think.

'69?

There, that says I think, yes.

Well that's the date of the Middelheim exhibition that I'm talking about.

Right, well we're talking about two separate... But anyway, it's there now, so...right. And can you remember any other exhibitions particularly that you want to mention in the mid Fifties, or early Fifties?

Most of them were abroad. I mean as always happens here, it's very very, or it was, very difficult to get any recognition here, and most of it was abroad, chiefly in America. And thanks to the British Council and Lilian Somerville that there used to be a sort of, a usual itinerary of exhibitions which were connected with the Commonwealth, Australia and Hong Kong, and various other places.

Yes. So there was more or less something by you touring permanently in the Fifties wasn't there, really.

Yes. And the other side of that was that the British Council seemed to have a bit of money, and so occasionally they bought works.

For their permanent collection.

For the permanent collection. That, and they used to pay a hiring fee.

Oh did they, as well.

Which was very helpful.

Oh that was good, yes. And so, early...in the sort of first half anyway of that decade, you did some teaching at the Bath Academy of Art didn't you.

Yes.

And how did you get there, invited to go there?

I can't remember.

Armitage, did he have something to do with it?

No. No no no, as I say I didn't meet him until I went down there.



Oh I see, right.

I can't think how I got down there. I knew a number of the people, people like Terry Frost, and Peter Lanyon, and...

What, you knew them anyway, before you got there, did you?

I think I did.

Yes. And, I think, correct me if I'm wrong, I think Armitage was a Gregory Fellow for a while up in Leeds, and I think you might have gone to sort of help a bit, when he was up there or something?

Well, it may have been...it may have been one of the reasons for there being a vacancy up there, but I don't think he ever had any intention of going back. I mean I think...I don't know how well you know Kenneth.

I know him quite well.

Oh. He's a chap with a very short fuse, and not a.....

End of F3001 side A

F3001 side B

.....not on yet then?

No. I think probably the connection with Corsham was through William Scott, because I knew him before that. I had known Macwilliam, and he and Macwilliam were fairly close friends, and I used to see Willie Scott at Macwilliam's from time to time.

And Macwilliam's Christian name was...?

William.

William as well, right. And how did you find the atmosphere down at Corsham, compared to your experience...?

Terrible, terrible. The chap in charge, Clifford Ellis, he was a very well-meaning chap, but...his background really was of...both he and his wife had been commercial artists. I felt that his attitude, he looked upon himself as an educationalist, but he was not my sort of educationalist, because much of his attitude towards the students was of, how can I put it? His sights were set too low. High in a populist sort of way, but he really was prepared to settle for students to get a pretty fair grounding in the styles of various artists who were working at the time, and then produce their version of it, which I mean is an absolute negation of education as far as I can see. And the whole atmosphere of the place, it was a very jolly atmosphere, if you can imagine an autocrat having an institution which was jolly.

And a marvellous setting as well down there, wasn't it.

Not a bad setting. It was...well the big house sort of dominated the area, but it was all sort of vaguely county, again which was something I didn't like that much. It was very incestuous in atmosphere, which I didn't approve of. And also I had a feeling that, to get the best out of students you had to keep them a bit at a distance.

And it didn't really work like that?

No it didn't, at all! (laughs) Which was lovely for the staff, and the students, of course they thought it was marvellous. It was very American in attitude. It was all right. It paid a lot more than Chelsea.

Oh, that was useful. And did you teach...can you remember the year you arrived there?

It must have been somewhere around about '55 I suppose.

Right. And you left...how long did you last, as it were?

I left in 1960, that was when I went to the Royal College.

Oh right, oh so...right, I see. So you weren't...you didn't overlap with Armitage then for long?

Didn't really overlap with him at all, not teaching.

No. Because I believe you and he built a foundry.

We did, yes. But that was after he really had given up teaching there. He still carried on living in the village.

Oh did he? And did you have your own studio down there?

No. No, because I used to go one day and come back the next.

Oh I see.

I only stayed down there; I couldn't bear to live down there!

Oh dear! And so you, you did overlap though with Lanyon who you knew already?

Yes.

Scott left I think in '56.

Yes, he was still teaching there when I was there, so maybe I went there before. And Bryan Wynter, and...

Oh yes of course, yes. And Peter Potworowski, do you remember him?

Potworowski, yes, very well.

He sounds as if he had quite an...

Pardon?

He sounded as if he had quite an influence on...

Oh he had a lot of influence.

Students and staff.

Yes, yes. The biggest influence at Corsham was a French girl.

Oh, Marie.

Marie. Marie-Christine.

Oh that's it, yes, I've heard about her.

She had a tremendous influence, and in a way the sort of underlying style of Armitage, and to a certain extent with Scott, was due to her and the style and mannerisms which she brought as a student. It was about the time when Brigitte Bardot was on her way up, and she had modelled herself on Brigitte Bardot.

Oh my goodness! Right.

She caused great fluttering in the dovecote! (laughing)

And, who else? Henry Cliffe.

Yes.

Did you make a lithograph there?

Yes.

Quite a lot of the staff seem to have done.

Yes. He was a very enthusiastic chap, basically a technician. But he was one of the more down-to-earth people, and he lived at home so there wasn't so much involvement with the students.

And did you ever go...you didn't ever visit Cornwall or anything? I mean when the Lanyons and everybody else came up, I just wondered whether you went down there?

No no. No it never appealed to me. I've been since, but it still doesn't appeal to me really. The sea is very nice, but all that in-bred...

Yes, another case of incest!

Yes, yes. It was very complicated, because there was Corsham, and there was St. Ives, or Cornwall, and also there was...the big house in Devon...

Oh, Dartington?

Dartington, yes. And quite a number of the staff at Corsham were teaching at Dartington also; not so much the visual arts people but drama and that sort of thing.

I've now gone blank on the person who taught drama. Oh dear, never mind. Riette Sturge Moore.

Riette Sturge Moore, yes, she was there. She was a lively sort of person. But also there was another one whose father was a poet, and they lived in...

Binyon.

Binyon, yes.

Helen Binyon, who did all the shadow puppets and things, yes.

Yes, yes, yes. And she taught at Dartington as well as Corsham.

Right, so there was a lot of coming and going.

A lot of coming and going, but a lot of I think misguided education.

And, did you have Dalwood? Was he one of your pupils, or was that...?

No. No no, he was a pupil of...

Armitage?

Armitage.

Right. And Hoskin, John Hoskin, he taught there didn't...

John Hoskin, he more or less took over after I left. I left at the time when Jack Smith left, we left together, because we neither of us could stand it any more. I think if we hadn't have left we would have been turned out!

And did you keep up your friendships with William Scott and people?

Yes, it was...it wasn't a very close friendship. I mean I used to see them all from time to time, at exhibitions, openings and things like that.

Right. And did you manage to do any of your own work?

Yes.

Yes, but that was mainly done up...that was done up here?

Yes. Yes, I mean I cast a few things in the foundry that we built. There wasn't much time to do anything; I mean you arrived at 10 one morning and left at 4 o'clock the next day.

So, what else? What else happened around that time?

I was on various organisations, like the Visual Arts Panel of the Arts Council, and...

What did that mean? Did you help, did you suggest ideas for exhibitions, or did you...?

That, and various other things that were going on at the time. Things like the Hayward Gallery was being built, and furnished, and so one was in on that, not often very effectively because the GLC were...or whoever they were at that time, had ideas themselves. And also I was on the Royal Fine Art Commission, which I found not very satisfactory.

And can you just explain what...

I'm not a joiner-in. Well, the Royal Fine Art Commission was a body really, and maybe still is, I don't know, I haven't had anything to do with it for a long time, it has a certain amount of authority, but no teeth, it can't do anything, and it seemed to me to be a sort of mutual admiration society of architects, nothing more. I went around doing the ordinary sort of chores that members get to do. I mean there was a meeting once a month, which I found rather boring because there were a lot of things which I thought should be done and couldn't get anybody to agree with me.

What ideas did you have, that you wanted to get done?

A lot of buildings which they agreed to put up which I thought should never have been put up! (laughs) And it's difficult to tell architects that other architectural chaps' works were not very good.

What in particular springs to mind that went up that you didn't like?

I can't think of any. And one or two odd things which I did at the time, like two or three of us went down to the studio of, now what's his name, Jones, who did the Churchill thing in...

In Parliament Square?

In Parliament Square, yes. To have a look at that. Henry Moore, when he was on the Royal Fine Art Commission had, among the others, selected this chap Jones to do it, and I got caught up with going along to see work in progress. It was quite a nice thing to do.

And any other things like that? Did you oversee any other...?

I don't...there's nothing that stands out. I was one of the governors of various schools of art.

You've mentioned Norwich.

Norwich, and Bristol, and Chelsea. I was Chairman of Chelsea governors. Norwich I found very difficult, because Norwich people are very difficult! And especially the local council people. Bristol, it seems that Bristol and Norwich seem to have the same sort of councillors; they were very authoritative, and they weren't going to have anybody coming in to tell them

what they should do, and they couldn't understand why they had people coming in, except I suppose they had to.

So was there anything you did manage to get put through that was your idea, in Bristol and Norwich?

I had quite a...I hesitate to say influence, on the number of appointments of principals, which was worthwhile doing.

Do you want to say who they were?

I think that...two of the cases were the same person; I mean they...Bristol...no, not Bristol, Chelsea and Norwich, they appointed the same person one after the other. I mean one of them went to Norwich and then after a time...or the other way round, I can't remember which. But it wouldn't be anybody...it wasn't anybody who anybody would have heard of very much. And at Bristol it was I suppose useful that one could lend weight to projects which the staff there already had in hand.

Yes.

Also I was a governor of Corsham for a bit.

Oh were you?

Mm.

So did you manage to change things?

No. No no, it was so ingrained. And also the place was in transition. Old Lord Methuen had died, and I think it was his nephew who took over, and he wasn't really in favour of the school being there, and I think...so they moved to Bath, and it seemed to me that the whole thing was being dismantled.

So you're talking about what, the end of the Sixties, early Seventies that...?

Must have been, yes.

But going back to the Fifties, you won a scholarship didn't you, an Italian State Scholarship?



Yes.

And what did that mean? Did that mean you travelled?

Nothing. I think there was about £50.

Oh, generous.

Which sort of allowed you to go to Italy for a month, or paid the train fare to get there!

(laughs) No, it was nothing.

So, but did you go anyway?

No.

Oh I see, no, right. But Gimpels took you up, didn't they?

Mm.

Did you have work in an exhibition before you had your first one man show there?

No I don't think so.

Because according to various notes, your first one man show was there at Gimpels, and it was in 1957, is that right, does that sound right?

Yes.

Yes, yes. And was that a success?

Well fairly. The thing about the Gimpels was that they did continue to work for artists at times outside the actual exhibitions, and as they relied a lot on clients coming from America, that one had to wait until the Americans came, and they weren't all coming at the time of the exhibitions.

Yes. And can you remember anything in particular that you exhibited in that first show?

No. No, I suppose.....[LOOKS AT ALBUM - BREAK IN RECORDING] The 'Crabs', and the 'Frightened Bird'.

Which were bronze?

Which were bronze, they are all bronze. That was in the first one. That was, the Contemporary Art Society ran an exhibition called 'The Seasons', that was the sort of title which sort of kept the exhibition together.

And what was that work called?

'Seasons Cock'.

'Seasons Cock', right, OK. And the date?

'58...'56.

'56. And the Contemporary Art Society exhibition 'The Seasons' was held where?

I think it was held at the Tate. Do you know Pauline Vogelpoel?

I know the name but I've never met her actually; I know her successor.

She was running it then, and she operated from the Tate, she had an office in the Tate. And that, there was one sold to Sweden, one sold to Hirshhorn.

In Washington, the Hirshhorn Museum you mean?

Well it wasn't the Hirshhorn Museum at that time. He had a house in Connecticut, I think, and he kept it there. I've never seen such...a sort of typical Victorian house, absolutely stacked from floor to ceiling with sculpture. And there were various other sales of that which I can't read.

And did you find them good as dealers? Were you quite pleased with them?

No. They're very nice people, very civilised people, especially Charles. Do you know Charles?

Does he have a beard?

No. No, he was the husband of Kay, and he had been in Auschwitz and badly beaten up, and was in a pretty well...he wasn't a wreck of a man, because he was...he had got tremendous character, and a love of art. I mean I hesitate to say so, but he had more...he seemed to me to have more love of what he was dealing in than the others, and when he died that was a great...it was a disaster, because the rest, although they were very nice people, Peter especially, his great love was sailing, and I think he couldn't...couldn't wait for the time to get away from the gallery and go off sailing! (laughs) But very nice, and he lent me his boat from time to time. He had one boat at Burnham-on-Crouch, and one, a big one, at that time in the Mediterranean; he kept it at Antibes.

Mm! Did you go to that one, oh very nice.

Yes. Yes, that was marvellous. But these French dealers, they...well there are two sorts of course. Some used to put themselves out no end to sell artists' work. If they took anybody on then they were involved positively; Charles was like that. But otherwise Peter and the rest of the family did tend to wait for the customers to come along; that's no good at all.

No no, it isn't, is it.

No good at all.

And were you officially sort of tied up in some sort of contract with them, or not?

It was a gent's contract, nothing in writing, and I think that...I think that I could have had something in writing, but it never seemed necessary. I mean it was all on a very civilised basis.

And who cast your work at that time? Did you use...?

At what time?

I mean the sort of...around the time of that 1957 exhibition?

I think that I went to two foundries in London. One was Fiorini and the other was Gaskin who, I think they're still going, but Fiorini being Italian, all his family had been founders before, and he is still a very very good founder.

And was that in Battersea, Fiorini?

Fiorini is in the King's Road. No, I think that Galizia was in...

Oh right, yes, I'm getting muddled up.

Yes I'm sure...I did go to Galizia, but I can't remember where it was, it's such a long time. But also I didn't...I think he did cast one thing for me, but that was all. I went to Morris Singer's, but they were far too expensive for me.

They're out of London, yes, Morris Singer, are they?

They're now down in Basingstoke, and still going strong. I had some things cast in Paris with Sous. Sous had died by that time, his widow was running the place, or at least she was running the place with a manager, and I had some big things cast with them. The big work for Norwich [LEAFING THROUGH ALBUM], that one, that was cast down south of the river, but I think not in Battersea, I think it was Peckham. At least that piece was cast there; these other pieces were cast at the Royal College.

I see, and that's...

That's bronze.

Highly polished bronze, and concrete.

Concrete, yes. That was cast by the people who made the cladding for the building in Suffolk.

I see. And did it have a title, or was it just called the...?

No, it didn't have a title.

No. Eastern Counties Newspaper Limited, Norwich. And the date of that was the Sixties, wasn't it?

Yes. '64 perhaps? No, it's probably a bit later than that.

'69?

Yes. Yes it must have been.

Do you want to talk about one particular piece and how you worked on it, and how you got an idea, of something during the Fifties time?

Yes, probably, this one perhaps is... Well I think that one's general philosophy of the whole thing might be an idea, and then taking it in from the earliest things. Because there is, for me at any rate there is a unity about the thing. Are you cold? Shall I put the heating on?

No no no, it's fine.

It may sound a bit pretentious, but it's all about the human condition. The crabs, and the birds, and the armed figures, the pointing figures, are all about fear. I think early on I talked about the effect of being in India. I think it's perhaps not fear, it's vulnerability, that one is always aware of the threat of spiders, of crawly things generally. Perhaps illogically, but it's a certain sort of threat, it's a certain sort of fear. You never know what they can do, and when they are going to do it, and... [LOOKING AT ALBUM] And that one too is a sort of...a sort of tank.

Oh yes. Can we just say what you're looking at now.

We're looking at...this is a crab from.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

.....of tank...

'Tank Crab', yes. But crabs are to a certain extent rather like tanks, especially land crabs. Because in the Cocos Islands they had land crabs that used to climb the coconut trees, right to the top, and cut the coconuts off and drop them to the ground and then come on down the tree and then rip the coconut open. And they really were quite fearsome things.

What sort of a size were they then? Huge. Oh right, what, about two foot across?

Yes, not much...perhaps not as much as that. I've got a photograph upstairs. But they've got big claws like that, that sort of size. I had one tied to the leg of a table in my room, and during the night it cut through the table leg and went off. That sort of thing. And then the startled birds. Again, you know how hysterical chickens are?

Yes.

That sort of thing.

Yes, he's got that sort of fluttering sort of...yes.

Yes. But as a vehicle for people, as a vehicle for...that same sort of hysteria which people get when life gets on top of you. I mean it's difficult to talk about it in...sort of cold. But all these birds, all these figures have got things which human beings have got: I mean they've got qualities which human beings have got. The only ones outside, are things like the Fish Relief which...

Yes, which happened by accident really, yes. And were you deliberately trying to...you were using these deliberately to get away from using a figure?

More than anything else, deliberately in order to get away from Moore.

From Moore, exactly, yes.

I mean I wouldn't have said so to him, but that's what one was doing. And birds, and crabs and things were a very good vehicle for that, because he didn't do anything of that sort at all. In fact, I think the essential thing to recognise is that what he was doing was, or what I was doing, and was wanting to do, was quite the opposite of what he was wanting to do; we were about two different things. In fact, I was nearer, more in sympathy with Picasso than I ever was with Moore. I mean this is not to say that I didn't learn far more from Moore than I ever did from Picasso, because I never had the opportunity of talking to Picasso, but immediately there was a sort of contact with Picasso. The contact with Moore I suppose tended to be rather more cerebral; the idea of analysing what he did, and why he did it, and the sort of logical sequence, which was fairly easy to follow; whereas the contact with Picasso was direct, absolutely direct, and is something which I continue to be... I mean I can be...take delight in the way that Moore carves, and certainly among his earlier works the extraordinary control that he had of the medium, of what he was doing, and that what he was wanting to say he could say impeccably, without any...he was absolutely in control of his hands, what he wanted to do, and this was marvellous. And certainly from my point of view I think that the work which he did before the War was for me the best.

End of F3001 side B

F3002 Side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 10th of November 1992. Tape 4.

So, can you remember any particular work by Picasso that struck you?

Yes, I've got a photograph, that big, upstairs.

Oh right, what is it?

Of a head.

A sculpture?

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING] This last photograph of Picasso, which is up in my office, is, the Arts Council had an exhibition some time, I suppose in the Seventies, and it got damaged this head, and they brought it along to the Royal College and asked if we would repair it. While it was there I took a photograph of it and had it enlarged up over life size, and it's really fantastic, it's one that I've always loved.

And what was it in, what material was it in?

Bronze.

Bronze, right. And you said it was about the same time as one reproduced in here is it, the same date? [LOOKING AT 'ART NOW' BY HERBERT READ]

Yes.

Yes, this one's 1932.

It would be about that.

And is it a sort of ugly...?

Yes. It's not ugly!

Perhaps it's not ugly, - beg his pardon! It's primitive, it's sort of...

Well all his work is primitive. [BREAK IN RECORDING] It's that one.

Do you just want to read out the title?

'Tete de Femme'. There are several of the same time which were similar, but that's '32.

And had you admired that before, because you had seen it in reproduction?

Yes. I thought I had seen it in this book, 'Art Now' by Herbert Read, which was published I think in 1934, and was a very influential book at the time. '33. And what I always found so extraordinary is that, what a sure eye Herbert Read had, that... This book is made up of chiefly reproductions. Every one almost, almost every one - and he was talking about them at the time the works were being done - almost every one of them has been proved to be a master.

Yes, amazing, yes.

Yes, and that doesn't very often happen.

It's very very difficult isn't it?

Yes.

To see things so clearly like that.

And so that really was the bible.

Again that sort of flickering nervousness of... That's the head of that one. [LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM]

Is that plaster?

It's plaster, yes.

So the lines are incised into the plaster, but that bit is 3-D, the head?



Yes. Yes, that was built on.

Yes. And is something rubbed into the incisions to make it...?

Yes.

What was that?

Well some sort of paint, a mixture of powder colour and shellac really.

What is shellac?

Well shellac is...it's like a varnish.

Right. So it binds. Does it bind...?

It binds the powder colour, yes. Also it means that...it's soluble in methylated spirit, so that you can put it on and let it dry and take it off again, and it means that there's lots of possibilities of playing about with textures and things. And also if there is any texture on the surface of a plaster for instance, shellac will pick it up, and show it up.

So that these are the reliefs. Is this one of a series of four?

No. It was done at the same time.

Right, that was the one of... And that was called, what?

That's 'Cock'.

And that was, what sort of date? [BREAK IN RECORDING]

'53.

Yes, very early. There were two in a frame, that was the other one, and that was incised in plaster and then a reverse cast taken of it, so that the incision stood up.

Right. So that...[LOOKING AT ALBUM]...

No, that's another one.

Was that, this one, was that done again in bronze, cast in bronze?

Yes. And then we come on to some other bird forms, chiefly hysterical, either hysterical or domineering.

These again are in bronze?

They are in bronze, yes.

And...I'll ask you later, I don't want to interrupt you, I'll ask you later.

No...

I was just going to ask you how you made something like that, but perhaps we had better...I'll go back to that when you feel like it.

All right.

Can I just, sorry, also ask you boringly, a) what they're called and b) the sort of dates, if they have got particular titles?

Well that's the 'Frightened Bird', and that's up there.

Oh right.

That's not so much a frightened bird as, it's just something standing its ground.

Yes. I like there, sort of shelf things.

I wish I had still got a cast of that.

But you haven't?

I haven't, no.

Now how many generally...how big an edition did you do?

Six. Six plus one. But one can't keep everything.

And the dates of those, approximately?

They would be the Fifties.

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

One is 1958.

Yes, but it doesn't follow.

No, no. But the one we're looking at.

Yes.

Yes, and the 'Frightened Bird Form', what...?

Date? [BREAK IN RECORDING]

1957.

'57, yes. And we come then on to 'Tycoons'. It's the idea of figures being armoured, protected, aggressive, from inside the safety of the shell but really inside being quite vulnerable; the same sort of ideas as, well as tycoons, protected by all the paraphernalia of their offices and...

Their retinues.

Mm? Their retinues, yes. But inside being completely soft and vulnerable.

So these are quite a change. I mean although the ideas are the same.

Yes, yes.

How did that evolve, change?

It came about through seeing in Florence a figure of Giovanni delle Bande Neri, one of the factions of the warring Ghibellines and the...one of the other chaps. The black band and the white band of the Ghibellines; they were fighting in Florence at the time of Dante.

Right.

And there's a statue in Florence of this chap sitting in a chair, looking so forbidding, so arrogant, so awful generally, and the awareness that these chaps were only...he could only keep fame because of all the other chaps that were around protecting him. It's something which sounds a bit sort of soppy when you say it in words, but it's something which is very real and very applicable all the time - applicable now. That was the biggest one, and that's in plaster.

And what size was that, what height?

This was about like that.

What's that, about...

About three feet, yes.

And, that was a tycoon again, was it?

Yes, yes. Well I really refer to them as seated armed figures, or standing armed figures.

Yes. And they're sitting on...?

In this case, this is just a wooden box, because, either I put them on a wooden base, or had a stone base.

And these skinny legs?

Yes, I mean there it's the contrast between the legs and this enormous...yes.

And are we early Sixties now?

I wish this were in a better form [LOOKING AT ALBUM].

I had a clip, a bulldog clip.

No, it's...as it's done from the book you see, the book is...facing pages, and that's unsatisfactory. 1961.

1961. And that's called...?

That's called 'Tycoon', and it's that one. It's that one.

And the plaster one we were just looking at?

The plaster one, it's...they're all about the same time.

And was that cast...that was cast later too?

Yes, oh yes, yes. They've all been cast. That is '63.

Title?

'Seated Armed Figure', yes. Two more seated armed figures. The one in Florence was much more of that sort of pose. And I did two large ones that were seven feet high.

Goodness!

And they, that one was in Battersea Park, it's photographed in Battersea Park, and is now in America.

In a private collection?

There's one in a private collection and the other one is in the Metropolitan Museum. And this one is the maquette for a larger one which is in.....[LEAFING THROUGH ALBUM - BREAK IN RECORDING]

And that's called...is that standing...

That's 'Standing Armed Figure', yes. Actually it's...just in order to identify works, I often give them individual titles, and this one is called 'Augustus', and the smaller one is called 'Little Augustus', that one, and chiefly on account of Holbein's portrait of Henry VIII. And

then I did a number of variations on Michelangelo's bust of Brutus. That's No.I and that's No.IV, and that's No.III, and that one is an odd one.

Right, and what, those were around the same sort of date, early Sixties were they?

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING] 1963, oh yes.

That one.

And that was number...?

IV. This one was V.

Right. And what height approximately are those two?

They're about two feet six.

Right.

Before that I did a number of fallen birds, which again, the vulnerability of existence comes in. The idea of a bird being shot and being absolutely useless. [LOOKING AT ALBUM] Two more shot birds. And that one I did on its side as that, and much bigger, and that one is in the Guggenheim Museum in New York.

Right, and were they late Fifties, or Sixties?

No no, they were '65 I think. [LEAFS THROUGH ALBUM]

And did you go and observe shot birds at all?

No, no. None of it's observed, it's not necessary. That's '58.

Is that called `Fallen Bird' or `Shot Bird', or...?

`Shot Bird', yes. Unfortunately there's only cast of that.

The one in the Guggenheim?

The one in the Guggenheim, yes. These sort of things are never easy to sell, because people don't want to be confronted all the time I think with disasters. It's not bland enough.

And do you have any of the plaster...?

Unfortunately no. No, if I had then I could make other casts.

Did they always get destroyed on purpose, or did they often get destroyed on purpose when an edition has been made?

I had a studio in Highgate, which was quite useful, but then the owner wanted it back, so I had to do something with all the plasters, and I threw them away. This was about the time when I left the College.

Right. What, about 1980-ish?

About 1980, yes. And a number of other fallen birds.

And did you have a particular patron, someone who bought quite a lot of your work, I mean a private individual at all?

No, from time to time, like for instance at the Biennale, I sold quite a lot. In fact I believe that until that time the British Council said that they had never sold so many! And out of that came a French dealer, who bought quite a number of things. He bought quite a number of things from the Biennale, and also afterwards from me direct.

And who was that dealer?

He was a dealer called Givaudan, who...

Did he have a gallery, or was he...?

He had a gallery, in the Boulevard St. Germain, and he was a friend of Godard, the film man, yes. And in fact, I believe Givaudan's wife took part in one or two of Godard's films.

And so, did he buy your works from the second Biennale?

Yes, nothing was sold in the first one.

Right, right. And was his gallery called Givaudan?

Givaudan, yes. He then took up...he was a wild man really. He had had a...he was involved in chemicals I think in the north of Italy, and they had a factory explosion which spread all sorts of chemical pollution all over the place, and a lot of people died. I think that was the story. And he then took to pop music and ran this gallery in the Boulevard St. Germain as a pop record shop.

Oh, a change! And did he give you a show there?

No, no. Actually he gave a show to a number of my students, which was rather good for them.

Oh that's good. In the Sixties was that?

Yes. I don't know if you know...what's his name, Hall.

Douglas Hall?

No, not Douglas Hall. I can't remember. He gave him a show, it was quite a successful show.

But you did show in Paris later didn't you, at a commercial gallery I think.

Yes, yes.

We can get to that a bit later. Was it drawings which...?

No it was drawings and...

Right [LOOKING AT ALBUM] Villand et Galanis.

Galanis, yes.

Right now there's another change.

Another change, yes. I saw in a magazine a photograph of, what's his name...a man who made...the Italian film director, who made the film 'The Leopard'. [BREAK IN



RECORDING] A picture in 'Life' I think it was, of Visconti directing, just like that, this tycoon, telling somebody what to do.

Exactly what he wanted, yes.

And that sparked off a number of pointing figures, pointing seated figures, pointing standing figures, and that sort of thing, which, that one is the biggest, and that's about that sort of size.

What, about three foot again?

Yes, it's about a three-foot cube.

And, I mean they're very different there, they're much smoother and more sort of organic...

Yes. Always been seduced by the quality of polished bronze, especially of satin finish rather than highly polished. But some of these were a combination of the two, two pieces which are highly polished and the rest of it satin finished.

Yes. And did you do that effect yourself, or does a technician, is a technician required to get these different finishes?

Unfortunately I organised from very early on my life, so that I was my own technician. That was a silly thing to have done.

Oh no, but it's good to be involved all the way through.

Well I know, but life's not long enough. It means that...I mean, with these, there are over a hundred works here, and with six casts of each, it means that all my.....

End of F3002 side A

F3002 side B

These hundred works, if there are six copies of each that's a lot of work, and it's very much like slavery. All of one's time really is taken up by being a technician.

And, so we were talking then, we had got up to the more sort of rounded, smooth, highly polished works. Can we just look.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

.....works. The outcome of some of these intermediate stage works were part-polished, part-unpolished, combined, played off one against the other.

And is that a pointed...?

That's 'Pointing Figure'. And this one is 'Mother and Child'.

Right. Can I be boring and ask for the dates again, sorry. [BREAK IN RECORDING] What does it say?

That's '75.

Right, that's 'Pointing...'

'Pointing Figure'.

'Pointing Figure', '75.

Yes, there are a number of pointing figures around that time, including that one, which is a big 'Pointing Figure with Child', of which there is one cast in the Middelheim, another one in Churchill College, Cambridge, another one...I think there's one in Finland.

And what's that one?

That one's called 'Help'.

And is that...yes, oh yes. And what date is that one, 'Help'?

That one is '66.

Right.

I think you've got that on your photocopy.

Mm. [LEAFING THROUGH ALBUM] Oh yes. I haven't got the date on it. No.

No, well we know what the date is of that.

Yes.

Yes, '66.

Yes, and that was exhibited in the British Sculptors exhibition at the Royal Academy, and no doubt elsewhere as well, but... Right.

And this was the big 'Pointing Figure with Child'.

Right. And the height of that one you were saying was...

Which...thirty inches.

And that's the one that you spoke of earlier, the contrast between the two finishes.

Yes.

And did you ever...I think I read somewhere that...did you cast real pieces of fruit?

Yes. There are some over there I think.

Yes a pepper; is that a pepper over there?

A pepper, and also...

Is it a mango?

A mango.

Oh lovely! Isn't that fantastic. Lovely. And what finish is that? Is that the smoothest?

Satin finish, yes.

Right, lovely.

And there's a pear there, and a plum.

Oh yes. That looks much whiter. Is there a reason...?

Oh yes, it's silver.

Oh silver, sorry! Right, oh that's beautiful. And, I don't know whether now is a good time to talk about your drawings, or whether you want to go on talking more about this work.

Well let's just see what else there is.

Yes.

[LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM] That's 'Lovers'.

Right. And what sort of size is that? About one foot by eighteen inches or so.

About that, yes.

Yes. And what...date again? Late Sixties-ish, is it?

Seventies. [LEAFING THROUGH ALBUM] Yes, that must be the Seventies. And incidentally, if we can take it out of context...[LOOKING AT ALBUM]...'Lovers' was '76. It's that one. This one, '79.

That one?

Yes.

I'm not quite sure what that one's called.

You can't see it.

No, I can see the silhouette but I can't...

It's called 'Watchers'.

Oh right, 'Watchers'. And for those pieces, were you using the studio you were mentioning up in Highgate, or were you working in the studios at the Royal College?

I was working at the College. Everything before '80 I was working at the College.

Right.

I don't know if you can see that, it's not a very good photograph.

Yes I can.

That's 'A Cross-Legged Figure'.

And there the base is also in bronze.

Yes. And the base is screwed to the figure. That's a 'Frightened Figure'.

And was that...datewise, was that the same, Seventies again, that one?

Yes. And that's 'A Pointing Figure'.

Is that again the same period?

Yes.

Yes. There are two versions of 'Help'.

Is that...no, sorry, is that...no, that's not...

Which?

What's that one over there, by the fireplace?

The big one?

It's a pointing figure/watcher, on the basis of something peering out from... But the same idea, with the 'Pointing Figure'.

And this 'Help' relates...the large piece you did for the Eastern Newspaper building...

Yes, it's sort of relative to that, except the Eastern Counties Newspapers really was concerned with all sorts of aspects of the human condition. The idea of one personage sort of blossoming forth, another one oppressed, trampled on. And three others are sort of squeezed in, compartmentalized, and another one sort of crushed up, restricted. The whole thing was a sort of a jig-saw puzzle, and the whole thing is twenty feet long. There's another photograph which I haven't got a print of in here; I don't think you will have one there either.

No.

No, that's the same. But the idea of this was that the whole thing went through a plate glass window, in that this piece was shuffled up to the plate-glass window on this side, on the outside, and on the inside there was a continuation of this.

Right, and was there more...both the bronze and the concrete, if that is concrete: is that concrete?

Yes, yes. I've got some pictures upstairs of the whole thing, but there, it goes to about there, and there's a sort of repetition of one block on top of the other with a piece, a little bit similar to that squeezed in between the two. So from the inside you get a view of the whole thing. And really it was a sort of a construction of free pieces; they're not joined in any way.

Free pieces did you say?

Free pieces, yes. And I'll tell you how it was put together. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Sorry, you were going to describe first of all...

They put a layer of grease, or soap, or something on the ground, then they slid this piece in, it's cut there.

Which you had already cast?

At the firm, who were doing it.

Yes, right.

Up to the plate glass. Then this piece was put in.

The longer...

Yes, up to that.

Up to the join.

Up to the join, yes. That was all right, that slid very easily on the, whatever it is they put down. Then, this piece, and that piece, were slid in together with a piece of wood there to hold that end up.

Right, that's the higher piece, at the higher level, the furthest piece...the piece nearest the plate-glass window, at the higher level, you're talking about.

Yes. That's there just as on this piece. And with a crane that was lowered into position there with a piece of wood there to hold it up so it didn't fall forward. You can see that...no you can't see ... you can see that if you had a tongue of concrete, which is part of this sticking out here, it could go through that piece, which was hollow, into this piece which already had been set up in that cut-out there.

What, that thin piece was already there?

Yes.

And so you're saying that bit was hollow?

This piece is hollow.

Right.

The tongue joined on to that, passed into a hole in that, you see, so that...

So that's firm.

So that's firm, so that you could then take this piece of wood out, and this piece was firmly fixed, couldn't move about, was in the position you wanted it in. Then, what you got is a flat end to this piece, and you put that piece in. Sorry, let's go back a bit. Before any of that happens this has to go in and be slid up as far as that.

To the shorter piece.

Yes.

So the longer, horizontal...

Yes, but while you were doing that, on the front of this there's a peg, which is about that sort of size.

On the front of the cement thing, or...?

The cement thing, yes, sticking up into this.

The trampled...oh right, into that.

Into that.

The upper piece of concrete.

Yes. Before that's put in, the bronze is put on over the peg. Then this piece is put in and slid back, and so that when that's in position, when it comes up to there, this can't move. And what I should have said was that, that has to be done first before that can be put in. So you see it's a matter of juggling it, and being in the right order.

Yes, ahead of sort of...one step ahead so you can take the next bit.

And then those were put in.

Are they three separate elements?

Three separate ones, yes. And because this one overhangs this side, and it overhangs that side as well you see, it can't move. And then this one was put in on top of it.



And has that got a sort of peg thing?

Yes, that will have a peg, yes.

And was the peg in the same material? Was it in bronze?

In bronze, yes.

Yes, I see.

And the same with that, that also would be pegged into place.

Into each other.

Into each other, yes.

And do they have anything going that way, into the next...?

No, no it's not necessary. And then, this one was put in on top of that, and that is pegged, has two pegs there to hold that in position.

I see.

And then, finally, this piece is put on.

That's the largest.

That's the largest piece. And there's a big bolt, screw, in this.

In the cube kind of ...

Yes, it's not a cube, it's a lot thinner than it is...

Right.

And in the back of this, this plate with a hole in it, and this has to be lowered over the peg, over the...

Was that lowered with a crane, that thing?

Yes. And there's a hole through here, which...

Yes, a visible hole, yes.

Yes, well that serves as an eye, but there's a hole straight through about that size, and...

About five inches...

Yes, and then a nut has to be put on the end of that screw, through the hole, and then tightened up.

Gosh, that's quite a complicated operation isn't it.

Yes.

Did you think all that out or were you working with the architects, or...?

No, I thought it out, yes.

And you were on site to make sure it was all done in the right order.

Also we had had a run-through of the whole thing in the contractors' yard in Suffolk, and had erected the whole thing.

Oh, so you knew it was absolutely...it was going to work.

Mm. And there they were, they turned up at 8 o'clock in the morning and I think we had got it all finished by about 11.

That was pretty good!

[LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM] That one is the one which was at Battersea.

`Pointing Figure with Child'.

`Pointing Figure with Child', yes. This is a baby from that.

Oh yes.

I've now got it on a different base. That's the `Watcher' which was so dark you couldn't see it.

Yes, I see. And that again is using two different surfaces.

Yes, it's...actually the photograph would make you believe that this is darker than the rest of it, but it isn't; they're both the same except this and this are polished, and the rest of it's satin. And that one is just a `Pointing Figure'. This is `Figure with Child', male or female, it doesn't matter.

Is that Seventies, that one?

Beginning of the Eighties.

That's going back...

This is going back a bit to the earlier ones, which I had had a number of plaster things which I had tried out and I had only cast one, so I decided to cast some of the others.

Right, that's a crab again.

That's a crab, yes. I've got those in the next room. These are the same sort of things as you saw before, of engraved drawings.

And then cast in...

These are actually clay presses. Clay is pressed into the plaster mould and then they're fired.

And what...sorry, what dates were those ones? Were they earlier again, those clay pressed works?

They are earlier ones, yes. Yes, really very early.

And what's this one, sorry?

That's the first thing that I did.

I see!

That's cast in iron.

Right. And that was called...have we looked...?

`Standing Figure'.

`Standing Figure'.

Have we looked...?

At the very beginning of the book, is that a repeat or is it a different one?

No it's a different one.

It is a different one. Right, so that one was 19 what, '48, the `Standing Figure'? I've got in a muddle with my dates.

That...yes. Yes, '47/'48. And the odd thing about that is that I was working with Henry Moore at the time, and made a mould on one of his works, and this is a part of a mould, with some work done on it.

Yes.

As was the other one which, that one. And the other extraordinary thing is that this was also done from a part of a mould, may have been the same one, I don't know. But that's very very similar to the arched figure in Hyde Park.

Oh, yes.

By the Serpentine, although this was done five or six years before the other.

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING] So we're looking now at photographs of the plaster and the finished product of `Lovers'.

Yes, that's about four feet, four feet six long, and is from about '82.

Right, so that was done in your studio up in Highgate.

No, it was done in a studio I had in Chelsea.

Oh right. That's all polished to the same degree is it?

Yes.

There's no contrast in the surfaces.

Yes. And whereas the other things are polished by hand, that was polished by a machine, so the quality is a bit different.

Mm. And did you use the machine, or someone else used the machine?

No I used the machine. And there's a cast of that at Hakone, and another one in the Tate.

So, at Hakone in Japan, is that an open-air sculpture park?

Yes.

Yes. And...

That's 'Crab Relief'.

'Crab Relief' of 1980...

It's about the same time, yes.

I like the way it's sort of coming out of its box.

Yes, it's walking out of the frame.

Yes. Is that bronze as well?

It's bronze, yes.

And, you've got a cast of that here?

Yes.

And are there any anywhere else?

I've got two casts here, and there's one cast in America.

In a private collection?

Yes, a private collection. And there's a whole edition of a smaller size, a maquette for that.

What, an edition of what?

Seven.

Is that six plus one?

Six plus one, yes.

Is that marble that one? No.

Yes.

It is, oh.

Yes, that's also four feet six long and was carved at Forte dei Marmi, or at Querceta, near Forte dei Marmi.

Did you carve it?

No. No no, it was carved by the quarry.

Right. Is that where Henry Moore went to use the marble?

Yes.

And the title of that one is?

That's also 'Help'.

'Help', yes. And do you like it in marble? Do you find...?

I don't think I like it as much in marble as I do in bronze. Although I think that it would have been better if we had got a better piece of marble; I think if it had been the Carrara marble instead of this more heavily-veined stuff, it's not so good.

Sort of breaks up...

It breaks it up too much, yes. But it was quite interesting to do. That's in America.

And so, did that ever get exhibited, that piece, that marble piece, or any of these later pieces?

Yes, well I mean that's exhibited at the Tate.

Oh right. Yes but where did they see it first, the Tate? I mean they bought it.....

End of F3002 side B

F3003 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his house in London on the 10th of November 1992. Tape 5.

We were just cut off in the final tape from what you were saying, Alan Bowness came to see you.

Yes, and said that he would like to buy something, or asked the Friends of the Tate to buy something if I had anything available, and I showed him that and he thought that was one of the best things of mine that he had seen, and so he bought it.

Right. And looking at...I don't want to divert at this stage, but looking at the plaster, did it involve quite a lot of carving? How did you get to that shape? Did you cast separate bits?

No, it was built up, gradually getting nearer to what one wanted all the time. It's the nice thing about modelling in plaster, it's the combination of the processes of carving and building up, that you build it up in plaster and then treat it rather as you would a piece of wood or a piece of stone.

[LOOKING AT ALBUM] Have we mentioned that one? I think...this one is...it's another pointing...

'Pointing Figure with Child', yes.

Yes, and where is that?

That's in a private collection, it belongs to John Hedgecoe, and that was in his garden.

Mm, it's a nice site, with sort of an avenue of trees going down there. Good.

Yes.

Are there any more?

No, that's all I've got here.

Right. And so you've got...presumably, have you got drawings?



Yes.

Preliminary drawings of all of these?

Yes. Although of course the works go from '47 to '87 certainly, so it's difficult to find exactly always the ones which one is looking for. That's the one at the Metropolitan Museum, that's in...that's in an outdoor exhibition; they lent the work to Storm King, in upstate New York.

And this is a...

That's 'Standing Armed Figure'. 'Augustus' that one.

The tall one? Yes.

That's again 'Lovers'.

Which the Tate...

Yes.

The Friends of the Tate.

Yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

So we're now looking at an album of reproductions of your drawings, although there are some lovely examples hung around.

These are all life-drawings which I did chiefly when I was a student, '38 to '40, and on after the War from '46 to '48.

So these are brush and ink and wash are they?

They are brush and...pen and ink and brush, pen and ink and wash. And most of these have sold. This was a little exhibition that I had at the Royal College when I was a student, and they awarded me the drawing prize and then found that I couldn't have it because I was at that time on a fourth year (they gave me an extra year), and it was only for the third year students.

Oh, I see. What's this?

Haven't you ever seen that?

Probably. What is it, tell me?

Outside the TUC.

Oh it is that.

Yes.

Oh right, right. Now I meant to go on a pilgrimage to look at it, and I haven't been.

I wouldn't worry, I wouldn't bother. It's all right; that's the best view. And...

Can we just explain about that? I don't have anything about...

Well, I don't really want to.

You don't want to?

No, I mean I wanted to disown it after a fashion. But I wouldn't like the TUC boys to think that I rejected it, but it's not my line of country really.

I think I would have walked past it, I wouldn't have realised it was by you.

No, quite right. It does what it was intended to do, but I've no interest in it really. It's quite a good solution I think in relation to the building.

And was that your first offering to them? What happened, what was the chronology?

No it wasn't.

There was something else you..?

Yes.

And they thought it was unsuitable or something?

That's right, yes. They thought the first idea was rather too belligerent, and I thought that was what was needed. So, it's an unsatisfactory thing to do really, one's conscious the whole time of all these chaps subscribing their 10p pieces for something of a sort, and one's got to do the best that you can within their limits of understanding. It's an impossible situation, impossible problem.

And when was that executed?

I think some time about...'50, '54, something like that.

Right. And is there an Epstein piece?

There's an Epstein inside.

Right, inside the building or inside the courtyard?

The building, yes. This was out on the street.

Fine, and it's Congress House?

Congress House. It's just by the YMCA in Great Russell Street. I think that's the building of the YMCA. These are maquettes, and the original, that I did for the school in Hertfordshire.

Oh yes. That's a very naturalistic cock.

Yes.

And the size of that is?

That's about that sort of size.

Three or four foot.

Yes, three feet, three foot six, yes. I don't know what it's like now. I believe that the kids at the school swung on the tail and ripped it off. [TURNING PAGES OF ALBUM] That's the school at Crownwood, bird in a pond, lake.

`Bird in a Pool'?

Yes.

Crownwood Comprehensive School, yes.

What I really intended was it to be alongside two fountains with an enormous gush of water really accentuating that, and of course...I suppose it's what they provided!

Two little squirts!

What they provided, and it was absolutely ridiculous.

So now, looking at this album, the exhibition of drawings you had when you were at the Royal College, can you remember...oh so that was when you went back after the War, yes.

Yes.

So, '47.

'47, yes.

Right. And did you sell some of those then, those drawings?

No, no no, I didn't sell any of them. But now I've sold practically all of them, and for much much more than I would have sold them for at the time! (laughs)

Are they all in one colour, these?

Yes.

They are quite sculptural aren't they.

Yes.

I don't know whether that's because I know your sculpture, but they do seem to be that quality. So these are seated and recumbant and reclining and back and front nude.

Yes. That one I've got in the next room. That one's that one. [LEAFING THROUGH ALBUM] Those two I've got upstairs. That one I've got upstairs. That one was a very big one, and that one I sold in America at the beginning of this year.

Do you have a dealer nowadays, or do you just...?

No, not really, not really. One or two around who are always prepared to take things, but no, since...Gimpels really haven't put themselves out to do anything. They keep asking when are we going to have another exhibition, but...

Because you also exhibited with Christopher Hewett.

Yes. But unfortunately he died. He was doing very well - well, I mean he wasn't doing financially very well, but he had lots of enthusiasm and he had a lot of...fairly big followings among various people.

And he produced very good quality catalogues.

Very very good. This was his real interest; he was very interested in topography and the production of books. That one I've just sold to the Art Gallery of Ontario.

And have they got some more of your work there anyway?

Yes, yes. That one is upstairs. No, it's in the next room I think. That's all the life-drawings. These are later drawings for sculpture. That was from the cover of one of Christopher Hewett's catalogues.

And here, is this pencil?

Yes.

And then very distinctive wash behind it, it's red.

Yes.

In ink is that, a sort of ink wash?

Mm?

Is that Indian ink?

No no no, it's watercolour.

Is it, right.

And what I did was, I set out to do a drawing, not having a very clear idea of what I wanted to do, so that there were often a lot of suggested outlines which then later I selected. If I could see anything in the drawing which I thought would be useful then I selected that outline, and used watercolour up to that outline. It doesn't show so much on this, except you can see there is another outline there which wasn't used.

Yes, you've brought it in.

And so, that was the one that was used. Here there are a lot of outlines which finally I selected the obvious ones there.

And is that to do with 'Lovers'?

Well actually it's much more like 'A Dead Figure'.

I'm just trying to visualise 'A Dead Figure'.

Well, a dead figure, like a pussy-cat with legs up in the air.

Oh right. I mean I think all these things have...not a dual nature, much more than a dual nature, a very complicated sort of character. They could be one thing and they could be others.

And were these included in...were any of these that we're looking at now, they were included in the Hewett, in the Taranman Gallery exhibition?

Yes, yes. That's the 'Watchers'. Really the idea of a personage enclosed in some sort of confined space, and in this case one of those, and the other one on the outside rather more dynamic, and perhaps protecting that, or...of a different nature. That's the drawing for the 'Lovers'. Now, this is the first drawing for the 'Lovers', so you can see how it turned into

that. There was an extension drawn on, because in the original drawing the drawing stopped there, and there was nothing on the bottom either. So really it's a technique which allows for quite a lot of adjustment, quite a lot of playing around on there. That's a similar idea as the 'Watchers', and actually that's only a part of another one which we'll come to later.

Is that a detail?

No, it's not a detail, it's a drawing by itself, but it's of a part that attracted me.

And is that pencil?

Yes. And really I would quite like to do a sculpture of that, just that part. [MOVING THROUGH ALBUM] More drawings for 'Lovers'. And a rather late crab, two crabs.

That's '76.

Mm, they're both the same time. I would very much like to do that. That's 'The Attack'. Again, coming back to the vulnerability. And 'The Attack' again. That's the 'Lovers'.

These are '76 again.

Yes, now this one which we were looking at, that one, part of that.

Oh yes. And this one is...?

That's 'Watchers'.

'Watchers', right.

And it started off as this.

And were these exhibited, these ones?

Yes.

In...?

In Taranman.

In Taranman.

Yes.

Because you had an...that's right, you had an exhibition there in 1975.

Yes.

'Bernard Meadows Drawings for Sculpture'. So do you think...they were probably in that show, do you think?

Could have been, could have been.

And did that go well, that?

Yes, he always sold quite well. And the nice thing was that many of his clients were English, or British.

Yes, did he sort of capture a new market? He got people interested in who were slightly...

I think he had no other market. I think he...he did have Americans passing by the gallery who were intrigued by the idea of what he had in his window, but there was no...he had no real list of collectors like a lot of galleries have. I mean I would think that if he was sending out notices for an opening there would be very few going to America.

It was quite a small space.

It was quite small.

Not very many large pieces could be exhibited, so yours I presume would fit in quite well.

Yes they would, yes. That's one of the reasons why I liked it. And there was nothing behind the gallery, I mean it was in a block of flats, and so you would go outside and you fall into somebody's bathroom! (laughs) These are drawings of fruits.

So did you draw from the fruit itself or did you draw from the cast?



No.

No, no, you just...

Since doing the life-drawings, I've never drawn from actuality. We went to stay at Amalfi at the time when the fruit was ripe, and every night on the table there were piles of `ladies'!

Yes, she's got a backbone.

Yes, they've all got backbones. I mean if you...

They've got...yes, sort of buttocks and things haven't they.

Yes.

I hadn't noticed the backbone.

Yes, they've got backbones, and only on one side. That's a sort of an encased figure. The funny thing is that Christopher Hewett was very interested in the Tuareg, and he used to go for long periods sometimes to go and live with them.

Oh really.

Mm. I did this before I knew him, but he was very interested in that.

It looks like sort of knees and then receding with feet on the end, I'm sure it's not meant to be on the end.

Yes, I'm not sure, I look upon it as upon knees; I think that's a back view.

Oh right. That's like the drawing upstairs.

Oh right. Is that...and you've done this what, is that red behind here?

Yes, yes. And in fact I took this photograph of course, and then I enlarged that one to about that size, and worked on the photograph, which was very successful.

What, you drew on the photograph you mean?

Yes. There's more 'Watchers'. The real trouble is that one has so many ideas, there's so little time to do them, because sculpture takes a lot of time.

Yes, especially if you're being your own technician as well. So there are some rather sort of bony ones, and there are some very erotic, sensuous ones.

Yes.

And are these bony ones...yes, they're at the same time.

Yes.

They're more like the earlier ones, the 'crabby' crabs kind of ones aren't they.

Yes.

And you see that one is a bit more like that.

Is that quite an unusual finish for you, that?

Yes, and it's done like that because the cast was not really a very good one, and it was full of holes, and I repaired it as much as I could but then the only thing to do was to patinate it in that sort of way, to cover up the imperfections.

And what do you call that patination? Is it called something?

No, no, it's a black patina with green on top of it.

And then you also had...the exhibition you had in Paris at Villand et Galanis, was that a mixture of sculpture and drawings?

Yes.

And likewise, the one you had in Japan, at the Fuji Television Gallery.

Yes, that was also.

Both?

Both.

Right. And that was in 1979.

Yes.

At the Fuji Television Gallery.

Yes. That's in the Fitzwilliam in Cambridge.

Did they buy that...was that exhibited in that exhibition? You had an exhibition there with your students to celebrate the end of your time there.

No no, it was bought before that. No the only thing that was bought out of that was a small cast of the 'Crab Relief'.

Right. So are these breast or eyes, or neither?

Eyes usually. All the way through these works the hole in the shape is invariable eyes. That I've got next-door, it's one which I especially like.

Has it got a name?

End of F3003 side A

F3003 side B

.....especially next-door, `Lovers'...

`Lovers' that one, and `Watchers', that one. Really relating to that cover of the Japanese exhibition.

Yes, at the Fuji Television Gallery.

Yes, mm. [LOOKING THROUGH ALBUM]

1979.

More belligerent figures.

Yes. 'Baby'. That's the `Watchers'.

Yes, '75 again. Does that say '75?

'78, I think, wasn't it?

I'm not quite sure.

I think it says '78.

Now here's a crab.

Yes, well the crab-cum-shell. Now these are under the lovers theme. These come...they're a bit like crabs, a bit like shells, a bit like pea pods.

Mm. Again pencil and...the wash is watercolour is it?

Yes. All these were in...what's his name's gallery.

Christopher Hewett, the Taranman Gallery.

Christopher Hewett, yes, yes.

Do you know when he started that gallery?

Not very long before he died. I mean he couldn't have been going for much more than eight years, and I think he started it straight from being a student at the College.

Oh I see, he had been a student there. Oh, so was he your student there? What did he study?

No. No no, he was in...he was in Hugh Casson's school, interior or...not interior design, environmental design.

[LOOKING AT ALBUM] That's '78.

Yes.

That's a fruity one isn't it.

Yes, that's outside the door here. That one I think needs working on, needs altering, but this one I think works quite well.

It's nice having these sort of wedge shapes dividing...

Mm.

And did you encourage your students to draw at all, when you were at the...?

No, they didn't really need any encouragement. I mean those that could draw and were interested in drawing, they went ahead. That's what was so good about teaching at the College, I mean that you didn't have to sell the idea at all, that people were interested or they weren't interested, and if they weren't interested there's nothing you could say to them, because they weren't going to do anything.

Yes. And presumably you tried to sieve out the ones that weren't before they got there. I mean, when you interviewed them, or...?

No, because it was necessary to have a certain number of people in the school or you didn't have a school.

So you weren't oversubscribed with applicants you mean?

Yes we were oversubscribed with applicants, but not with good ones. I mean we used to take perhaps seven students a year.

Oh right, quite small.

Yes. And it was jolly difficult to find seven people that looked interesting. And if you got two or three then you were doing rather well, and the rest of the people you just had to go along with, making excuses for them! (laughs) And there was a tendency unfortunately among some of the Establishment to expect that you would be able to turn out geniuses all round; that was what you were there for, and it doesn't work.

No, no.

And that was where Darwin was so good, Darwin understood this.

Yes. [LOOKING AT ALBUM] That's a different kind.

Mm, that a 'Pointing Figure', two 'Pointing Figures'.

Oh crabs.

They're crabs.

And what...are these sort of late crabs, going back to an earlier idea?

Yes, yes. I did...I did a drawing for a College cookery book.

Oh, I think I saw that once.

Crab stew or something like that! Silly idea.

That, is that charcoal or conte, that one? I can't see.

No, no no no it's the same. They're all...waxy crayon.

So when was that College cook book thing done? Was that in...before you left presumably?

Yes.

What, late Seventies-ish was it?

Mid Seventies, yes. And these are early drawings, but worked on again in '87, or '89 is it?

That says '57.

'57, yes, well they were all worked on again later. I usually keep drawings even though I might not like them very much, in case there's something that I can see in them later that, I can then go ahead and work on them more, and that's what I did with these. That I've still got upstairs, and I've got several others which carried on from there. That I've got in the next room.

That's a sort of crab-stroke...

That's a crab, yes, a crab.

'79. And that, that's the cover?

That's the cover, yes.

The cover for the Fuji one, or the cover for the...?

The cover for the Fuji one.

Right.

That one I've got next-door. And these are different ones again, these are `Bathers'.

And what sort of date are those, these `Bathers'?

Fairly recently, '86.

[END OF SESSION]

End of F3003 side B

F3004 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 17th of November 1992. Tape 6.

So, you say you think you remembered the connection.

Yes, I was wrong when I said that I was there until 1960, at Corsham until 1960. I remembered that when Jack Smith and I left, as you say, in '57, I went back to Chelsea, although I had never left.

Right!

(laughs) I used Chelsea as a fire insurance, and was still carrying on teaching there, although I was also teaching at Corsham; also of course it was much more rewarding to...rewarding as far as interest went, teaching at Chelsea than it was at Corsham.

Mhm, right. And you had also mentioned Macwilliam being a friend of Scott.

Yes.

And I think...we had just better clear up that Macwilliam was F.E. Macwilliam.

F.E. Macwilliam, yes.

Known as?

Mac.

Mm, right, yes.

I've never heard him use either the F or the E, he was in fact Frederick I think.

Yes, thanks very much. So, I was going to say about, in the Fifties when you were taken on by Gimpels, when you had your first one man show, was there any particular critic that wrote about your work that you agreed with, or disagreed with?



I don't think I have ever agreed with any critic! (laughs) Some were nicer than others. No, nobody stands out. There was somebody, I can't remember his name, he was art critic on the 'Architectural Review'. He was always quite sympathetic. Bryan Robertson was always very sympathetic. I think the rest of them didn't understand what I was about.

And what about nowadays? Can you think...?

The same thing applies I think! (laughs) I mean I don't fit into any sort of school or style, and this is what the critics need; they want...

A peg.

They want a peg to hang you on. Well, I'm not so easily hung.

Although you were...as you said before you were grouped with the 1952 Biennale.

That was only because the whole lot of us were working at the same time, and it was an accident. Lilian Somerville thought she could collect together an exhibition typical of the work which was going on at that time, but we were a disparate lot really.

Mm, yes. Because, you were all...a lot of you were born within a few...within sort of...what, 1915, 1916, 1917 sort of thing.

Yes.

And someone called them vintage years for producing, but...

Oh really? Oh well!

Good sculptors. And so, but nowadays, when you read, who do you like to read, whose articles in the papers, or in periodicals and things?

I very rarely read articles in the papers. I think that Richard Cork is probably one of the best critics writing now, and he's an intelligent chap and obviously gives a lot of thought to what he writes.

Yes. And he is now in 'The Times' isn't he?

He is now on 'The Times' and 'The Sunday Times', and he's everywhere.

Yes.

As he should be!

Yes. And sort of art historians, do you...what, Herbert Read.

Herbert Read chiefly.

Yes, yes.

Yes, he was a remarkable chap. And a great, real sense of humility which is very rare among critics and other writers of art.

Yes, I think that's...that's right. And, I was going to say as well, in that decade, I seem to be fixated with the Fifties at the moment because I'm just trying to get that out of the way, who among your peers did you admire, not necessarily only sculptors but painters as well? Was there anybody particularly, whose work you particularly admired?

I think it was a very flat period. I mean a number of people, like Jack Smith for instance, who is roughly the same generation, he's a bit younger than I am, yet who was an individual. And the main thing that happened in the Thirties was that it was really a period of individual artists. There were dozens of them, all working in a completely different way, and at that time, 1950, none of us had been working long enough to make any impact. Most were thought of as being...as having promise, so that one...one really wasn't interested in...so much in what they were doing, because that diluted the sort of pressure that one was building up towards one's own work.

And so, do you think today that some of these artists have it too...they get spoon-fed, they suddenly become flavour of the month terribly quickly.

Yes, yes, yes. This is the essential difference between the Thirties and now, that there were dozens of people working in the Thirties who were working as individuals and who one was very excited about. And in this way I think that Herbert Read was remarkable in that he collected together a number of artists which he reproduced in a book published I think in '32 or '34, called 'Art Now'.

Yes, that you referred to last time, yes.

And they've all proved to be the ones who were making...who were going to be the great ones.

Yes. And today, I wonder what he would say now.

I know what he would say. He was very very disillusioned before he died. I mean he was...he was some time dying, and it was all very tragic, and it was made worse by the fact that he was disillusioned by what he thought was going to be a very lively and significant first half of the 20th century, or the second quarter of the 20th century. And it's concentrated much more on style and fashion, aided by the far greater ease of reproduction, so that...and public relations.

Yes, and so many newspapers and supplements, and everything else.

Yes, yes well that sort of thing, yes, but they wouldn't have been any good without the means of reproducing the things. And now, students in art schools, first thing they want is a good library so that they can look at the pictures, see what's being done, and so they can get on the bandwagon. It's tragic.

Yes, so they're looking rather at the end product rather than sort of getting there gradually aren't they.

Just...we can perhaps come on to this a bit later, but this is what was symptomatic about the revolution in art education, which was...in the Fifties and Sixties, which was...which came about under the auspices of Bill Coldstream.

Do you want...?

But the sort of students and the sort of staff which were at the post-graduate schools, that's the Slade and the Royal College, and ones who were in the undergraduate schools, the ordinary ones all around the country, they were the same, because they read the same books. The staff was the same staff. I mean it was a time when probably it was the best time for being able to support yourself, because you could always get a teaching job if you were any good at all.

And when was this, the Sixties?

Fifties, Sixties; I mean it started in the Fifties and went on into the Sixties and Seventies. And the people who were teaching at the Royal College, if they found they were a bit hard up they went off somewhere else and did a bit more teaching somewhere else, and so they were the same things, and they were teaching them in the same manner. Well this was entirely wrong, because the sort of teaching that should go on in first degree schools is quite different from post-graduate work.

Right, so perhaps you can talk more about that, but later as you say, when you're at the Royal College. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Going back to sort of personal, family things, you've got two children, is that right?

Yes.

Daughters are they?

Daughters, yes.

And they were born when?

I think '50, '52.

Right. And so they were still living around here, you were?

Yes.

You hadn't bought this house? No.

No, we bought this house about 26 years ago.

Right. And what do they do, your children? Did they go to art school or anything like that?

One went...one was a very clever mathematician, but she, I suppose fell in with a number of students, and staff - she was at Leeds at the university there - and they...and she decided she didn't want to do all that old conventional stuff, she wanted to do...wanted to be on her own doing things, and now she is working for the BBC, editing tapes, visual tapes, video tapes, sort of editing programmes.

Arts programmes, or not particularly?

Not particularly; she's at present working on an architectural one, but done a variety of programmes, and most of them, I don't know what category you would say they were. Most of them are connected with social things.

Documentary type things?

Documentary type things, yes. She was connected with the Half Moon Theatre.

Oh yes, in Chelsea, in the King's Road. No.

No no, no, Whitechapel.

Oh right, right.

The other one is quite different. The other one was a student at Cambridge, at the polytechnic in Cambridge. I never quite understood what she was studying! (laughs) I don't know whether she did. But a very lively girl, and she went off to Paris, became a member of a rock group. She joined a circus and fell off the hire wire, fortunately into a net but I think it knocked out most of her front teeth. And she now works for 'Liberation'.

Is that a weekly paper?

No, it's a daily.

Oh a daily, sorry.

Daily, yes. It's really the most highly...I believe it's the most highly thought of of the vaguely left-wing newspapers. You find it is quoted here more often than 'Le Monde' or 'Le Figaro'. And she lives with a Japanese, has two half Japanese children, and that's where she is.

Right. And do you go over to Paris? Have you always gone over to Paris and things?

Yes.

And she's the younger one is she?

She's the younger one, yes. And also she...she was also connected with the Half Moon Theatre, but also she did a number of things for, I think for the BBC, acting. They're both members of Equity, and she was in a film about a spastic, I forget what it was called, what he was called.

Was that recent, or not?

No, it must be nearly...it must be nearly twenty years back. I think there's been a recent one as well.

Yes, because I was just thinking of something recent...

But that I think was a film, not a programme for the BBC.

Right, I see, yes.

But the other one may not have been, I don't know, but I thought it was. And that was highly acclaimed I believe, the one that she did. She has done all sorts of things like that. I think if she had concentrated her mind on pure things she could have done fewer of them, much better. But that's my opinion, she probably wouldn't have agreed.

And so, the sort of acting streak, does that come from your wife, or not?

No no, they were both pupils at Camden School for Girls, which I think was...which tended toward the arts in one form or another.

Right. You just mentioned travelling to Paris, and I was going to ask you about New York. I just wondered, I know the first...you had a one-man show at the end of the Fifties with Paul Rosenberg didn't you?

Yes, I had three, I think three or four with Rosenberg; perhaps it was three.

The first one was in '59 I think.

Yes.

And, how did that come about? How did they...?

Through...I seem to remember, I mean at this sort of distance my memory is not very reliable, but I seem to remember that he had been in Paris, and had seen a work of mine at the Musee Rodin, which was...I think it was Madame Goldscheider who was Director at the time, and she organised an exhibition of European sculpture, or maybe it was wider than European, maybe she included American things too, and one of my things was in it. And he liked the look of it, and he contacted me.

Right. Because he gave other of your contemporaries, did he not, one-man shows? I think there was Armitage anyway.

I didn't think Armitage did have; I didn't think he did show there, but he could have done. Because Rosenberg knew the Gimpels quite well, I mean their families had been art dealers in Paris at the same time.

And so did you go out to the...

I didn't go to the first exhibition, but I went to the other two.

Right, so obviously the first one must have been a success, otherwise they wouldn't have asked you back.

A success compared with the success from the British Council exhibitions, no it wasn't, because Rosenberg had much the same sort of attitude to dealing as the Gimpels had, and that was you sit around with all the works in your cellar and waited until the customers turned up. And that was a hopeless state of affairs for somebody just starting out.

Yes. But, so didn't they sell well at the beginning?

No. No, no. But in fact, not from the first one but from the subsequent ones he, Rosenberg bought almost all of the things.

Oh well, right.

So it was a success that far, but not a real success. And he was just hanging on to them.

Right. And he no longer...does he exist any more, or his gallery?

He does exist, but not the same Rosenberg that I knew. I think that...I don't know, I suppose a variety of things happened, personal and from the point of view of business; also I think that he had done very well and probably made a fair bit of money, and he had a large collection. I was amazed, I went to his apartment for dinner and he showed me the cellar, the store, and the numbers of Picassos and Matisse's and everybody he had, which of course I suppose he had inherited from his father, Paul Rosenberg, who was Picasso's dealer. And so I think that perhaps there was not such a pressure to go all out to sell things as would have been better from my point of view.

And so your Rosenberg that you knew, what was his name then?

His name was...I'll have to come back to that and tell you, because there are two Rosenbergs with the same Christian name in New York and they're both art dealers, they're both quite well-known art dealers.

But the gallery was called the Paul Rosenberg Gallery?

Yes.

The one that you exhibited in.

Yes. There are a variety of Rosenberg Galleries around. I mean there was one in London, in Bruton Street, which was Rosenberg and Helft.

Was it the same family, or...?

Yes, yes, they're the same people, yes. This was while Paul Rosenberg was still alive.

Right, I see. And when you were in New York, did you go and visit other artists, or...?

Not much, no.

And did you get out? Did you get out of New York and travel around at all, did you see any of the...?

Yes, I knew a number of people who had bought my works from the Gimpels, because they had a very close connection with Americans and sold a lot of things to Americans, sold many more to Americans than they ever did to the English.



And so, you said earlier on you met Hirshhorn when he had...was that right, in Connecticut?

Yes, I really met him here, but then when I went to America I went to visit him at his house. In fact the value of the Gimpel Gallery was much more the connection with New York dealers and collectors.

So they were quite generous in that way then, they introduced you to other dealers and collectors?

Yes.

Yes, that's quite good then isn't it.

Yes.

And they didn't mind you going direct to them?

No I didn't, I didn't go direct to them. I mean, they were always so civilised that one wouldn't have done that. They were in fact quite jealous of people who went off. In England for instance, the Marlborough poached a number of, or they looked upon it as poaching, a number of their artists, like Chadwick, like Armitage, and they really never forgave them for it.

Would you have wanted to move, or did the Marlborough contact you?

Marlborough didn't, and because chiefly I suppose I didn't give them any encouragement. Harry Fischer, who was at the Marlborough and then set up by himself, I could have gone with him, but I didn't really see...I wanted to carry on at my own rate, my own sort of rate; I didn't want to be part of a bigger hustling sort of set-up. It's difficult to know what was right, and what would have paid off better, it's a gamble.

Right. And so...

Also, I was just going to say that it would have been possible to go along to any of these people, because of my connection with Henry Moore.

Absolutely, yes.

But there again, I wanted to be on my own, I didn't want to be tied to him.

End of F3004 side A

F3004 side B

At the end of the Fifties, 1959, you were shown at Documenta, and that was thought to be a very important exhibition, I mean still is, isn't it?

Oh yes, yes.

And how many works did you show do you think?

I think probably it was two, but I think the usual ration for artists showing there, at that time, was about two; but I can tell you, I've got the catalogue up there somewhere.

Right. And then, soon after that, well not that soon but, you were invited to represent Great Britain again at the Venice Biennale in '64.

That was '64, yes.

So that really...were you surprised by that, to be asked again?

No. No, not...I was surprised to be asked to this extent, that in...was it '51?

'52.

'52. I was one of a group to be sent to Venice, and I suppose I had...I thought that it was perhaps a bit soon after the previous one. But a number of other people, well not that number, but I think that...well certainly Armitage, certainly Chadwick had been sent. I don't think there were any others, but...

Paolozzi, did he go again? No.

He went I believe just after me, but I'm not certain about that. Maybe he went before but...

And so, it turned out to be quite a sort of mini retrospective, didn't it, your showing there.

Yes.

It was quite a lot of work?

Quite a lot of work, yes, including two quite big ones. But...obviously the British Council thought of these exhibitions as being retrospectives, because obviously they had put together an exhibition which included all the best works.

Yes.

And you had...you were the only sculptor that time, is that right?

There were usually one painter and one sculptor. Well Gwyther Irwin, he was half-way between the two; I mean he was...

Was he doing his collage at that point?

Yes. So I think that they were...well they were three-dimensional collage things, and so it's difficult to categorise him either as a painter or a sculptor; I think he has become much more of a painter than he was then.

And so he was there, and was Roger Hilton there at that time?

Roger Hilton, yes.

Yes, and he won a prize?

He won a prize.

Yes. And Tilson, Joe Tilson I think was as well.

Joe Tilson was there too, yes.

And did you go out this time?

Yes.

And was it exciting? I mean...

Yes, yes, it was...it was just a long party. It was very good, and lots of people, lots of artists, lots of critics and gallery people.

And did Hilton go out, and the other two?

Yes, yes.

And did you know him anyway, Hilton?

Not very well. He was even less easy to get on with than the other chap we were talking about! (laughs) He was a most quarrelsome chap.

So did you give him a wide berth, or did you...?

Yes, I gave him as wide a berth as...I didn't want to have anything to do with him.

And, Gwyther Irwin, he was...was he quite young then? About thirtyish was he? No, a bit more than that.

I suppose...35 perhaps, yes.

He also was another...he was on the staff at the Bath Academy of Art at some point, I think a bit later on.

I think a bit later on, after I left, yes. He was one of the Gimpel people.

Oh yes, of course, yes, yes. And did the Gimpels, did they go out? Did anyone from there go?

Oh they always went out, they held court there. And everybody knew them, and it was very useful, very good.

And who from the British Council went out? Was Lilian...?

Lilian Somerville, yes, she went out there. She really kept the thing very much to herself; I mean the other people didn't get a look in. She was the queen.

Yes. And who did you meet among the other artists that you particular remember meeting, from the other countries represented?

Oh, many, many. People like Berrocal, he's a Spaniard, sculptor, who did a whole lot of multiples. He...I think he had a business connection with a foundry, I think somewhere like Bergamo, and he and I at that time were concerned with doing the same sort of things, except his things tended to be sort of dismembered figures which fitted together. I'll show you a picture of one.

And was he working in bronze?

He was working in bronze.

Yes obviously, with the connection with the foundry, sorry.

Bronze and brass. Highly polished. And he was...he was quite a bit younger than I was, I think.

And did you keep up the connection with him?

No, I saw him a few times here, but not...

Yes, you didn't visit him in Spain or anything?

No, no. I don't think he was in Spain much; I think he spent time in Paris and in Italy.

Right. And anyone else that you remember meeting then?

No. I met a lot of the...well I did meet a lot of the artists, but I can't remember who they were, because afterwards when one meets them, that sort of confuses the picture and you don't know then when you met them, whether you met them before or after, or... So that, not with my exhibition but with the previous ones, with Armitage and with Chadwick, I went to Paris for their openings.

Oh did you?

And came across quite a lot of French sculptors. But there again I can't remember in what order I met them, because since that time I've been going backwards and forwards to Paris, and to France, and met...I was connected up with an Anglo-French student exchange, and every year we had a get-together as often as we could manage it in France.

Was that while you were at the College?

Yes, but nothing to do with the College.

Oh right, right.

And, we used to go around and visit various artists, people like César, who I knew quite well.

And where did he live? Was he based in Paris or was he outside?

He was based in Paris, but had a house down near Cannes, or...no, it was near...down in the south, Avignon.

Oh right, yes.

It was between Cannes and Avignon.

Sort of Provence kind of...

Yes. Went down there to see him.

Because you also...I think your work was exhibited in, was it Rouen and Angers?

Yes.

Was that to do with that exchange you were talking about, or was that something...?

Well it wasn't to do with the exchange, but it came about through the exchange, in that I met a number of people who I came across at the annual party that we had, and they invited me to have exhibitions.

Right, so...

They were more on the scale of the Taranman exhibitions.

Right, I see. Yes, one I think, that was in...one was in '78, so it was a bit later.

Where was that?

I've got a note of one at the Ecole d'Art in Angers.

Yes.

And one at the Galerie d'Ecole des Beaux Arts at Rouen.

At Rouen, yes.

I think they were both in '78.

Were they?

Yes. And what was it called, this exchange? Did it have a name, that you remember?

I can't remember.

No. It was a student exchange, or a...?

A student exchange. Well, it was a student exchange except that the annual get-togethers were staff, and it was a sort of horse sale! (laughs) The principals of schools of art around Britain, and in France, met together to say how many students they would take, and how many they would like to send on this exchange. The French were very very much more interested and excited by the whole idea. The attitude of the English was very much more that it was a nice opportunity for a holiday, which was very sad, because the French were very serious about it.

And so which students did you send? Were they students from several art schools in England?

Yes.

Yes, and you helped select them?

No. No.

So what was your connection with it then? Or did you receive the others at the Royal College, or at Chelsea?



No no no, I had nothing to do with it.

You were just sort of there?

I wasn't on the...I wasn't on the sort of foot-soldier's level.

No, no. Right, you were on the general level.

Pardon? Yes, that's right, yes.

Or colonel of the regiment level!

I was on the sort of philosophical side.

Right. And so what French schools of art were well thought of then at that time?

Oh there were a number which were really very good. Nice had a very good school, built in an absolute...unbelievable area, right at the top of Nice, overlooking the whole town, and the view was incredible. And the place was...it was also run as an art centre, so that there were all sorts of conferences which took place there. And it was a really professional set-up. But Rouen was a very good one, Angers was a very good one, Nantes, and Aix. We went round to all of them.

Lovely. And in Paris itself, was it the Ecole des Beaux Arts?

No, the Ecole des Beaux Arts wasn't really very good, yet they had...César was the chap in charge of the sculpture. He knew that it was not very good, and we organised an exchange with him, but it was on the basis that he would bring, he personally would bring a group to London, and we would look after them and they would go around and see things and see schools. But they didn't stay; the others all stayed for three, six months.

Oh I see, so how long did this lot stay?

I don't know, about a fortnight I think, something like that.

Oh I see, right.

And César at that time had been having a number of exhibitions in England at the Hanover Gallery; he was quite well-known here, especially he was well-known to Bob Sainsbury, and Sainsbury had bought his works, and we prevailed upon Sainsbury to give a bursary at the Royal College for a French student to do a year at the College, which was quite successful, we had three, four, five perhaps, students, over five years from France, and they were great value in being at the College the whole time, and they were a very good influence to my students, and a number of sort of friendships were struck up, and people had long-standing connections with Paris in that way. You know of Tony Cragg?

Yes.

Well he went off to...he went off to Tourcoing, you know, that's on the French-Belgian border, and being near Germany too, and it was the beginning of his love affair with the Germans.

Right. So that...the exchange scheme lasted...?

It's still going.

Oh it's still going? Right, oh that's good. Are you still involved in it, or not?

No, no. The comparable chap on the French side was a man called Adam-Tessier, Maxim Adam-Tessier, who was an Anglophile, which is fairly unusual among Frenchmen. And so, he got to retiring age, and he had been the Chief Inspector, he became the Chief Inspector; he was a sculptor too. And although I still see him, he still comes over here and he comes, whenever he's over here he comes and stays with us, but when he stopped, I stopped. And also when I left the College, I think probably I was a bit disillusioned with the whole idea, because I think that it could have been...it could have been marvellous. One of the first causes for that disillusionment was the fact that I arranged with the Institut Francais at South Ken that they were going to run a language course for us, for our people, for the College people, but that the people concerned with this exchange would also be able to join in. We got not one take-up.

Oh no!

For the whole thing. I mean, it was terrible.

Oh no!

And that was the feeling that I got over the whole thing, that it was a nice idea for a holiday but, you didn't want to get too involved.

Oh dear, what a shame.

It was a shame, it was a shame. The French were all for it. And the French were so...the French were so impressed by our system, which at that time was...I mean Coldstream had done his re-organisation of the system, the College was running very well, and it was towards the end of Darwin's time there but it was running quite well, and the whole situation was ripe for it really to be taken advantage of, but they just missed out, nobody... You can't have the ideas and whip up the enthusiasm in other people as well.

No, no.

It's just impossible.

Yes. And so, Darwin left in '71 I think, I've got a note, is that right?

I would have guessed a little bit later than that.

Oh right, OK. So...

You may be right, but I...

But it was well before you left then that it started fizzling out, that it didn't work, from your point of view?

Oh what, the exchange?

Yes. I mean your involvement with it.

My involvement with it I suppose went on until about...until I left the College.

Oh right.

Which is 1980.

Yes, right.

But the College had nothing to do with the exchange. The French part of the exchange put on these marvellous parties once a year, and I felt that something had to be done from our side, because we always went over there and we never had them back here. And I organised, tried to organise something, and we put on a lunch at the College, but it was so difficult, and the College people were so awkward, and they were so really unfriendly, and they couldn't...and I was quite embarrassed by it.

When you say the College people, you mean the staff?

The staff; you see, the College, the senior common room was only open for lunch, not for dinner, and so there was no chance of having an evening meal, so it had to be lunch. Well, there were I suppose about 30 or 40 people turned up for lunch, and that meant that all the usual chaps had to wait for their lunch or they...and they were so disagreeable, and they were so...

Oh dear! What embarrassment for you.

Yes. So, that was another cause for disenchantment.

And, I was going to ask you, the Venice Biennale catalogue had a photograph of you in it, and I seem to have seen that one around.

That one, yes.

Yes, was that by Snowdon that one, or not?

Yes.

It was? Did he take...

I think so.

Did he take a whole sort of set of you?

Yes.

And are there any of you working as well? You look as if you are in a studio, are you?

Yes, that was from our studios.

Oh right. And are there some of you actually...?

No, I don't think there were, no. No, I mean he turned up, and...oh, it wasn't possible to do any work.

You weren't in that book, 'Private View', were you?

Yes.

That was a separate photo was it, or was that the same session?

I think it was...it was the same session, yes.

Right, so it might have been a different photo.

Yes.

And can you think of anybody else who took any photos of you?

Hedgecoe.

And he was a colleague at the College was he?

At the College, yes.

Yes. What, did he teach photography, or no?

He was...yes, he became Professor of Photography. He was a department, he wasn't a school; you see the College was divided into schools, that's the Painting School and the Sculpture School and the Engraving School and the...or Printmaking, and photography was a department that to begin with was looked upon as a service department. He had grand ideas when he got the job in charge of photography, and made himself into a professor.

Right.

End of F3004 side B

F3005 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at this home in London on the 17th of November 1992. Tape 7.

Sorry, you were talking about John Hedgecoe at the College.

There's a helicopter there, just hovering still.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

John Hedgecoe, you said he had a department of photography. What school was it affiliated to, or wasn't it, was it separate?

I think it was affiliated to the Graphic Design School, and it became a separate entity.

And it became in its own right, a separate... Did it ever become a...is there a school of photography?

I don't know, it's so...it's so involved and complicated, and the titles seem to change so often.

But he took a photograph of you...I know I saw one in the Fitzwilliam Museum catalogue.

Yes.

Yes, and are there others?

Yes, he took quite a lot of us.

What, at different stages? I mean different times, did he take them, or was there a whole...?

Yes, yes, yes.

So there are some of you and your students? Are there some that he took of you working with your students as well?

No.

No, just you by yourself?

Yes, in the studio at the College, yes. In my studio, yes. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Another thing I was going to say, I know that you were Professor at the College from 1960 to 1980.

Yes.

How did it happen? Did you apply for the job?

No I didn't apply, I was approached. I suppose I was approached by the Registrar at the College, who asked me if I would go along and...because Robin Darwin would like to talk to me. And I found out by talking to him that he had talked to various people. I think he had talked to Anthony Caro; in fact I know he had, because he showed me correspondence which he had had with Caro. And obviously Caro was making demands which Darwin felt that he couldn't fulfil, chiefly along the lines of who as staff Caro would like to get rid of, and who he would like to appoint. I suppose he asked me the same questions as he asked Caro, and I could see from his point of view that...he had instituted contracts with the staff, so it was not within his power to get rid of anybody until the contract finished, or it could be shown that the people were so unsatisfactory that he could get rid of them without awkward questions being asked. I think the fact that I was asked to go and talk with him was due to the fact that there was somebody on the staff at the College, I think in the Painting School, who was related by marriage to Darwin, and this was Julian Tevelyan.

Oh right.

And Julian had been teaching at Chelsea the same time as I had been teaching there, so I knew him quite well, and I believe that Robin Darwin asked Julian who he thought was available, and Julian said that he thought it might be a good idea to talk to me, and I think it came about that way. I know it didn't come through Henry Moore, because I said...[that helicopter is still there]. I said to Henry Moore after I had been appointed, I hear that Caro had been interviewed - or if you can call it an interview, it wasn't, it was much more informal than an interview - and he said, 'Oh yes, yes, I recommended him'. So I said, 'Well that was a fine state of affairs. What about me?' And he said, 'Oh, I didn't think you would want it.'

So, Caro had been at St Martin's at that point, had he? Or hadn't he?

I suppose yes, I suppose he was at St Martin's by that time. He had been working with Moore as his assistant for a relatively short time, so he knew him quite well.



What, at about...at what sort of date had he been working with Moore?

Well it must have been before 1960.

Yes.

So that's how it happened.

Yes, oh that's interesting. And you know you said Trevelyan was related by marriage to Darwin.

Darwin was married to his sister. Right, thanks, I just wondered which way round it worked. And so, were you quite friendly with Trevelyan?

Yes.

From the Chelsea days.

Yes.

That's where you met him was it?

Yes.

Right, so you knew...

I knew of him long before that, because Trevelyan was...had got himself annexed to the Free French in London, and so 'Picture Post' from time to time had pictures of him in his French army uniform around the pubs in Chelsea...in Soho.

So you knew him by sight.

I knew him by sight, and he was the sort of chap who, once you had seen him, you know, you didn't forget him, because he was a very distinctive sort.

Yes, did he always have a beard?

No, he didn't always have a beard, no. No no, he had...he had a very...he had an extraordinary sort of...I don't know what it was, a slow stroke or something of the sort, because quite suddenly and without any warning, I think his speech started to thicken up and he finished up...I could really not understand anything he talked about. But he did get better before he died, but it was very odd, and tragic too. He carried on painting.

Yes. And his wife, Marry Fedden, she taught at the College for a bit, didn't she?

Yes. I think she did, not in my time, except she may have come in for the odd days. The College system worked on the basis that there were a certain number of regular staff and a certain number of people coming in from, on a one-off basis. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

.....anyway, that you were saying just a moment ago, off the tape you said about Trevelyan, you might have met him much earlier in...

I think I did meet him in 1936, because when the 1936 Surrealist exhibition was being organised, in part by Roland Penrose, and it was held at the New Burlington Gallery, Trevelyan was closely involved in that, and I'm sure I must have met him then.

Right. And so, we seem to have...we may as well go on talking about the College if that's all right with you. So you arrived, and what was the first thing you did when you got there to sort of change things?

I thought how I could change the staff.

Right.

It was relatively easy, because there was such hanky-panky going on that...and I believe one of the students was suing, or threatening to sue a certain member of staff. I didn't get myself involved in that at all, and I didn't want to know about it.

Was it hanky-panky, naughty hanky-panky?

Naughty hanky-panky, yes! What other sort is there?

I was just checking! (both laughing)

I mean the school I believe was open all night; there was no such thing as discipline; nobody ever knew where they were, and it was impossible. Well fortunately the person who was threatening to sue this member of staff was in some way connected with somebody I knew in another school of art in London, and had a certain amount of influence with this chap, and who persuaded him to call off the dogs, and I think by doing that I sort of perhaps ingratiated myself a bit with Darwin, who felt that a very embarrassing situation had been side-tracked.

Yes, so the student that was suing the member of staff, it was a female student, was it?

No, no. No, I think it was a male one. The one being sued was the female one.

Oh I see, oh I see, ah!

I think, I don't know. I can't remember. That's what I'm saying anyhow! (laughs)

Yes. Anyway, can I just ask you, was it a sort of paternity suit kind of thing? No.

No I don't think it got to that stage, I don't think it had got to that stage, but...no, I think that somebody was beaten up.

Oh Lord! But your predecessor as Professor had been Skeaping, is that right? He had been...

Yes.

Yes. So he had sort of let it all go, had he? Or was he never particularly disciplined? You said he was a playboy, didn't you?

Pardon?

You said he was a playboy earlier on.

Well, yes, he was a good time Charlie.

Yes, oh sorry, yes, a good time Charlie, yes, you did say that. So he had let it...sort of lost the grip - oh well he hadn't had any grip.

Well I think that he was playing being a bohemian, and he was a very likeable sort of chap, and all the girls sort of fell for him all around. And he used to go off to...well he was...he was

in Italy on the Prix de Rome, he got the Prix de Rome the same time as Barbara Hepworth was there, and that was when he met her and they got married. But he always travelled around a lot, and he spent quite a lot of time in Mexico, and experimented with the Mexican system of terracotta firing, and that sort of thing.

Yes, because whenever I think of him I think of ceramic things for Wedgwood and things he did, yes.

Oh what, those...

The sort of horrible...

The glazed...the Heals stuff?

I think that's what it is. Was it for Heals, yes.

No no, he was quite different from that. The things in Mexico were pre-Colombian things.

So you managed to...how many staff had there been? There was the professor and who had there been before you?

I believe there was the professor and two tutors. And then there was somebody who...do you know of Christopher Ironside?

I know the name, yes.

He was the father of...

Janey?

He was the husband of Janey, father of...

Was he called Robin Ironside? No.

He was Robin Ironside.

Oh sorry, I'm going mad, yes.

No the girl who was the agony aunt on...

Virginia.

Virginia, yes. He was her father.

Right. And he died quite recently?

He died quite recently. And he was on the staff, chiefly on the basis of his connection with the Mint, and the connection with making medals, and coins. This was the strange state of affairs when I took over. There was one chap, Robin Ironside - Christopher Ironside; Robin Ironside is a different chap isn't he?

Yes, I think I've got in a muddle.

Yes, I think you have, yes.

Yes, sorry.

Yes, Robin Ironside I think was...he was a painter.

Yes, sorry, I got the wrong name, yes. So, Christopher Ironside...

Christopher Ironside was there from the point of view of medals. There was also another man who was there as a letter-cutter. Well both of those appointments were ridiculous at this time; even in 1960, you still don't want...there still wouldn't have been anybody who was either making medals or was letter-cutting. And another one, Jim Cadbury-Brown, who is an architect, he was also on the sculpture staff, and I was quite friendly with Jim Cadbury-Brown, in fact he is a great friend of a chap who lives next door, who is also an architect. And so, it was obvious that those three had to be substituted, or somebody had to be substituted for them. So that was quite easy. Gradually I got rid of the others, and appointed them with people that I knew.

[END OF SESSION]

End of F3005 side A

F3005 side B is blank

F3006 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 20th of November 1992. Tape 8.

So last time you just began talking about your time at the College, and who you arranged to get...the staff you had managed to ease out.

Yes.

So you began, set about appointing new staff, that you wanted, did you?

Oh well it was all a gradual process, I mean both getting the ones out that I didn't want, and getting other people in. In fact I tended to have people in on a fairly short-term basis, which meant that I could try all sorts of people out.

And did they come in as visiting staff?

Yes.

Yes, so there was no one there that was there every day?

There was. There was one person who had been there all the time, and he was the sort of nominal second-in-command I suppose, and a back-up chap.

And who was he, what was his name?

His name was Wayne Hobson.

Right. And, did you have a technician, or someone like that as well?

Yes, there were...it varied between one technician and three technicians. When the foundry, when I set up the foundry, I took on an extra chap, in fact three brothers, who were of an Italian family, and a bronze foundry had been in the family for generations, and they came over to England I suppose after the First War, when there was quite a large influx of Italians, selling ice cream or fish and chips, or running foundries.

Ah, and what was their name?

Angeloni. Little angel! Well a big angel!

And so where had you come across them originally then? Had they worked for another firm that you had...?

Yes, I set up the foundry with one of the students, and somebody who was appointed, had been appointed technician, and I think he and I didn't get on very well together because I was a bit critical.

What, the student or the technician?

The technician. And he left. And it just happened that at that time Angeloni `maggiore' had quarrelled with the firm of founders that he was working for, and...

They were in London were they?

They were in London, yes. And so he was free, and he came along to see if there was any vacancies for a founder. So that was very good.

That was perfect timing.

But of course although he was difficult chap, and very quarrelsome, he was a very good founder.

Oh that's good. And can you remember the name of the firm he came from then?

No, I can remember a lot of the names of Italian founders, and there were I suppose about six foundries that were run by Italians in London, and I can't remember which one it was.

So, there hadn't ever been...there hadn't been a foundry under Skeaping's time, or...?

No. Except as Skeaping always did, he experimented, and it's a wonder he didn't blow himself up, because when I got there any sort of health inspector, or whoever it was who might have come round at the present time, would have been horrified. I had worked on Henry Moore's works with another foundry in Fulham, and so I knew the foundry business fairly well; also I had already set up a foundry at Corsham. So that it was fairly easy. It's a very simple process.

Is it?

Yes. The lost wax process that is, anybody can do it; I mean so long as you've got the heat to melt the bronze, and a kiln to fire the mould, you could do it in your kitchen.

And, you used the foundry for bronze, but did you use it for other...did you use it for aluminium, or...?

No, I cast a few things in silver, jewellery and that sort of thing.

Jewellery, did you?

Yes.

That you made yourself?

Yes.

Oh right.

Yes. I got a prize from the Goldsmiths Company.

Oh did you?

Yes.

Were you a member of the Worshipful Company or whatever it's called?

No no no no no, no no.

So what was the jewellery like you made?

I'll show you a piece.

Can we now, as we're talking about it, or not? I mean describe it, or do you want to talk about it later? We can talk about it later.



Well, it was cast in silver, and then gilded. The actual one which I entered for this competition, the Goldsmiths Company were arranging to do all the technical stuff, and I took it along to their agent and had it...I think...I seem to remember that I made the first cast myself in silver and then took it along to the Goldsmiths Company and they cast it from my first silver cast.

And what was it actually?

A broach.

A broach.

Yes. With a diamond.

And is your wife the proud owner of this now?

Yes.

Oh good.

And there's one cast in the Victoria & Albert Museum, and the Goldsmiths Company have got a cast.

Right, so there were three, were there, or more?

I don't know how many they did, because the thing belonged to them and it's up to them what they did.

Right. And, what was it like? I mean was it fruit-formed? What was it based on?

No no no, it was abstract, completely abstract. I'll show you. If you pour molten wax onto water you get all sorts of funny shapes, and that's what I did, and I made some rings and other smaller broaches.

And did you enjoy working on a small scale like that?

There's not much difference between working on that sort of scale and large ones, except the large ones are a bit more difficult to carry around, move around.

And that was what, in the early Sixties was that, when you were...or not?

It must have been, yes. Yes, because I didn't go to the College until 1960, and I set up the foundry I suppose...it must have been in the first year.

And the competition of the Goldsmiths Company, they initiated the competition did they?

Yes. Yes, it was probably some sort of anniversary that they were celebrating. It was all quite amusing, but it was just amusement, it wasn't anything very serious.

And were other...did you know other people who had been asked to do it, to enter that competition?

Yes I did, but I can't remember who they were now.

And was there a separate jewellery making department or whatever at the College?

At the College? Oh yes, yes, a School of Jewellery and...Silversmithing and Jewellery it was called.

And who was head of that then?

Robert Goodden, who was the brother I think of...now what's his name? There's another Goodden who's a designer.

Oh right, a designer, right.

He's still alive, I think; I haven't heard of him dying.

And so...

That was a good thing...a very useful perk, to having a job at the College; there were so many different departments and schools where you could go along and have all sorts of things done. I mean I had a suit made.

Did you?

Yes. In the Fashion School. And a jacket with a brilliant scarlet lining.

Oh, wonderful. Oh that's very useful. Were they made by students, those, or by the staff?

No, they had craftsmen to do it. A very good tailor they had.

Very useful!

Yes. So that one could get prints printed. I worked for a short time in the printmaking department on lithographs and etchings.

Right. Did you do the set of etchings you did for the Beckett...?

Yes, yes. I did the etchings, I mean I worked on the plates, but then the plates were sent to Paris to be printed. They did some prints at the College, but the colour wasn't half so good as it was in Paris. And as Givaudan was in Paris he arranged all that.

Right. And this is the 'Molloy'?

'Molloy', yes.

And was that commissioned by Givaudan, or...?

Yes, when Givaudan opened his gallery it was the occasion when the...he invited a certain number of people to produce books, and they were all sorts of fanciful books; nobody could recognise them as being books. Beckett was most...was very...what shall we say? Not unbelieving, but he really couldn't see where the books came in. But that...mm?

Sorry, go on.

No, I...

I was going to say, that was a box. Your particular contribution was a box of how many etchings were there?

There were 35 etchings, and they were each on the cover of 35 booklets.

Right.

I mean each one was on one booklet, and they hung on a certain Meccano-like contraption which Givaudan had thought up. It was all a bit silly, and I think Beckett thought it was silly too! (laughs)

And it was a rather unusual box as well wasn't it.

Yes. Well, that was my box, I mean I...

You invented that box?

Yes. Yes, that was the box which contained the 'Meccano' set, and copies of...the whole book, 'Molloy', was cut into 35 pieces; Givaudan cut it into pieces, so he seemed to think that they were the natural breaks, but I didn't see that and I don't think that Beckett saw it either.

So you chose to illustrate something from each separate...

No no no. No, I mean this was...as I said to Beckett, that part of the reason for choosing it, I had read all his works and knew about him, and part of the reason for choosing this book to do it with the etchings is that it's a completely impossible book to illustrate, so it was by no means an illustration. I tried...I looked upon it as being a series of etchings parallel to what Beckett's attitude might have been, but it was a bit far fetched.

And were they coloured etchings? They were coloured etchings, yes.

Yes, they were etchings and aquatints.

Right. And so you did them what, was Alistair Grant, was he...?

Yes. Yes, I didn't...well he was in charge of the department, but I didn't...and I had help from the technician, but that was about all. Because all these things were repeats, reproductions of drawings which I had already made.

Right, I see.

Often at the same...actually at the same scale, the same size.

Right, so the technician literally helped you transpose the drawing on to the plate?

No no, I did that.

Oh right.

Yes. He told me how long the etching plate ought to be in the acid to make a certain effect. It was the technical things that he was advising me about.

And, were they the only prints you have made, except for the...when you were at Corsham you made that lithograph, didn't you, had you made some other ones?

No, I made a number of things at the same time or just after, at the College.

And were they exhibited at all?

No, they've never been exhibited. Always I've felt that it was...when I set out to do these things, you remember the black and white lithograph that I showed you? Well at that time that was selling for £2. Well who on earth's going to bother about exhibiting for that sort of return? I mean now a print of that sort of size would sell probably for £75 or £100.

At least I should think, yes. Especially if it was by you. But I mean there were people weren't there that were interested in artists' prints. Robert Erskine was it, at the St George's Gallery, and people like that.

Yes, yes. But normally those sort of people they ran a sort of printing enterprise, and so they were doing all the printing; in fact you were in some ways working for them. And I didn't join in that. Also, sculpture is such a long and all-embracing activity, that there's not much time left for doing anything else.

No.

Drawing and sculpture together, you don't do sort of stage design and all that sort of thing, as the painters can. I mean the painter, it's much easier for a painter.

And, you mentioned last time Cadbury-Brown.

Yes.

Was he still there in your early...he was there for a bit.

Yes. He's the chap who, with Hugh Casson did the College building.

Ah, yes, right.

What date did that go up then, the building then?

I can't remember. Some time in the Sixties.

And did you have another architect on your staff, or...?

No.

No, to replace him then?

No. Oh no. What would I be needing an architect for? (laughs)

Well I wondered. No, I wondered whether you might, to help, you know...

No. Because, and this was a part of my philosophy of teaching and running the school at the College was that I thought, rightly or wrongly, that students shouldn't be primarily interested in selling their work, that they should be interested in realising their own character. The trouble with commissioning, being commissioned to do works, and working for architects, is that they are always trying to impose conditions. Well, that's all right if after you have finished being a student you go out, and this is the way you want to make a living, well that's up to you, but I think that an educational institution has a responsibility to make sure that the students' character is developed the way that... I mean we will talk about this later, but it's like...recognising the fact that each student is an individual person, and is likely to develop, left to his own devices likely to develop in his own individual way. And it's up to...the school of art has a responsibility I believe to help get the student to realise what this individuality is. And commissioning, or working in relation to architecture cuts across this, it stops you doing it. So, there's no need for an architect.

Yes. No, I can see that, absolutely.

He's a very nice chap, I mean I've always been friendly with him, and I still see him from time to time because he lives next door.

So, who did you...who was one of the first people you got in then, to replace either Ironside or...?

Well, Ralph Brown had been teaching there for a bit under Skeaping, and I kept him on, and he was a very good teacher. And there again, this was something which we will come back to later on, the qualities of people who are good teachers, those who are good sculptors, and they're not necessarily the same thing. In fact there's a lot to justify one's belief that they are often not the same thing. I don't know if you want to talk about that now.

Yes, as it's cropped up.

I was in educational institutions, Chelsea, Corsham, the College, for 30 years, and during that time I had a lot of opportunity to appoint and to sack staff, not only...and the fact that being a governor on a number of schools I was also in on appointing people to teach at those schools. And I am convinced that there's a good likelihood of a person who is a good practitioner, a good sculptor, or a good painter, that they will not be a very good teacher, because it's necessary, I believe, to get inside the skin of the student. A good practitioner is not so likely to do that, because most very good...most good artists, and certainly great ones, are such egotists that that's the last thing that they ever want to do. I mean the Victorian sort of professor, holding forth, pouring out pearls of wisdom, is a nonsense, because however good they are, in fact the better they are the more likely they are to be egotistical and have no sympathy at all for anybody with any different point of view. I mean, even to the point...it's a common sort of opinion that Henry Moore was a good teacher; I don't think he was that good, for that reason. Among my students, the best ones, the ones who turned out best as sculptors, usually they are the poorest teachers, and they are short-sighted, they are concerned all the time only for things which are of interest to them. And that's not what a student wants, or it shouldn't be. It is, obviously, there's a certain section among students whose sort of measure of success is the extent to which they can repeat what their teachers told them, and try to repeat the success which he has had. I mean the worst ones of that sort are American girls, because this seems to be what...from my experience, this always seems to be what they want. In fact, when I was at Chelsea it was not uncommon to have American girls turning up - perhaps men too, I don't know - saying, I'd like to be in this person's class, or I would like to be in that person's class. Well why would you want to be in this person or that person's class? 'Because I like his work.' Well, they may be temperamentally completely different. What's the point?

And so, you didn't have a sort of atelier system did you?

No no, never.

Because obviously that would go against what you think.

End of F3006 side A



F3006 side B

Right. So, you can carry on about...you were talking about the girls, the American girls imitating, wanting to imitate their teachers.

Yes, I mean this is a system which has carried on from way way back, the way the French organised their...and the Germans. But it's an extension of a teacher's egotism, and a negation of what I believe to be a basic truth of education.

So how did you put that into practice? I mean how was it physically laid out and things like that, at the College?

Well, if you remember, the Sculpture School at the College was in corrugated iron huts which had been built way way back.

Yes, in Queen's Gate.

Yes. Each studio was big enough to house four students; the room was divided up. I started out with just having the room and there being four people in the room, and with a fairly clear idea of what their territory was. And gradually the students among themselves seemed to prefer the idea of their territory being more than a line in somebody's mind; they wanted it...they wanted to be shut off from other people. So gradually they built up barriers, and...so that they could have less contact with the other students, than my arrangement. And then they did their work, and the staff and I used to go around and talk to them about what they were doing. And because of that it was much more possible to adopt an attitude of, all right, now this is your work. Surprise me. I don't want to see anything that you have...that's been done before, I want to see something which is essentially from you. And that seemed to be fairly successful, certainly successful with the good ones, but for the less good ones I think they found that a terrible strain. But then you can't run an institution like that on the basis of some and some. What is it, if you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen! And really this is the situation which is going to exist when they get out of the college; once they get out this is the attitude. I don't want to see what somebody else can do better, I want to see what you can do, I want to know about you. And I think that's the only way that one can run a school, I can't see how it can possibly be done in any other way. A complete humility on the part of the staff, in relation to the student; the student is there to develop himself, not to develop me.

And you had your own studio there as well?

I had my own studio, yes.

Which was in a separate hut was it, or...?

No no no, it was one of the...one of the studios; in fact I changed around from time to time, to a certain extent, because the studio that was available for me was somewhat smaller than the other ones which could accommodate four students. But as I say, some of the best students seemed to appreciate this way of working. The difficulty was, I think, that too many of the students, after they finished their time, went out to other schools of art and tried the same thing and it didn't work, because they were doing a different thing. I mean in first degree schools they are taking people from scratch and they're demonstrating to them what the possibilities are, what they can do, what is possible for them to do. By the time they get to the College, at post-graduate level, then they should have decided that for themselves already.

And so they tried to...so the students who had left the Royal College tried to cut out...I mean they probably didn't mean to but they cut out the basic grounding.

I think they had enjoyed that sort of freedom enough that they thought that that was what was necessary at the lower level as well, but it isn't. I found that conditions at post-graduate level were absolutely ideal, and I would never have wanted to teach at any other level.

Unfortunately...well, not unfortunately, because you've got to start somewhere, but at Chelsea and at Corsham one was at a different level.

Yes. And as you said, when you were talking about Corsham, you were saying that that was much more a sort of atelier kind of system, people slightly turning out imitations of their...

Yes, yes, yes. Mm, well especially when...we talked about Marie-Christine.

Marie-Christine, yes, and she that worked the other way.

And also, while I was there, the painters were all painting in the style of Tamayo. Tamayo had had an exhibition fairly recently, and they had all been along and thought this was lovely, and it certainly fitted into the general sort of gaiety of Corsham.

So, at the College did your students do nothing but work in their studios on their own work?

Yes.

Or were there...I mean did they...were they ever encouraged to go out and do something completely different, have a break, or...to get...?

They were...they had to be there. I mean they were paid to be there. If one let up on that, they wouldn't be there at all.

No. No I meant as part of your teaching, did you ever say right, I want you to go...?

No no, no. The teaching wasn't on that sort of basis at all. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Did you ever encourage students from other departments to come and work in the Sculpture School at all?

No; from time to time the professors in the other Schools, such as Furniture and Silversmithing and Jewellery, and various other ones, did ask if they could send their students along for a week or so to do a bit of three-dimensional work, because they thought that this would help to get a development in the students' attitude, and make their work more three-dimensional. Well I think it was a mistaken idea, it rarely worked. I think that there is a great sort of misunderstanding in schools of art, or probably in the art world generally, that design owes a great debt to the fine arts: it looks to the fine arts for inspiration. Well I think this is totally wrong, I think it doesn't happen. It's possible for anybody working as a designer to look at the latest magazines and see what has been done. In painting and sculpture it's not the sort of thing on which to base a sort of, an educational system.

And you were also saying, when we were speaking a moment ago off the tape, about how important it is for design students to learn to cater for the client, the person who is...

Yes, I think that it's a mistaken idea to think that painting and sculpture, and design, are part of the same thing. They're not, they're completely different, the attitude is completely different. I think always, with painting and sculpture one is concerned with, basically with two people, with the artist and with the observer, with the audience. Occasionally of course, especially with sculpture, the architect can also become involved, but I think this then becomes, or illustrates, the unsatisfactory nature of, one of the unsatisfactory sides of commissioning work, that if you have somebody paying a designer to design something for him, whether it's a commodity for sale, or a publicity, or some sort of packaging, there's always the third person, the person who is paying, who is, justifiably, in the position to say no, that's not what I want; I want it like this, and I want it like that. Then he becomes...he is

playing an essential part in the production of the work. This is not the way that painters and sculptors can work.

But did your students ever go to the painting schools at all, or not?

No. It was of course possible always; if my students wanted to paint they could set up in their work space with an easel and they could paint, never stopped them doing that, and I was a painter.

Exactly, yes, yes.

That would have been quite interesting; very rarely did it happen, because at that time there was a fairly clearly defined difference between painting and sculpture.

And, in that time, when you were first there, can you think of any particular student that you became friendly with and that you keep up with and...?

I suppose that I keep up with the better ones all the time, because you meet them in galleries, you meet them in private views, and that sort of thing. One's a bit sad that there were other ones who I had looked upon while they were students as being very good, who have just dropped out, for one reason or another, and I suppose one of the reasons could be that they needed an institution, they needed a framework in which to work, and without that the pressures in the wide world are so strong that they didn't put up...they didn't put up with that pressure, or they found that they just didn't know how to cope with it.

Yes it must have been very useful to have such a sort of disciplined...

Well the marvellous thing about an institution like the College is that the students get as much and probably more from each other as they do from the staff, that they spark off each other quite a lot, and it's very interesting to see it happen.

And can you name any student from that time that, you know, ones that have now become better known and done well?

Yes. Yes. Well, I mean we have mentioned a few of them.

Tony Cragg you mentioned.

Tony Cragg, certainly he stands out. He has been a great success, and his work is not just success based on fashion, he really is an intelligent chap. But there's also Nigel Hall.

Was he the one you referred to and you forgot his Christian name, that the gallery in Paris gave a show to?

Yes, yes. There was also another Hall who was very good as a student, and I've rather lost sight of him, but people like John Maine, I saw him fairly recently, I was in India with him.

And what is his work like, John Maine's? What does he work in?

He worked in, I suppose plaster. We then cast things. You see the foundry, I set it up on the basis that it was going to be a commercial foundry. We were in the business of casting for people outside, and we charged them outside prices.

Ah, right.

Which had the double effect of maintaining the standard of work, because nobody was going to come along to us and have things cast if they had to pay the same prices outside, if the work was inferior, so it really had to be as good as outside.

So did you make some money for the department out of that?

Yes, we made quite a lot of money. I think now the income is something like £25,000 a year. And that's the other side to it. In addition to running it as a foundry to cast things, we also ran it as a course to train founders. So, there was a multiplicity of advantages of doing the whole thing. One of the most important things I found - well I didn't find it because I set out with that idea - of maintaining an awareness among the other students, not students who were having things cast in bronze, not who were doing anything connected with bronze, but to have a sort of technical set-up which was working at the highest...on the highest standards, helped them, because here in the institution was a set-up which was not sloppy in its attitude to technical things, and it worked... I mean there was a certain amount of hangover between the bronze casting and other things, such as metal welding; one of the technicians who was concerned with some work in the foundry also was a fantastically good welder. And so there was a carry-over, and a help as between different sides of the foundry. And, the other side was that we cast things for the students for nothing, and that came out of the profits. I was pretty dictatorial as far as what was going to be cast; I mean if I thought that something wasn't worthwhile casting then I wouldn't cast it. But we cast quite a number of things. Certainly

there were students, like John Maine, who were having things cast, and did quite a number of things, and some of them quite large. Also, there was another student who I had forgotten to mention, named Bill Pye, who was casting very large things in aluminium. Yes, I said that we didn't cast things in aluminium, but occasionally somebody who had a special interest in doing it, we did. And he cast quite big things, and they were seen around, and I think this had a good effect on sort of getting him started.

Had you mainly male students in your department, or is that just...? No.

No, I had the reputation of being anti girls, but it was entirely wrong. You see, the disadvantage of having girls around, most of them anyhow, was that sculpture is a very heavy...is very heavy work, and the smaller girls especially were going along to the bigger chaps, getting them to carry the things around for them, move them around, and generally sort of act as a...which wasn't very good. I started off as a student at Chelsea - not started off, as I explained to you... And pretty well the whole of the school were nothing but debs.

Really?

And it was wonderful, absolutely wonderful, on the social side, but by the time I had got to the College I sort of realised that this is not the sort of basis on which you could run a professional school. I met an awful lot of very nice girls at Chelsea, but it's not the sort of thing that has anything to do with that sort of education.

Right. And were they in the Painting School or the Sculpture School, the Debs at Chelsea, or just they were milling around?

Henry Moore attracted them to the Sculpture School, they thought he was marvellous, and he had got them to produce some very very good work. I came across one fairly recently. I had a studio in Chelsea, and...

You had a studio in Chelsea quite recently?

Until about ten years ago, yes. And it was in the basement, or the ground floor of Cadbury-Brown's redbrick development at World's End. My workshop, it was intended as a shop and it had been empty for quite a long time and they couldn't let it, and so I rented it as a studio. The next shop to mine was the sort of office of the caretakers, and one of the caretakers had a work which I remembered being done in Henry Moore's class at Chelsea, of the girl who is now and has been for a long time, the wife of Victor Pasmore.

Oh, right, oh!

You know that very peachy reclining figure...

What, backside sort of...with her bottom out?

Yes, which I think is in the Tate. She was the girl. And she was one of the favourite models at Chelsea, and not only did she pose for the painters but also in the sculpture class.

Oh right. And what's her Christian name? Is she called Wendy?

Wendy, yes. Wendy Blood. Daughter of Brigadier Blood, Brigadier Sir somebody Blood, or Lieutenant General or something he was.

So, would you put her into the category of deb?

No, no no no, the deb ones were people who really were debs.

Proper debs, yes.

Proper debs, I mean they were sort of the families of Chelsea residents, and...well people like Queensberry's family. I mean not only was he a student at Chelsea but his sister was also a student.

End of F3006 side B

F3007 side A

.....20th of November 1992, tape 9.

So, you were just talking...you just mentioned off the tape then the difference between art schools before and after the War, which is worth mentioning again I think.

Well before the War the schools were predominantly finishing schools for debs, and it was a very pleasant atmosphere, but quite different from now where schools have become a much more professional, vocational training.

Yes. And you were saying a lot of part-time...

There used to be. The way that the schools were set up before the War was that part-time students played quite a big part. I think there were far fewer people perhaps who could afford to be students full-time; there were no grants or anything of that sort. And so, they had evening classes, and even the day classes had I should think probably more than fifty per cent who were part-time people. [BREAK IN RECORDING] .....was very, very selective. I mean there were only about eight students shown there, out of twenty years at six, seven a year.

Yes. Sorry, that's now gone on the tape. We'll come back to your exhibition at the Fitzwilliam Museum when you left the College a bit later, but you were just mentioning before the War and after the War, art schools, and I just wondered whether you would like to explain what happened in art schools from the...what was it, about the Fifties, early Fifties, things began to change, the contrast, and how it was arranged.

Yes. They started to change really with a review of the general art school set-up, and this was done by means of a committee, the chairman of which was Bill Coldstream. And this committee having set up the philosophy of what Coldstream and his fellow committee members thought was desirable, the...I can't remember which way round it was, whether... There were two committees, there was the Coldstream Committee and also there was the Summerson Committee. Well the Summerson Committee I believe was the one which was responsible for sending artists and designers around to schools of art to validate their courses. The schools were not allowed to run official courses unless they were validated, and I think that students were...that local authorities would not support students on any courses other than those that were validated; it was a method of assuring the local authorities that their money was well spent.



And was that after the Coldstream, or you can't remember which way round?

I think they ran concurrently.

Yes. And Summerson was Sir John Summerson was it?

Sir John Summerson, who has just died, yes. He lived just across the way.

Yes. He was married to Hepworth's sister.

Yes. I feel sure that's the way round it was, because the people who went round to the schools were always referred to as the Summerson Committee, whereas the prime mover I'm sure was Coldstream.

Right.

And I had connections with Coldstream also in that for quite a time I was external examiner for the Slade, and once a year the people who were graduating from the Slade put up an exhibition of their work, and there was a committee of about six people, a painter, a sculptor, a couple of members of staff, and that sort of thing, and Coldstream.

Yes. And can you remember who your fellow committee members were?

Well, there was John Piper, there was Lawrence Gowing, there was a man named Townsend, who was a painter.

William Townsend?

William Townsend, yes, yes. And somebody else. There was also the Professor of Sculpture. I can't remember whether there was...no, there wasn't a professor of painting, because the Professor of Sculpture was somebody who had expected I think to be appointed Slade Professor of the whole lot. Coldstream was Professor Coldstream, but he was the only one apart from the chap who was in charge of the sculpture department.

Who was called?

Who was called...I don't remember. So it was a small cross-section of people; most of them had been connected with Coldstream.

At Euston Road.

Mm?

No, sorry, forget what I said.

Who...Coldstream used to be on the staff of Camberwell School.

Yes, so it was a sort of Euston Road School kind of...

Euston Road School, Camberwell...Euston Road School, which was...oh dear, I know so well.  
[BREAK IN RECORDING] Claude Rogers was also on the judging committee for the Slade diplomas.

Right. And what date are we talking about now?

I suppose...I suppose up to about perhaps '65. I don't think that I carried on much after that, partly because...[you had better turn it off]. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Sorry, the Professor of Sculpture at the Slade until '65 was who?

Yes, I can't remember.

Oh you can't remember, right.

I'll remember and tell you it later.

Yes. And can I just ask you, the sculpture which was produced at the Slade, was it very distinctively Slade, like you can always tell...well you could often tell the Slade tradition of fine art?

Yes, yes.

Was it quite figurative and...?

It tended to be so, yes, it ended to be so. This chap, and...I should add that the Slade did produce people, worthwhile sculptors. I mean Paolozzi was a student there, Turnbull was a student there. It was a much smaller school than the College, and they had fewer students.

About how many did they have then?

I shouldn't think they had much...I shouldn't think they had more than ten, in sometimes two years, sometimes three years.

But how many did you have then? I gathered you only had about six or seven, was that wrong?

A year.

A year, oh I see, they had ten over...

Ten altogether.

Oh I see, right.

Yes, there were sort of...probably only three each year. And the staff was small. They were not very well equipped; I think it's much better now. But they've always been a bit starved for money; I mean compared with the financing of the College and the financing of the Slade, they had a much tougher time. And that tended to make...tended to control the sort of things that they did. They weren't able to experiment half as much as was possible at the College.

How did it differ, the funding?

Well they were the London University, and so they were funded by the university authority. The university authority had a bigish pot of money, out of which all the different departments and schools, and colleges of the university had to be financed, and there's I suppose always a tendency that the art part missed out; whereas the College, which has varied in its funding source, at one time was funded direct from the Treasury. It has been funded by the...what's it called, the University Finance Commission, or...and now I think it's being funded by something else, but always there's been somebody, either Darwin, who was very good at putting the case for the College, or more recently Stevens.

Yes. So on your committee that you were talking about before...

Which one?

Sorry, on the...when you went to judge the...were they diploma shows, or...at the Slade?

Oh yes, at the Slade, yes.

There was a sort of clique of Euston Road, Camberwelly, staff?

Yes, yes. Yes, of those people on the committee, probably the only ones who weren't anything to do with Camberwell or already at the Slade, were John Piper and me, and I have an idea that we were the only ones.

And did you know Piper reasonably well?

Yes, fairly well, yes. He was always...well he was a different generation of course, I mean he was the same generation as Henry Moore, and so one didn't come across him that much because he was living out at Henley. I saw him at meetings of the Arts Council and things like that.

And had you met him way back, I mean when he was a war artists and things, through Moore, and...?

Yes, yes. And of course one of the big influences in the Thirties for me was the Seven and Five group, who were chiefly concerned with abstract painting and sculpture, Ben Nicholson, Barbara Hepworth, Moore...

Ivon Hitchens was one I think wasn't he?

I think he was, yes, yes; he was a little bit out of the general run. And Piper's wife, Myfanwy Piper published a magazine called 'Axis', which later was published as a book called 'Circle' I think, so I came in contact with him through that. And a chap who did quite a bit of writing for 'Axis' was living in Upper Park Road, which is just across Haverstock Hill on the other side, so I came across a lot of people who were concerned with 'Axis'.

Right. Can you remember the name of the man who wrote...?

No I can't; I was trying the other day to try to remember it, because Alan Bowness is closely connected with that lot. He was young then, and wasn't that closely connected, but he has since been connected through his mother-in-law, and his wife.

And so, what did the Coldstream Report find was wrong, or put right...?

I think that they tried to put the whole thing on a more professional footing. I mean up to the War schools of art were, tended to be run on the basis of a sort of spare time art club; never on the basis of anything like sort of architects' training, or solicitors' training, or...it wasn't professional training. To that extent it wasn't serious in that way.

And they had something called the N.D.D.?

N.D.D., yes.

National...

National Diploma in Design...N.D.A.D., National Diploma in Art and Design, yes, which was a government exam system, which superseded the previous one which had been running I suppose since the First War, which was an examination in sculpture, in...well first of all there was an intermediate, which was a sort of basic training where one did a little of all sorts of things, including architectural drawing and perspective, and life drawing, but all drawing, no painting and no sculpture, and then the second part specialised in painting, or sculpture, or engraving I suppose. But not design, at that stage, or not much of it anyhow, it was on a pretty low level. And from that exam one could then go on to the Royal College.

Right. And so when did the Dip.A.D. come? Was that after the N.D.A.D.? Did Coldstream...?

Well, I think the Dip.A.D. was the Diploma in Art and Design, and the...

Wasn't that after the N.D.A.D.?

I can't remember. I was never that involved. I was examiner for sculpture I think for the N.D.D., but I can't...I have an idea the Dip.A.D. came after Coldstream, and N.D.D. was before, but I may be wrong.

Yes, I think that's what I gathered, although I'm not qualified like you, but I think I sort of heard of Dip AD.

I think that was the way round it was, yes.

Yes, and so, did he also...was that as a result of the Coldstream Report, the Dip.A.D.?

Yes.

Yes. What about foundation courses?

Well that was a part of...that was a part of the thing. Foundation courses were set up as a preliminary test of aptitude really. It's more or less the same, but it was more clearly defined than it had been previously. And there were certain differences, as far as support by local authorities went. I think that for a bit of the foundation course they didn't support people at all, and then if you had proved that you were a worthwhile student then you got a grant.

Oh I see.

I have an idea that's how it was done.

And foundation courses were...did you have to go to your local...? I know within the last ten years or something you had to go to your local college of art or whatever to study that.

Yes, I think that probably was so.

Unless you paid to go out.

I think that's probably so. Recently there's been a big change in that they've done an exercise roughly the same as they've done in London, with the London Institute. You know, that Chelsea and Camberwell and St. Martin's and the Central were all amalgamated into one school called the London Institute. Before that they were all local authority schools and the Chelsea Borough Council ran Chelsea School of Art. And now, for instance in Norfolk there used to be the Norwich School of Art and the Great Yarmouth School of Art, and Lowestoft School of Art. Now I think there's only one. It's much more centralised.

Do you think that's a good thing or a bad thing?

It could be a bad thing or it could be a good thing. I think probably on balance it's probably a bad thing, because I think it really gives a uniformity, too much uniformity.

So what else did the Coldstream Report result in?

Well the chief thing it resulted in was to help support artists.

Help support artists?

Yes.

How?

Well, the people who went round validating courses were paid. After I stopped doing it!  
(laughing)

I hope you were given at least your expenses for that.

Yes, oh yes. Always the receiving school paid the expenses, so that you turned up to Liverpool or some such place and before you left you held out your hand for the train fare.

And you were saying, one of the courses you validated, I think you validated, was St. Martin's.

Yes.

Yes, and you were saying about what you thought of it.

Yes.

But I don't think you said it on here.

Oh. I went there two or three times I think; I think on one occasion it was not validated. I think in the subsequent ones they were. And we thought that although there were a lot of things which seemed not desirable, on balance it seemed to us that we felt that there was a place for a school like that, that there always out to be dissident schools around. You couldn't have a whole bunch of yes men.

And what did you disapprove of?

Oh that would be telling! (laughs) No, I think that one disapproved of the authoritarian nature of the school chiefly, and secondly that people were doing all sorts of things, and encouraged to work in a certain sort of way, without having been through the business of learning all the other things that they could have done, all the other ways of expressing themselves. In fact what they were doing seemed to me to be expressing the staff's opinion rather than their own.

Right. And the staff at that time, can you remember who they were?

All I can remember is a chap named Peter, Peter Atkins, or Peter Kardia, who had been at the same school as I was in Norwich. And he was one of the most outspoken and dictatorial members of staff. He was quite intelligent. But he was doing all the thinking for the students instead of letting them do some.

So was...again all their work was quite identifiable, was it, as being from there?

Fairly, yes, yes. There were a few dissidents even there, but I think that in the main they were rather unpopular.

And was that the time when there was a lot of welding going on there?

Yes, but also...yes, this was at a time when Caro was there, but also there were a whole lot of people working in what then was an innovative medium, of resin casting.

End of F3007 side A



F3007 side B

.....at St. Martin's then.

At St. Martin's, yes. And Kardia was more interested in conceptual ideas. Always there was a sort of conformity.

And were your students at the Royal College, were they beginning to use resin, to cast in resin?

Yes, they were casting in resin. There was somebody named John...John...Panting, he did a lot of resin casting.

And did you ever use it yourself?

Only as a means of making a model that was strong enough to be cast in bronze by a sand casting process, which is different from the lost wax. And sand casting needs...it means that the mould is made of sand, which is rammed onto the model, so that the model has got to be pretty stable. And the work at Norwich, the newspaper office, on the front is a large ball which is about five feet in diameter, I cast that in resin, because then it was cut in half and sent to the foundry where they rammed it up in sand.

And is the sand like loose sand, or...?

Yes, loose sand, but loose sand with some sort of binding medium with it, which...sometimes loam. Do you know what loam is?

Now I've heard of loam. Is it something limey?

No. No no no, it's earth. It's sort of...

Dead leaves break up into loam, do they?

Yes they do, yes yes, I was going to say compost. Earth which has got an element of that, so you can squash it and it stays in the shape. And it's then a mixture of sand and loam. It's rammed onto the surface of the model, and then the whole thing is encased in an iron box which comes to pieces, and when you put it together and you put the pins in, then it holds together, and it's the iron box really which holds the sand in shape.

Right, and has the resin bit been removed by this stage?

It's been removed, yes, yes.

So it goes wham! It makes its imprint in this sand.

Yes, yes.

And it keeps its shape.

Not exactly wham, because the chap sort of feeds the sand on with his hand, and damps it down all the time.

Oh I see, you have to be quite gentle with it.

Oh yes, yes yes. And the extraordinary thing is that the process of sand casting is a highly skilled job; you couldn't do that in the kitchen. And I've seen models of very complicated casts of very complicated models, where the pieces, there have been over two hundred pieces all fitting in to each other, and tiny pieces on bits of wire which fit in to another piece, and you could pull it off again and put it back again and it would stay up in shape. And when you finally get to pouring the bronze in, all these bits are fitted back into place like an enormous three-dimensional jig-saw inside the two halves of the box, the iron box, then the two halves of the iron box are put together and fixings put in to hold them together, and then the bronze poured in. But sometimes they are pouring one, two tons of bronze in one pour.

So that round piece, the large round in your Norwich sculpture, was that done so they could pour it all in and it was one piece, or did they do two halves and ram it together?

No, it was actually cast in three pieces and welded. But it could have been cast in one piece if the foundry had had the equipment big enough. I mean for instance...

We are just talking about that one round...yes.

Yes. For instance, bells, like the Big Ben bell, I think weighs something like thirteen tons, all cast in one piece, or poured in one piece, so it could have been done.

But that large round piece, was it not hollow?

Yes. But so are bells.

Yes I know, I know they are, yes. Right. So did you do...

I mean perhaps you haven't quite followed...

I think I've got lost.

That it can be hollow, because you ram the sand on the front and you ram the sand inside as well.

Oh right, inside, yes.

And that's the reason why you have to take it to pieces and...whereas with a ball which is cut, then you've got one piece there, and one piece there, and then you've got a great hunk in the middle which is the core, and that's the thing which controls the thickness of the metal, which probably is only about that thick, as opposed to a bell which is about that thick.

Yes, so the....[BREAK IN RECORDING] So that there is a...you were explaining, in the middle is a core, and there is another small piece of, is it metal, in the middle, the armature?

No, there's the armature on which the core is built, and supports the core, and the means by which the core can be lifted out of the mould.

Right. And so then you've got the narrow space to fill with bronze.

The thickness of the bronze, yes.

And you were saying that art schools don't practise...it's a highly-skilled job, the sand-casting.

It's a highly-skilled job for large works. It is possible to cast simple things in sand, and in fact there are some schools which do it, but it's not a very worthwhile thing, because while the lost wax process can be used by any reasonably intelligent student, especially for casting things like lead, sand casting is much more of a professional craftsman-like process.

[END OF SESSION]

End of F3007 side B

F3008 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 26th of November 1992. Tape 10.

You were mentioning last time that your students worked in, obviously bronze and aluminium and resin, they were beginning to work in, but what other materials did they use?

Well any. I mean there were no restrictions; if somebody wanted to carve in wood, or carve in stone, then they could, but very very few of them did, I mean it was out of fashion at the time. But fashions were no more frowned upon than encouraged.

And I also wanted to ask you, did you have a sort of quota of foreign students that you...?

No, no quota, no.

Just, if someone applied who was good enough...?

It was just accidental that one heard of somebody who would like to come. Of course at that time the fees for foreign students was much higher, so that was one discouragement for them. Now, under the Common Market all the European students come for the same fees as our home students.

And so, I've noticed in that Fitzwilliam catalogue you had an Indian student.

Yes.

That must have cost a fortune for him.

Yes; I think there were various ways of getting around it. I mean I think...I'm not certain whether that one who was included in the exhibition was supported by the Moore Foundation, but a number of the Indian students had been.

Right. I'm just going to try and get his name right.

Pardon?

I'm just looking at his name. Raghav Kaneria.

Kaneria, yes

And, did you find that the foreign students had a good influence on the other students particularly, as opposed to any...or had a different, useful...?

Yes, I think they had...they all had different viewpoints, and they all reacted on each other, no matter whether they were foreign or English.

And you mentioned Ralph Brown as being one of your staff.

Yes.

Who else did you have, who's worth talking about?

A number of people who were around at the time. Dalwood, Clatworthy, Liz Frink occasionally, because she had been a student of mine in Chelsea, and she was one of those who I would have classed under the ones which I said often the better the people were as artists the less good they were at teaching, because they could usually only teach in terms of their own work, and she was one like that. But she was a good influence around the place, I mean it was very good. At that time there was a certain continuing prejudice against women, and to have her around gave the girls in the school a bit more confidence.

And, you were separated geographically from the other departments.

Yes.

And you had mentioned that you were able to go into whatever departments you wanted.

Yes.

Like printmaking, and you had your suit made in the fashion department.

Yes! (laughs)

Who did you become friendly with or meeting ...

Well I...

In the senior common room and things, people...?

Yes, the good thing about the senior common room was that you met everybody, and so...I knew most of the staff.

And can we just...

All of them I suppose.

To set it in context, sort of who...so who was there? Was Carel Weight?

Carel Weight was there, yes.

And you mentioned I think off the tape, Queensberry, David Queensberry.

Queensberry, yes, he was there. He had been a student of mine at Chelsea, not a sculpture student but he was...I taught life drawing there for a bit.

Oh did you?

And he was in that class.

Right. But he was in fact head of Ceramics wasn't he, a Professor...

At the College.

At the College, yes.

Yes. So he had set up...had he set up his firm?

And his sister-in-law was my secretary.

Oh really?

Yes.

And what was her name?

I can't remember. No, I can't remember. But it was one of Queensberry's four wives, her sister was.

Right. I met...after I came to you last time I saw a friend of mine who remembers...she was at Chelsea at the time, and she remembered you very well, and she gave me all these names to ask you.

Oh yes? What's her name?

She wasn't a sculpture student. I think you might class her in a sort of Deb category. She was called Virginia Lucas in those days.

Lucas?

Yes.

No I don't know.

Anyway, she was remembering various people, including Willi Soukop she thought was...

Soukop, yes.

Was a friend of yours she thought.

Not exactly, not exactly.

She sort of remembered you together somehow.

Yes, no, Soukop was...first went there I suppose after the War, perhaps during the War, I don't know. When Henry Moore was still there, and when Henry Moore left and I took over his job at Chelsea there was a certain amount of friction between me and Soukop. He was always all right, but we had completely different views on things.

Right. [BREAK IN RECORDING] Yes, Brian Robb, you were saying was there.

Yes, he was there. And the Coxons of course.



Yes. And Edward Middleditch.

Middleditch, yes.

Roy Spencer?

Yes, Roy Spencer had been a student there, and he...soon after ceasing to be a student he became...he was one of the...soon he was put on the staff. I remember him chiefly, I remember his work of course, but for being an absolute crack shot; he was a sniper during the War.

And Anthony Wishaw, do you remember him?

Yes, yes. Some of them I still see.

And Gowing?

Gowing took over when...I suppose it was when Williamson retired, and he was another one of the Euston Road lot, and Camberwell School.

Yes. And he went to the Tate didn't he.

He went to the Tate for a fairly short time, I mean I think two or three years, and finally I think he got to his true home, which was the Slade, and he was in charge of the Slade for several years. But he did all sorts of other things; I mean he wrote books and he organised exhibitions, he organised a big Matisse exhibition at The Hayward. He did that sort of thing very well.

And going back to the Royal College, so who else, can you just name a few more people who were there when you were there, in other departments?

Well Misha Black was there, I was quite friendly with him.

And what department was his?

Industrial Design - or maybe it was called Engineering Design at that time.

And Fashion?

Janey Ironside.

Right, who we briefly mentioned last time.

And after her, I can't remember the girl's name. No, I forget.

And so, you used to meet in the senior common room for sort of lunch and things?

For lunch, yes.

And was that located where it is now, at the top of the Darwin building?

Yes. Well no, we moved there sort of half-way through my time at the College. Previously we had been in one of the houses in Cromwell Road, which is now the photography department. I think it was the photography, or it may have been housed next-door; they were 21 and 23 Cromwell Road which belonged to the College, and Darwin set up the senior common room in one of those houses.

Right. And there hadn't been one then before Darwin, a senior common room?

No, no.

I see. So that was a good idea then wasn't it.

Oh it was a very good idea, a marvellous idea. I mean it was quite a civilised set-up.

And the students had their own equivalent, did they?

Yes, not exactly equivalent. Yes, they had their...I think it was in the same house.

And, the other day you mentioned off the tape about when the Royal College got its charter.

Yes.

What did it mean when it got its charter?

Well, it's a sort of I suppose self-governing...became a self-governing institution, and the Queen turned up for the charter celebration, and I suppose she made a formal presentation of the charter, and sort of more or less a week of parties. It made I suppose a bit of difference, but not that much, because the College had always been...had always been in a rather privileged position, which was greatly frowned upon by the people in the other parts of the art educational establishment.

And, I just wanted to double check. Before the Coldstream Report, had the Royal College been exclusively post-graduate? Had it always been?

It's always been, yes, always been that, it was set up with that in view in mind. Which meant that it was in a privileged position, coupled with the fact that if it's self-governing then that really means a lot from the point of view of freedom to do what you want, not really answerable to anybody so long as the College came up with success, which it did.

Exactly. So meanwhile, you were still doing your own work obviously.

Yes.

And there were quite a lot of important exhibitions in the Sixties weren't there.

Yes.

Which was the one that you were most pleased to be included in?

All of them.

Which do you think had the most prestige?

At that time I suppose probably the Biennale, the Venice Biennale. But here there were various exhibitions, like the open-air exhibitions at Battersea Park, and also, I think there was an exhibition at the Royal Academy, 'Art of a Decade'.

Yes, that was I think at the Tate.

The Tate was it? Yes.

'Painting and Sculpture of a Decade'.

Yes, yes. There was one at the Royal Academy, but that was another one.

Yes, I think that was 'British Sculptors' possibly that you're referring to.

Oh yes, yes.

In 1972.

Yes.

And the one at the Tate was...

'64 was ...?

'64, yes. And were there any that you were rather unhappy about being missed out of? Or perhaps you weren't missed out of anything. Was there something that you wanted to be in that you weren't included in, in the sort of mixed shows that were going on at the time.

No, I think depending on the people who were selecting these things you were included in some things and left out of some things. I mean it was just the same as the British Council, there were an awful lot of people who were very upset because they weren't included in the British Council exhibitions, but it was the selection of one person.

Yes exactly. And the Battersea Park open-air shows...

Yes.

There was one that you were on the selection committee of, or perhaps you were on the committee for more than one.

Yes I was, yes.

Can you remember which ones you were on the committee of?

I suppose I was on them all for about ten years after '52, so I think...I think I remember that Henry Moore was on the one for the '52 grand exhibition, and after that he dropped out and I took it over.

Right. You don't mean '51 by any chance do you?

'51, that's right.

Right. And you selected...there was one that you selected that Armitage mentioned, that I think I mentioned to you before, I think it was '63, when you chose quite a lot of American sculptors.

Yes. Yes, it was...I believe it was in part supported by the Americans; I think...certainly one of the shipping companies arranged to transport all the works, but that well may have been P&O, because the managing director, or the chairman of P&O at that time was Colin Anderson, who was quite...held a fairly influential position in the art establishment at the time.

Right, so they sponsored it, P&O, virtually?

No, it was a joint...you see the whole thing was a mixture of Arts Council and GLC, and...and so I think that in recognition of the fact that the exhibition was going to include a lot of American sculptors, that somebody on the other side decided that they were going to support it.

And was that one of the first times that American sculpture...?

No.

No. When was the first time that American sculpture was exhibited here, you know, from around that time?

It's very difficult to remember. I mean one had heard of people like David Smith, and Calder, for a long long time. I mean Calder was exhibiting here before the War, and certainly immediately after the war.

And were both those two in the show that you selected, in Battersea Park?

Yes, yes.

Can you remember who else was?

I can't really. I think there was George Rickey. I suppose there must have been about ten people.

And you had work in that show?

Yes.

Right. And I read somewhere that there was a television film made of you...was it you working? That was made for schools. Do you remember anything about that?

I remember the BBC making a film. I can't remember what the name of the man was who made it. It well may have been that one that was made for schools, and that's the one that I told you at the beginning of this interview, that it sounded terrible and I didn't want to have anything to do with it! (laughing)

You meant your voice?

Yes, it was terrible.

It wasn't John...John Read didn't ever make...?

No no no, no John Read is something different.

Yes, but he did do some films.

Yes, but he was...I'm not certain whether he did make any...or rather whether he was in fact employed by the BBC, but certainly he did a number which were freelance ones.

And did he do one of you?

No, no. His speciality was of his father's friend, Henry Moore.

And while you were at the Royal College, did you put on...did you, with your approval, put on exhibitions that were held at the Royal College, of...?

There weren't any held at the Royal College except the end of course exhibitions, by the students. But I did organise a number of exhibitions, I suppose the best one was soon after I

took over in 1960, and we held an exhibition at the Arts Council in St. James's Square, which was a great success.

Right, and that was called what, what was it called?

'Towards Art' I think.

With a question mark? Was that...?

Something...it could have been, I forget, I forget. But it included a lot of people who, after they left the College turned out to be the ones who were most often heard of, people like Nigel Hall, and John Panting, somebody named Furlonger, they were both New Zealanders. And it really was a very handsome exhibition.

And did that show tour the provinces?

I can't remember whether it did or not. It well could have done, but that would have been something that the Arts Council would have looked after, yes.

And they had a nice exhibition space did they in St. James's Square?

Well, they had...they had the ground floor. I mean they were just ordinary rooms, but they had the ground floor, and they put on exhibitions all the time; this was their chief exhibiting space, before they got the Hayward Gallery. And it was fairly remarkable I think that the Arts Council agreed to put on an exhibition of student works, because it wasn't exactly well-known that such things were done.

Mm, and it was your idea was it? You thought of it?

Yes, well I was on the Fine Art Panel of the Arts Council at the time, so it was easy for me to put the idea forward, yes. But the other people on it welcomed the idea.

So, can you remember who else was on the Arts Council Panel at the same time?

I think at the time, and it's a long way back so it's a bit difficult to remember, but there was David Sylvester, I think Robert Melville but I can't be certain about that, Robert Sainsbury; I think that Gowing was but I'm not certain about that; I think Coldstream was. So it was very...a very useful contact.

Yes. And who was chairman of the Arts Council then, at that time?

I can't remember. Oh yes, yes I can, yes of course I can. [PAUSE FOR THOUGHT THEN  
BREAK IN RECORDING]

And so you think...the chairman then was...?

The chairman was...I'm not certain whether he was chairman of the Fine Art Panel, but he was certainly chairman, or a director of the Arts Council Fine Art Department, and that was Gabriel White. Afterwards Philip James, yes.

And, so Darwin left the Royal College...I think I've got it, I think we mentioned it before, I think it was '71, according to...

It would have been some time about that, perhaps a little after.

And his successor was...

His successor was Dick Guyatt. And it was a case of...I mean Dick Guyatt was pretty near to retiring age anyhow, so we...the job I believe was advertised, and there were a number of people on the short list. I believe we interviewed a number, and I was on the Council at the time, so I was on the selection board as well, and we couldn't agree about any of them, so it was decided to ask Dick Guyatt to carry on for the time being. And he had been a great friend of Robin Darwin, and really carried on along the same lines that Darwin had operated on.

And had he been a student at the College as well, Guyatt?

I can't be certain about that, but I don't think so.

And he was a sort of...a graphic designer?

He was a graphic designer, yes. Among other things he was sort of...I believe chief designer, or chief, or consultant designer for W H Smith, and he was responsible for a lot of their work. [BREAK IN RECORDING] He did a number of designs for pottery, notably the Coronation mugs.

The Coronation mugs?



Yes.

Oh right, for this Queen?

Yes.

Right, because I know there was the Ravilious one wasn't there, that they sort of...

Yes, that was the same time, yes.

End of F3008 side A

F3008 side B

And so you had, in the mid Seventies you had an exhibition in Japan didn't you, at the Fuji Television Gallery.

Yes.

Did you go out to that exhibition?

Yes. Partly it was...I went out because Fuji Television were...they have a very good gallery in Tokyo, they were...they had organised a Henry Moore prize, a prize for sculpture, which was based on this open-air sculpture collection at Hakone, which is about seventy miles out of Tokyo, and it belonged to the Fuji Television Company. They organised the prize, and I went out there to select works, or rather select the prize-winners, and the man in charge, the chairman or president or whatever he was, suggested that I had an exhibition there at the same time, which I did.

And that was...I was saying in the mid Seventies, but I don't think it was the mid Seventies, it was late Seventies, 1979?

Yes, yes that's right.

And that, was it purely sculpture or was it sculpture and drawings?

Sculpture and drawings.

Right. And that was one of the catalogues produced by Taranman again was it?

Yes.

And did it only get shown in Japan, or did he exhibit it in this country?

No no no, because...I mean the catalogue was in Japanese, so it would have been necessary to reprint the catalogue. And anyhow, some of the things were sold out there.

Mm. Do you find the Japanese appreciate sculpture more than others, quite a lot of other people?

It's a very very funny sort of relationship between the Japanese and Europeans, because there's been a long-standing love affair between the Japanese and the European painters and sculptors, and the other way round of course because the Impressionists were very influenced by, some of them were, influenced by Japanese prints. Rodin for instance had a great influence there, and this man of Fuji Television, whose name was Shikanai, he had a collection which must have been started up round about the turn of the century. [BREAK IN RECORDING] .....had his collection which must have been started up at the turn of the century by somebody else, and it had all sorts of works, a number of which were portraits, but also others, and the overwhelming influence was from Rodin.

Was it purely sculpture? No.

He had other works, but I didn't look at the paintings very much, because they weren't very good, but not that the majority of the sculptures were very good in my opinion. But it was interesting to see that work for work you could pick out the European artists who had served as models for their works, and it has always been a follow on at a few years' distance. I forget how we came to this point.

Because, we were talking about when you went out to Japan, and you had the exhibition at the Fuji Television Gallery.

Oh yes, you said did I find that there was a good relationship between...

Yes.

Yes. So it was always that sort of a relationship, and the open-air exhibition at Hakone has some works which are really very good, and an awful lot of others by followers who were predominantly Japanese, and I find that a great shame because there are a lot of people who in Japan who are good artists, and yet there's a prejudice in Japan. If you haven't got some sort of confirmation from somebody in the West that you're an OK chap, you don't stand much chance.

Really?

And this is very sad.

Yes, very.

I mean I had a student who was Japanese, and he produced some of the most exquisite small works. They weren't following the Japanese floating world tradition or anything like that, they were I think chiefly abstract from what I can remember, but they were essentially Japanese; they had that essentially Japanese quality about them, and I told him how much I liked these. And in time he started to go around the galleries, both here and in Paris, and he started to produce works which were in a sort of Western, international tradition, and they were nothing, absolutely nothing. He didn't understand, as one can imagine, didn't understand what the Europeans and Americans were up to. And I said, 'This is terrible, why don't you carry on doing...?' He said, 'There's no point in doing that. If I go back to Japan from here and show that sort of work, they will...they won't look at it twice.' And that's terrible.

Yes, it is.

So there's always that sort of a relationship with the Japanese. But they are very good, I mean the gallery director for the Fuji Television company is a very very good director and knows a lot about international painting and sculpture. He is widely, highly regarded among the gallery world, in the gallery world. So they do know that side of it, but not so much in producing works. Architecture is another matter, I mean they produce some very very interesting architecture.

Sorry, can I just ask you, the name of the director of the gallery, was that Shikani?

No, Shikanai. He was the Godfather. Perhaps I ought not to say that, but he was the man with all the money.

Right. And so the name of the director...

The name of the director I can't remember.

Right. And so, I think you said a couple of weeks ago that you visited Japan on more than one occasion.

Yes I did, yes.

Was that to do with your work for the Henry Moore Foundation, or independently, later?

No, it was...it must have been in connection with the Foundation.

Which we haven't started talking about yet, and we'll talk a bit about that in a minute.

The nice thing about doing it for Shikanai was that we both went for this Henry Moore prize thing, and we went on Jap Airlines, first class, and that really was something! It was an experience.

To be recommended is it?

It's to be recommended, yes. I've never been looked after so well. Did you hear that Jap Airlines? [CALLING OUT] (laughing) [BREAK IN RECORDING]

We referred to this, what we call the Fitzwilliam exhibition sometimes during this interview, and I'm now looking at the catalogue, and I'll just get the title. 'Bernard Meadows at the Royal College of Art 1960-1980'. And it took place at the Fitzwilliam Museum, and I think you said on the tape that it was Michael Jaffé.

Michael Jaffé was the director of the Fitzwilliam at the time, yes. And he had...one of his students was Reg Gadney, who was in the General Studies Department at the Royal College, teaching there, and when I left he thought it would be a good idea to have an exhibition of students' works drawn from the time that I had been teaching there, at the Fitzwilliam.

And, the work was, as you said it was only possible to have a very small cross section of the students who had been there, and they ....[BREAK IN RECORDING] So we were just saying, it was the students' sort of high point from...the work of the students that you taught. [BREAK IN RECORDING] The work in this show, it was work done not necessarily when they were students, it was quite often...?

Yes, I think...I have an idea most of them were works...

OK, I'm just looking...

Yes, yes.

Malcolm Poynter, now he's got the Royal College of Art, '70 to '73, and this piece is exhibited, 'Con Front' 1977, fibreglass and mixed media.

How long after it...

So that was, yes, four years after.

Yes.

Was he, for example was he doing work along those lines?

Much the same sort of things, yes.

And was he quite unusual doing figurative work? Was it quite unusual to have a student doing that sort of thing?

No, no, at that time people were casting from a figure, from a live figure. This was one of the things that was going on at the time, and...

Had Elizabeth Frink done her walking men?

Well she didn't, she didn't cast...she didn't cast from life, no. No that sort of thing has got nothing to do with Liz Frink. This was a very interesting Indian, Rhaghav Kaneria. And I met him about two years ago in Bombay, or rather Baroda, where he is now head of the sculpture department of the school there, and unfortunately seems to have lost his way.

Oh dear. Oh yes it says here he got a Commonwealth Scholarship, so we were just talking earlier on about that, yes. So do you think he's a good teacher? Is that why he sort of lost his way with his art, and suddenly...?

I think that to sort of translate oneself from working here in a Western tradition to going back to India, working in the same tradition, where you've got to explain to everybody what you are up to, it's an impossibility. I mean I went to...I went for the Moore Foundation to India about two or three years ago, to be at the opening of an exhibition in Baroda, and I got involved in some sort of exercise in explaining the word, and it was absolutely impossible. I mean they just did not know what I was talking about. They were trying very hard, and there was no real point of contact, and I think it's an impossibility, you can't do that sort of thing. I mean I think that as a last resort perhaps, it can be done in the same way as, what's his name, the Indian who is here at present?

Kapoor?

No, not Kapoor, but Kapoor could be an example. No there's one who does animals.

Mistry.

Mistry, yes, Dhruva Mistry, yes. I mean he has made a great success here, and we know what he is up to. Perhaps people back in India would know what he was up to, but this man was doing things which are essentially in the Western tradition and I think they just wouldn't understand. They made all the right sounds about understanding what the Henry Moore exhibition was about, but I'm not convinced that they did understand.

And then, there was David Hall that you've mentioned as...you mentioned off the tape; you briefly mentioned on the tape, you mentioned off the tape, so we just might say something about him. You said he slightly disappeared from view.

Well one doesn't hear much of him. In fact I don't know if he is still making sculptures, but early on I thought very highly of what he was doing, and I think it's a great pity if he has dropped out. He is perhaps doing other things, something completely different, I don't know. He was included in the exhibition of student works at the Arts Council gallery in St. James's Square.

[LOOKING THROUGH FITZWILLIAM CATALOGUE] And this piece is called 'Isomet', 1965, which was the year after you left.

Yes.

Welded steel plate, spray painted. Was he one of several that painted steel?

Yes, it was...

In the air.

In the air at the time, yes.

Martin Naylor.

Yes. He's a maverick, I think. Highly thought of by some people.

Mm. And John Cobb?

He was an interesting chap. He came from Norfolk, and some of the things I think are very interesting.

What's happened to him?

He's still working. They're all of them teaching, and I suppose at the present time the conditions being what they are, they're having to teach more and more, because it being difficult to sell things.

Do you want to just flick through and...

Terry Powell, he was one of the staff, but he was included as a student. And this chap was an interesting one, Boyd Webb. [SAYS GOODBYE TO SOMEONE IN ROOM] He made objects like that, but more often than not exhibited photographs of the objects. A very odd chap and a very wry sense of humour.

A New Zealander.

And he's still working. You know of him?

Oh yes I know him, yes. And that was called 'Untitled, 1979', and he was there at the College from '72 to '75.

Yes.

And was that a photograph?

That was a photograph, yes.

Yes. 'A Shower Curtain', and something else there. And then we've obviously, Tony Cragg is...

That's a sort of seminal piece. He did two or three things like that, and they really had a sort of fantastical quality about them.

And that's called 'Untitled, 1975'. So that was done definitely while he was there? Because he was there from '73 to '77.



Yes.

And that was high, I mean...?

Yes, yes, I think it would be about six feet high, yes.

Made out of...?

Rubbish.

Rubbish , exactly.

Yes. Yes, it's a rubbish hamburger.

A rubbish hamburger did you say?

That's what I called it, yes.

And is this the Japanese chap you were talking about?

Yes.

Nobuo...

Nakamura.

Nakamura. And that's 'Untitled, 1979'. Oh, so he...ah, it says here he studied in the School of Furniture Design in ... well that's...is that quite unusual? .. and transferred.

Fairly, but of these people, illustrated in that booklet, three of them were from other departments. Poynter, he was from Ceramics. I think they all came from Ceramics. And the other chap.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

Graham Ibbeson, he was in Ceramics?

He was in Ceramics, and Queensberry came along and said he thought he was not in the right school, would I be interested. And also there was Malcolm Poynter, who was also...it doesn't say anything about him transferring, but he was.

And did he come of his own accord and say, I want to do sculpture?

I don't really...I don't remember, no.

And Nakamura, did he come of his own accord, or...from the School of Furniture Design?

I don't think that Queensberry talked to me about him.

Wasn't Queensberry Ceramics?

Yes.

Because this says that Nakamura came from the Furniture...

Oh yes, I beg your pardon, yes. The Professor of Furniture at that time was David...dear oh dear, David.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

The Professor of Furniture was...?

Was David Pye, yes. He was the uncle of...

William Pye.

William Pye, yes.

And so you think what, he might have come to you and said.....

I think he came to me and said that he thought that Nakamura should be in the Sculpture School. Nakamura had produced and still does produce furniture. I think he produces furniture also for, is it...some firm called IKEA.

Oh yes, Ikea or whatever it's called.

Ikea or...

Oh I thought they were Scandinavian.

What?

I thought they all had things from Scandinavia and wherever.

Well yes, but I think they travelled around, and...there's a sort of common character to a certain extent between Japan and Scandinavia I think.

Then there's Jean-Luc Vilmouth, or whatever he's called, Vilmouth.

Vilmouth, yes, he's a Frenchman.

And that piece was done while he was there?

Mm?

That piece, 'Untitled, 1978' was done while he was a student?

I think it was done on the spot, yes, for the exhibition.

Right.

And he, I think he was one of the Sainsbury people, I think he got a Sainsbury award. We used to have a sort of appointments board every year, to select somebody for an exchange between France and Britain, and our part of the exchange was that we took a French student into the College, as I explained last time.

Yes you did, yes, exactly.

And he was one of them. Difficult chap but an interesting chap.

What has he used here? I mean what's happening?

I think he has drawn.

Just drawn on a...

Drawn on the corner of a room, yes.

And then there's John Panting.

Yes, he died. He was very good, he was one of the best of that lot.

And he taught? You took him on as a teacher did you there? He taught at the Royal College of Art and the Central.

There was a scheme - well scheme is rather a grand word to describe it, because there was no real properly set up scheme - for students to state who they would like to come in occasionally as a teacher, and he was originally one of those, and after that I took him on regularly. He did all sorts of very different things. I mean that, the one in the book couldn't be said to be typical of what he was doing, because there was nothing that was typical of what he was doing.

What, he experimented in all different...?

Yes.

Yes, because this particular one is zinc sprayed steel and stainless steel cable.

Yes.

And then Nigel Hall, you've already mentioned him.

Yes, he's the one that Givaudan...

The Galerie Givaudan, yes. Carl Plackman.

He was a very...not odd, a very serious, very quiet sort of chap who kept very much to himself. But everybody had a great respect for him, and he was...he knew what he was up to and he went ahead and did it.

And then this Graham Ibbeson, who you've already mentioned.

Yes. He.....

End of F3008 side B

F3009 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his house in London on the 26th of November 1992. Tape 11.

I'm sorry, the tape ran out, the last one, and we were talking about Graham Ibbeson, and you said he was...

Another odd one.

Another odd one.

Yes.

But you liked...you selected, you were saying [INAUDIBLE].

Yes, in this case, as we've already said, he was transferred from Ceramics so that, I didn't select him, he was already a student at the College, and students had a right to transfer if everybody was in agreement, and from what I saw of the work that he had already produced, I was interested.

And was there anyone...and obviously you couldn't, as we've mentioned before, put many people in that Fitzwilliam exhibition, was there anybody that you really would have liked to have done that springs to mind, that you had to leave out?

Not really, not that many. I mean, if at any one time you've got two or three interesting students, you're jolly lucky.

So that was at the end of your reign there.

Yes.

So, what about your successor? Did you have any choice, any say, sorry, in the choice?

Yes, as things were set up the retiring professor had no place on the selection board. I mean that was a matter of policy, and I suppose quite rightly. But I knew the people on the board, and I made sure that they knew what I thought, and Kenneth Armitage was on the board, and we were in agreement about who the successor should be.

And he was...?

Pardon?

And your successor was...?

Phillip King, yes.

Who had been at St. Martin's.

He had been at St. Martin's. He worked for a relatively short time as an assistant to Henry Moore. He had been I think an engineer or a chemist or something like that.

Had he been at Cambridge?

He had got a Cambridge degree, yes, for some sort of non-art thing, subject.

And he is still there isn't he.

No.

No, sorry, he's not still there.

No.

Oh no, he's not.

I'm not certain, but I had a feeling that he wasn't very happy there. It was a very difficult period.

What, to do with the rector of the time?

Well, various rectors, yes. You see, the so-called fine arts don't fit in easily in an institution like the College. I think that the painters and sculptors were jolly lucky, because it provided them with a home, and no questions asked, so it was possible for them to work at realising themselves without having to justify it all the time. I mean the other areas that the College was working in had so much success that nobody at any time was going to say that the

College wasn't a worthwhile institution, and so the painters and sculptors had a marvellous sort of working environment that, if the staff were sufficiently interested in what they were doing they could carry on and do it, and you couldn't ask for better.

Who in particular had success then, other departments?

Well, one of the ones that most springs to mind of course is Fashion, and Janey Ironside had tremendous success, and her predecessor also had a lot of success. And it's gone on and on. A number of the other schools and departments, I mean Queensberry had a lot of success with his school; the Photography were reasonably successful; Film and Television from time to time: I mean they had ups and downs, but from time to time Film and Television were quite successful. And the College was looked upon as being a worthwhile place, everybody knew about it, internationally. And again you can't ask for more. And fortunately I think that the Government understood that, and went along with it, and I hope they still do.

So did you find it quite a wrench when you left, or...?

Yes, I always liked to be with students, always liked talking with them. I found some of them jolly difficult, but that's a cross section of humanity.

And it must have been marvellous for you to have that studio to work in there as well.

It was good to have the studio to work in, but also it was marvellous to have the help in things like the bronze foundry; I could get things cast. I mean I paid for them, but I could get things cast just when I wanted. I could work on the things as much as I wanted, when I wanted. I could oversee what was being done. And that was very useful. Apart from that, there was so much expertise within the College that one could draw on, and again that was worthwhile, and still is. When I say still is, I mean I can still go along there and take advantage of it.

Yes, oh that's good.

Being Professor Emeritus I think they have to give me working space. I don't think anybody has ever asked for working space, but one could.

Yes.

Unless they change the rules.

And so, can you just remind me, when you left, you had a studio in Highgate.

Yes.

Was that...and you also said you had a studio in Chelsea.

Yes.

What was the order?

I had one in Highgate first and then, which overlapped with the College, and that was more a store-room than anything else. And also I had a dark room up there, so that was a good thing.

A dark room that you used for taking photographs of your own work?

Yes, yes. And then, when I left the College I got this place at Chelsea.

At World's End.

At World's End. But I didn't use it very much, it wasn't practical.

It was quite a hike from here to there as well.

Well, that's not so bad if you can drive, but I started off on the understanding that I would be able to take a car and leave it in the World's End development place, and then suddenly they changed the rules, because of course all the residents there were wanting to do the same. And so I used that less and less, and also on one occasion I had all the windows broken; there is a tremendous amount of hooliganism around there. One of the caretakers was murdered, and this was next to my studio. So it wasn't very pleasant.

Not very conducive, no. So do you have anywhere now?

Well I have a studio at the Moore Foundation, which I don't use very much, and recently I've concentrated more on drawings, and small things which I can do here.

And you've got a sort of office, a studio upstairs?



Yes, I've got a studio up at the top, and a cupboard in the basement where I...I work under the stairs! And you may think that funny, but I once went to see Giacometti in his studio in Paris and it was about the same size.

Is that why he did such sort of tall, then, things?

Yes. Yes. First thing he said to me, 'I bet you've got a bigger studio than this'!

And, I asked you one of the times I came last week who had taken photographs of you, and you had mentioned Snowden and Hedgecoe, and you remembered that also a couple of other people had taken photographs of you.

Yes, Ida Kar and...

Lewinski.

Lewinski, that's right, yes.

And I've forgotten his Christian name.

I can't think.

And was that in the sort of Fifties, early Sixties?

I should think the Ida Kar one was in the Fifties, early Fifties, and Lewinski, I don't know, I suppose about 25 years ago.

Oh yes, can I just ask you, there was another exhibition, I mean the last exhibition you had, one-man, can you remember where that was?

I think probably it was the one in Japan.

Right, because you had one with someone called Keith Chapman?

No. No, that was something entirely different. Chapman had been going around to the sales and buying up works in sales, then suddenly he said that he was going to have an exhibition, and wanted cooperation over that, and I said I didn't want to have anything to do with it. I tried to get in touch with him, and I had a number of addresses given me about where he was,

and nobody...it was all a matter of, 'Yes he was here last week, but he's gone now', and I still haven't...

Yes, so you disassociated yourself totally from that, yes.

Yes, yes.

Because I don't know, did he have a gallery for a short while, I think?

I have never been able to find out. Something in Baker Street, in one of those big buildings I think, and the last time I tried to get in touch with him there, somebody told me that it was just a store, so I don't really know.

Because your work does come up, doesn't it, from time to time.

Yes.

There's usually about one or two pieces in Christie's and Sotheby's.

Yes, yes, because most of the things that I sold were sold in America.

Yes. And so they consult you? Do they get in touch with you, Sotheby's and Christie's?

Occasionally, yes. And so, the other thing that you are connected with that you became more involved with, I presume when you had left the College but...no, you must...you were probably involved with it while you were there, the Henry Moore Foundation.

Mm.

So how did you start getting involved with that? I mean obviously you were a friend of Henry Moore anyway.

Yes. He got in touch with me and said that he wanted to make me a trustee of the Foundation, because he thought that I knew more about, certainly about the early works, than anybody else, which I suppose I do. And from then on it...I used to go over to Much Hadham for trustees' meetings, but then his health began to fail and he really was quite ill, and he asked me if I would become more involved. Well I agreed to do that, but very quickly it became obvious that I was spending an awful lot of time, and I wasn't getting paid, and I

wasn't having the time to do my work either, so I said well, something had got to be done. And he said all right, well we'll pay you. The Charity Commission were informed about this and they said you can't be a trustee and be paid, so I ceased to be a trustee and continued on a consultancy basis, on the basis that he was still alive, and he was the Director of the Foundation, it was his thing, and he made all the decisions. I could make suggestions to him, but...and this was right and proper, I mean it suited me very well.

So can I just ask you the date that the Henry Moore Foundation was set up, was that...I mean I've got it...was it '77?

'77, yes.

And the other trustees were...can you...Margaret Macleod?

Not until later. Lord Goodman, he was Chairman. Mrs Moore was one of the trustees. Henry wasn't, because he was involved, he was an employee of the Foundation. Maurice Ash, who was...who had been a lecturer at the London School of Economics; he was a friend of Henry Moore, and he married the daughter of the Elmhirsts.

Oh right, the Dartington...

The Dartington, yes, yes, who were friends of Henry. There was also Leslie Martin.

Right, the architect.

Architect, yes. And I think that was all, to begin with. After that Margaret Macleod was appointed. She had been a long-time friend of his, and had worked on most of his exhibitions while she was at the British Council. There was somebody else. Oh...

His daughter?

Denis Hamilton. No, his daughter left before I had anything to do with it.

I see. [BREAK IN RECORDING] But she had been one of the trustees originally?

She was the only trustee originally, I believe.

Right. Because was there something before the Henry Moore Foundation was formed; there was some other...was there some other...?

Well there was a trust, there was a trust, which was somehow involved with the gift of works to the Tate.

With the Tate trustees?

Yes. But I had nothing to do with that. I had nothing to do with the Foundation at all until, I suppose about 1980, or perhaps just a little before; just a little before I left the College.

Right.

The other trustee was Sir Denis Hamilton, who was...you know, he was the chairman of Reuters, and a marvellous chap. He was Montgomery's right-hand man during the War. Very nice man; very ill, he was dying of cancer for several years, but still used to turn up at all the meetings. And then Henry Moore's health really got worse and worse, and he was taken into hospital in Cambridge, and poor chap nearly died, and then suddenly got better, and he sort of soldiered on, but most of the meetings that I had with him was at his bedside. But he still was very alert and wanted to make decisions all the time, which was...which was all right, because he had always operated a one-man band, and there was no other way that anybody could work with him, until he died, when there was something of a vacuum into which I fell! And that was a very very difficult time, because the terms of reference hadn't clearly been laid down. I knew what I thought he would have done, and along with conversations, discussions with the other trustees. Because I still stayed a member of the trustees from a meeting point of view.

Right, you weren't an official trustee but you were...? I see.

That's right, yes, yes. I mean, when the Charity Commission were consulted about this they said well, it doesn't matter, he can still stay a member of the meeting, but not officially as trustee. I suppose it really means that one doesn't have voting rights, but as nobody really ever takes a vote on anything, they ask me my opinion and that's how it goes.

Yes. And so, that situation arose after he died, and he died in '86.

Yes.

And so how often did they meet, the trustees?

Once a quarter, apart from special meetings. But it meant really that I had to be down there every day, because there were a number of works still going on which had got so far ahead that he agreed that they should be finished, and they were straightforward, mechanical enlargements of other works, smaller versions which had already been done.

Right, and so you had to oversee.

I had to oversee, that sort of thing. It was...I mean that wasn't difficult, the things were sufficiently ahead towards being finished that there was nothing much to do except to arrange for all the business of getting them cast, and as some of them were very very big indeed, that was quite a job.

And did they get cast in this country, or did they get cast...?

Yes, they were cast...well there was one which was being cast in Germany, in Berlin.

Is that Noack?

Noack, yes, which had got along quite a long way, and I really didn't see it until it was finished. And anyhow he had left the whole thing to the founder; the founder had been responsible for enlarging from a small working model that size, up to something which was fifteen, sixteen feet across, and they had got somebody in Berlin who was able to do that. And so, I didn't see it until it was finished and it was ready to be placed on a site in Berlin, and I went to Berlin to choose a site, which wasn't an ideal one but of the ones which they offered, and there were only three, it seemed to me to be the best one.

And what, it was the City of Berlin that commissioned this piece, or whatever?

Yes. Well either the City of Berlin or the West German Government: it was in West Berlin. And it's in a lake in the middle of...in the middle of a lake in a sort of...I don't know what you would call it, a sort of trade centre. Not the happiest of places. But the alternatives were not possible at all. One was in the middle of a road with traffic swirling around it all the time, which would have been impossible, nobody could ever have seen it; and the other possibility was in some park I believe where the public would be climbing all over it and making graffiti on it, which wouldn't have been possible at all. I mean as it was, the.....

End of F3009 side A

F3009 side B

So you were saying...I cut you off again. As it was, the work had...

It had already stood out, after the casting had been finished, in a park in West Berlin, and it had been covered with graffiti as high as anybody could reach, and so obviously to put it out again in West Berlin under those conditions, the same thing would have happened again, and so the best solution seemed to be to put it in the middle of a lake.

Right. And so...the Henry Moore Foundation when it was formed, what was its aim, what was its purpose?

Oh well that's asking a lot, to... I suppose basically to organise exhibitions of his work, to publicise his work and what he stood for; really to act as a public relations organisation for familiarising people with his work and what he stood for.

And did it undertake to sort of conserve his work, if...

Yes. And also, because of...mm?

Sorry, I meant sort of restore, conserve, his work.

Conserve, yes. Within limits, because I mean obviously if somebody has bought works and taken them to the other end of the world, then it becomes well nigh impossible to act as a sort of after-sales service.

Yes, yes.

But also because of the tax arrangement with the government the Foundation had a lot of money, which was invested, and it was possible to make donations to various good objects on a fairly grand scale, and this was very much what he wanted to do. Originally he was having in mind the hardships that he suffered when he was a student. He was aware that students had a hard time. Well they certainly did have a hard time when he was a student, but the conditions for students now are a lot different; there are very very many more bursaries and scholarships given by the central government and by local authorities. So, the number of bursaries given has reduced in size, chiefly because of that, because there aren't that number of people suffering hardship. And on the opposite side, the fact of the...well, the present recession, but also the fact that national galleries and local galleries have always been short of

money, that it's always been...they have always been begging around for support, and so the Foundation has been able to do that.

And it's not necessarily...it doesn't necessarily give money to things connected with sculpture, there are other non ...

For the most part yes it does, yes. The aims really are to support the sculpture exhibitions and sculptors. But there are other things from time to time which are supported.

Like that Stanley Spencer...?

Yes, like the Stanley Spencer book. That's an unusual one, because normally the Foundation doesn't support any sort of commercial enterprise, but in this case I believe the money given was in order to support the research that somebody was doing into getting the facts together for the publication of the book, and probably was paid to the chap who was doing it directly, I can't remember. But the Foundation has supported most of the national galleries, the Tate, the V & A, and local ones, but for the most part within the U.K., not usually outside, not usually foreign ones.

And Leeds, up in Leeds...?

That's a sort of, in a way the branch office. That's the centre for the study of sculpture which, you know that he came from Leeds?

Yes.

And always looked upon himself as a Yorkshireman. And there are two institutions in Leeds, one is the centre for study of sculpture which is the main one, and then there's the other one which is a sort of off-shoot of the...what's it called? Leeds City Art Gallery. That had been running for quite a long time, whereas the new one is now set up, but it hasn't yet got any territory of its own. I think they're still sort of guests of the Leeds City Art Gallery. But the Foundation has been organising with the Leeds City Council for a new territory, new premises, which has been...because alongside the Leeds City Art Gallery, and has recently been rehabilitated and it's just on the point of being finished, and that's the sort of custom-built thing.

And what is the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust?

Well there are one or two of them. There's a sculpture trust, which is I think this one which involves the...involves the donation to the Tate, but also there are other ones which are family ones, which are nothing to do with us.

Right. So, Terry Friedman, what is he...?

Well he's the one who has been there for some time, and he is in charge of the one which is...the department of the Leeds City Art Gallery, I mean he is employed by the Leeds City Art Gallery. I get confused. I came in on it when Terry Friedman's outfit was the only one, and since then they've set up this other one, and I don't know where one of their responsibilities finish and the other ones begin.

Yes. And Robert...

Robert Hopper, he is the Director of the Henry Moore Sculpture Study Centre.

Right. And the Curator of the Henry Moore...the Much Hadham enterprise.

Yes, that's David Mitchinson.

David Mitchinson.

Yes.

And the Chairman of the Henry Moore Foundation itself...

Is Lord Goodman.

Is Goodman. And Alan Bowness is the Director.

Director, he's the Director, yes.

Were you ever Director, actually Director, or...?

I was never appointed. The thing about all my connection with Henry Moore and the Foundation was always by word of mouth, and he never did anything in any other way. And this was very unsatisfactory, especially now. Not for me now, but as it was between the time of Henry dying and Bowness being appointed; I mean Bowness was appointed, getting on for



three years after Henry had died, and there was that gap, because he was still at the Tate and he wasn't going to retire until, whenever it was, and I was in a sort of limbo, which was very very unsatisfactory; I never knew where I was or what authority I had, or anything. But we managed. Everybody was very friendly.

Because a lot of the...what, the drawings are mainly...all the works of art in Much Hadham? I mean drawings, prints, sculpture, the majority of them are there, are they?

Yes.

And, there have been two or three schemes for what should happen down there. I mean...that's right, when was the first scheme, like the...I'm talking about the architects scheme at Much Hadham that was proposed. Can you remember the order of it?

Well it would have been some time after Bowness was appointed; I suppose it must have been two or three years ago.

And then another set of ideas was put forward was it? Because that was...

The first lot were turned down by the planning authority. Then another scheme was put up, and that was looked at by the planning authority, planning commission or whatever it is, just recently, and they are still waiting for the outcome of that.

And was it the same architect for both sets of schemes?

Yes.

Dixon, Jeremy Dixon?

Yes, yes.

And the first one, was that on the sort of rubbish tips or something, was that where the first...?

No.

No, oh right.

No the rubbish tip is an entirely different thing. The rubbish tip is some way away, and is still being filled up and won't be completely filled up, I believe in something like 25 years' time.

Oh I see, oh I see.

Yes, it's a very long, long-term thing. And the awful thing is that any time when there is a gale the whole of the area is absolutely swamped with polythene sheeting and bags and all sorts, it's awful. They do their best, they run around...the Council run around the countryside every time there is a gale sort of hoovering, clearing it up, raking it up, putting earth on top of...in fact they have tended to fill up as they are going along and then putting earth on top. It's a nasty sort of...I hate the idea of it.

Yes. So what is the latest...the latest proposal for the scheme that's now being talked about, is that for...that's somewhere to show his sculpture?

Yes, I think the way that the thinking has gone along is that...it's always been felt that it's possible to show the big works outside, and anyhow the big works come and go all the time because of exhibitions around the world, and however much one might think that it would be a good idea to have a sort of theme park there without changing it, that the thing stays, representing...a permanent selection of his works, it can't be done, because always these works are on call and they come and go all the time. But there's no facility down there to show drawings; there's no facility down there really to show the small scale works, maquettes and working models, and I think that these plans are towards solving that problem. But they've been a matter of contention for some time.

Because the locals down there didn't want people...

The locals unfortunately they've been got at, and the locals don't know, and they always fear, quite rightly, that it's going to be worse than it is.

Mm, with hoards of people.

But I don't think there will be hoards of people; I mean at the present time, you get a sort of crowd of bored housewives going down in a coach to look around, as they do, looking around all sorts of places. There is a limit to the number of those sort of people that you can get. There will be a certain number of people who are scholars, people interested in his work, and who are writing works about him, and on his work, but never going to flood the area. And I think the whole thing has been blown up. It's sad, it's sad, because there's a nasty feeling.

And now there's an additional problem with the daughter.

Nice girl, I've always liked her, but... [Can you turn it off?]

[END OF SESSION]

End of F3009 side B

F3010 side A

Bernard Meadows talking to Tamsyn Woollcombe at his home in London on the 15th of December 1992. Tape 12.

So, I was going to ask you today, we've talked about a lot of your works when we were looking at the albums, and we've talked about sand casting and cire perdue, and how you installed a work, and some different finishes on some of the works, and I was just wondering whether we could take a couple of examples that you did and talk about how you started, how you made the model, the maquette, in the beginning, because they...for example something like 'Pointing Figure with Child', which is completely smooth...

Just the big one?

Yes, I mean that was just one that came off the top of my head, but you can choose whichever one you want to talk about. That contrasts, and is a completely different method I presume, in the beginning, with say one of your 'Fallen Birds', or in your 'Tycoons'. I don't know, would you like to...?

A lot of the difference in the way of working is controlled by the size of the thing. I mean whereas on a small hand-sized piece you can work with plaster very easily, and you can see the whole thing in one look, whereas in big things you can't and often they are...it's not even possible to make things easily in plaster. And so, one does things like say the large work in Norwich, in the newspaper office, which was made with polystyrene blocks, and they are easily carved with a bread knife or something of that sort.

Do you do it with something hot?

No, no; some people do, because the hot wire, you can carve quite complicated shapes quite easily with a hot wire. But polystyrene blocks with simple shapes can be carved with a bread knife, a serrated bread knife works very well.

And it achieves a...because I remember that piece has got a lot of smooth...I mean the round discs for example, can you get that smoothness then, or not, or do you...?

Yes. Yes, with a variety of perhaps unconventional tools for a sculptor, like a potato shredder, and a vegetable shredder, a nutmeg grater and that sort of thing. And then it can be rubbed down with wet and dry abrasive paper, or it can be painted, or, you can do all sorts of

things with it. And in addition, having made the work in the polystyrene, you can then put a plaster mould on that, and that of course will register the reverse texture, and so you can work on the inside of the mould in plaster, and take all the texture off, and so you can come back to a very smooth surface.

I see, right. And so that in miniature...would you have worked on polystyrene for...you've got something, I think it's called...is it called 'Seated Figure'?

Yes.

And it's on a bronze sort of shelf, with a.....[BREAK IN RECORDING] .....piece I was trying to get to was called 'Cross-Legged Figure'.

Yes.

Which is small.

Yes, it's quite small.

So you wouldn't have worked on it in that way at all?

Not really, except always, as I make the waxes for most of the small things myself, I am always in a position to work on the inside of the mould, so if it's difficult to...because of course plaster has a bit of texture, if you are mixing plaster you get bubbles in it and you get places where two mixes don't quite join up together. If you put a mould on, that will show in reverse and so you can work on the inside of a mould, to make it smooth.

Right. So, I think in that book...

Mm? What are you looking for?

What about...that's a tycoon isn't it?

Yes. These are modelled in plaster as near as I can get to what I want, and then they are worked on top of that with a knife, or a carving tool of some sort. A little hatchet.

Right. And do you have an armature? Do you have something underneath that in the beginning ...?

Very little. The good thing about working in plaster is that so long as you are not...we're not talking about thin things like legs and a large body, which is heavy, bearing a lot of weight on the thin legs, then of course they would have to have armatures, but otherwise it's quite possible to do these things with...with bits of stick.

Right. But there is something in there, there is something in there to start off with?

Well it's a help, it's a help, because if you start off with a stick going up to there, from the base to the knee for instance, then you've got a...you've got that stick to build the thickness of the leg on, and also from then on you carry on from the knee; you don't have to carry on from the base all the time.

So was there anything in the centre of your original model for the body?

Probably not, probably not.

And you said before when we were talking about your piece, 'Lovers', that the Tate bought, that you enjoyed plaster because you can sort of carve it.

Yes.

Really like you can stone or whatever.

Yes, yes. You see, I was brought up as a stone carver and a wood carver, and this technique of modelling plaster, it quickly gets back to the point of being a carver, if I want to. And the marvellous thing about modelling in plaster is that it's so much more adaptable, it makes your language a good deal wider than...and more expressive than carving ever can be.

And have you...since you left being Henry Moore's assistant, have you ever done any carving since?

No, no.

You never felt particularly that you wanted...?

Yes, I felt very attracted to it. In fact on several occasions from going to the quarry in Italy I've begged bits of marble to bring back, and I have brought them back and I've still got them, I've never used them!

Although there was one piece that you referred to, wasn't there, that you had done in...

Oh I had it done.

Rather a veined marble, but you had that...

They did that completely, yes, they did it completely in the old traditional way of...well like Rodin did for instance, giving them a plaster model and saying now, copy that.

And I've forgotten the title of that one.

That was 'Help'.

Oh yes.

Something I was going to say about.....[BREAK IN RECORDING]

And, looking round in your house where you've got a lot of your works, there are obviously lots of different surfaces, patinations.

Yes.

I was going to ask you if you could explain why things have different surfaces. I mean when one thinks of bronze, quite often one thinks of the, well I do, a sort of blacker, matt finish.

Yes.

Or the highly polished blacky-bronze.

Yes. Well that has been used traditionally over a long long period; in fact the foundries, when they talk about a black patina, a highly polished black patina, they refer to it as a Florentine patina. And people like Giambologna, working in Italy during the Renaissance, he worked with that sort of patina all the time. But it's not, to my mind it isn't as expressive as

what one uses now, because it depends on the thing being highly polished and it's got a sort of a look of a sweet, or a piece of soap that's been in the bath water a long time.

So how does a piece come out of the foundry?

It comes out of the...

I mean if it's not...if it hasn't been touched.

If it hasn't been touched it really is almost unrecognisable, because it sort of has so much of the original mould left adhering to the cast that it looks like a piece of sort of, something that has been stripped out of a coke furnace, and that then has to go into acid to have that mould mixture, which is predominantly plaster, dissolved away. And then you're left with a cast which is certainly not bright, it's matt, and is slightly pink, it's got a very distinctive colour, which is due partly to the acid. How it comes out of course is dependent on which acid it has been in. Some acids it comes up bright, but that acid takes away quite a bit of the original cast as well, so you don't use that.

Yes, yes.

Well after it has been in the acid and it has been dried out, then there are all sorts of things to be done to it, which in the trade is known as chasing, and that means that the surfaces is worked on, any blemishes taken off, or repaired. The nails which have been holding the core in position, after the casting, in the process of casting have been transferred to the, instead of being in the wax they now are in the bronze, and so they have to be drilled out and the holes filled, which are done by making bronze screws out of the same metal as the thing is cast with, and then the bronze screws are screwed in and tightened, and are sawn off, and matted, which means...it's like having a punch with...a square punch, which may be about a quarter of an inch square, with a texture on it, and you hammer any repairs with that, and partly it compacts the repair and also gives it the same texture as the original cast. And from then on it's patinated, and depending on how, what colour you want it, the marvellous thing about patination is, it's a bit like etching, you can play about on it forever. And to a certain extent it's unpredictable, and sometimes you are very pleasantly surprised with how it turns out and sometimes you hate it, and you have to start over again. But it's...one can make it pretty well any colour, depending on the chemical that you put on.

And then the air after that, that affects it.



That almost invariably improves patinas. I mean, a patina which is a hundred years old is certainly more likely to be better than one that was done yesterday. This presents often a difficulty, because if you are doing...if you are working with the idea of making an addition, somebody sees a cast which was made four or five years ago and you don't want to sell that one, but you will sell them another one, you have somehow got to try to imitate the patina and that's a very difficult thing to do, just because of the unpredictability of the process.

Mm. So do you keep a sort of recipe book?

No, it's all...

It's all trial and error as you go, yes.

Yes, yes.

And are you actually...have you actually been involved at that stage? I suppose you must have been at the Royal College were you, because you could...it was on site.

I was there, because I watched them doing it, and was in a position to say well, try this or that, and I don't like that, I'll just try something else on top. And it's like a sort of witch's brew.

Yes, it must be rather exciting. And so what do you think is your favourite finish then? Is it a silk finish, or...?

I don't think I've got...I don't think I've got any favourite finish. Different patinas suit different works. And I think half the problem is that you set out with too clear an idea of what you want, and it's always a disappointment, or invariably so, and so you have to sort of push it around all the time. [BREAK IN RECORDING]

Obviously we couldn't mention...we haven't mentioned every single exhibition that your work was included in, during this interview, but as it happens you have got a proof for an entry into a new Debrett's sort of 'Who's Who' type of book, haven't you, that you could just.....[BREAK IN RECORDING] .....that mentions a few of the ones that we haven't gone into. We did mention the Battersea open-air ones in theory, but you've got them written down, the dates.

Yes, in this entry, and I'm afraid that they can't be completely relied upon; they are as I told the people who were making, writing up the entry, but I'm afraid my memory is not that

reliable. But what they've got here is that I exhibited at the Battersea Park exhibitions, open-air exhibitions in 1952, 1960, '63, '66, and in Holland Park, which on that occasion was situated in Holland Park instead of Battersea. Also at the...

Sorry, have we said the date for that one, Holland Park?

That was 1957.

Right.

Yes. In 1956 there was an open-air exhibition at the Musee Rodin in Paris, I've got 1956.

You mentioned that en passant, and...

Yes. Also one at Antwerp in 1953 and in 1959, an open-air exhibition in Arnhem in 1958, and in the British Pavilion in the Brussels exhibition in 1958, as well as the Sao Paulo Bienale, and the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburg in 1959 and in 1969.

Right, and the Sao Paulo, the date for that was?

Sao Paulo was 1958.

Right. And we haven't mentioned it, but there was another exhibition in Battersea Park. Sorry, have you finished that list?

Yes.

The Silver Jubilee year there was an exhibition in Battersea Park, an open-air one.

Which year was that?

'77, this present Queen's Silver Jubilee. I know it's not down there but I have...I know that was the case.

Well as I say, all these entries in various books are relatively unreliable.

Yes. Anyway, there are clues for people to go and search.

Yes, yes.

And also, I think perhaps one of the most recent exhibitions that your work was seen in, in a mixture, the Tate Liverpool had one didn't they...

Yes.

Of the Tate's collection.

Yes.

'Modern British Sculpture from the Collection', 1988.

Yes.

Do you think that was possibly the last time your work was in a sort of mixed show in this country?

Yes. Yes, there haven't been that number of mixed exhibitions, except of the younger people.

And also, that thing hasn't mentioned Middelheim, but we have mentioned Middelheim.

Yes, the Antwerp place is called Middelheim.

Oh right, sorry.

It's Middelheim Park, which is on the outskirts of Antwerp.

Oh right, right, that clears that up, great, thank you. And we also mentioned exhibitions you organised. You were closely involved, well you were on the committee, organising committee of the Battersea Park exhibitions, several of them.

Yes.

And you said when in a previous tape, and you had also said about when you were first at the College you organised that successful exhibition, 'Towards Art'.

Yes, at the Arts Council Gallery, yes. That was students' work, yes.

And then while you were at the College you mention Nigel Hall being exhibited at Givaudan in Paris.

Yes. And also a mixed exhibition of some of the students who were at the College at that time.

A group show he put on?

That was a group show, yes.

And was that in the Sixties or Seventies, or...?

That was...I don't know if we've got...we haven't got Givaudan's show on this list.

No.

That would have been in the Sixties, mm.

Right. And then obviously you...did you...did the students really...your students really organise their own degree shows at the Royal College?

Yes.

Yes, you didn't...they did it themselves.

They did it themselves, and I really insisted on that, because part of what they elected to be judged by, was a part of the whole affair, I mean it gave a clue to the quality of the student, what his selection was.

Right, I think we've really probably come to the end of this interview, do you think, probably? [BREAK IN RECORDING] Anyway, thank you very much indeed for all your time you've given. And as we said just now off the tape, I asked you if there was anything else you wanted to say, put on record, and you...

I think...I can't think of anything just at the moment, but I'm sure over the years I shall think of all sorts of things that I should have said.

OK, thank you.

End of F3010 side A

F3010 side B

Right, there are just a few things that you've mentioned in the tapes that we're just going to clarify. You mentioned about Hepworth and Skeaping and Nicholson, the studios in...the Mall Studios. Hepworth met Nicholson in 1931, but you only came across them, you only met Nicholson and Hepworth later that decade.

Later that decade certainly. Finally they went off to St Ives at the beginning of the War, and it was then that I had most contact with them.

When they were down there?

No, not when they were down there, but...

Before they left?

Yes, the move.

Right, right.

Because after that, the tenancy of the studio passed to Henry Moore, and so he moved in there, and I was involved with him in that move.

Yes.

Fixing up blackouts and such, because of the War.

Right. And you yourself had his studio didn't you, later on, after the War.

Yes. After Henry Moore moved to Much Hadham, yes.

Yes. And did you actually live and work in that studio, or did you just use it as a work place?

I used to live and work there, and then I got a flat in Parkhill Road, opposite, just opposite, and moved in there, and I used the studio for working.

Right, and that was when you were first married was it, when you got the flat in Parkhill Road?

No, we had had another flat in Parkhill Road.

Oh I see.

We were married in 1939.

OK. Then you mentioned, when you were talking about India, when you were in the Air Sea Rescue, you just mentioned someone who had written a book on, wrote books or a book, on pacifism, and you had forgotten his name, but you have remembered it since.

Yes, I think it was Beverly Nichols, who had visited India. I have an idea it was before I went to India, and he had made some what seemed to me to be very derogatory statements about the Indians, and especially Indian music, which he didn't approve of at all, and which I found very exciting, when I finally did live in India.

And India is a place you visited subsequently isn't it, for the Moore Foundation and...

Yes, I have been there two or three times since the War.

And has...every visit that you've made there, has it been for the Foundation or was it sometimes just on a holiday?

It's never been on a holiday, I've never had a holiday! (laughs)

I seem to recall you mentioning trips to France, and trips to Italy.

Yes, but they've never been holidays. It's always been in the line of business.

Did you ever take your children on holiday?

Yes, oh yes, always. We've got photographs of them sitting in the car, or standing in front of a car with a great garland of tulips on the car, in Holland. (laughs) Yes, and on the bridges over the canals in Venice and things like that.

Right, so they went everywhere. Did they come out with you that time when you went in '64 to the Venice Biennale, or was that a solo mission?

No. No no.

No, that would have been too much.

Yes. No that was really work.

Yes. But you have mentioned France a lot, you obviously like France.

Yes. I like everywhere. I mean I haven't been...I have been to Berlin, but only for a day.

Which you mentioned, when you were putting the Moore in the middle of the lake.

Yes. But apart from that I haven't been...I haven't travelled around there at all. But Italy and France, and Spain.

And I suppose, you've been...when you were connected with the Henry Moore Foundation you mentioned going to see that gallery in Saffron Walden, the Fry Gallery.

Yes.

Have you been around the country inspecting other museums? Do you know quite a lot of the provincial museums quite well?

Not very well, some of them, some of them. But most of what I do for the Moore Foundation isn't concerned with donations, although I'm always in on the decisions, but most of what I do is authenticating works.

Yes, I see. And when you authenticate a work, do you write...do you sort of write a kind of certificate sort of thing, or what...put it in writing, or...?

No, it's a bit more conversational, it's not...there's no formal certificate.

And were you in on the one that Anne Elliott found in India? Do you know about that?

Yes, I do, yes. I wasn't in on that, that was something that can happen. I mean somebody in the distant past buys something, and in this case it was before records were kept; Henry Moore often didn't keep proper records, in the early days certainly.



Sorry, we've digressed a bit. Going back to something in the tape, you referred to an exhibition held at the ICA, but weren't quite sure when it was, but you think it was early Fifties.

It was very early Fifties, yes. Yes, it could have been '50.

Right, right, oh yes. And then there was the name of the stockbroker that bought your concrete standing figure of 1949.

Mm, his name was Benden, Mick Benden, who had quite a good collection of both paintings and sculptures.

Then, we also might get it clear, when you were on the Royal Fine Art Commission, which according to the `Who's Who'...

Roberts-Jones.

Ah, brilliant! While you're on it, yes, you mentioned seeing the statue of Churchill, overseeing the man doing it, and he is called Robert...

Roberts-Jones.

Roberts-Jones. Hyphenated?

Yes.

Yes, oh brilliant, that's very good to remember that.

And I believe, I believe I'm right in saying that he is one of the very few people who fell out of an aeroplane and landed in a tree! (laughing) His claim to fame.

Oh right, goodness. Was that before or after he did this work?

Oh no, that was before. Yes, I suppose it was in the War.

Yes, yes. Goodness! And so you were on the Royal Fine Art Commission from '71 to '76 you said earlier on, from that Who's Who? entry.

Yes, yes.

Right. Because it wasn't clear before. And then, also we...it wasn't very clear, I think it was my fault, I made it sound as if you were a governor of Corsham, the Bath Academy of Art earlier than you in fact were. Because Clifford Ellis left in 1972, Methuen died in '74, and you were a governor some time after that.

Yes. Yes, I'm sure that's right.

Yes, and you left.

Yes.

You resigned did you? Was that one of the ones you resigned from?

Yes, I think I resigned, because I felt that the amalgamation, as was proposed and carried out by, I don't know what they were, whether they were Avon Council at that time, the amalgamations they were proposing seemed to me to be not in the interests of the school.

They're now...well it became the Bath College of Higher Education didn't it?

Yes, yes. And that seemed to me to be a dilution of, well their status, and probably would have meant that they wouldn't be able to get their hands on such support as they had been used to having. Because they really at one time were a very privileged, in a very privileged position, thanks to Ellis really, because he was the one who...

Got all the funds...

Well, he built up the reputation of the place, and...I didn't always agree with what he stood for, but nobody could ever deny that he didn't...wasn't responsible for building them up to a much higher level than they were previously.

Mm. The critic who wrote for 'Architectural Review', you haven't had a brain-storm, you can't remember...connected with the Hanover Gallery? It wasn't particularly important.

No.

And then, oh yes, you just said...we had mentioned Terry Friedman up in Leeds and you said he is in fact about to leave, or has left.

Mm.

Yes, you don't know who he is being replaced by?

No, because I believe that I'm right in saying that Terry Friedman was an employee of Leeds City Art Gallery, so he wasn't...it's nothing to do with the Foundation or the Sculpture Study Centre. But he is leaving because, well his subject really is architecture.

Oh I see.

And I don't think that he was ever completely happy in running a gallery; I think that he wanted...he's now, I believe, going back to writing about architecture, which he does quite well.

OK, well I think those cleared up a few small points. OK, thanks.

End of F3010 side B

End of Interview